

Common Circle for Human Rights

c/o M. Lichtman, R.R. 3, Box 1119, Belfast 04915

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July Meeting To Continue Dialogue

Our next monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 22 at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church Parish House, 49 Church Street, in Belfast. An informal social time will begin at 6:30pm, and the program between 7:00 - 9:00pm. Please come for an opportunity to discuss on a more informal and personal basis the impact of being a target of or perpetrator of hate crimes, prejudice, intolerance or hurtful behavior. How do we move forward and release the negativity of such actions and activity?

We will also spend a little time updating people on the upcoming Love Makes a Family photo/text exhibit and solicit your help in putting this exhibit together. Updates will also be given on what's happening in regards to the People's Veto effort to force a referendum this November and attempt to disallow the inclusion of sexual orientation into the Maine Human Rights Act. Please come and be with old friends and new.

June Event An Overwhelming Success

We are very pleased to announce that our first event funded by the Maine Equity Fund and supported by the Maine Community Foundation was an overwhelming success! Sixty-eight people participated in the program, entitled "Not In Our Town: Revealing the Shadow of Hate," at the Belfast Free Library on June 24, 1997. The program drew interest not only from Belfast, but from other communities as well -- including Liberty, Monroe, Unity, Pittsfield, Orono, Bar Harbor and Mt.. Desert Island.

The evening began with a pasta dinner, prepared by the staff at Harbor Hill Assisted Living and Health Care Center. After dinner the videotape "Not In Our Town" was shown. Immediately afterward, the 45-minute open microphone session began, during which participants continually stepped to the microphone -- some simply read aloud hate crime incidents documented between 1996 and 1997, while others shared their own personal experiences. What an eye-opening experience the segment was! An outdoor candlelighting ceremony and brief meditation ended the program.

Several tangible outcomes immediately resulted from the event:

- A local resident who works with the Sophomore Awareness program in the local school district asked to borrow the "Not In Our Town" videotape and viewer's guide to begin planning to present the program for next school year's Sophomore Awareness Program.

- A Pittsfield resident who attended the event asked for information about purchasing the tape. He planned to buy and share the tape with the 7000 employees at his work place -- Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine.
- Sharon Nichols, director of the Holocaust Human Rights Center of Maine, offered a scholarship for a young person from the area to attend a Leadership Training Institute sponsored by her organization.
- During the "open microphone session," a young man spoke about the presence of offensive, hate-related graffiti on the walls of a nearby quarry. After the event, several other participants offered to assist the young man in painting over the graffiti at the quarry.

We have many people to thank for making this event the success that it was. Our thanks to Harbor Hill for the elegant meal! And a heartfelt thank you to the committee members who worked to plan the program, distribute notices, set-up, serve meals, facilitate the event, and clean up after the event. You did a GREAT Job!!!

Common Circle to Sponsor Photo Exhibit in September

Plans are steadily progressing to bring the nationally recognized photo/text exhibit entitled "Love Makes A Family" to our area in September. This is the second major project that our group is undertaking with financial support from the Maine Community Foundation and the Maine Equity Fund. The exhibit which is meant to break through the invisibility of gay and lesbian family systems will be at the Spring Street Gallery in Belfast between September 5-13. There will be an opening night reception from 5:00 to 7:00 P.M. at the Spring Street Gallery and a panel discussion consisting of diverse families, some of whom will not be gay or lesbian, will take place starting at 7:15 P.M. at the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library. Your help is needed! Can you volunteer to staff the exhibit? Hours during the week and weekend are Noon to 8:00 P.M., except Saturday Sept. 13th, which will be from Noon to 4:00 P.M.. If so please contact Deb Hockensmith at 338-1704. If you have time to assist with mailings, outreach and publicity please call Mitzi at 338-5889.

Efforts to Repeal Civil Rights Based on Sexual Orientation

Word has it that as I write this the Christian Civic League and their allies are gathering signatures to force a Referendum vote this November that would repeal L.D. 1116 and the hard won victory this spring that has included sexual orientation in the categories of people protected by the Maine Human Rights Act. This time around we are promised a more hurtful campaign as the group leading this campaign will be focusing more on the perceived immorality of same-gender sexual relationships.

How will we respond locally to this effort to remove these long sought for rights before we have even had the opportunity to reap the benefits? Can we ask our local newspapers to join the Portland Press Herald and others in urging people not to sign this petition?

Community Calendar

- July 19 - 20 Full Circle Fair
Union Fairgrounds. Call 469-6600 for information.
- July 13 - 18
Aug. 3 - 8 Seminars on Teaching the Holocaust
Sponsored by Holocaust Human Rights Center. Call 993-2620
- July 22 Workshop by the National Coalition Building Institute
Building Community and Welcoming Diversity, Westbrook College/Ludke Auditorium,
8:30 to 4:00 P.M. \$65 but \$35 for low income. Call Howard - 773-1209 or Diane 882-8022
- July 27 Gay Lesbian Straight Teachers Network (GLSTN)
Potluck Picnic 5:30 to 7:30 P.M. at Peter Rees' in Trenton Call 667-2358 for info.
- Aug. 1 - 4 7th Annual Diversity Leadership Institute
Sponsored by Holocaust Human Rights Center. Call 993-2620
- Aug. 16 - 18 Gay Times Festival in Bar Harbor
Starts Sat. at 1:30 if not registering, 10 A.M. other 2 days. Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon, Diane Elze, Romanovsky & Phillips, Coffeehouse & much more. Costs before 8/1 (add \$20 late fee). Whole weekend - dorm \$210, tent - \$160, Sat. lunch & Sun. dorm - \$140, tent - \$115. Sun. & Mon. dorm - \$130, tent \$105, Meals /events/no housing - \$140,. Events only for 3 days - \$75, Sat. - \$35, Sun. - \$40, Mon. - \$15. Call 244-4062 or 667-7857
- Aug. 15 - 17 GLBTQ Youth Summit
Sponsored by Outright Portland for youth 22 and under. Univ. of ME. - Farmington Workshops, dance, etc. To register call 828-6560 or 1-888-567-7600 Ask 4 Tom or Jeff
- Aug. 24 - 29 Intensive Retreat for Men Who Love Men
Duxbury, Mass. Creating a Community of healing, Wholeness and Transformation. FMI email bt@stasio.com or call 617-247-3964
- Aug. 26 Women's Equality Day
Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine, 128 Main St., Bangor 7 P.M. An original play, Susan B. Anthony Meets Greater Bangor NOW. All welcome. Call 989-3306
- Sept 5 - 13 Love Makes A Family - Photo Exhibit and Text - Belfast
Spring Street Gallery from 9/5 - 12 Noon to 8 P.M. & Sat. 9/13 from Noon to 4 P.M.
9/5 - Reception 5 to 7 P.M. at gallery and Panel from 7:15 to 9 P.M. at Abbott Rm.. of Belfast Free Library. Call Mitzi to get involved. 338-5889.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

"The Common Circle for Human Rights is a group of individuals whose mission is to educate ourselves and the larger community on issues of equal rights and social justice. We will hold social, political and cultural gatherings in order to 1) facilitate respectful discussion and exchange of ideas, 2) create a more informed citizenry, and 3) increase the bonds of friendship and understanding among diverse people."