

# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

July/August 2006

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

This issue of *The Torch* is all about the human resources available to you through the Civil Rights Team Project. Read about the upcoming regional trainings scheduled for this fall, the free in-service training required of all schools that participate in the CRTP, and the people who keep the CRTP moving forward on a daily basis.



### Regional Fall Trainings News

This year we will again be doing regional trainings around the state for advisors and team members. The schedule is already set for the fall trainings in order to allow you as much advance time as possible to make the necessary arrangements for you and your team members. Once again, we ask you to invite your principal to these trainings. Attendance helps them to learn what the teams are trying to do. Principals who attended last year spoke highly of the experience.

The faculty training will include step by step instruction on how to develop your own interactive theater pieces with your team, an overview of a sexual harassment workshop for middle and high schools, and a session on how to keep your team motivated throughout the school year. The theater development and sexual harassment workshops will both be available to schools around the state on a limited first come-first serve basis after the team training sessions conclude in November.

We are very pleased that Pat Ryan, Executive Director of the Maine Human Rights Commission (MHRC) and John Gause, legal counsel for the MHRC, have agreed to be our guest speakers at this year's faculty trainings. Pat will be speaking at the trainings in Saco, Farmington and Augusta and John will be speaking at the Orono training.

The team training program is still being developed, but it is shaping up to be an interesting and informative day for everyone. This year, two of our MS/HS team workshops will be developed by the extremely capable and talented Kelley McDaniel, longtime advisor to the King Middle School team in Portland. Kelley has designed and implemented some top notch trainings for her teams over the years and we are pleased that she accepted our offer to share her skills to benefit teams around the state. We are equally fortunate to be having Windham's Manchester Elementary School advisor Barb Maurais develop a training session for the elementary school teams. Barb consistently does amazing things with her teams and has developed a terrific website for elementary age students.

A full description of the team training program will be included in the September issue of *The Torch*.

Registration packets for the faculty and team trainings will be sent out in mid-August. As always, we encourage early registration.

### **Faculty Advisor Trainings**

**September 25 (Monday): Holiday Inn Express, Saco**

**September 27 (Wednesday): Stodder Hall, UMO, Orono**

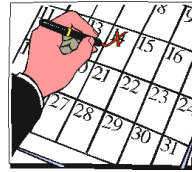
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**September 29 (Friday): Olsen Student Center, UMF, Farmington**  
**October 3 (Tuesday): The Calumet Club, Augusta**



### **Mark Your Calendar for the 2007 Statewide Conference!**

#### **Student/Team Trainings**

**October 17 (Tuesday): Brewer Auditorium, Brewer (ES, MS and HS)**  
**October 20 (Friday): Brewer Auditorium (MS and HS)**  
**October 27 (Friday): UMF, Olsen Student Center (MS and HS)**  
**October 31 (Tuesday): Howard's Sport Center, Saco (ES, MS and HS)**  
**TBA: Keddy's Presque Isle Inn and Convention Center**  
**November 6 (Monday): Augusta Civic Center, Augusta (ES, MS and HS)**  
**November 7 (Tuesday): Augusta Civic Center (MS and HS)**

YOUR TRAINING PACKET, WHICH WILL BE MAILED OUT ON AUGUST 18<sup>TH</sup>, WILL INCLUDE THE SPECIFIC DATE AND LOCATION OF YOUR TEAM'S TRAINING. THE VAST MAJORITY OF SCHOOLS WILL BE ATTENDING THE SAME TRAINING LOCATION AS LAST YEAR, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE NEW SACO LOCATION FOR THE YORK COUNTY AND GREATER PORTLAND AREAS SCHOOLS.

Thanks to the efforts of the incomparable Debi Gray, the Augusta Civic Center has been reserved for **Monday, May 7** for the 2007 CRTP Statewide Conference. We are announcing this date ten months in advance of the date in order to give you as much time as possible to save the date, reserve the bus, and make arrangements for substitutes. We realize that this event could not take place on the scale that it does without a lot of advance planning on your part, as well as ours. *[ed. note: We had hoped to get a date other than on a Monday so that teams who travel and stay overnight could take full advantage of a trip to the Capitol City. However, due to the fact that the Civic Center is in extremely high demand and because we require so many of its rooms, we were not able to get a date on any other day of the week.]*



**Did you know...** that your school entered into a contract with the Attorney General's Office when it joined the Civil Rights Team Project? It's true. Every school in the CRTP entered into a contract when it became a part of the Project. A provision of

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the contract requires each school that joins the Project to have a civil rights training for its entire faculty and staff.

In order to assist schools in complying with this contractual provision, the CRTP provides a comprehensive, two and a half hour training at no cost to participating schools. The trainings are conducted by an assistant attorney general, usually Sue Sparaco, Thom Harnett or another AAG with experience in civil rights issues, and a CRTP regional coordinator.

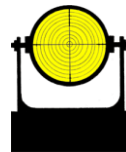
The purpose of the training is to educate faculty and staff on the Maine Civil Rights Act, how it applies in a school setting, and to share the experiences of schools around the state that have experienced civil rights violations within their school community.

This training is also intended to help faculty and staff understand the mission of the CRTP and of the team that exists in their school. By better understanding these issues, faculty and staff can better support their school's team. Our most successful teams are those that are embraced by their faculty and staff. Conversely, a team can be the most dedicated, hard-working team in the Project, but if it is not supported by the adults in its school community, the team will have great difficulty attaining any degree of success.

We cannot expect students to make positive changes in their school climate if faculty and staff a) do not fully understand what it is the students are trying to accomplish and b) undermine the team's efforts by failing to step up and address demeaning and derogatory language and conduct that the team members are working to eliminate from their schools.

It has been our experience in conducting hundreds of school trainings around the state, that this training helps everyone understand issues of diversity that affect the children (and adults) in our schools. It is a very practical, straightforward training that focuses on civil rights cases that had their genesis in Maine schools. We do not go beyond the borders of the state for information used in our trainings because we have a plethora of it available from our own first hand experiences. It is a common misbelief that because Maine is the whitest state in the nation it does not experience civil rights violations. Unfortunately, our experiences have proved that is not the case. For that reason, this training is designed to provide teachers, administrators and staff members with the tools to identify situations with the potential to lead to civil rights violations and with strategies for dealing with those situations before they escalate to violations of the law.

If your school has not yet scheduled this mandatory in-service training, it should do so soon. If it has been a number of years since your team had a school-wide training and there has been turn over in your faculty and staff, the CRTP will come to your school upon request and provide another free in-service training. To schedule a training for your school faculty and staff, please call Debi Gray at 626-8856 or email her at [Debi.Gray@maine.gov](mailto:Debi.Gray@maine.gov).



**Spotlight on the  
CRTP Staff and Regional  
Coordinators**

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The summer issue of the newsletter seems like a good opportunity to tell you a little more about the people who actually keep the CRTP moving on a day to day basis. For those of you who don't already know, the CRTP's full time staff members are Director **Thom Harnett**, Project Administrator **Debi Gray** and Detective **Margie Berkovich**. In addition, seven part-time Regional Coordinators around the state provide support services to the civil rights teams in their respective regions throughout the calendar year. Read on to find out who we all are, what our backgrounds and areas of interest are, and what we can do for you and your team.

### Thom Harnett

As most you who have been with the Project for at least a year are well aware, the director of the Project is the seemingly tireless Thom Harnett. Thom is officially the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Education and Enforcement in the Maine Office of the Attorney General. In addition to directing the CRTP with more than 220 schools located around the state, Thom also directs the Office's enforcement of the Maine Civil Rights Act.

Thom previously worked as an Assistant Attorney General in the Natural Resources Division and the Civil Rights Unit of the Maine Department of the Attorney General from 1989 to 2000. He directed the civil rights enforcement effort of the Attorney General's Office and the Civil Rights Team Project from 1999 to 2000 and returned to direct the Office's civil rights initiatives in September 2001.

As an Assistant Attorney General, Thom has prosecuted numerous civil rights and

currently conducts student and faculty trainings statewide. He has spoken about the Attorney General's Civil Rights Team Project at regional conferences, guidance counselor gatherings, legal education seminars, statewide events and at national conferences sponsored by the United States Department of Justice and the Education Law & Policy Consortium, Inc.

Thom currently serves as a community advisor for the Civil Rights Team at his son's elementary school. Thom is also the current president of the Maine Bar Foundation which is responsible for funding entities that provide legal services to low income and other vulnerable populations throughout the State of Maine and for promoting the provision of *pro bono* legal services to persons not otherwise able to secure those services.

Thom was born in the Bronx and is a graduate of Fordham University and New York University School of Law. Prior to practicing law in Maine, he worked as a legal services attorney for migrant farm workers in New York State from 1980 to 1989.

### Debi Gray

Debi Gray graduated from the University of Maine at Augusta in 1981 with a Business Major. Debi is the Civil Rights Team Project Administrator and simply put, is the go-to person in the CRTP. Debi has worked in the Attorney General's Office since 1998. She single handedly organizes every faculty and team training from reserving the locations to negotiating prices to handling every aspect of the registration process to arrangements for food to typing, printing and distributing name tags, certificates, and agendas to fielding the

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million and one phone calls and email messages that precede the advent of “fall trainings.”

Debi has the organizational skills of a first rate event planner and it is because of her efficiency, her unbelievable memory, her good nature and her coolness under pressure that we are able to execute large events throughout the fall and to stay securely on track the remainder of the year. *[Ed. note: Debi did not do the event planning for the 2006 Statewide Conference. Any glitches you may have experienced were not the result of any lapses on Debi's part.]* As if those skills were not enough, Debi also assists Det. Margie Berkovich with the filming and editing of student films that are created through the CRTP Video Project. Debi has a hand in just about every single aspect of the CRTP and we all feel incredibly fortunate to have the benefit of her talents on a daily basis.

### Detective Margie Berkovich

Margie Berkovich is the investigator within the Attorney General's Office assigned to investigate potential civil rights violations on a statewide basis. Margie has been a sworn law enforcement officer at the Department of the Attorney General for more than twenty years and has been investigating civil rights cases since the Maine Civil Rights Act was passed in 1992.

Margie is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College and had completed the majority of a Master's degree in American History at UMass Amherst before deciding to go to law school. Margie graduated from Franklin Pierce Law Center and has used her degree since that time to follow a career in law enforcement.

Prior to working on civil rights matters, Margie's investigative responsibilities included consumer fraud, financial crimes, and environmental crimes. Margie has also developed, implemented, and coordinated training programs for Maine's law enforcement community in the areas of civil rights enforcement, criminal law, laws of evidence, civil liability, laws of arrest, constitutional law, criminal investigation, and report writing.

Her current responsibilities focus on civil rights enforcement, including investigation, managing the Civil Rights Officer Program, coordinating civil rights investigations with municipal, county, and state law enforcement agencies, and civil rights training for Maine's law enforcement community.

Margie, along with Debi Gray, is the driving force behind the CRTP Video Project, which encourages civil rights teams to create skits, public interest announcements, and other types of video friendly scripts. Margie and Debi have filmed students around the state and then spent countless hours editing films that are then used by schools and at trainings around the state. Margie also wrote the scripts for the teaching videos on the Maine Civil Rights Law that have been shown countless times at CRTP trainings and by teams around the state. She and Debi also filmed and edited those films.

Margie is always available to answer questions about potential civil rights violations in your school and is a valuable resource to schools that are struggling with how to address particular situations.

Margie can be contacted at [Margie.Berkovich@maine.gov](mailto:Margie.Berkovich@maine.gov).



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### THE REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Every school that participates in the CRTP is assigned to a regional coordinator. There are seven regional coordinators located around the state who work with the CRTP on a part time basis.

The role of the regional coordinator is to provide support to the teams in their region and to act as a resource to faculty and community advisors and to team members. Support is available in the form of trainings for groups within your school, recommendations on speakers, programs, films and other civil rights related resources. Regional coordinators can also provide support for teams who need an outside advocate in dealing with controversial issues within their school community. It is also the job of the regional coordinators to make sure that their teams have a faculty advisor and a place and time to meet during the school week.

Your regional coordinator has access to a wealth of information to assist you and your team members throughout the school year. Please do not hesitate to call upon your regional coordinator for help in determining how to address certain issues within your school, to assist in developing additional trainings for your team and other members of your school community, and to provide whatever support is possible in assisting you and your team with your projects and programs throughout the year. What your regional coordinator is NOT is the civil rights team police. It is not the RC's role to judge your program or to criticize in any way what you are or are not doing with your team. So please do not hesitate to accept your RC's invitation to you or a team meeting. We do this work because we enjoy

supporting you and your team and we all look forward to visiting our teams over the year.

### Darylen Cote: Aroostook County

Darylen Cote is one of the original Regional Coordinators who began with the CRTP at its inception in 1996. She originally served as the RC for Aroostook County and from 2002-2004 Darylen also served as the RC for Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties. She is currently serving as the RC for Aroostook County.

Darylen began her career as a teacher in the Limestone schools and then had a long career in health, family life and sexuality education with Maine Family Planning. Darylen made another career change in 2004 and took on the directorship of the TRiO Upward Bound program at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, where she also occasionally teaches as an adjunct faculty member. In addition, she has been a columnist on leadership issues for PTO Today magazine.

Darylen is a licensed social worker, and is also certified as a teacher, principal and curriculum coordinator. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of Maine, and she earned her Master's Degree in 2001 from the University of Southern Maine.

Social justice is Darylen's passion and she has contributed in many ways to HIV/ AIDS awareness, gender equity, and GLBTQ issues awareness. Darylen's wealth of experience in the area of gender issues in particular has made her an invaluable member of the CRTP over the years. Darylen was also a tremendous force behind the creation of the CRTP Tool Box and was

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the source of many of the resources contained in the Tool Boxes.

Darylen and her husband Hap have been married for 35 years and are the parents of two adult children. She can be contacted at [acote3@maine.rr.com](mailto:acote3@maine.rr.com).

### **Amy Homans: Southern and Western Cumberland County**

Amy Homans joined the CRTP in the fall of 2003 and is the regional coordinator for Southern and Western Cumberland County.

Amy is a graduate of Bowdoin College and Northeastern University School of Law. She began her legal career as a law clerk to the Maine Superior Court and then worked at the Attorney General's Office from 1986-1993 and from 1994-1999 as an assistant attorney general in the Consumer and Antitrust Division where she prosecuted civil and criminal fraud cases.

Amy and Thom Harnett were among the five assistant attorneys general who joined the Attorney General's all volunteer Civil Rights Unit when it was first formed in 1992, shortly after the passage of the Maine Civil Rights Act. In 2003, after having prosecuting hate crimes around the state, many of which involved young victims and defendants, Amy was excited over the prospect of working on civil rights issues in Maine from a pro-active perspective as a member of the CRTP.

In addition to her work with the CRTP, Amy has a private law practice specializing in employment law. Much of Amy's practice involves investigating allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Amy was born and raised in Bangor and currently lives in Portland with her family. She can be contacted at [amy@maine.rr.com](mailto:amy@maine.rr.com).

### **Sherri Mitchell: Penobscot County**

Sherri Mitchell joined the CRTP in 2004 and is the regional coordinator for Penobscot County.

Sherri is a member of the Penobscot Nation and has worked on the issue of indigenous rights from Alaska to Guatemala. She is widely known as a staunch advocate for native women and children. She also has a strong interest in the role that internal oppression plays within communities of oppressed people.

Sherri is an alumni member of the American Indian Ambassador Program, a program developer for the American Indian Institute's Healing the Future project, and a longtime member of the Traditional Circle of Indigenous Elders and youth.

In addition to being a philosopher and a published poet, Sherri is the founder of The Inner Walk Institute, an organization dedicated to holistic education. She is currently working on The Warrior Project, a video documentary project featuring individuals who are modern day "warriors" and role models for native youth around the country.

Sherri is a graduate of the University of Maine and is currently working to complete a Master's degree program at UMO. Sherri is the mother of two children and lives with her family in northern Penobscot County. Sherri can be contacted at [slmitchell@gwi.net](mailto:slmitchell@gwi.net).

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### **Mary Beth Paquette: Central Maine and Northern Cumberland County**

Mary Beth Paquette joined the CRTP in 2004 and is the Regional Coordinator for the Lewiston and Augusta area schools as well as for parts of central Maine and northern Cumberland County.

Mary Beth has a BS degree in Child and Family Community Services and a BA in Women's Studies. Her past work experience includes work in the fields of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, disability awareness and advocacy, and non-traditional career training and placement. Her current work outside of the Civil Rights Team Project is in mediation, facilitation and training.

Mary Beth's expertise lies in the human rights law with an emphasis on sexual harassment and other employment issues, conflict resolution, communication skills, team building, and cultural diversity.

Mary Beth lives in Monmouth with her husband and two daughters who are on their school's Civil Rights Team. Her contact information is: mbp246@adelphia.net.

### **Peter Rees: Hancock and Washington Counties**

Peter is the regional coordinator for all of Hancock and Washington County.

Peter was born in Massachusetts, but he spent summers in Maine where his grandfather was a fisherman and his grandmother an amazing all-purpose woman. Peter claims he always felt like a Maine boy who happened to spend his school months in Massachusetts.

Peter was the first member of his family to

graduate from college and did so in 1955 graduated with a BA in English Literature (after switching from physics). He joined the NAACP at that time and has been an activist for peace and justice issues ever since.

Peter attended graduate school at Harvard, first in anthropology (MA) and then in counseling psychology (Ed.D.). He married during that time and then went to a job in Nigeria where for three years where he was a guidance counselor in a high school that was a demonstration of modern education. He then returned to the US to teach psychology at Harvard Graduate School of Education and from there went on to be the director of the Putney School in Vermont.

Peter came to Maine in 1975 and was the clinical director of Hancock County Community Mental Health Center until he took a job as clinical director of a residential treatment program for adolescents with behavioral problems.

Since 1982, Peter has had a private psychology practice with considerable school consulting and contracts with the probation department. He has also done a lot of work evaluating and treating sex offenders, but is currently retired from that aspect of his practice. Peter was actively involved in each of the referenda for equal rights for LGBT people in Maine since 1995 and he initiated the Downeast chapter of GLSEN in 1997 and currently serves as its secretary. Peter was designated as the "GLSEN Ally of the Year" in 2002.

Peter can offer ways to resolve conflict, knowledge about the human rights and civil rights laws, knowledge about what basic needs we all share as humans, and methods to calm ourselves and think things through



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before reacting - as well as about community resources relating to peace, justice and the environment.

Peter has been married for 45 years and has two children and four grandchildren. He can be contacted at [rees909@midmaine.com](mailto:rees909@midmaine.com).

### **Chris Wright: Northern Kennebec, Somerset, Waldo and Knox Counties**

Chris Wright joined the CRTP in 2004 and is the Regional Coordinator for participating schools in Central Maine and the Central Coastal region.

After 20 years in the residential building trades, Chris returned to school in 1992, earning degrees in Psychology and Creative Writing as well as credentials in Social Work and Counseling.

His focus in the last fifteen years has shifted towards working with people. Chris has worked with folks as a mobile Crisis Worker; with families whose children are in protective custody of the state; and as a Community Mediator.

Woven into all of Chris' work is his perspective about the damaging effects of our society's "myths of masculinity": those ideas about how boys and men are supposed to act if they want to be seen as acceptably male. Through lecture and theatrical presentations at schools, educational conferences, churches, and jails, Chris has helped boys and men remember that it is healthy and natural to feel and express a full range of emotions. He points out that chronic pretending about how you feel, never asking for help, and feeling embarrassed to show much tenderness are all learned attitudes and only diminish the lives of all of us.

Chris lives with his wife, Jane, a reading specialist, in a home he built 20 years ago in rural Solon. Chris has two grown children whom he is very thankful still live in Maine. He can be contacted at [chriswright@tds.net](mailto:chriswright@tds.net).

*The York County regional coordinator position, formerly held by Colleen Rost-Banik, is currently vacant.*



### **UPCOMING EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DATES**

**August 7-11: The Summer Institute on Wabanaki Studies; UMO.** This summer marks the third Summer Institute, focusing on preparing educators to teach all Maine students (K-12) about the Wabanaki people. This annual event serves to support educators in the implementation of Public Law 2001, Chapter 403 (known as LD 291.) As of September 2004, all Maine schools were mandated to include education about the Wabanaki people in their curriculum. For registration information, contact [Julie.nowell@umit.maine.edu](mailto:Julie.nowell@umit.maine.edu) or call 581-4450.

*This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a statewide program under the auspices of the Maine Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of high school, middle school and elementary school students and to reduce the incidence of bias-motivated harassment and violence in schools.*

**G. Steven Rowe --- Attorney General**  
**Thomas A. Harnett—Director, Civil Rights Education & Enforcement Unit**  
**Debi Gray, Civil Rights Project Administrator**