

Common Circle for Human Rights

c/o M. Lichtman, P.O. Box 793 Belfast, Maine 04915 • 338-5889 • Vol. 4, #5 • March/April 1999

Exciting start for statewide equal rights initiative

We are sending this newsletter out to an expanded mailing list with the intention of updating and energizing people. We hope you will want to get involved in a host of important activities and events. While we have been quiet on the local Common Circle front over the past few months, activity on the Statewide level has been buzzing. Since last summer a new organization, the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, has been forming. This group's main goals are:

- to pass and defend an amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act prohibiting discrimination based upon sexual orientation;

- to educate the public at a grassroots level, creating increased safety for and understanding of the issues and needs of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered (LGBT) community.

During some thoughtful and lengthy discussions that took place at these monthly meetings, a large majority of those attending decided that this coalition would support the introduction of an equal-rights bill, which will likely be debated in next year's legislative session. If passed, it will almost certainly include a requirement that a referendum take place in November 2000; Gov. King has stated clearly that he will not sign into law any equal rights bill that does not go out to public vote. There is much that needs to be done before then.

We need to organize support, on all levels throughout the state, to ensure that people understand the common issues and needs of LGBT people, the very real need for passage of a non-discrimination bill and how continuing discrimination and silencing of LGBT issues affects and diminishes us all.

The Maine Coalition for Equal Rights (MCER) plan-

ning committee has been meeting to plan the monthly meetings, and has guided the group's initial formative process. Our own Mitzi is on this committee, and JaneA Kelley is active in Internal Communications. These and all committees are open to anyone who wants to participate.

The other committees and contact people are as follows:

Education: Dave Garrity (heydave@maine.rr.com or 774-5412);

Grassroots Organizing: Bill Hammond (abnaki@revnetx.net);

Religious Education: Mitzi (mitzjoy@mint.net);

Structure: Sive Neilan (siveneilan@e-mail.com or 774-4219);

Conflict Resolution: Janice Campbell (jaye39@cybertours.com or 625-3689);

Internal Communications: Jim Martin (jim@maineguide.com or 942-7681 — cyberspace meetings Monday evenings).

There are many ways you can help in the campaign for equal rights; we particularly want and need our straight allies to get involved. Please plan to attend the next statewide meeting set for Saturday, March 27, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Cony High School in Augusta. Come early and attend the Equality Begins at Home campaign rally from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., also at Cony High.

The April statewide meeting of MCER will take place Saturday, April 17, 1 to 4:15 p.m. at the University of Maine in Orono. This meeting is being coordinated with the Wilde-Stein Alliance for Sexual Diversity 25th anniversary banquet, which will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Wells Conference Center.

CCHR to focus on campaign, speakout, book distribution

At a recent planning meeting we decided to forego our monthly discussions in order to spend our time preparing a solid base for work on the referendum campaign. Come to our Campaign Kickoff Common Circle meeting on Tuesday May 18, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church Parish House (corner Court & Elm St., Belfast).

We are seeking people in Waldo County who are interested in acting as contact people or get out the vote organizers for their town, group of friends, or businesses. We need committed people or groups in each town to do outreach, update voter lists, and follow up with voters. This effort, combined with a strong education campaign from MCER, will bring about more positive outcome for this referendum.

We want to form coalitions with other human rights-oriented groups in the area. If we divide the campaign efforts between CCHR and other groups, it will help all of us avoid burnout and help us build a shared agenda to work together on. If you know anyone who would like to help us achieve legal equality or work together, please attend our meeting or contact Mitzi.

We would also like to speak to religious, business or social organizations in order to educate people on issues of sexual diversity. We have applied for a grant to help us with upgrading our internal communications and data entry skills so that we will be better prepared for the upcoming campaign.

We plan to work with Coastal AIDS Network in bringing a Speakout training to our area. If you want to take this day-long training, contact Marcy (589-4177 or change@midcoast.com). We also hope to obtain and distribute books on issues of sexual diversity and make these available to area school librarians. We are also considering forming a Political Action Committee so we can do this work and the necessary fund-raising on our own.

We have been asked to share our mailing list with the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, and have decided not to do this without your permission. If you do *not* want your name shared with MCER, please contact Marcy as soon as possible. If we do not hear from you by April 20, we will assume we have your permission to share your name.

Maine LGBT Symposium XXV to take place in Presque Isle

Organizers seek suggestions for workshop topics, discussion leaders

The Maine Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans Symposium XXV will take place on Memorial Day Weekend, May 28-31, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle.

The keynote speaker at the event will be Diane Elze, a longtime activist who was involved with the early Symposium at Orono and was instrumental in the creation of the OUTRIGHT youth support group. A Canadian man will be the second keynote speaker; arrangements are pending.

A film presentation, *Tangible Fathers*, with filmmaker Bob Poirier of Portland, is another highlight of the event. On Saturday night, there will be a dance. It's party night, and a special DJ has been arranged for the occasion.

As of Feb. 8, Northern Lambda Nord, the Symposium's hosts, have confirmed discussion leaders for the following workshops:

- Monogamy vs. assorted non-monogamies;
- Rural Organizing, with the Maine Rural Network;
- Transgendered issues;
- Institutionalized homophobia/heterosexism; and
- A discussion of the book *Two Flutes Playing*, by Andrew Ramer.

The Symposium 25 organizing committee is requesting suggestions for more workshop topics, as well as facilitators to lead them. These workshops will be small group discussions with a presenter/discussion facilitator, offered throughout the Symposium weekend. Topics may range from legal or health issues, to how to get on-line, to being out on the job. The "traditional" Symposium workshops — which include "coming out" and "long-term relationships" — will also be offered. Any and all ideas are welcome; send your suggestions to symposium@mfx.net.

This year's Symposium will be the 25th time that Maine's queer community has gathered to meet, discuss, learn, argue, dance, and play, and have a fun, empower-

ing, energizing and exciting and fabulous weekend. Symposium is for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered and our allies to gather for a long Spring weekend, this year in "The Crown of Maine."

The cost for the entire weekend is \$140 per person, which includes 6 meals, 3 nights lodging (double occupancy in the dorms — all linen provided), and admission to all Symposium events. You can register for the entire weekend or for just part of the weekend at reduced rates. A limited number of scholarships will be available. To be on the mailing list, send a note to symposium@mfx.net with your full postal mailing address.

Symposium 25 is hosted by the women and men of Northern Lambda Nord. This is the fifth time that NLN has sponsored Symposium. For more information, e-mail symposium@mfx.net, or write Symposium, POB 990, Caribou ME 04736.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

If you do *not* want your address given to the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, contact Marcy (589-4177 or change@midcoast.com).

Legislative Update

There have been six civil rights bills (LR 41, LR 204, LR1156, LR 2285, LR 2920, LR 592) introduced this session, by both parties and in both houses. The sponsors, including our own Sen. Susan Longley, are currently in the process of seeing if they can agree on just one version of the bill. There have also been several significant HIV-related bills introduced, some of which appear to have significant negative consequences. Some of these bills will be heard in the judiciary committee on Wednesday, March 24, at 1:30 p.m.

To check on the status of an individual bill, call 287-1692 or check www.state.me.us/legis.

Calendar of Events

Many important, worthwhile events are happening in the next few months. Here are some dates for you to mark down on your calendar.

Wednesday, March 24:

"An Exposition Luncheon For LGBT Organizations and Legislators," 10 a.m.-2 p.m., in the Moose Room of the State House of Augusta, to show legislators just how broad and strong Maine's LGBT community is. Sponsored by MLGPA. Our Common Circle banner and informational sheet will be on display, along with information from over 40 organizations. David will be attending on our behalf. Thanks, David!

Saturday March 27

"Equality Begins At Home" rally, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Cony High School, Augusta. Come and show your support for Maine's LGBT community and for equal rights.

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights statewide meeting, 1-3 p.m., Cony High School, Augusta.

"Teach Out, Listen Up, Speak Out, Take Action" workshop, 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Tufts University Aidekman Arts Center, Boston. Sponsored by GLSEN (Gay/Lesbian/Straight Education Network) of Boston.

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Calendar *continued from previous page***Sunday, March 28**

Film: *Not In Our Town*, followed by a workshop on how to form a local social justice group, 10:30 a.m. Universalist Unitarian Church, 84 Silver Street, Waterville. Sponsored by Maine Rural Network.

Sunday, April 11

Reclaiming Our Faith — A Maine Speakout Project effort, 1 to 5 p.m., Camden Congregational Church. Cost is only \$5 and includes dinner. There will be presentations and small group discussions. These are geared to people of faith who are looking at ways to be more inclusive and who understand that Christianity is about love and acceptance. Contact Lucie at lbak@mint.net or 236-4734

GLSEN DownEast Chapter meeting, noon to 2 p.m., Downeast AIDS Network office, Ellsworth.

Saturday, April 17

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights statewide meeting, 1 to 4:15 p.m., University of Maine, Orono. This meeting is being coordinated with the Wilde-Stein Alliance for Sexual Diversity 25th anniversary banquet, which will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Wells Conference Center.

Saturday, April 23

Jerry Falwell — yes, you heard right, Jerry Falwell — will be speaking in Bangor from 10 a.m. to noon. Wouldn't it be nice for him to be greeted by a welcoming delegation of Teletubbies or Tinky Winkies before he begins his speech? For more info or to join the fun, contact Mitzi (338-5889 or mitzijoy@mint.net).

Sunday, April 24

HOPE (Help Organize Peace Earthwide) Festival Earthday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Brewer Auditorium, State and Wilson St., Brewer. This event

includes live music, children's events, a fun run, environmental art, great food and 60 organizations will be represented. Author Nichols Fox will be the guest speaker.

Saturday, May 8

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights campaign planning day, Colby College, Waterville. Help is needed in planning this event. For more information, contact Mitzi (338-5889, mitzijoy@mint.net), and she can put you in touch with MCER.

Saturday, May 15

"Last Gay Prom Of The Millennium," 8-11 p.m., Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland. This event is for people age 26 and under, and for those who support youth age safe boundaries. Call 773-1229 for more information.

Tuesday, May 18

Common Circle for Human Rights Campaign Kickoff and meeting, 6:30-9 p.m., St. Margaret's Episcopal Church Parish House (corner Court & Elm St., Belfast). Come learn what's been going on with the November 2000 equal rights referendum campaign, and find out what you can do to help. Brown bag dinner, 6:30 to 7 p.m.; meeting, 7 to 9 p.m.

Friday-Sunday, May 28-31

The Maine Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans Symposium XXV, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Sponsored by Northern Lambda Nord. For more information, e-mail symposium@mfx.net, or write Symposium, POB 990, Caribou ME 04736.

June

Southern Maine Pride. Contact PrideMaine@aol.com, call 774-7800, or write 142 High St. Suite 508 Portland.

Thanks for your efforts! We couldn't do it without you.

Lots of gratitude to Mitzi and Marcye for the hours they spent — on a Sunday, no less! — preparing a grant proposal to help us get funds to update our communications structure and create a web site for the Common Circle for Human Rights.

Thanks again to Marcye and Mitzi for compiling the information for the newsletter, to JaneA for editing and layout, to Marcye for maintaining and updating the

Common Circle mailing list, to Lynn and Marcye for their photocopying, stamping, labeling and mailing of this newsletter, and to David for attending the March 24 Exposition Luncheon on our behalf.

And, of course, thanks to all the people who, over the last 20-plus years, have been working toward true justice and equal rights for all citizens, no matter what their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

