

MLGPA News

Advocacy for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities since 1984

PO Box 1951, Portland, ME 04104 • 207-761-3732 • fax 207-761-8484 • mlgpa@rcn.com • www.mlgpa.org



SPRING 2003

**Suzanne
Westenhoefer
comedy show in
Belfast to
benefit MLGPA
Foundation!**

See page 6

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MLGPA Foundation 19th Annual Awards Banquet

Saturday, March 22, 2003

6:00 - 9:00 pm

**Holiday Inn By the Bay
Portland**

Please join us in honoring:

LARRY CONNOLLY AWARD
Representative Michael Saxl

GREAT PIONEER AWARD
Rev. Susan Gilpin

CAMERON DUNCAN AWARD
**Client Services Committee of the
Eastern Maine AIDS Network**

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS
**Ralph Cusack & Butch Fenton
Penny Rich
Doug Kimmel
Michelle Noyes**

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS AWARD
Maine Bureau of Health

YOUTH IN LEADERSHIP AWARD
Scarborough Middle School

For more information or to reserve tickets, go to our website:

WWW.MLGPA.ORG
or 207-761-3732 or mlgpa@rcn.com

MLGPA

Advocacy for the Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, and Transgender
Communities since 1984

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MLGPA Foundation Receives \$7,500 Grant for Technology

MLGPA Foundation received \$7,500 from the Unity Foundation as part of Unity's pilot project on capacity building. Last summer all MLGPA Board members and staff completed a lengthy on-line survey designed to assess an organization's capacity in the areas of leadership (mission, board, executive staff), advancement (fundraising, marketing, communications), treasury (planning & budgeting, financial management, financial reporting), and operations (human resource management, infrastructure, program management).

Seventy four organizations from across New England participated in the survey, out of which 60 applied for funding. Of those 60, fifteen organizations, including MLGPA Foundation, were awarded funding. These fifteen organizations will be part of a year-long pilot program testing a diagnostic tool to measure non-profit capacity.

MLGPA Foundation will use its funding from the Unity Foundation to address our infrastructure. Specifically, the grant will allow us to purchase a new database, new computer, the resources to convert all old data to the new program, and software.

The Unity Foundation was established just two years ago with its national headquarters in Unity, Maine. It was founded by Bert and Coral Clifford, who decades ago were small Maine dairy farmers, but who invested wisely and made smart business decisions. Today Unity Foundation has a \$5 million endowment with expectations of more growth. We are honored to have such a foundation here in the state of Maine. •



MLGPA President Maggie Allen (far left) and Executive Director Betsy Smith (far right) pose with staff from the Unity Foundation.

Second from left is Unity Foundation President Dott Freeman and Administrative Assistant Lori Roming.

MLGPA Receives \$3,000 Grant from HRC

MLGPA received a \$3,000 grant from the Human Rights Campaign for our legislative work in 2003. This year, MLGPA has submitted a bill to provide inheritance rights to surviving domestic partners. See article on page 3.

The grant from HRC will allow us to provide a lobbyist at the State House to work on the inheritance rights bill, HIV/AIDS bills, and other pro-LGBT bills while working to defeat any anti-LGBT bills. Many thanks to HRC for their continued financial support for LGBT equality. •

www.mlgpa.org

MLGPA Submits Inheritance Rights Bill

MLGPA is working with Rep. Ben Dudley (D-Portland) on passing an inheritance rights bill for surviving domestic partners. The bill addresses two issues—the right of a domestic partner to inherit without a will and to claim the remains of a deceased partner.

Currently, if a domestic partner dies without a will, trust, or other estate plan, the surviving domestic partner cannot inherit any of the deceased partner's property. Instead, surviving relatives, including siblings, nieces, nephews, parents, and children may inherit the property.

Under MLGPA's inheritance rights bill, if a domestic partner dies without a will, trust, or other estate plan, the surviving domestic partner will inherit the deceased partner's property in the same manner as a surviving spouse. This means that the surviving domestic partner would inherit 1/2 of the estate, 1/2 of the estate plus \$50,000, or the entire estate depending on whether the deceased partner has surviving children or parents.

This change in the intestate law will not affect anyone who has a will, trust, or other estate plan.

To register a domestic partnership, individuals will sign and send to the office of the Secretary of State a notarized affidavit attesting to their domestic partnership. Without a notarized affidavit on file at the Secretary of State's office, surviving partners will not be eligible for inheritance rights.

Under this bill, two individuals may form a domestic partnership if they meet the following criteria:

- Each individual is a mentally competent adult;
- The two individuals have been legally domiciled with each other for at least 12 months;
- Neither individual is legally married to or legally separated from another individual;
- Each individual is the sole domestic partner of the other and expects to remain so; and
- The two individuals are jointly responsible for each other's common welfare as evidenced by joint living arrangements, joint financial arrangements, or joint ownership of real or personal property.

If this bill passes, MLGPA will identify notary publics across the state who are supportive, available, and willing

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

MLGPA LEGISLATIVE LOBBY DAY

Wednesday, May 28

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Hall of Flags, State House

Augusta

MLGPA's Legislative Lobby Day is an excellent opportunity to meet with your state representatives about issues important to you and the LGBT community. Please join us as we lobby for the Inheritance Rights bill, as well as other important bills.

For more information, visit our website:

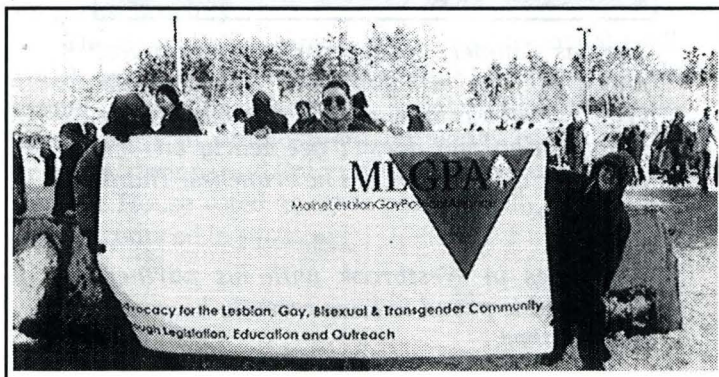
www.mlgpa.org

or contact us at mlgpa@rcn.com or 761-3732.

to help people fill out affidavits. These notaries will be listed on the MLGPA website and we hope to publish them through other means as well. There will undoubtedly be an administrative fee for filing the affidavit.

The bill also provides for surviving domestic partners to have custody and control of the remains of a deceased partner. No longer will surviving domestic partners have to stand by and watch as relatives claim the remains of their loved one, make funeral arrangements and determine where to bury the individual.

If you have lost your partner and experienced a situation similar to that above, your story could make the difference in passing this bill. The Legislature needs to know that these situations are real and that they are very very painful. Please contact us if you can help or if you know someone who can. We can be reached at: mlgpa@rcn.com or 207-761-3732. •



MLGPA member Eileen Meilenhausen (center) helps hold the banner at the Many and One Rally in Lewiston on January 11. MLGPA was just one of many LGBT groups who participated in the diversity rally to protest a gathering of white supremacists and to support Lewiston's Somali residents.

MLGPA at Northeast Regional PRIDE Conference



MLGPA Executive Director Betsy Smith and South Portland City Councilor David Jacobs facilitate a workshop together at the PRIDE conference on forming relationships with politicians.



MLGPA Board member Marty Hagglund conducts a workshop on Transgender issues. Marty is a registered nurse and is president and director of Transcare 2000, a service that provides transexual nursing and rehabilitation.

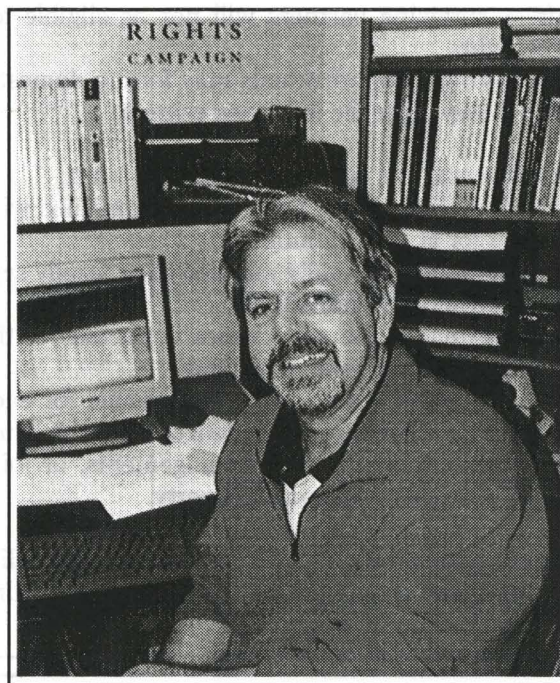
Westbrook's Victory Makes it Number Ten

Westbrook's victory brought to ten the number of communities which have passed local ordinances on LGBT civil rights. The first was Portland in 1992 and the latest was Westbrook in 2002.

Here's the complete list so far:

Portland	1992
Long Island	1997
South Portland	1998
Bar Harbor	1998
Orono	1998
Falmouth	1999
Castine	1999
Brooksville	2000
Bangor	2001
Westbrook	2002

If you are interested in helping your community pass a local ordinance, MLGPA can help. Please contact us at: mlgpa@rcn.com or 761-3732. •



Thomas Sumner, bookkeeper extraordinaire, joined MLGPA last spring as official bookkeeper. Tom has been a wonderful asset to the organization and doesn't get nearly enough credit for all the numbers he crunches. Thank you, Tom!

Tom lives in Westbrook with his partner, John, and is proud to have recently become a grandfather.

New York Passes Anti-Discrimination Bill

Becomes 13th State to Pass Statewide Law

In November 2002, the state of New York passed a law outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation. The 31-year-old bill (possibly the oldest active bill in the New York State Legislature) passed the Republican-controlled Senate by a vote of 34-26, with 21 of 24 Democrats and 13 of 36 Republicans voting in the affirmative. The Democratic-controlled Assembly had passed the bill by increasing majorities every year for the past decade. Governor Pataki (R) signed the bill into law a few hours after the bill passed the Senate.

Unfortunately, an amendment by the Senate Minority to include specific protections against transgender discrimination did not garner enough votes to pass, and failed by a vote of 19-41. Nineteen of 24 Democrats voted in support of the amendment, with no Republicans supporting it.

New York becomes the 13th state in the country to pass a statewide anti-discrimination law. New Mexico is on the brink of becoming the 14th state. For more information on the New York law, visit New York Pride Agenda's website at www.prideagenda.org. •

New Mexico Set To Become 14th State To Ban Discrimination

The New Mexico Senate passed a bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity on February 28, 2003. A joint committee is slated to reconcile the House and Senate bills before a final bill goes to the governor's desk for signing. Gov. Bill Richardson (D) has pledged to sign the non-discrimination measure.

The passage of this bill will make New Mexico the 14th state (see list to the right) to pass a law to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation and the third state (after Minnesota and Rhode Island) based on gender identity.

The New Mexico Senate voted 22-18 to pass the bill, which broadens the state's Human Rights Act to cover sexual orientation and gender identity, prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations and union membership. Four days earlier, the House voted 39-27 to pass the bill. The bill was first introduced in 1991. •

States with Anti-Discrimination Laws and Dates Passed

1. WISCONSIN	1982
2. MASSACHUSETTS	1989
3. CONNECTICUT	1991
4. HAWAII	1991
5. CALIFORNIA	1992
6. NEW JERSEY	1992
7. VERMONT	1992
8. MINNESOTA	1993
9. RHODE ISLAND	1995
10. NEW HAMPSHIRE	1997
11. NEVADA	1999
12. MARYLAND	2001
13. NEW YORK	2002
14. NEW MEXICO	2003*

* Expected, but not official

Maine had once been on the list as number 10, having passed a bill just weeks before New Hampshire. But voters vetoed the bill on February 10, 1998, and the bill never became law.

Maine remains the only state in the country whose legislative bill on LGBT civil rights was passed and then vetoed.

An Evening with Singer-Songwriter **Dorothy Scott**

followed by dancing with DJ Lisa Vaccaro

Saturday, May 3 • Camp Ketcha, Scarborough • Rte. 77

6:30 Doors open
7:30 Dorothy Scott
9:00-11:00 Dancing with DJ Lisa Vaccaro

Tickets \$20 sliding scale
Door prizes, raffles, & more
For more info, call Paula 929-5878

Events To Benefit MLGPA Foundation

Suzanne Westenhoefer

Award winning * Uproariously funny * Comedienne

Friday, June 20th, 8:00 pm

Troy Howard Middle School, Belfast

Admission:

Sliding Scale: \$18 to \$25 Door Price: \$20 to \$25

Tickets available at:

Green Store in Belfast, Wild Rufus in Camden, Grasshopper in Ellsworth and Bangor, and the MLGPA office.

For more information, call 338-6935.

A portion of the proceeds to benefit MLGPA Foundation.

Maine's Anti-Discrimination Bill Slated for Later Date

There's been a lot of talk lately about why an LGBT anti-discrimination bill was not submitted to the Legislature this year. Some people were upset when they learned there would be no bill while others were relieved. Here's why we asked legislators to not submit a bill.

Given our history of statewide LGBT referendum campaigns, especially with one as recent as 2000, we strongly believe that a legislative bill on LGBT civil rights will end up in a referendum. This could happen in two ways:

1. It could pass in the Senate and House and be signed by the governor, and then end up in a referendum through a people's veto. That's what happened in 1998, when the Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition gathered enough signatures to put the question on the ballot as a veto.
2. Legislators could attach a referendum to the bill before passing it. That's what happened in 2000, when legislators felt they could not justify passing the bill outright when the voters of Maine had vetoed it in 1998.

At this point, we feel very strongly that the LGBT community and our straight allies are not prepared to launch a \$1 million referendum campaign. For one thing, we need a significant amount of time to assess why we lost the last campaign, organize the community for a new campaign, build new bridges and coalitions, and raise money. It has been difficult to begin this process because, among other things, people are burned out, tired of working on and/or supporting campaigns, want to focus on other parts of their lives, are working on other LGBT issues, or are not interested in getting involved right now.

For another thing, the economy is so poor right now that most people do not have much money to give away. To win the next referendum campaign, we will need to raise over \$1 million, which means that all of us will have to give many times over. This is simply not possible in these eco-



MLGPA President Maggie Allen and Legislative Committee Chair Dottie Melanson were guest speakers at Rainbow Business and Professional Association's February dinner meeting. They spoke to the crowd about MLGPA's legislative strategy on the LGBT anti-discrimination bill.

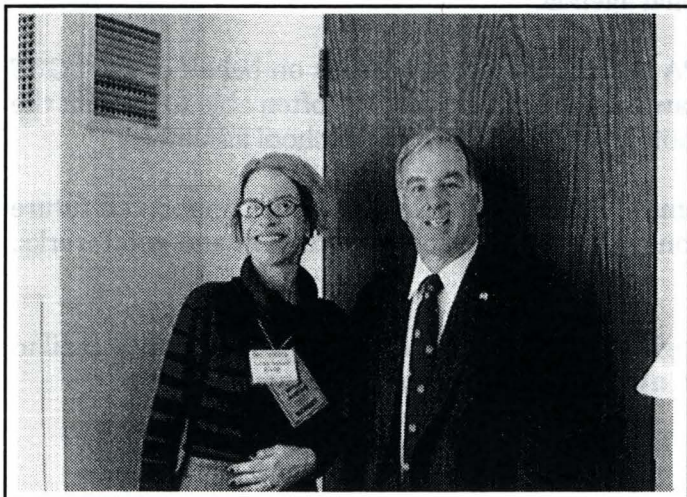
nomic times.

Aside from the challenges of another referendum, it is also very possible that legislators would kill the bill outright. Given that the voters of Maine have voted against LGBT civil rights on two occasions in the last five years, legislators could easily claim that people in Maine do not support civil rights and they could vote against the bill.

We cannot change our history of two referendum campaign defeats, but the more time that passes, the more memories will fade.

Given this political landscape, it is our assessment that to introduce the bill in 2003 would be a mistake. Instead, we will begin a 3-4 year plan that includes a legislative bill (probably in '05) and a winning referendum campaign (possibly in '06).

We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact us at mlgpa@rcn.com or 761-3732. •



MLGPA Legislative Committee Chair Dottie Melanson recently attended a meeting of the Democratic National Committee in Washington DC. Dottie is Maine's representative to the DNC. Here she speaks with presidential candidate Howard Dean, who, as governor of Vermont, instituted civil unions and universal health care.

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I. Joel Abromson Scholarship Fund Needs Your Support

Dear Friends,

Our scholarship program is among the most important outreach programs we have.

Each year we award scholarships to two high school seniors planning to pursue post-secondary education. Scholarship applicants are required to submit an essay that addresses the question of how schools can be made safer for all students regardless of their sexual orientation and gender expression. This program provides students with a forum to speak on this very important issue and, at the same time, provides us with pertinent insights and information, with which to guide our educational agenda.

The scholarship program also lends visibility to MLGPA and the issues we address on behalf of the LGBT community. We attend scholarship recipients' high school awards ceremonies and are often able to present the award ourselves. What better forum do we have for grassroots education than a high school assembly?

Please donate to the MLGPA Foundation's I. Joel Abromson Scholarship Fund. Help us support our future leaders and policy makers with the very tangible gift of money for their continued education and good works. Thank you in advance for your support.

You may make a donation to the scholarship fund through our website at **www.mlgpa.org**, or by mail to **PO Box 1951, Portland, ME 04104**, or by calling us at **207-761-3732**. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Scholarship Committee
