Discrimination Begins at Home

by Donald Weatherford, Director, Northern Lambda Nord

Well, Spring is in the air and the birdies are chirping away. I’m glad to see it arrive. Though I do enjoy the snow and the cold, I’m glad to see the temperature rise into the double digits above zero! Could summer be very far away? Gosh, I hope not! I’m looking forward to slipping into my bikini (picture that, if you dare!) and basking in the sun while — of course — swatting away those darn, pesky black flies. Which is worse: swatting black flies or shoveling snow? Good question, but I have no answer. So, I guess I am just going to enjoy the warmer weather as I’m sure we all will do.

Now, on a more serious note. Does discrimination exist within our community? A charge of discrimination has been brought before the NLN Board from several former N LN members. At first I was floored. I have been an active member of this organization for two years, and I have never seen discrimination. At least that is what I thought. I was thinking of discrimination from a racial standpoint. But let’s look at the definition of discrimination. Webster defines it as, “to act with partiality; to observe a difference; biased or unfair treatments or judgments.”

So, does discrimination exist within the N LN community? The answer is, yes. We are all guilty. A mighty strong accusation, and some will be offended by this statement, but let’s look at this. How many of us have sat in a group and took part in a conversation where a member of our family is being made fun of because he/she is different? He/she is either unemployed or has a low-paying job? He/she is either too fat or too skinny? He is too faggy? She is too dykey? He/she is not attractive to a particular person? He/she is too closeted, or too OUT? I have personally sat in on a group of people and heard the aforementioned, and — sadly — I have even joined in on a few.

Admitting this is hard for me. I have always considered myself to be a very accepting person, and for the most part I am, but I am only human. I have fallen into the realm of gossip, as I am sure we all have. I guess the word “discrimination” is a hard one for me to accept. But when we sit around and bash a person or gossip about another, we are discriminating against that person. Regardless of what word we use to explain why we partake in this behavior, it still boils down to discrimination.

The charges that were brought to the Board’s attention were more of a racial matter, and I thank the persons who brought their concerns forward. Though I have not seen evidence of this, the Board and I are going to do everything in our power to erase any discrimination on the “race” level.

As far as the other forms of discrimination that plague this organization, I cannot do much. The only thing I can do is appeal to the N LN family for change, and make a personal change on my part. I just feel that we have to endure so much hate and bigotry from the outside world, I just cannot figure out why we have to have it within our own community. I am not saying that you cannot dislike someone. That is our choice and our right, but it is also our humane duty to be civil to everyone. That’s all I am asking from you. Stop and think about the person you may be talking about, and wonder how that person may feel if they heard you. One thing I have learned about his community: gossip does not stay in the closet. It spreads like wildfire. So, if we think of the consequences before we speak, just maybe a change can occur. Someone once told me that I was “stupid” for accepting the director’s position. “Change is not possible,” I was told. “You’re wasting your time. Nothing will ever change in Aroostook County! Accept it!” Well, I refused to believe this person, and I still refuse to believe. Change is in the air! Change is inevitable!

A little advice for myself and for you: “Think
before you speak, and as a great lady once stated, 'If you look hard enough, you can always find some good in everybody.'

Until next time,

/s/ D.

On another note . . .

by Donald Weatherford, Director

I would like to take this space to welcome JOHN NELSON aboard the Board. He has graciously agreed to fill the vacant Member-at-Large slot, and I know that he will be an asset to us all. I am looking forward to working with him. I would also like to give a special Thank You to the Board. You are all doing a wonderful job. Because of your dedication, our community—and the community as a whole—is becoming a better place. I am proud to be a part of this organization.

Though I have not been able to attend the majority of the functions this year, I understand that they have all been successes, much in part to our social director, but also to those who volunteer to help. A special Thank You to Siros' Restaurant for the donation of a gift certificate, which was one of the door prizes at our Valentine's dance at the Caribou VFW. Thanks to John and Lynn for supplying the food for several functions. Also, congrats to John for a fine job as DJ at the St. Patrick's dance in Van Buren; nothing but great things have been said!

Just to let you know, May 31st is our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. I would love to see you all attend and let the Board and myself know what you’re thinking. If you have ideas or complaints, this is the time and the place to share them! We are all in this together, and without each other we are doomed to fail. So, check out the calendar and make plans to come. There is a pot luck meal and sock hop dance following the General Meeting. So if you can, make plans to come and share. That’s what it’s all about!

/s/ D.

Help Prevent Transmission of HIV - Become a Volunteer!

by Debra Madore, NLN Phoneline Coordinator

Northern Lambda Nord’s HIV Prevention Phoneline Project needs more volunteers. Trained volunteers offer information and referrals in an effort to reduce risks and to help prevent HIV transmission. They also talk with people who call the Gay & Lesbian Phoneline of Maine with questions other than HIV/AIDS-related. A 16-hour training course is required. Completion of the training enables you to staff the Phoneline once per month (or more) for two hours each evening. The Phoneline is at our Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center of Northern Maine in Caribou.

Training topics include: HIV 101; safer sex - examining personal and professional attitudes; assessing/changing risky behavior; confidentiality; sexual orientation issues; beginning listening and phone skills; crisis intervention and making referrals.

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROJECT, a collaboration between NLN and HEALTH 1St with funding provided by the Maine Bureau of Health. This project not only benefits HIV-prevention efforts, but also supports the needs of the gay community. It’s a rewarding experience to know that your efforts have helped someone struggling with the difficult issues of coming out, finding a safe place, or just someone to talk to. Your efforts could make a difference in someone’s life. WON’T YOU PLEASE HELP IN THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT? Current volunteers include both gays and straights. They all recognize the need to pull together to defeat discrimination, isolation, heterosexism, homophobia, and to support each other, no matter who we are.

The Phoneline is staffed every Monday, Wednesday and
You Can Earn $10 Per Hour!
If you care about stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS, you may be one of five men who are chosen to help with this special project and earn some money at the same time. Call Donald, 207/325-3413 or the Gay & Lesbian Phoneline, 207/498-2088 or 800/468-2088 and leave a message.

Gay Bar Opens in Madawaska!
by Dick Harrison, editor
As of Saturday, April 12, 1997, there is a place to go dancing and socializing in this region. It's called the Wonder Bar, and it's on Main Street in downtown Madawaska. It seems that the owner, Mr. Bouchard (who also owns the Yacht Club in Van Buren) realized that he had to do something to increase his Saturday night business: 10 patrons was not a good crowd. Some gay people in Madawaska and Edmundston had approached him with the idea, and after some discussions he decided to have a “private party” to see what kind of crowd there would be. Well, through word-of-mouth, (telephone, telegraph, tell a gay?) there were about 100 people that first night, and Mr. Bouchard has decided to have this “private party” every Saturday, as long as the support is there (which I believe it will be). The NLN Board plans to talk with Mr. Bouchard and with some of the local people who organized this historic happening in order to establish a working relationship between the Wonder Bar and Lambda. Just as the Community Center provides a central meeting place and home for our offices and Phoneline, the Wonder Bar can offer a means to promote NLN’s goals and activities and offer the kind of networking opportunities that our community has in most urban centers.

NLN Joins Local Chambers
by Dick Harrison, editor
Northern Lambda Nord is supporting local Chambers of Commerce with our membership. In February, we joined the Caribou Chamber of Commerce - a membership plaque hangs at the Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center - and a short article about NLN appears in the Chamber’s April-May newsletter. At our most recent (April) Lambda Board meeting, money was approved for membership in the Greater Madawaska Chamber of Commerce. Other area chambers include Fort Kent, Edmundston, Grand Falls/Grand-Sault, Fort Fairfield, Presque Isle and Houlton. We’ll join them as well, as funds permit.

Chris & Tret In Concert
If you’re familiar with women’s music, you’ve probably heard of Chris Williamson and Tret Fure. Their spring concert tour includes two performances in Maine: Tuesday, May 13 at The Left Bank in Blue Hill (207/374-2201) and Wednesday, May 14 at Jonathan’s in Ogunquit (207/646-4777).

Gay Men’s Retreat ’97
Inspired by the national trend of men’s gatherings, a retreat will be held May 30–June 1 at the Rockcraft Lodge in East Sebago. It’s open to all gay and bisexual men, age 18 and older. Workshops and activities are planned. Space is limited to 30 men. The cost is $30 for the entire weekend. Register by May 16: GMR, POBox 7977, Lewiston ME 04243-7977. Info: Sean Douglas, 207/786-4697.

Out & About On Campus
If you were an undergrad in the ’90s and would like to share your experiences as a lesbian, gayman, bisexual or transgendered college student coming out, being out, or being closeted on campus, a book is being compiled and the editors need your input. Info: Kim & Annie, POB 5345, Takoma Park MD 20913, or e-mail: AS154@umail.umd.edu
Maine Legislators to Vote on Gay Rights

The Maine House and Senate are on recess the week of April 21, but soon after they return they will vote - for the 10th time in 20 years - whether to include "sexual orientation" in the Maine Human Rights Act, granting legal protection from discrimination in employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. Those in the know say it will pass in the Senate, but will be close in the House. The governor will sign it if it goes through - whether to include "sexual orientation" in the Maine Human Rights Act, or not.

SENATE: mail to 3 State House Station, Augusta 04330-0003
District 1 - Judy Paradis 728-4854
District 2 - Leo Kieffer 493-3190
District 3 - Michael Michaud 746-9069
HOUSE: mail to 2 State House Station, Augusta 04330-0002
141 - Henry Joy, Island Falls 463-2507
142 - Dean Clukey, Houlton 532-6363
143 - Edgar Wheeler, Bridgewater 429-9108
144 - Richard Kneeland, Easton 488-5311
145 - Jim Donnelly, Presque Isle 764-0276
146 - Mabel Desmond, Mapleton 764-1011
147 - Irvin Belanger, Caribou 496-2821
148 - Gary O'Neal, Caribou 496-2821
149 - Rosaire Sirois, Caribou 498-6750
150 - Douglas Ahme, Madawaska 728-6030
151 - Duane Belanger, Wallagrass 834-2246

AIDS

THE SAFER THE SEX, THE BETTER

CONSIDERED SAFE: Mutual masturbation, Hugging/body rubbing, Massage, Social (dry) kissing, Fantasy, Light S/M (without bleeding or bruising), Sex toys (when used only on yourself)

CONSIDERED POSSIBLY SAFE: Anal or vaginal intercourse with a condom, French (wet) kissing, Sucking (but stopping before climax), Watersports (external only), Cunnilingus

CONSIDERED UNSAFE: Swallowed semen, Anal or vaginal intercourse without a condom, Watersports in mouth or on skin with sores or cuts, Sharing IV needles, Fisting or rimming, Shared condoms, douching equipment, or sex toys