

# Lesbian & Gay Caucus of Public Health Workers

In Official Relations with The American Public Health Association

Winter 1993

## Chair's Column

by Denice Dennis, MPH

Happy New Year to new and old members and friends! I hope your holidays were refreshing and happy ones. Best wishes for a healthy new year from myself and the other members of the executive committee: Cheri, Marc and Paul. I would also like to extend my thanks to Josh Lipsman for his fine service as chairperson over the past two years. Josh is featured in this issue's *Member's Spotlight* article.

Many great ideas for caucus-sponsored sessions were generated at our business meeting in Washington. Cheri Pies has been busy working on these ideas and coordinating our sessions for San Francisco. Unfortunately, a computer problem prevented us from distributing the January newsletter on time. As a result, the Call for Abstracts was sent out later than we would have liked. A special thank you to those who contributed - we apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Shortly after the November meeting we received some excellent press from DC's gay periodical The Washington Blade. The article discussed several of the sessions sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Caucus, as well as our intent and goals for the upcoming program in San Francisco. (If you would like a copy of the Blade article, drop a line to either Marc Wynne or myself.) The Caucus-sponsored sessions were very well received and attended, and David Dassey deserves many thanks for his excellent work as program chair.

One of the goals of our caucus is to provide an opportunity for APHA mem-

bers and other health workers to learn about lesbian, gay and bisexual public health issues. One way to accomplish this is by co-sponsoring program sessions. Often times, APHA members attend only those sessions which are sponsored or co-sponsored by their own section. So by co-sponsoring sessions we maximize our visibility and our opportunities to educate APHA members who might otherwise have not attended a fo-

(program chair) for additional information.

These are exciting times! In addition to the new national leadership, we have some interesting developments in the works. David Jernigan, a Caucus member who serves on the Equal Health Opportunity Committee (EHOC), is working with APHA caucus representatives to improve the Association's communications with caucus leadership. The 'Inter-



Jonathan Goldman

(L to R) Caucus members Ellen Glascock, Brian Dubrow and David Jernigan, Caucus Chair Denice Dennis, Past Chair Josh Lipsman, and Caucus Secretary Marc Wynne at the Caucus Banquet, 1992 Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

rum on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues.

Our diverse membership brings with it a wealth of knowledge and experience which we can share with other APHA members. So if you see an opportunity for us to co-sponsor a session with your section either for this year's Annual Meeting or next's, go for it! Contact Cheri Pies

Caucus Council, a committee comprised of chairpersons from the various APHA caucuses, will meet for the first time in San Francisco. And we will soon begin exploring a mechanism to give members of other caucuses the opportunity of affiliating with us, most likely with a re-

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# MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT.....

## ... on Josh Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H.

Was it as a boy when I played dolls with the little neighbor girls rather than sports with the other boys that I first realized that I was "different." And was it when I asked my little girl friends to use a code name when we spoke of our doll game in front of other people that I first experienced the shame of that difference?

There is controversy now over how much of being gay is determined by genetics and how much by environment. Perhaps I'll never know when I first was gay, but my consciousness of being different and my shame at being different have been present for as long ago as I can remember. I am fortunate to be able to write to you today that the difference has evolved into an openly gay consciousness, and that the shame and internalized homophobia have been healed.

As I grew up, my parents never told me that being gay was wrong or bad, but they sensed my gayness in me and lovingly discouraged its expression. I figured there was something wrong with me, and spent an emotionally unpleasant adolescence wondering how I was going to get better when I could not even talk freely about my inner life.

One of the fundamental reasons I believe now that "gay is good" is that despite a lack of awareness and even some opposition on my part, my inner gay self pushed and worked over the years to full expression. How could such an unconscious striving for freedom be bad? How is it any less natural than the seed of a plant sprouting through soil to seek the warm face of the sun?

I went into therapy. I forced and cajoled myself into accepting who I was sexually

and then I thrived and bloomed as that gay person. As a whole person. Though my life certainly is not problem-free, I feel as if the best interpersonal relationships of my life, the most successful professional accomplishments are happening now as I live as an openly gay person. No more compartmentalizing. All the parts of my life are able to be integrated.

One of the great goals in my life is to foster and create neighborhoods, communities and societies where no one ever has to be repressed as I was. I work to develop nurturing environments where negative social forces and the vagaries of circumstances are overcome, where they are prevented from keeping



Jonathan Goldman

(L to R) Past Caucus Chair Josh Lipsman and Caucus Treasurer Paul Moore at the Caucus Banquet, 1992 Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

## Chair's Column

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duced membership fee (e.g., a primary and secondary membership status).

Speaking of membership, if you have not as yet renewed or joined the Caucus, please do so as soon as possible. Membership fees are our only source of income, and we depend on this income to enable us to produce this newsletter for you, in addition to subsidizing the Annual Meeting booth and our social functions. A membership form is included with this newsletter.

Unfortunately, our membership fees do not cover all of our expenses, and this year we have a few special needs. For example, the banner we have used over the past few years at our booth is in bad need of a face-lift. If you can help us with a special donation so we can cover the cost of a new banner, or you know of a supplier who can give us a professional or courtesy discount, please contact Paul Moore or myself as soon as possible.

We also need funds to purchase another lot of our pink triangle badge stickers. (Wasn't it great to see so many of us wearing pick triangles in Washington?)

And finally, the Caucus has officially endorsed the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. (Please see the enclosed flyer.) We have also written to the APHA Executive Committee requesting the Association join us as an endorser.

Anyone is welcome to march with us. Look for us on the mall under the 'Lesbian and Gay Caucus of Public Health Workers' banner (hopefully, our new banner by then).

Hope to see many of you this April in Washington! ▼

**Have You Renewed  
Your  
Membership?  
(see page 6)**

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**Pro -****Jonathan Goldman**

This caucus has existed in varying strengths for over a decade and currently is at a reasonable level of stability and viability. A consistent challenge has been the struggle to find and nurture its leaders from its membership. Our membership has never really reached its potential, due in part to the low profile of caucuses within the APHA structural organization. A caucus is not an integral part of the Association - but merely "in official relations."

One method to attain greater visibility would be to become a Special Primary Interest Group (SPIG) which is akin to a section but without full status advantages (formal budget, Governing Council representation, etc.) Our members are women and men from around the country; some of whom are active in other sections or state affiliates, some who work providing health services for gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender persons, and all, I believe, are identifiable as same-sex romantically-inclined. (I don't know everyone, but members I have met have not "come out" as bisexual or transgender). All are also interested in promoting equal access to health care for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

In the past decade, this interest has grown into a specialized area of health services known as Lesbian and Gay Health Services and Promotion. I suggest this be the focus of a SPIG.

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**- Con****Paul Moore**

My reasons for recommending that the Lesbian and Gay Caucus remain a caucus and not seek SPIG (Special Primary Interest Group) status fall into two areas: organizational and personal.

**Organizational Considerations:**

The official APHA definitions for caucuses and SPIGs highlight my major concern in this area.

A *SPIG* is defined as "groups of self-elected APHA members sharing a common occupational discipline or program area of interest,"

while a *caucus* is "a group of 15 or more APHA members, partisan of a particular position on an issue important to APHA, who pursue a desired result

## ***To SPIG or not to SPIG? That is the question.***

within the Association."

In my view, most caucuses are person-oriented while SPIGs are content oriented - who you are versus what you study, or what you do. Few of us in the Caucus work on and/or study lesbian, gay or bisexual issues. We are all lesbians, gay men or bisexuals interested in lesbian, gay and bisexual issues.

The Caucus by-laws define our goals in broad terms of mutual support and education; advocacy for improved health care for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals; and education of others regarding lesbian, gay and bisexual health care and public health issues. We do not define ourselves as students of lesbian, gay and

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*[These commentaries stem from a discussion at the last Caucus business meeting about changing the Caucus to a SPIG. The topic will be revisited at the upcoming business meeting in San Francisco. All comments received on this issue will appear in the pre-meeting newsletter.]*

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Perhaps with the status of a SPIG and its inclusion on all APHA membership forms, more people would become aware of our existence and join. It often takes several years and attendance at an Annual Meeting or two for people to get involved with the Caucus. Of course, the primary focus of our SPIG would not exclude others from joining or participating if lesbian/gay health services was not in their professional domain, and it would be expected that the Annual Meeting scientific sessions would be continued in their breadth and depth.

Yet there are other particulars needing analysis prior to a decision on this issue in San Francisco. Among them are: (1) How many current members could change their primary section affiliation to the new SPIG? (2) How would the dues be restructured to reflect those members paying "second section" annual dues? (3) How would other caucuses feel being left behind? (4) As a SPIG would we really get increased visibility and more members, or is it all an illusion? (5) Should we instead seek closer ties to the Medical Care Section as a committee within that group? (6) Would a forward-moving balance be attainable between those serving lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender clients and lesbian and gay members in other fields? (7) What about the NLGHEF? Is there room for two groups of similar purposes? Are we and they mutually exclusive, or do we need to collaborate and both exist? (8) Who cares?

If you care, please submit your comments to the newsletter. ▼

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**Con -***Continued from Page 3*

bisexual health issues, nor as persons who provide health care or health education to lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals.

**Personal Concerns:**

Under the labyrinthine structure of APHA, a member can affect policy decisions of the Association most effectively through sections and affiliates (geographic, usually statewide organizations). Neither SPIGs nor caucuses have votes in the Governing Council. (Note: While SPIGs are usually viewed as sections in formation, it is not required that a SPIG become a section.)

Individuals are allowed to be members of one Primary Section and as many Secondary Sections as desired, however an individual can vote for officers only in their Primary Section. Membership in Secondary Sections either does not count or is greatly discounted in the allocations of funds to sections. Thus, individuals are rarely effective participants in their Secondary Section(s).

SPIG membership can substitute for Primary or Secondary Section membership, but to be an effective SPIG member, an individual would need to choose the SPIG as a Primary Section. Thus, if the Caucus were a SPIG and I wanted to be effective in the SPIG, I would be faced with moving my primary membership from the Social Work section.

I feel that I have a great deal of influence the Social Work section in terms of recommendations for APHA officers, positions on policy statements, and program content. Further, my active participation in that section gives me support and credibility in APHA as a whole, especially in seeking an appointment in membership deployment to various boards and committees.

I would not want to give up an effective position in a voting section for membership in a non-voting SPIG even with the perceived enhanced recognition and the scheduling preference SPIGs receive.

In summary, I am content to remain a Caucus member along with my American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian American, Black, and Latino brothers and sisters. ▼

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## What's Happening at E.H.O.C.

by David Jernigan

This year APHA's Equal Health Opportunity Committee is looking at a number of issues relevant to lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

After much discussion within the Association and the Caucus regarding how best to include members of our constituency in the Association's affirmative action program, we are requesting the Executive Board to revise both the membership deployment memo sent annually to Section Chairs and the annual letter to the Nominations Committee chair in each section. The revision will include language indicative of the Association's commitment to encouraging the participation of and visible leadership by lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Second, we are reviewing the Association's policies and policy statements regarding people with disabilities and comparing them with the policies of other progressive organizations to ensure that no stone is left unturned in our efforts to make APHA accessible to and supportive of the rights of people with disabilities.

Finally, EHOAC has agreed to sign on to a letter from the Caucus requesting that APHA no longer hold its meetings in states where laws against sodomy are still on the books. The Association has been on record since 1975 in favor of sodomy law reform — this letter simply asks the Executive Board to put the financial weight of the Association behind its position.

If you have any questions about the EHOAC or concerns you would like raised there, feel free to contact me at (415) 456-5692.

## Happy Birthday, Walter!

Walter Lear, a founder of the Lesbian and Gay Caucus, will celebrate his 70th birthday, his 40th year together with James Payne, and other milestones in his life on Saturday, May 1st, in Philadelphia. The celebration will consist of a small get-together of friends for exchange of experience and views, followed that evening with a no-charge BIG bash.

The morning discussion will reflect on "The Lesbian and Gay Fight for Health." Presenters will include Barbara Gittings (Philadelphia), Barbara Herbert (Boston), and jointly Frank Greenberg (Houston), Ron Sable (Chicago) and Bopper Deyton (Washington). The afternoon discussion will reflect on "The Health Left — Past, Present and Future." Among the presenters will be Victor Sidel (New York), a past president of APHA. The evening party will include a buffet supper, entertainment and disco dancing.

Anyone wishing to attend this celebration should request invitations directly from Walter at 206 North 35th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19104 .

## Spotlight...

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people from developing their full potential. Is that not health? Is it not the substance of public health?

My job is as the director of the Alexandria Health Department. I am responsible for preventive and primary care medical clinics, environmental health, public health nursing and laboratory services to an urban community of 113,000 just outside of Washington, DC. I enjoy my work immensely. Stop by and say hello. ▼

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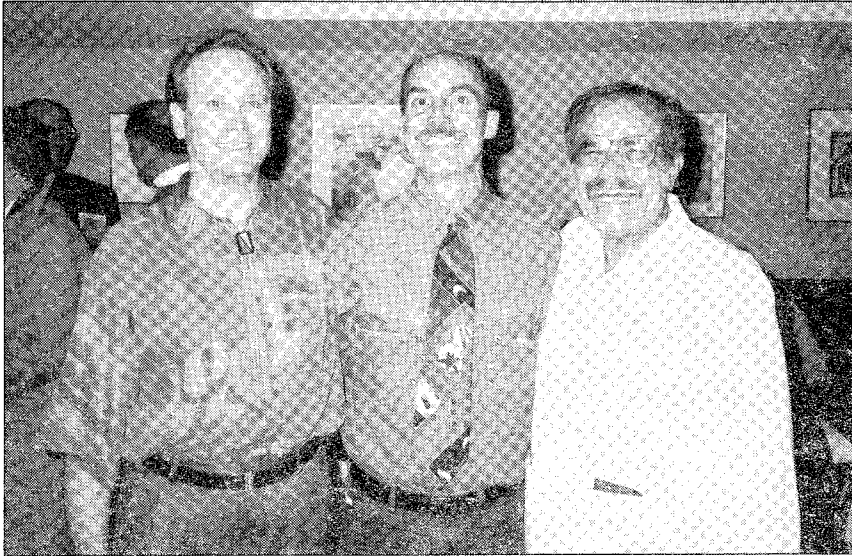
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Jonathan Goldman

(L to R) Caucus Treasurer Paul Moore, and Caucus members David Dassey and Walter Lear at the Caucus Banquet, 1992 Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

## Welcome to San Francisco!

by Social Committee Chair, John Gressman

The Social Committee of the Lesbian and Gay Caucus has been hard at work to have your visit in San Francisco nothing less than GREAT! A sneak preview of the planning reveals:

- Expanded Hospitality Hours
- Saturday Welcome Reception
- Sunday Brunch
- Night at the Theater
- Two Stepping
- Joint Social with the Rainbow Caucus
- Women's Breakfast
- Annual Lesbian and Gay Banquet at a *fabulous* restaurant, and
- Resource packets of services and merchants in the city

Further details will appear in the next Caucus newsletter. Look for it!

More helpful hints from the Committee about coming to San Francisco - The weather should be beautiful because it's our summer! There are some exciting areas to visit about an hours drive away, so be sure to pick up a map. We will include some suggestions in the next newsletter. And Halloween in San Francisco is a special treat! The streets close and the Castro comes alive! Plan to stay around for it. (Some events even start the weekend before. Watch the newsletter for more information.)

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions you are welcome to call the Committee Chair John Gressman at 415-647-2194 (home) or 415-252-7291 (office), John Grima at 415-586-4151 (home), or Linda Wardlaw at 510-848-9082 (home).

## Have You Renewed Your Membership Lately?

Not sure whether you paid your 1992-1993 membership dues yet?

If the words 'PAID 92-93' appear on your mailing label, then thank you, your membership is current. If instead you see a series of five stars ('\*\*\*\*\*'), then it's time for you to renew (or join!). A membership form is enclosed for your convenience. (Caucus membership runs from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting.)

Deposits for our banquet and our booth at the October Annual Meeting will be due before the Fall newsletter is issued. It is therefore imperative that you renew your membership now!

Thank you.

## Lodging Requests

Caucus members interested in sharing accommodations with other members at the upcoming Annual Meeting in San Francisco are encouraged to add their names to the Shared Housing List early.

Contact Marc Wynne, Caucus Secretary, at (213) 654-3615 for more information. This is a name exchange service only; accommodations are not being arranged by the Caucus.