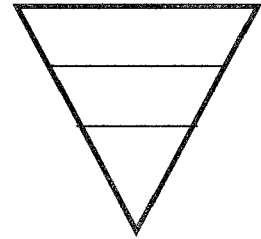


LGBT PHW NEWS



In official relations with the American Public Health Association

March 2004

Chair's Column

Until recently, my partner and I lived in Boston, Massachusetts. However, we moved to Manchester, New Hampshire this past autumn to live closer to the hospital where she will be doing her residency. Thus, my current work/home situation is



unique in that I live in one state, and work in another. And the differences between these two states are often glaringly apparent.

My state of employment, Massachusetts, is currently under the national radar for the Supreme Judicial Court's decision that civil unions are equivalent to second-class citizenship. This has caused great excitement for equal rights activists, and great outcry from those who think we are "lesser than." As we have rallied on our streets, we have watched other cities and towns start to issue marriage licenses to same sex couples. This show of support (one might call it a love revolt) gives us hope that by the time you read this newsletter, we will soon begin to issue legally recognized licenses within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

(continued on Page 2, column 1)

**JOIN US IN
WASHINGTON, D.C.!**

**132nd Annual Meeting
of APHA
November 6—10, 2004**

**"Public Health and
the Environment"**

Annual Meeting info @ www.apha.org

Program Chair's Report

Progress on the LGBT Caucus' 2004 scientific program is well under way. We received 60 abstract submissions this year, which represents an expected drop in total submissions from last year's high of approximately 80 submissions that were received for the San Francisco meeting. Even with a slight drop in total submissions, we still received far more than our allocated program of seven sessions can accommodate.

Thank you to all of you who submitted abstracts and volunteered to review abstracts this year. Without your help the Caucus would not be able to produce the high quality scientific programs people have come to expect from us.

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Chair's Report, continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, just north of Massachusetts, lies my home state of New Hampshire. Here, the possibility of obtaining civil marriage for same sex couples is not as hopeful. While Massachusetts' highest court eloquently defended the rights of two humans to obtain the benefits of civil marriage regardless of gender identity, the New Hampshire legislature is entertaining the notion of passing a law that would add language to the existing marriage laws to prevent the state from recognizing "any public act, record, or judicial proceeding" in another state that treats same-sex couples similarly to married opposite-sex couples. Our governor, Craig Benson, does not even support civil unions, as he thinks they are identical to civil marriage (perhaps he should do some homework on any of a number of websites explaining the vast difference?).

Of course, there are a few benefits living in the Live Free or Die state. In my brief time here thus far, one of the most exciting has been being a part of New Hampshire Primary Season. As a political junkie, this was a little slice of heaven on earth; meeting all the candidates, attending debates, watching the news crews swarm all over Manchester, talking politics with people on the street. It makes a national election feel much more local, and serves as a reminder of how personal politics truly are.

(continued next column)



Diane Tider receiving the 2003 Walter Lear, MD Outstanding Student Award plaque at the LGBT Annual Dinner in November

As public health officials, there are many reasons to feel that the past two years have been a struggle politically and professionally. Whether your field of interest is the environment, occupational health, education and schools, ensuring health care for all, access to care for a specific subpopulation, or many other areas of public health, the current federal administration has given you something to talk about (and often rally against). For better or for worse, this administration has helped many of us to become more actively involved in social justice than we might have been four years ago.

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**The LGBT Caucus Web-site is
located at:
<http://www.stophiv.com/lgbtc>**

Editor's Column

My first term as Newsletter Editor of the LGBT Caucus was from 1998-2000, and I am excited about returning to this position. The APHA Annual Meeting was last held in Washington, D.C. in 1998 and there were approximately 14,000 participants – a larger attendance than in subsequent years. At that time, I expressed my hope that the LGBT Newsletter would play a greater role as a means of communication for LGBT people who work in public health and also by increasing our visibility in APHA. This remains my goal as Newsletter Editor.

If you are wondering why the articles in this issue of the newsletter focus on political issues rather than LGBT health research projects, recent political events have overshadowed other areas. Firstly, the Bush Administration has exerted an unprecedented political influence on the public health research climate.

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LGBT Caucus members and friends at the LGBT Annual Dinner at the APHA Annual Meeting in November 2003 in San Francisco

Chair's Column, continued from Page 2

When the next APHA conference descends upon the nation's capitol, we will have just gone through the next presidential election. The outcome of that election will greatly impact the activities and conversations at the conference itself. So, as we sit in the period of time between knowing who the Democratic nominee will be and the actual election, I ask you: What kind of Washington do you wish to visit?

Do you wish to visit a Washington, D.C. that is run by corporate interests and socially conservative minds, or a Washington that is interested in making sure that more Americans are given the opportunity to secure health care and other social services that support all families? Do you wish to visit a Washington that has little interest in ensuring the environment will be inhabitable for future generations, or a Washington that recognizes the importance of balancing economic profits with the need to create sustainable ecosystem that allows for biodiversity and clean air? Do you wish to visit a Washington that has actively seeks to eliminate a woman's right to choose, or a Washington, D.C. that will protect this most personal decision?

And what are you *personally* willing to do to help make your future vision come to fruition?

It is an exciting time to be alive and involved in the field of public health. Although most of our funding asks us to focus on ailments, we remind ourselves that health is more than simply the absence of disease. Now more than ever we are being called upon to seek out creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied public health professionals, we have a unique opportunity to apply what we have learned in our own fight for equal rights and apply it to a host of social justice concerns.

Through your continued support of the LGBT Caucus, we are able to work on all of this together, as a strong and unified voice. I look forward to seeing you next November!

2004 — Choose Your Leader As If Your Rights Depend On It

by Michael Shankle, MPH
(Past Chair)

Over the last three years, the LGBT health movement has come under attack. The current Bush Administration and the Republican leadership have played hard ball with the lives of our LGBT brothers and sisters. The actions that have and are threatening the health of LGBT people include:

- Withholding \$75,000 originally offered for a conference on Lesbian Health issues that DHHS had supported the year before;
- Withdrawing support of and refusing to distribute the *“Healthy People 2010 Companion Document for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health”* recommendations concerning LGBT health issues;
- Calling for investigations and defunding of LGBT and HIV research projects by members of Congress;
- Deciding not to support a 2003 United Nations sponsored resolution-condemning discrimination based on sexual orientation;
- Supporting statements made by US Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) equating homosexuality with bestiality; (I am sorry to say he represents my state.)
- Removing safer sex information from federal web sites;
- Limiting the free exchange of scientific information;

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Editor's Column, continued from Page 3

An article in the 1/6/04 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor* entitled, “Politics in the Lab Hits U.S. Scientific Integrity” outlines the Bush Administration’s undermining of scientific integrity through imposing stringent political controls on a broad variety of federal scientific programs and activities.

Meanwhile, yesterday (3/11), the Massachusetts state legislature convened again to resume the debate on a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. I live near Boston, and was at the State House yesterday holding a sign and facing bigots and religious extremists who hate our existence. Whatever the outcome, it felt great to be present, visible, and participating in this historic event. At this time, the state legislature has preliminarily approved a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage but legalize civil unions. However, more voting by the legislature is required before a constitutional amendment can be put before the voters in November, 2006.

It is extremely important that we remain visible in APHA, stay politically active in resisting attacks on our civil rights, and vote in November to defeat the Bush Administration. It is my fervent hope that we will convene at the Annual Meeting in Washington, DC with a brighter four years ahead.



More caucus members at the Annual LGBT Caucus Dinner in San Francisco in November 2003

- Intimidating LGBT health researchers;
- Promoting abstinence only education; and
- Supporting legalized discrimination of LGBT individuals by calling for a federal marriage act constitutional amendment.

If you think these issues do not affect you, you are DEAD wrong. They affect every individual in our community. Regardless of your political affiliations, we cannot sit passively by waiting to see what is going to happen in 2004. We must unite, speak out against inequalities, hold our elected officials accountable to the LGBT community, and encourage our community to become active in politics.

I often hear people talking about issues in government and politics. I am sure that it has happened to you also. Most often, people are complaining about something. The next time this happens to you, simply ask if they voted in the last election. Better yet, ask what have they done to voice their opinions? Again, more often than not, you will hear these people say that they did not vote, their vote does not count, or they do not have time to do anything. These people participate in what I have termed "Whine-O-Politics" or WOPs for short. I am tired of hearing from the WOPs people. Frankly, it just does not contribute anything constructive to the political climate. Do you participate in WOPs? It is time we act and stop just complaining to one another.

I encourage you, to become active in the 2004 Presidential Elections. The following is a list of things you can do in 2004.

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And more LGBT Caucus members at the LGBT Annual Dinner at the APHA Annual Meeting in San Francisco

Treasurer's Report

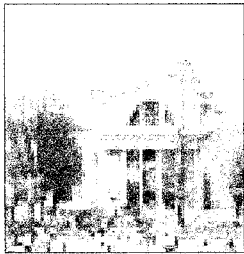
As of February 6, 2004, with all the invoices paid from the San Francisco conference, the Caucus presently has a total of \$8,701.19 in our account. The Caucus would like to especially thank the following individuals for contributing additional funds and enabling the Caucus to present two special awards as well as in offsetting the costs of our social events and producing the newsletter.

Many thanks to the following donors: Peggy and Pat; John M.; Arnold G.; Nancy K.; David D.; Tony S.; Roger B.; Walter L.; John G.; Daniel J.; David R.; Dan G.; Christopher A.; Matthew M.; Melissa T.; Michael S.; Jeff S.; Michael D.; Mary S. and Heather C.

The Caucus does accept and greatly appreciates contributions throughout the year. Your donation makes it possible to expand our social events and membership benefits. If you would like to make a contribution prior to the 2004 Annual Meeting in Washington D.C., please send your check made payable to LGBT Caucus to: John Grima, 426 Gonzalez Drive, San Francisco, CA 94132 or email at JFJTG@aol.com.

1. **Get Informed:** Educate yourself about the issues at hand and about how political candidates feel about LGBT issues. It is not hard to do. Most LGBT newspapers and publications have a list of how your representatives voted on legislation that affects the LGBT community. If they do not, the Human Rights Coalition (www.hrc.org) has a web site that surveys the candidates on LGBT issues and provides you with their responses. It is easy to use and updated regularly.

2. **Get Involved:** Campaigning for a candidate or for an issue is important. Express your educated opinions to your friends and family. Show your support of a



candidate and your opinions on political issues. Get people registered to vote and get them to actually go and vote in the upcoming elections. You can even register to vote online at <http://www.fec.gov/votregis/vr.htm>. It is not a good excuse that someone did not have time to vote. Failure to vote can get you stuck into a four-year downward turn of events.

3. **Elect Your Representation:** Every election in your area will ultimately affect you. Every vote counts in this country. It is one of our fundamental rights as a citizen. Make sure you vote on Election Day. Encourage your friends and family to vote. If you are not in your voting district on Election Day, submit an absentee ballot. Most jurisdictions have online forms available to request an absentee ballot or just refer to the blue pages of your local telephone directory.

4. **Contact Your Representatives:** Write letters or contact your political representatives about your opinions regarding pending legislation or about how you feel they are representing you.



Members of the LGBT Caucus Executive Board for 2003-2004

Remember that they work for you and represent you. You should tell them how you feel about governmental issues affecting you.

5. **Voice Your Opinions and Concerns:** Write letters regarding how issues affect you and the LGBT community to the editor of your local press. According to the Human Rights Coalition, "The letters to the editor section of your local paper is an ideal forum for sharing your opinion and story with the local community. In addition, it is one of the first pages many elected officials turn to. Letters to the editor show that an issue is of concern to the community and are excellent tools for education."

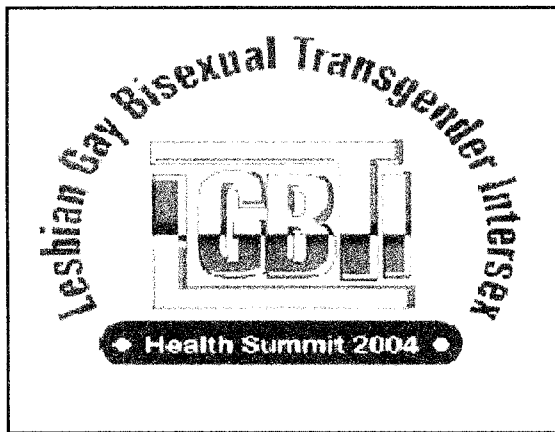
We as a community need to work harder to end inequalities in our lives that are based on sexual orientation. I often refer to the words of Pastor Martin Neimöller when he described the genocidal Nazi party activities.

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.

I ask, "Why are you waiting to be heard?" "Why are you waiting to get involved?" Your rights depend on it.

Announcements

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) again called on the Bush Administration to end its policies of distorting scientific findings and censoring research to avoid information that runs counter to its political beliefs. Citing a 38-page report released February 19, 2004 by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) that was endorsed by 60 influential scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates, GLMA decried administration policies that "misrepresented scientific knowledge and misled the public about the implications of its policies," according to the UCS report.



The 2004 LGBTI Health Summit: "Supporting Healthy Communities to Promote Social Parity"

Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons will come together at the 2004 LGBTI Health Summit to create a unique community for the purpose of exploring, expanding and exploding existing notions of what makes us healthy as individuals and as communities.

The 2nd Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Health Summit will be held on Wednesday August 25 – August 29, 2004, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Following the pattern of past Summits, Wednesday's Pre-Summit Institutes will allow for a full day of focused discussion

(continued next column)

Announcements, continued from Page 7, column 1

and skill-building. This Summit will be a mix of genders, generations, and geography. Past Summits have brought together people from across the globe to share ideas and energy. The organizers of the Summit are committed to ensuring that this is a grassroots effort, creating a welcoming environment for all persons, regardless of size, shape, age, race, gender, faith, sexual expression, or other identifiers. Further information can be found at <http://www.healthsummit2004.org>.

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) issues a special invitation to members of APHA's LGBT Caucus to attend SOPHE's 55th Annual Meeting, "The Power and Influence of Health Education: Promoting Monumental Change," November 5-7, 2004, in Washington, DC. The meeting will address the power of advocacy to promote change; the influence of social determinants and social justice; the power to protect the public's health; the circle of research and practice; and the influence of marketing. In keeping with SOPHE's resolutions on eliminating health disparities, special sessions are planned to address LGBT health disparities, racial and ethnic health disparities, rural health disparities, and inequities experienced by other populations. Don't miss the hilarious closing panel featuring the off-Broadway musical "Damaged Care", starring former APHA president Dr. Barry Levy and colleagues. Topping off the conference will be SOPHE's Awards Banquet at the National Press Club on Saturday, November 6.

Watch for the preliminary program in May 2004 at www.sophe.org.

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- The deadline for submissions for
- the next issue of the newsletter is
- September 1, 2004.
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- Please address all correspondence
- and submission of articles to the
- Editor at the email address listed
- above.
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Program Chair's Report, continued from Page 1

Because so many of you volunteered to review, we were able to avoid overwhelming anybody with too many abstracts to review and reviewers only had to review 3-5 abstracts this year. By the time you read this, all the reviews will have been completed and we will be arranging sessions and deciding on the winner of the Walter Lear Award for best student abstract. Authors will be notified if their abstract is accepted on May 31st.

Feel free to email me at: jayby@earthlink.net if you have any questions about the program for this year.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Washington, DC in November!

Announcements, continued from Page 7

Sweden Moves Forward On Gay Marriage

In mid-March, the Justice Committee of the Swedish Parliament is considering three motions that would replace the current law on same-sex civil unions with full marriage rights.

Gay and lesbian couples in Sweden have since 1995 enjoyed the same rights as heterosexual couples. While the public commonly refers to gay unions as "marriages", they are in the eyes of the law officially called "partnerships".

The three motions currently under consideration all propose a change in the marriage law to make it "gender neutral", eliminating the last distinction between the two kinds of unions.

The debate in parliament is scheduled for April 28. The three major opposition parties support the measure. Officially the government has not said how it will vote, but it is expected there is enough support for passage.

Same-sex marriage is already legal in Holland and Belgium.

Membership Lapsed?

Please renew!

**The LGBT Caucus Membership
Application & Renewal Form can be
downloaded from the Caucus
web-site at:**

<http://www.stophiv.com/lgbtc>