



Network Notes

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A Newsletter for Members of UMCP's Rainbow Terrapin Network

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Spring Break in Annapolis?

Spring break is here, and even as many of us at the University of Maryland are taking a well deserved break, state representatives will be hard at work. Unfortunately, both the Maryland Senate and the Maryland House of Delegates are currently considering bills to amend the state constitution in order to prevent marriage equality for lesbians and gay men. If either of these bills—SB 690 and HB 1393—pass both houses with a 3/5 majority vote, the amendment will be placed on the November 2006 ballot, and Marylanders will be asked to decide whether or not to constitutionally codify marriage as an institution available only to heterosexual couples in the state.

While opponents of marriage equality would have us believe that marriage should be defined as it “always” has been, I think it’s important to note that the legal definition of marriage has in fact evolved over time. We’ve moved on from the days when women had no legal rights to property and interracial couples were barred from marrying. I think we’re better off for the progress we’ve made.

And of course, like the institution of marriage itself, the Maryland Constitution is not static either. In fact, according to Equality Maryland, it’s been amended some 281 times. Not once in all of those amendments, however, has the Constitution been amended in a way that has restricted the rights of a single group of people. But that’s just the danger we’re facing now. (For more information on the difficulties with such an amendment, see Equality Maryland’s fact sheet at www.equalitymaryland.org/legislative/factsheets/EQMD_Fact_HB1393.pdf.)

I think it would be difficult to overstate the importance of defeating these bills to the future of gay and lesbian Marylanders. Lesbian and gay Marylanders and their children need and deserve the legal protection that civil marriage affords. At the very least, they need to have hope that such protection may someday be theirs, not that it will be prevented due to a constitutional amendment.

And so, gay and lesbian Marylanders need you. They need you to write to your representatives, and they need you to do it *now*, before their rights are put to popular vote. With just a few minutes of work and a few emails to your representatives, you can make a difference in the lives of lesbian and gay families throughout the state.

You can look up your state legislators’ contact information at http://eqfed.org/equalitymaryland/leg-lookup/search.tcl?view_fed_or_state=state.

If you’d like, you can also view their voting record on previous LGBT-related legislation at <http://www.equalitymaryland.org/legislative/index.htm>.

"Spring Break in Annapolis?", continued from pg. 1...

Then, simply write to your representatives and let them know what you think about SB 690 and HB 1393. Although recent polls mentioned in the Equality Maryland fact sheet suggest that most Marylanders are not interested in a constitutional amendment, the fact that this is such a contentious issue for some means that it's especially important to thank representatives who have voted in ways you approve of on past LGBT-related legislation, and to encourage them to do so again. If, however, your representatives haven't voted in ways with which you agree in the past, you might remind them that as a voter you'll be monitoring their action on the legislation that's important to you.

The difference you can make with just a few minutes of your time during spring break may be immeasurable in the lives of your fellow citizens. And if the idea of codifying discrimination is offensive to you—even if you won't be directly affected—it just might make a difference in how you feel about yourself too!

Best wishes for a restful break with a bit of e-activism sprinkled in!

—Tricia

Did You Know?

With the recent addition of the University of Florida, 50 of the 60 U.S. public and private universities that belong to the Association of American Universities now offer domestic partner benefits. Sadly, the University of Maryland is still among the 10 universities that do not.

For a complete list of the member universities that do and do not offer d.p. benefits, visit <http://www.umd.edu/lgbt/AAUMembers.html>

Campus News From Around the Country

1. Suffolk University to Extend Benefits to Trans Students

Beginning this August, Massachusetts' Suffolk University will offer coverage for hormones and psychological services for transgender students on the University's health plan.

<http://baywindows.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=008EC9FBCFF24AD18614290016BE1303&nm=Current+Issue&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=8F3A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=855983022E7346BD A8D22510319D723C>

2. Hood College Students Crown Lesbian Homecoming King

Out lesbian and senior Jennifer Jones was named king at this year's homecoming dance at Hood College. The College is now considering a revision of the rules to prevent that from happening again.

<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2006/03/07/1>

3. Equality Riders Face Resistance

Twenty four young gay rights activists were arrested for trespassing as they attempted to meet with other students on the campus of Liberty University. Six more activists were arrested earlier this week at Regent University.

<http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?2006/03/10/5>

http://www.equalityride.com/article.php?article_id=189

Campus News, continued from pg. 2...

4. Bisexuality on the Rise for College Women

A student recently released by the CDC has found that the incidence of bisexuality among young women is up 10% in the last decade.

http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?coll=news_articles&sernum=2005/09/16/1&page=2

5. Coming Out, American Style

Lesbian and gay foreign students find a sense of comfort and freedom from social and cultural restraints as they come out on campus.

<http://www.diamondbackonline.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2005/12/08/4397d7b6788e2>

6. Georgetown Offers Benefits but Sidesteps the Issue of Same-Sex Partnerships

Georgetown University recently began offering benefits to "Legally-Domiciled Adults" (LDAs), allowing them to offer benefits to their employees' same sex partners or other adults with whom they reside while avoiding conflicts over the University's Catholic identity.

<http://www.georgetownvoice.com/2005-11-03/feature/all-in-the-family>

7. Baptist Colleges Facing Difficulties

A number of Baptist-affiliated colleges and universities have recently been confronted by the challenge of appeasing both a more vocally pro-gay student population and the Baptist trustees who control their budgets, all with a variety of outcomes.

<http://insidehighered.com/news/2005/11/17/baptist>

8. UPDATE: Supreme Court Upholds Solomon Amendment

The U.S. Supreme Court recently determined, by unanimous decision, that the government can withhold federal funding for colleges who choose to limit or deny military recruitment on campus. Some schools had been challenging the Solomon Amendment because of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

<http://chronicle.com/free/2006/03/2006030608n.htm>

Check it out!



www.safraproject.org

"The Safra Project is a resource project working on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender women who identify as Muslim religiously and/or culturally (Muslim LBT women). The Safra Project was set up in October 2001 by and for Muslim LBT women. The issues faced by Muslim LBT women, and the (combination of) prejudices based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, religion, race, culture and immigration status that they experience, are unique and currently insufficiently addressed." (www.safraproject.org/about.htm)

(Thanks to Rainbow Terp Craig Alimo for pointing out this fantastic resource!)

Featured Online Resource

The Washington Blade



www.washblade.com

If you're looking for *the* source for LGBT news and entertainment in the area, look no further than the *Washington Blade*. In addition to its print version, which is circulated every Friday and is available free in Stamp Student Union, the *Blade* offers an online version that is expanded and updated and includes all the LGBT news that's fit to print. (OK, maybe a bit that isn't so fit, too. More on that later.)

The *Blade* provides a good mix of national and local news, arts and entertainment news, community calendars and more. One difficulty with the site is that its divisions aren't entirely transparent. While the quality of the information is generally high, its organization could use some deeper consideration.

Nevertheless, there does seem to be some rhyme to the *Blade's* reason. On the whole, the website seems to be divided into updated, online only content (represented by "The Latest," "Bladewire," "Bladeblog," and "Blogwatch") versus content generally included in the print edition (represented by "News," "Viewpoint," "Local Life," "Entertainment," "Eclipse," and "Nightlife"). A final, sometimes more frivolous section contains "Bitch Session," and "Cartoons," but also the very important "Calendars" section.

Much of the online-only content is comprised of up-to-the-minute news articles. Both The Latest and Bladewire contain those articles, the primary difference being that The Latest news contains articles available on the *Blade's* own site, while Bladewire articles require readers to follow external links. Also, Bladewire articles, while not typically trivial, often seem a bit less urgent or national in scope than do the articles found in The Latest section.

Other online-only content is included in Bladeblog and Blogwatch. Bladeblog includes

Blade staff commentary on news of interest to LGBT people and our allies, while Blogwatch is a simple list of links to blog entries of interest to LGBT news watchers. While some of the blogs are interesting posts by unknowns, others are blog entries by big names in LGBT culture. I personally appreciate that someone else goes out and rounds this list up! I also have to admit that I've become a fan of more than one blog listed in Blogwatch.

Those who prefer their information a little less interactive or at least a little closer to the print version will want to check out the second set of links ("News," "Viewpoint," "Local Life," "Entertainment," "Eclipse," and "Nightlife") from the homepage. Included in the news section are local, national, and world news sections, as well as sections reporting on religious news, hate crimes and other significant crimes involving LGBT people, and current LGBT-related legislation.

Viewpoint is, not surprisingly, the section where editorials, opinions, action alerts, LGBT-related quotes from celebrities and politicians, and reader commentary about news articles reside. I think it's a somewhat distinct and definitely interesting feature of the *Blade* that it includes so many opportunities for readers to sound off about the what they're reading. If there's one thing the *Blade* isn't short on, both from its readers and its staff, it's opinions. You'll find them all in Viewpoint..

Local Life contains a feature of local interest. (The most recent feature, for example, focuses on a Takoma Park lesbian running for election to the Maryland House of Delegates.) Additionally, Local Life takes an in-depth look each week at a social event, a restaurant, and a theatre production which may interest readers.

If you're interested in knowing what's up in gay culture, the Entertainment pages might be a good place to begin. There you'll find articles on books, music, television, travel, and even cars that may be of interest to LGBT readers. And while the Auto section and the gossipy "Dish" section may not provide the hard-hitting news some are looking for, for others, they're a welcome diversion from the realities of the day. (LGBT cars? I know. It seems a bit of a stretch to me too!)

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Featured Online Resource, cont'd from page 4...

Finally, there's Eclipse. This section contains a calendar of local nightlife opportunities, a safer-sex advice column, and the often humorous, always passionate "Bitch Session, where LGBT people vent about the world around them, both LGBT and straight.

There are two ways to look at the online version of the *Blade*, I think. On the more serious side, you can see it as a source for both the most important LGBT-related news of the day and LGBT opinions about that news. Or, you can see it as a source for entertainment, both in its heavy focus on Washington-area entertainment of interest to LGBT people, and also its more off-beat attributes such as advice columns, gossip, and staff-reader interaction and opinions.

Either way, check out the *Blade*, and I think you'll find that it's got exactly what you're looking for.

Network Notes is a newsletter for members of The University of Maryland, College Park's Rainbow Terrapin Network. Comments, questions, and suggestions are always welcome, and may be directed to Tricia Slusser, editor of *Network Notes*, at tricia.slusser@verizon.net or 301.405.0734.



Announcements & Program Notes



Welcome to our newest Rainbow Terps!

Jason Chan
 Krystal Clark
 Mosi Forde
 Ikenchuku Gboneme
 Isaac Hill
 Sheree Ibrahim
 Lauren Kervick
 Matthew Kirschner
 Richard Kollar
 Gretchen Metzelaars
 Kiyanna Mills
 Michael Proctor
 Biney Singh
 Ashley Smithson
 Sophia Stoute
 Merle Zimmerman



Spread the word...the last 2 sets of Rainbow Terps trainings for the semester will take place as follows:

Part 1: April 3, 9am – 12pm
 Part 2: April 10, 9am – 12pm
 Part 1: May 4, 1pm – 4pm
 Part 2: May 11, 1pm – 4pm

Anyone wishing to register can contact Tricia at tricia.slusser@verizon.net