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just news

Growing up, reaching out

A continuing goal of the Lesbian Community Project is the establishment of a community center

BY ANNDEE HOCHMAN

Jawea Mockabee sits in the Lesbian Community Project's new office on East Burnside Street, staring at the AT&T terminal topped with an inflatable purple palm tree, methodically moving the membership files from wilted index cards to computer disk.

It is not a glamorous task. But it is symbolic of the work facing Mockabee, LCP's new executive director, and LCP's board and membership in the group's second full year of existence. If establishing LCP in May 1987 placed a cornerstone for the lesbian community, the task at hand now is to build the rest of the house, brick by slow, gritty brick.

Mockabee and several board members say LCP's focus now is "maturation" — to become financially solid, work toward long-term goals such as establishing a community center and involve members more fully in the group's day-to-day activities.

For Mockabee, who has been a board member since LCP's inception and bears a lengthy résumé of community and statewide organizing, plotting LCP's second year demands both expansive vision and a realistic eye. One of her own long-term goals is to spread LCP throughout Oregon — perhaps by hanging a state map on the wall, placing pushpins in every town that boasts at least one member and holding forums in each of those places.

"We've been criticized for not reaching out enough to lesbians in other areas. My response is — we're only a year old," she said.

"The first year we were trying to consolidate our vision of what LCP was going to do and match that to the reality of what we *could* do," said Sue Kozak, a member of the board of directors. "Now we have a healthier outlook about time, how long it takes to get things done."

One current goal is to increase members' involvement in LCP. After a rush of interest that brought in 400 members in the first six months, the list has steadily increased to 600. But for many of those women, LCP involvement means writing a check for yearly dues or a monthly pledge, reading the newsletter and attending occasional LCP-sponsored events.

"The organization, being new, needs to develop its membership potential," said board member Lynn Nakamoto. "That needs major work. There's a wealth of talent out there that we don't take advantage of."

One and a half years of existence have brought tangible changes and accomplishments for LCP. Newsletters with a streamlined format of updates, classified ads and calendar listings now arrive monthly instead of bimonthly; LCP's political effectiveness committee has compiled a Lesbian Resource Guide of women's groups, social services, media numbers, and gay

and lesbian resources. The group has sponsored three summertime softball tournaments, two series of continuing-education classes and numerous other musical, cultural and educational events.

LCP also has proven itself to be a group that learns from history, on both large and small scales. From the beginning, members sought to avoid the divisiveness and intolerance that plagued the lesbian community in the 1970s, when strict lines of political "correctness" split people with basically common goals. LCP has held to its early dictum that coming out is not a requirement for participation, even for board membership; one new board member is identified as "name withheld" in the August newsletter.

In smaller ways, LCP has used criticism as leverage for change. After hearing complaints for hosting the women-only Pride at the Pittock party on the weekend of 1987 Lesbian and Gay Pride, LCP threw a larger party at the Montgomery Park Atrium, open to both men and women, the following June.

Current projects include a yearly Gay Pride event, a lesbian New Year's Eve party and a February conference with the theme "Lesbian Families."

A continuing goal is the establishment of a community center.

A priority from the beginning, the vision of a community center also has been tempered with the reality of financial status and long-term lease agreements. For a year and a half, former executive director Cathy Siemens ran LCP out of a third-floor room in her home. The new office on East Burnside Street, although not accessible to women in wheelchairs, does hold room for the bulging files, stacks of documents and lesbian newsletters from around the country, as well as a place for meetings and drop-in visitors.

The search for a larger community space continues, urged on by a \$7,500 grant from the Chicago Resource Center that must be used within a year to lease or put a down-payment on a center.

Experience taught LCP's first board some lessons about the structure they created. The initial 24-member board of directors proved unwieldy, and current board members are considering proposals for reorganizing.

Several board members said the most important accomplishment of LCP's first 18 months is also the least tangible — the establishment of a large, broad-based, identifiable lesbian community that continually insists, to both members and the larger world, that lesbians exist, organize and constitute a political force.

"It means just being available for politicians to contact lesbians and to be aware of LCP's existence," said Kozak. "It's harder to quantify that kind of impact."

Priscilla's appeal rejected, sanctions ordered

A hearing on September 21 finally closed one chapter in the case of *Tim Shuck v. Priscilla Martin*, although the courtroom saga goes on.

A Multnomah County Circuit Court jury determined in July that Martin, a fervent anti-abortion activist, had slandered Shuck by shouting on several occasions outside the Lovejoy Surgicenter where he works that he had AIDS.

Martin's attorney, Henry S. Kane, filed a motion to declare a mistrial and call for a new

trial, primarily on grounds that the courtroom deputy gestured and reacted during the trial in a way that may have biased jurors in favor of Shuck.

After a two-hour hearing, Judge Robert W. Redding rejected the motion for a mistrial. He also granted sanctions against Kane and Martin, meaning that they will be required to pay the costs of Shuck's response to the motion.

Meanwhile, Shuck has not received a penny of the \$175,000 judgment in his favor, although his attorneys have filed several demands for payment, and interest on the amount accrues at \$43.23 per day.

Martin has 30 days to decide whether to appeal the jury's finding.

— Anndee Hochman

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