

The generation gap

Younger women are crucial for LCP's survival

BY KRISTAN ASPEN

Fear seems to be the primary factor motivating many of us since Sept. 11.

The only way we can regain a sense of safety is to reach out and build community with our human family. The better we know each other, the more secure we will feel and the more prepared we will be to support each other when any of us is under attack.

To build this kind of community network takes commitment and vision. It was the vision of the founding mothers of the Lesbian Community Project in 1986 that this organization could evolve to meet the needs of lesbians many years into the future. Today, I believe LCP is more important than ever as an institution.

I agreed to serve as program director in January 2000 because I wanted to see LCP thrive and become relevant again to lesbians and others in the sexual minorities community. With the help of a precious few board members who have given generously of their time and money during the past two years, we have made great strides and survived through 2001.

Now, we need an influx of new energy to

continue to grow. Now is the time for women in their 20s, 30s and 40s to get involved. We have mentors in their 50s, 60s and 70s who are available for consultation, to share history and to train new leaders as requested, but LCP cannot become stronger without more participation by younger women.

It was not an easy thing to start this organization, to obtain tax-exempt status, to build an infrastructure or even to amass the office supplies we have. These achievements are substantial, and they are available to you because many women have held this dream together for 16 years.

LCP is a resilient institution. It has been raised from smoldering ashes more than once, but it should not be taken for granted.

To keep the organization running smoothly requires the commitment and cooperation of 10 to 18 volunteer board members plus five to 10 other active volunteers. We have only nine board members, and several are ready to retire. Without new enthusiasm to stoke the fire, LCP will not survive the next year.

Perhaps you are wondering what LCP actually does for lesbians. Through our newsletter, soon-to-be-launched Web site, groups and classes, LCP provides access, information, hope, leadership training, visibility, opportunities to make new friends, communication between women and many possible ways to volunteer and participate in building community with others.

As program director, I interact with lesbians who appreciate LCP being there for them—women who are just coming out, women who are new to town, women who need the support of other lesbians as they face difficult decisions or are calling for a referral to a lesbian-friendly practitioner of one kind or another and women looking for social alternatives to the bars.

I also know there are lesbians who support LCP financially because they believe in the possibilities of what an organized community can do. Whatever your reasons for becoming a member, I hope you will do it today.

If LCP ceases to exist in 2002, what will serve as the umbrella for new projects and initiatives developed by lesbians and our friends and allies? Who will play host to Deaf Culture Nights and American Sign Language classes, the Amazon Dragons dragonboat team and for the Options for Elders task force on senior housing and retirement communities?

Who will produce the softball tournament in August? Who will provide leadership training retreats for queer youth and organize Conversations Projects?

These are just some of the projects flourishing under LCP's auspices. Who knows what new community organizing opportunities await us in the new year!

I hope I've convinced you to become a member, renew your membership and/or make a special tax-deductible, year-end donation.

Any donation and any renewal by a member expired for more than a year will count toward a 50 percent match from the Ralph L. Smith Foundation.


The purpose of this grant is to strengthen our membership/donor base so LCP can become more self-sufficient. We appreciate the foundation's continued investment in our collective community umbrella organization. To qualify for the match we must demonstrate that lesbians and our friends and allies are investing in LCP, too.


The future of any organization is in the hands of its members. Without you we are going nowhere. Basic membership is critical.

Beyond that, you can pledge any amount you choose on a monthly or other basis to support LCP's office and staff. Monthly pledgers and major donors are LCP's fairy godmothers.

And finally, you can offer to volunteer in the office, at our New Year's Eve Dance or through public speaking, working on the newsletter and fund raising. If you are a voting member, you may apply to serve on the board of directors. The board needs women of diverse backgrounds who have good communication skills, a commitment to lesbians and an interest in community organizing.

However you choose to participate, you will be joining a wonderful community of women. Don't wait until it's too late.

Join LCP now. I look forward to seeing you on New Year's Eve at Shenanigan's, where we all can "Lift Those Spirits and Dance!!!" Tell your friends. Everyone is welcome! 

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KRISTAN ASPEN is program director of the Lesbian Community Project. For more information call 503-294-7435 or send e-mail to lcp@webpride.net.



Kristan Aspen (left) learns sign language as part of the Lesbian Community Project's outreach to the deaf community

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