



From left, Stonewall Communities board member Alice Fisher, Stonewall Communities president David Aronstein, Wheelock College vice president of academic affairs Suzanne Pasch and Stonewall communities board member Michael Connolly are partnering to create a gay-specific college.

insurance for the domestic partners of gay and lesbian state employees.

"After serving the state for 25 years, I hoped to retire with the same peace of mind as my straight colleagues," said Ellen Novak. "But retirement has meant that my partner has had to switch to costly private health insurance with inferior coverage at the point in our lives when we are most likely to face health problems. I worked just as hard as my colleagues, so it doesn't seem fair that my family has been saddled with this burden."

Novak, who has been with her partner, Linda McCreary, for 15 years, was forced to retire in 2004 after being diagnosed with a chronic lung condition. When she was still working for the state, she was able to provide McCreary health insurance as her domestic partner, but because of the state's policy of denying retirees domestic partner coverage, McCreary's domestic partner coverage was terminated when Novak was forced to retire. Married couples in the same situation are permitted to continue to provide health insurance to their spouses after retirement.

The lawsuit charges that the state's policy of denying gay and lesbian state retirees equal health insurance for their partners violates the New Mexico Constitution's equality guarantees. Unlike their straight colleagues, gay and lesbian employees are barred from marrying in the state and therefore, in the absence of domestic partner benefits, are denied equal compensation.

In 2003, Gov. Bill Richardson issued an executive order providing state employees, both gay and straight, with the option of providing their partners health insurance through domestic partner coverage. Under the order, domestic partner coverage is not available to employees after they retire, while spousal coverage is provided.

MASSACHUSETTS Gay Learning Institute Opens

A learning institute designed for and by queer adults will open March 29 in Boston. The Stonewall Communities Lifelong Learning Institute at Wheelock College will offer eight-week courses plus "lunch and learn" events, social networking opportunities and much more. Students will have access to various facilities and programs at Wheelock College and will be able to participate in other activities, social events and trips.

While there are other Lifelong Learning Institutes in the greater Boston area, this will be the first ever to be designed specifically by and for the

sexual minorities community but open to all. Lifelong learning is a rapidly growing social and personal growth movement for people older than 50. Sometimes called "senior colleges" or "learning communities," there are no grades, tests or requirements. There are more than 26,000 older gay people in the Boston area, and part of the appeal of a lifelong learning program is the sense of community enjoyed by its members.

"Lifelong learning matches Stonewall's mission, goals, expertise and networks. We are dedicated to creating social, residential and educational opportunities for older lesbians and gay men, as well as support, connections and empowerment," said Stonewall Communities president David Aronstein. "We believe that our LLI will help create a culture of aging in Boston's LGBT community that is marked by generosity, compassion and vision."

For more information call 617-369-9090 or visit www.stonewallcommunities.com.

MICHIGAN Court Rules Against Public Employer Benefits

The Michigan Court of Appeals ruled that the state's marriage amendment prohibits public employers from offering domestic partner benefits.

The decision, which was made public Feb. 2, overturns a ruling by Judge Joyce Draganchuk that public employers may offer domestic partner benefits without violating the "marriage amendment." The lower court decision was appealed by Attorney General Mike Cox, who intervened as a defendant.

When voters passed the amendment in November 2004, they were told that it would not affect domestic partnership benefits that provide health coverage for same-sex couples.

"Providing health insurance to same-sex domestic partners is vastly different from recognition of a marriage and the over 1,000 benefits and rights that marriage confers," the American Civil Liberties Union argued in the appeal brief.

In April 2005, the ACLU of Michigan filed the lawsuit on behalf of 21 families in Ingham County Circuit Court seeking a declaratory ruling that Proposal 2, which amended the Michigan Constitution to prohibit marriage for same-sex couples, allows public employers to offer health care insurance, or domestic partnership benefits, to gay and lesbian families. 10

Compiled by JAYMEE R. CUTI

Newborn through Size 8

**Hoot-N-
Annie**

Experienced Children's Fashions

**All Purple Tags 20% off
in February!**

Open Tues 9am-7pm, and Wed-Sat 9am-4pm
503-246-1235
8426 SW 22nd
1/2 block South of Barbur Blvd

\$136,900

Cute 1BD/BA
Condo near PCC
Rock Creek &
major buslines.
Pool/Spa onsite.
Nook for office/
den/dining.
ML# 6107127.
Call Randall!

Randall Smith
REAL ESTATE BROKER
(503) 471-3573
DIRECT
randallsmith@cbseal.com
randall-smith.com

**COLDWELL
BANKER**

**SEAL
PROPERTIES**
(503) 643-7325

JMV

The Law Office of John V. McVea, P.C.

CRIMINAL DEFENSE

- DUI / DWS
- PROPERTY CRIMES
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- THEFT
- ASSAULT

PERSONAL INJURY

- AUTO ACCIDENTS
- WRONGFUL DEATH
- BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN
- ABUSE VICTIMS
- MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

503-223-1708
www.mcvealaw.com

PABA
Member: Oregon Bar, OSLA, NBA

The Morgan Bldg. • 720 SW Washington, Suite 750 • Portland, OR 97205

MORGAN FINANCIAL, INC

MORTGAGE LENDING & INVESTMENTS

Custom Financing that fits your Needs!

It is our goal to fit every borrower with the mortgage that best suits their interests and goals. It is of the utmost importance that you understand all of the potential options you have, and make the right decision.

It is important to us that you are comfortable with the financing from the minute you fill out an application to the day you move into your new home.

Pauline Hines Branch Manager
pauline@morfi.com • 503-515-8761 Mobile

Kristen Roland
kroland@morfi.com • 503-679-1299 Mobile

503-542-7894 Office • 503-542-7895 Fax • 935 NW 19th • Portland, Oregon 97209

*Building strong, lasting, lifelong relationships...
one at a time.*

ROBERT HOGG, CPA
Mortgage Broker
Retired Air Force MSC
503.781.4181
www.HoggLoans.com

FHA/VA

- 100 % Financing
- Reverse Mortgage
- Investment Properties
- Equity Loans
- Commercial Loans