



News & views

Vision • Integrity • Quality

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Community Alliance Forms

The 1994 National Social Workers Conference marked a milestone in the history of the Transgender Community. Five transgender organizations set aside philosophical differences in order to work together on a common project—outreach and education to social workers about the transgender community. The Transgender Alliance for Community (The Alliance) is meant to build upon that small beginning and continue the cooperative effort begun in October 1994 at the NASW conference.

The Alliance will form the framework for the interactive participation of transgender organizations in community programs and projects. This interactive participation will take the form of sharing and exchanging services, information, and resources available to the partners in the alliance.

The Alliance is inclusive. That is, all non-profit and not-for-profit transgender organizations are invited to participate as a member of the Alliance. The Alliance is also committed to diversity. In that spirit, the Alliance will develop educational and promotional programs and projects that benefit the community as a whole, but also develop programs and projects for minority interests that are not served by other organizations. The Alliance will be pro-active on inclusion and diversity, but will not use those buzzwords to exclude any organization from participation.

Any organization that wishes to participate in The Alliance should make the following Pledge:

"We, the (name of organization), in the spirit of cooperation, caring, and community, pledge to participate in the sharing and exchange of services, information and resources, where possible, with other transgender organizations in order to develop a greater sense of true community among all transgendered people of the world."

The concept of The Alliance evolved over the past 18 months from discussions between Alison Laing, Chair of the Outreach Institute; Dallas Denny and JoAnn Roberts, Executive Director and Chair, respectively, of AEGIS; and Jane Ellen Fairfax, Chair of Tri-Ess. The cooperative effort for NASW was Fairfax's idea and was coordinated by Roberts. Encouraged by the success of the NASW effort, Denny, Laing, and Roberts developed The Alliance Pledge and will be presenting it to their respective boards this month. Fairfax has agreed to take the Pledge to the Tri-Ess board for approval, hopefully, sometime next year.

Meanwhile, as both Roberts and Laing are also co-founders of Renaissance, they brought The Alliance Pledge to Renaissance first. The board of directors of Renaissance took The Pledge at their November 13th meeting. It begins!



Breakthrough Outreach Effort A Success

by Angela Gardner

On October eighteenth social workers from all over the U.S. converged on Nashville, Tennessee for the National Association of Social Workers convention at that city's modern, downtown convention center. A small band of determined representatives of the transgender community also descended on the convention to spread the word about the differently gendered. I was one of that band of gender rebels.

Nashville is known as a bastion of country music and is called the "Buckle on the Bible Belt." This fact was apparent to me every morning as my route to the convention center took me right past the

headquarters of the Southern Baptist Church. That Nashville is a city of contrasts was illustrated by the fact that one street away from the Baptists our outreach team had to walk past a "gentlemen's club" which featured exotic dancers. The exotic dancers would not have gotten as much attention as our team did on the convention's exhibition floor. We were a hit. The man in the next booth told me he had observed people all day long watching us from what they felt were unobtrusive vantage points.

We were worth watching and not only because we were transgendered. We were a genuine break-

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RENAISSANCE

Renaissance Elects First Female National Leader

This seems the month to break old habits. The board of directors of Renaissance held its national elections at the November meeting and Linda Chenowith, a genetic female and former Chapter Leader of Renaissance LSV, was elected unanimously to the position of Managing Director of Renaissance National.

Other women have been group leaders at the local level, notably Linda Peacock of Tri-Ess, and have served on national boards. But Ms. Chenowith is the first woman to lead a national transgender organization. Linda fills the chair vacated by Beth Marshall who led the group for 1994. The board thanks Beth for her service and welcomes Linda.

Breakthrough Outreach...

through for the transgender community. For the first time the five major transgender organizations in the country were working together in a major outreach effort. Coming together under the IFGE banner were that organization's Operations Director, Yvonne Cook-Riley, our team captain, Tri-Ess' chair of their national board, Jane Ellen Fairfax and her spouse, the publisher of the *Femme Mirror*, Frances Fairfax, Evelyn Kirkland of Renaissance and SPICE, the Reverend Carla Pridgen representing AEGIS and myself carrying the banner for the Outreach Institute as well as Renaissance. IFGE paid the most money toward the effort with contributions of five hundred dollars from each of the other organizations helping to pay the expenses of our appearance.

In the hectic first day session we handed out over twelve hundred copies of the *Tapestry Journal* along with a trifold brochure which gave information on the participating groups. We stood in front of the IFGE display which has been utilized at that organization's conventions in the past. Prominently displayed photos of various transgendered people, including our own Michelle Lynn, caught the eye of passers by and a friendly smile and inquiry as to whether they had gotten a complimentary copy of *Tapestry* made sure that we held their attention. Only a small minority of the social workers chose to ignore our offer. Most reactions ranged from mild interest to enthusiasm that we were there. Some told us they had worked with transgendered clients in the past and had not had the resources to deal with those people. Others said they had a present client who would benefit from what they had just learned.

The second day was not as frantic. With most of the *Tapestry* copies given out our task became more focused on

one-on-one question answering. Team members gave each inquiry as much time as was needed. Other exhibitors came by to see our booth and were just as interested in getting our information as the social workers. Members of the armed forces had displays but, they didn't ask and we didn't tell.

That evening the local support group, The Tennessee Vals held a reception and dinner in our honor at a local restaurant. If you are ever in Nashville contact their boss lady Marisa Richmond and they will throw down the welcome mat for you, too. They are a great bunch of folks and they know how to show a girl a good time.

The third day, after reluctantly prying ourselves out of bed, we engaged in more of the same type of outreach as day two. While all of the team members had special moments with convention attendees, my moment came with a woman who worked for the Emergency Medical Services company that was there in case of any medical problems. She had walked by the booth on the first day and I had smiled and asked if she would like a copy of *Tapestry*. On the third day she came by and said she had read the magazine from cover to cover and now felt she had learned a lot about the transgendered community. She said it made her feel good that I had taken the time to say hello and offer her our literature since most of the exhibitors did not pay any attention to her. We shared a good bye hug and she left the booth better prepared to deal with any transgendered person who has a medical emergency.

Next year's NASW convention will happen in Philadelphia at the new Marriott Hotel near the convention center. After the great success of this year's outreach each organization's team member has recommended that their group participate again. For information on how you may participate, contact me through the national office.



Unemployed? Underemployed?

Ben Franklin said, "The Lord helps those that help themselves." Renaissance is going to try and help the transgendered who are unemployed or under-employed.

Announcing: Renaissance Job Match, a national employment resource center. If you are looking for work send a resume or brief description of what type of employment you want. Make sure you include a way for us to contact you. If you are in a position to offer employment or let someone know of a job opening send a description of the position. Maybe we can make a match. To be included in the Job Match files send your information to:

**Renaissance Job Match,
c/o Renaissance, 987 Old Eagle School Rd, Suite 719
Wayne, PA 19087**