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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VII - No. II - December 2005

A Victory Against Discrimination

By Mona Greenbaum – Coordinator, Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec

I first met Helene Zylberszac, a family therapist, when she joined the Lesbian Mothers Association in February 1999. At the time she had no idea what a long and arduous journey it would be for her to start her own family.

This was the time when we did not have access to places like Procrea, Ovo or the Montreal Fertility Centre and so, many individuals found their own doctors, in private practice, who were willing to do inseminations. Unfortunately, though well-meaning, many of these doctors had only rudimentary knowledge of fertility issues.

After two ectopic pregnancies (the embryo gets implanted in the fallopian tubes rather than the uterus where it should be) Helene found herself, in 2001, at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) sitting and discussing her situation with Dr Tulandi, a leading fertility specialist at the RVH's Infertility Centre. Her father, a doctor, had made the appointment for her.

Dr Tulandi agreed that because of the fertility issues that Helene was experiencing that she would be a perfect candidate for in vitro fertilization. Helene decided to try.

But when she left the doctor's office and went to the reception area to set up her appointment, the secretary asked her the name of her husband. When the secretary found out that she had neither husband nor boyfriend she refused to give Helene an appointment. She said it was hospital policy. A loud argument ensued and through it all Dr Tulandi sat quietly in his office.

Shortly after this, Helene lodged a complaint to the ombudsman of the hospital. Helene told me that she also spoke again with Dr Tulandi, as well as the head nurse of the clinic, who she says told her that the RVH doesn't take lesbians because their "regular" clients would not want to see lesbians "being demonstrative in the waiting room".

Helene said that, Dr Tan, the chief of the department also explained to her that gays and lesbians "do not make good parents". When she told them that she would take her case to the Quebec Human Rights Commission the response from them was: "The Human Rights Commission is a joke. You won't get anything out of them."

Finally Dr Tan recommended that she continue with regular inseminations outside of the hospital, despite the fact that another ectopic pregnancy could be life-threatening. So much for quality patient-care.

Helene ended up, out of desperation, doing another year of inseminations with Dr Mok, who although acknowledging that this was, for her, a high-risk procedure, said: "Well, anyway there are emergency wards nearby."

In the meantime Helene and her partner launched a complaint with the Quebec Human Rights Commission (QHRC). For the next 3.5 years Helene pursued this case relentlessly. She phoned the QHRC every month to see where her case was at.

During this time the vista for Quebec lesbians changed dramatically. We were given full parental right with the reform of the civil code in 2002, we gained access to three private fertility clinics in Montreal and one in Quebec City, and the Assisted Human Reproduction Act of 2004 prohibited discrimination on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation.

Still no news for Helene.

At the end of 2003 the QHRC had set up a mediation session with the RVH. The hospital sent 3 lawyers to this meeting. Helene arrived with a caseworker from the QHRC. No solution was found. The hospital continued to insist that this discrimination was appropriate and acceptable.

Finally in March 2005 Helene called the *Montreal Gazette* with her story. After much resistance and skepticism from editors at the Gazette they finally did run an article entitled "Fertility Challenge was the First of Many". In the article Dr Tan publicly admitted that the federal law states that hospitals cannot discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. He did not however express regrets regarding Helene's case.

And then when she was least expecting it Helene got a letter in the mail. The Quebec Human Rights Commission voted unanimously that the RVH had discriminated against her and that damages should be awarded: \$9,500 for her expenses (i.e. un warranted medical procedures and missed days of work) and \$10,000 in moral damages. The RVH had smeared its public reputation.

This unanimous judgment sends a loud and clear message that hospitals can no longer discriminate against us. Although it looks like the RVH will now be opening its doors, there are still others.

Hôpital St Luc for example, routinely tells lesbians that although they do inseminations, they do not have a lot of sperm and so are saving it for heterosexual couples! Imagine if they said: only white people can be seen at this clinic because we don't have enough sperm, or there are only enough brain-scans available for non-muslims. The discrimination is obvious, patently ridiculous and NOW has consequences attached to it.

The AML has sent notices around to all public fertility clinics to let them know the penalties attached to this kind of discrimination.

And because of the determination of one person...the system will change!

Oh yeah. And did Helene ever get to start a family? Well in July 2003 she adopted her son Max from Moldova. Helene succeeded and she is ecstatic to finally be a parent. In the process she helped us all.

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs - September-December 2005

Montreal and Quebec News

September 1, 2005 (Montreal, Quebec) The second Outgames will be staged in Denmark's capital it was announced in Montreal by the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (GLISA). GLISA was holding its first annual delegate conference in Montreal, the host city for the 2006 games.

The announcement was greeted by cheers in both Montreal and Copenhagen. Martin Geertsen, a Copenhagen city council member said that the decision will help the city prepare for its bid for the 2024 Olympics. The Outgames are expected to bring about 16,000 athletes and fans to the Danish City.

Plans for the first Outgames, to be held in Montreal, are well along. Montreal 2006, the organizing committee has secured major funding from the city, provincial and federal governments. It says that the number of LGBT athletes already committed is above estimates for a year before the event.

Montreal was to have hosted the more established Gay Games in 2006 but withdrew in a dispute with the Federation of Games over control and funding.

September 13, 2005 (Quebec City) Andre Boulerice, a Parti Quebecois member of the legislature since 1985, is quitting politics in what he calls the toughest decision of his life.

Boulerice, 59, said he will continue to fight for Quebec sovereignty when the next referendum is held. Boulerice, who was appointed minister for relations with citizens and immigration by then-premier Bernard Landry in 2001, was one of the first Quebec politicians to openly say he was gay.

October 2, 2005 (Montreal, Quebec) A lesbian has been awarded more than \$19,000 in damages after a hospital refused to give her in-vitro fertilization when she showed up at the clinic without a man (see cover story).

November 15, 2005 (Quebec City) Andre Boisclair has rolled over his rivals to become leader of the Quebec sovereignty movement. Some wondered if the openly gay Boisclair's sexuality might become an issue in the Parti Quebecois leadership campaign. Instead, his past cocaine use dominated the race and provided an unexpected test of his leadership abilities.

The issue repeatedly dogged Boisclair who refused to discuss how often he did the drug when he was a PQ cabinet minister or who supplied it to him. Shortly before his cocaine use became front-page news, he was confronted during a quiet moment over his reputed wild lifestyle while in government. Muttering a few now-familiar lines about youthful indiscretions, Boisclair blushed and bolted for the exit.

Boisclair joined cabinet in 1996 under Lucien Bouchard, sharing conservative fiscal policies and a desire for a new political arrangement with Canada. He rose to higher prominence as environment and municipal affairs minister in the dying days of the last PQ government under Bernard Landry, who stepped down last June.

Boisclair, 39, received 53.7 per cent support among PQ members on the first ballot when results were tallied. The win makes him the first openly gay man to lead a political party in North America.

Canadian News

September 8, 2005 (Thunder Bay, Ontario) Gabriel Picard and his family are optimistic that the recent settlement of the Ontario Human Rights Commission between Gabriel and the Lakehead District School Board is the beginning of a board-wide commitment to ending homophobic harassment and bullying in Lakehead Public Schools.

“ Discrimination and harassment have no place in our schools,” said Chief Commissioner Keith Norton, commenting on the settlement. “ I am pleased to see the Lakehead District School Board is taking progressive measures to ensure all students will be treated equally, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation. ”

The two parties developed a document entitled *Proactive Steps in Preventing Homophobic Harassment*, which the Board has agreed to adopt and promote. It contains a number of positive steps that can help to change the culture within the public school system and make it a safer place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students and staff. The Board is committed to reviewing, implementing and communicating all policies regarding the rights of all students with respect to sexual orientation. The School Board will be ensuring that curriculum resources and professional development dealing with homophobia and heterosexism will be made available to teachers and students.

It was Gabriel's intention from the outset to ensure that no other student be subjected to the homophobic harassment that he experienced throughout his schooling. With this settlement the Board is making a commitment to a safer school system.

The decision has implications for other school boards across Canada.

N.B. There is a growing list of litigation cases where school boards have been taken to task for doing nothing to protect youth from harassment based on their or their parents' sexual orientation. The following are a few that are better known:

- 1) *Azmi Jubran vs. North Vancouver School Board (BC)* (re: bullying, see below)
- 2) *Chamberlain et al vs. Surrey School Board (BC)* (re: inclusion of books on same-sex families in Kindergarten classroom)
- 3) *Marc Hall vs. Durham Catholic School Board (ONT)* (re: same-sex date to the high school prom)
- 4) *Gabriel Picard vs. Thunder Bay School Board (ONT)* (re: bullying)
- 5) *Surrey Teacher's Association vs. Surrey School Board* (re: a child being removed from a gay teacher's class)

September 23, 2005 *365Gay.com, Globe and Mail, Vancouver Sun (Vancouver)* A British Columbia school district has cancelled a high school production of a play designed to teach tolerance toward homosexuals. The Surrey school board known for its history of banning gay positive books has now banned a local high school, Elgin Park Secondary School, from putting on a production of The Laramie Project.

The play is about how townsfolk in Laramie, Wyo., reacted to the news of a gay university student who, in 1998, was lured from a local bar by two young men who beat him badly, tied him to a fence post, and left him for dead. The victim died five days later in hospital.

"The play wasn't appropriate as family entertainment," Doug Strachan, communications manager of the Surrey school district, told the Vancouver Province. Strachan said the decision had nothing to do with the issue of homosexuality.

Laramie Project playwright Moises Kaufman disagrees. Kaufman told the Province: "It seems like the real issue is not whether it's age appropriate. It seems this community has a real problem with homosexuality. I'm very disappointed. It sounds like a real retrograde stance. I think it's really irresponsible for them to do that [cancel the Surrey high school production] because the kind of violence that leads to hate crimes is learned at the high school age."

The play has been staged at over 1,500 universities and high schools.

In 1997 the board banned three books depicting families with same-sex parents from classrooms because they might offend conservative Christians. The board's decision went to court and in 2003 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that to ban books in publicly funded schools on religious grounds was unconstitutional. The court did not order the books back in classes, opting instead to require the board to reconsider the three books. The board banned the same books from classes again, this time saying that the books did not fit other criteria.

September 27, 2005 *365Gay.com (Fredericton, New Brunswick)* Allison Brewer has become the first out lesbian to lead a political party in North America. Brewer won a first ballot victory to become leader of the New Democratic Party in New Brunswick. If her party wins the next provincial election she would become the first out premier in Canada.

October 9, 2005 *The Canadian Press (Toronto)* George Hislop, Canada's first major LGBT civil rights activist has died at the age of 78. Instrumental in fighting to get gays included in Ontario's Human Rights Code and

later in federal human rights laws, Hislop in later life continued the battle for gay equality over survivor benefits for widowed same-sex partners.

When Hislop's longtime partner died after years of contributing to the Canada pension plan, Hislop applied for a pension but was turned down. He fought the decision and spent the last 19 years trying to get the rules changed.

Earlier this year, Hislop declared victory and in August he said he received his first check from the government.

"George was a leader in the lesbian and gay community in fighting discrimination and demanding equal respect," said Douglas Elliott, Hislop's lawyer.

October 23, 2005 365gay.com (Vancouver) Pizza, popcorn and a good movie after a hard day of high school - the perfect recipe to get teens hanging out and talking to each other. It's with that idea in mind that a Vancouver-based film society wants to raise awareness in schools about homophobia.

The *Out on Screen Society*, which hosts the annual Vancouver Queer Film and Video Festival, brings films from the festival to high schools as part of a project called Out in Schools. The society hopes the concept will catch on in schools across Canada.

Gay and lesbian film festivals tend to exclude young people because of adult ratings on most of the movies. But organizers say there are dozens of family-rated gay films, many written and directed by teens themselves. The society hopes it will eventually be adopted as part of school curricula. The society has put together four different film packages about 60 minutes long with one feature and one short film and a discussion package for teachers.

October 25, 2005 365Gay.com (Ottawa) A young man who endured years of homophobic taunts and physical harassment from high school bullies in the 1990s has won an unprecedented human-rights battle with the North Vancouver school board. The Supreme Court of Canada has refused to hear an appeal of a British Columbia ruling that said school boards are responsible for preventing homophobic bullying.

The case involved Azmi Jubran who was called "homo," "faggot" and "gay" -- although he is not homosexual -- from 1993 to 1998 by students who also spat on him, kicked him, punched him and, on one occasion, set his shirt on fire in the school gym.

Jubran went to the British Columbia Human Rights Commission. At a tribunal hearing school principal Terry Shaw testified he had never seen a student harassed as badly as Jubran was, but with almost 13,000 students and only 70 teachers, he didn't have the resources to stop it. The tribunal said that school had violated Jubran's rights and ordered the school board to pay his legal costs and \$4,500 in compensation.

The board went to court where the case was dismissed with the judge ruling Jubran could not sue a school board for homophobic bullying and harassment because he is straight. Jubran took the case to the British Columbia Supreme Court, which overturned the lower court ruling. The board subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The high court gave no reason for declining the case. The decision allows the BC Supreme Court ruling to stand.

"I am extremely happy," Jubran told the Vancouver Sun. "Justice has been served."

"Canada's school boards need to sit up and take notice of this precedent setting case," stated Egale Education Committee Co-chair and B.C. teacher James Chamberlain. "They can no longer ignore the plight of any student who is targeted for harassment based upon their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. If they do so, it will be at their own peril and could involve expensive litigation."

According to the courts the North Vancouver School Board failed in three key areas:

- 1) Having a vague Code of Conduct policy, which failed to specifically prohibit discrimination, based upon one's real or perceived sexual orientation
- 2) Lacking any attempt at *preventative* anti-homophobia education for all students, despite resources being available from external organizations. In its decision, the BCCA confirmed that it's not good enough for school boards to wait for bullying to occur and then discipline the bullies afterward.
- 3) An unwillingness or inability to maintain a discrimination-free learning environment.

These poor conditions are present in the vast majority of Canadian schools.

October 29, 2005 – *Egale Canada News, Calgary Herald (Ottawa)* An Alberta Human Rights Tribunal is gearing up to hear a case that will test the boundaries of free speech in Alberta. At issue is whether Rev. Stephen Boissoin, the former Executive Director of *Concerned Christians Canada Inc.*, has gone too far in leading what he describes as a "war" against making schools safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified (LGBT) students and children of LGBT parents. His 'declaration of war' was made through a letter to the editor that was published in a newspaper in Red Deer, Alberta on June 17, 2002. The full letter is available at: <http://concernedchristians.ca/pages/campaigns/hrCommision/theLetter.htm>.

The letter is now the subject of a human rights complaint by University of Calgary professor of education and Alberta Human Rights Award winner Darren Lund. Meanwhile, *Concerned Christians Canada Inc.* is raising money around this issue, and has received support from the U.S. group *Alliance Defense Fund*.

"Pastor Boissoin's letter demonstrates the profound intolerance that kids must deal with," said Stephen Lock, board member of Egale Canada. "Pastor Boissoin engages in name calling, saying LGBT people are 'perverse, self-centered and morally deprived,' and that 'where homosexuality flourishes, all manner of wickedness abounds.' He then says 'war has been declared' and calls on his readers to 'take whatever steps are necessary to reverse the wickedness.' This is hurtful and inflammatory language."

Egale has concluded that since Boissoin's opinions are "a political issue," exposing "his misguided views to public scrutiny" is preferable to suppressing his free speech.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(Skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

August 8 (London) A London court hears the case of a British lesbian couple married in Canada that could result in the UK recognizing the same-sex marriages of couples wed in those countries where they are legal.

August 10 (Madrid) Spain's same-sex marriage law includes foreigners the justice ministry rules, overturning a decision by a court in Catalonia that said a Spanish man could not wed his Indian partner because India does not allow same-sex marriage.

August 13 (Madrid) Judge Francisco Garcia, from Gran Canaria, refuses to register three same-sex marriages and asks for a ruling on same-sex marriage from the country's Constitutional Court. If Spain's Constitutional Court decides to hear the case it has the power to nullify the new law.

August 24 (Oranjestad, Aruba) A lesbian couple has the right to register their marriage in Aruba, a court rules, rejecting a government appeal in a case that has exposed a cultural rift between Holland and its former colony. Aruba's Superior Court confirms a lower court's December ruling that the Caribbean island should register the marriage of Charlene and Esther Oduber-Lamers, who were wed in Holland in 2001.

August 30 (Vancouver, British Columbia) A Vancouver woman is granted a divorce after a B.C. Supreme Court judge decides the woman's husband had indeed engaged in an adulterous affair with another man, despite the current definition of adultery involving people of the opposite sex.

September 1 (Sacramento, California) The California Senate becomes the first elected state body in the country to pass legislation to allow same-sex couples to marry. Called the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act, the bill would require local clerks to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples but allow people opposed to gay marriage to refuse to conduct weddings.

The measure passes 21 to 15 - a majority larger than marriage advocates had expected. The legislation will move to the Assembly where it is in for a rough ride.

September 6 (Sacramento, California) The California Assembly passes legislation to allow same-sex couples to marry.

The bill passes by the slimmest of margins - one vote. But, it makes California the first state in the nation to have a same-sex marriage law passed by the legislature. In Massachusetts, where gay marriage has been legal for more than a year, the decision was made by the courts.

September 7 (Sacramento, California) California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announces that he will veto legislation allowing same-sex couples to marry.

The announcement, made through his press secretary, Margita Thompson, says that the bill is in conflict with Proposition 22 a ballot initiative passed in 2000 to prevent California from recognizing same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

The issue of same-sex marriage is slowly heading toward the California Supreme Court. In March a San Francisco judge ruled that state laws preventing gay marriage are illegal. The case is currently under appeal.

September 12 (London) The partners of gays and lesbians in the British military are being welcomed onto military bases. The Ministry of Defense has announced that same-sex couples will be eligible for marriage quarters on bases throughout the UK.

Civil unions become legal in Britain on December 5. Members of the armed forces who register will be treated in the same way as traditionally married couples the ministry said.

September 14 - By an overwhelming vote, the **Massachusetts** Legislature defeats an attempt to replace same-sex marriages with civil unions.

September 15 (Riga) Latvia's Parliament has passed an amendment to the country's constitution to ban same-sex marriage. It still needs approval in three additional votes and then to be approved by a constitutional panel before going into effect.

The amendment was pushed by the powerful Christian First party, part of Latvia's ruling conservative coalition government. The party said it needed the ban to "defend the family and traditional family values."

September 19 (Madrid) Spain's Constitutional Court is asked to declare the three-month-old law allowing same-sex couples to wed illegal. The legal challenge to the law is mounted by the Popular Party, Spain's largest opposition party.

September 30 (Kampala) Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has signed into law a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, making the country the only one in the world to have a specific constitutional reference outlawing gay marriage.

The amendment says that "marriage is lawful only if entered into between a man and a woman" and specifies that "it is unlawful for same-sex couples to marry".

October 5 (Lahore) A gay couple is told to leave **Pakistan** or be killed after the two men exchange vows in a traditional ceremony in a remote village. The threats come from village elders in the conservative Islamic region near the famed Khyber Pass.

October 10 (Windsor, Nova Scotia) Scott Brison, Canada's first openly gay federal minister (public works) and a close associate of Prime Minister Paul Martin, announces that boyfriend Maxime St. Pierre has popped the question.

The MP for Kings-Hants, a rural riding in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, quit the Conservative Party, crossed the floor, and became a Liberal in 2003. The defection was a stunning blow to the Tories. Brison said he could not be a member of party that opposed same-sex marriage.

October 24 (Edmonton, Alberta) Provincial Premier Ralph Klein says Alberta will hold off until spring to bring legislation allowing clergy and marriage commissioners to refuse to perform same-sex marriages. In July Klein announced plans to draft a law protecting civil marriage commissioners and clergy who don't want to perform gay marriages. The federal law currently protects churches opposed to same-sex marriage, but makes no mention of civil servants who perform marriages.

October 28 (Madrid) One of **Spain's** highest courts has agreed to hear a challenge to the 5-month-old law giving same-sex couples the right to wed. The government says it will mount a "vigorous defense of the laws."

October 31 (Cairo, Egypt) Conservative Anglican clerics from Africa, Asia and Latin America accuse North American priests of not doing enough to stop supporting same-sex marriages and gay priests.

November 2 (Israel) A third Israeli same-sex couple wed in Canada petitions the High Court of Justice to rule that their marriage be registered in Israel.

November 4 (Sweden) Sweden's Lutheran Church has authorized special church ceremonies for same-sex partners, but the ceremonies will not be traditional weddings.

International News

August 16, 2005 china daily (BEIJING) Fudan University is introducing an optional undergraduate course in homosexual studies, the first time any Chinese university has convened such a course for non-medical undergraduates. Starting in September, the course will examine the health, legal and social issues relating to homosexuality, said Sun Zhongxin, an associate professor of sociology who will lead the course.

"We hope this course, which is an optional one open to the whole university, will introduce the study of sexual orientation to more and more students," Sun told *China Daily*.

Sun said students' interest in sexuality-related topics was the main reason for the course to be offered. The class, which started in 2003 as a graduate programme, will be offered to undergraduates for the first time. In 2003 over 1500 students registered for it. Some students wrote to professors saying they learnt "tolerance, understanding and correct life attitude" from the course.

August 26, 2005 IPS (Buenos Aires, Argentina) By drawing the media spotlight to five-year-old twins Lucas and Julia and their two "daddies", the Argentine gay and lesbian community is gearing up to fight for the passage of a bill in Congress that would not only legalize same-sex civil unions, but grant these couples the inheritance and adoption rights normally limited to marriage.

The bill will be introduced in the Argentine Congress in September. If it is passed into law, Argentina will become the first country in Latin America to legally recognize homosexual couples nationwide. Same-sex civil unions are currently authorized in the city of Buenos Aires, but these partnerships do not include the right for one spouse to automatically inherit from the other, nor do they permit adopting children as a couple.

September 15, 2005 365Gay.com (New York City) The Vatican has begun its investigation of America's 229 seminaries to root out gays. The Church is attempting to lay blame on gays for the child abuse scandal that has rocked Roman Catholicism. Vatican investigators arrived in the US to gauge the scale of the scandal and to determine how many gay priests are in the priesthood.

A document obtained by the *New York Times* shows the investigators will seek to have priests turn in suspected gays. The *Times* said it received the document from a priest "who was granted anonymity because he feared retribution". It shows that the inquisitors will conduct confidential interviews with every faculty member and seminarian, as well as everyone who graduated in the last three years. Among the questions all seminarians and teachers will be asked are: "Is there evidence of homosexuality in the seminary?" and "Are there signs of particular friendships." Both questions must be answered the document says.

September 14, 2005 HRC (Washington) The U.S. House of Representatives, in a precedent setting vote, amended the *Children's Safety Act* by adding what has been known as the *Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Hate Crimes Prevention Act*. When enacted into law, the amendment extends existing federal hate crimes laws that already cover crimes motivated by race, color, national origin and religion to include crimes based on actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity (including gender-related characteristics). New gender identity/characteristics language was added just this year to make clear that the legislation applied to hate crimes against transgender people. The vote on the amendment was 223 to 199, with 30 Republicans supporting the amendment. The full bill later passed the House overwhelmingly. This is the first time that the House of Representatives has passed any legislation to protect transgender people.

September 22, 2005 365Gay.com (St. Petersburg, Russia) A St. Petersburg court has ruled that a man cannot be denied a job because he is gay - the first such ruling by a court in Russian history. The case involved a man identified only as VP. He went to court after being refused a job with the Russian State Railways because of a notation on government military records that listed him as having a mental disorder.

In 1992 he was denied military service because he is gay. At the time, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder. His official government file and his military card carried the disorder notation and he was required to attend periodic psychiatric assessments.

Russia no longer considers homosexuality to be a mental illness but the military has refused to amend his records. When VP applied for the railway job his "disorder" was used to exclude him from employment.

The court ruled that it is illegal to use military data to restrict human rights and that the diagnosis of VP was based exclusively on his sexuality. Additionally, the court re-stated that homosexuality is not a mental disorder.

October 6, 2005 PlanetOut News - A California adoption agency embroiled in a lawsuit has agreed it will no longer discriminate against applicants based on sexual orientation.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/10/06/2>

October 13-14, 2005 *Naciongay.com* (**Cáceres, Spain**) The First International Congress on Homosexual Adoption took place from October 13 – 14 in Spain, to gather the necessary tools to face new challenges brought on by the newly passed same sex law.

Organized by the Board of the Universidad Extremadura and the Fundacion Triangulo, the Congress dealt with the legal aspects of the new law, adoption and the adoption process or the key elements of this one, among other issues.

Jesus Palacios, congress director and evolution psychology professor at the Universidad de Sevilla, explained that is not about evaluating whether adoption is positive or negative, but “to give a social and technical response to a new reality.”

The congress had 3 workshops and testimonies from adults and minors about their experience living in the core of a homosexual family unit. David Brozynsky, who has researched adoption and homosexual parenthood in the US and other countries, was also present at the Congress.

October 31, 2005 *365Gay.com* (**Washington**) US President George W. Bush has nominated Samuel Alito a staunch conservative to replace moderate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in the Supreme Court

Lambda Legal said that the nomination raises potential "Red Flags", the Human Rights Campaign called for close scrutiny, and Stonewall Democrats said Bush was pandering to the far right.

Alito, 55, has been a strong conservative voice in his 15 years on the Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. In 2001, Judge Alito authored a decision in *Saxe v. State* that declared unconstitutional a public school district policy that prohibited harassment against students because of their sexual orientation or other characteristics.

The policy focused on harassment that had the purpose or effect of interfering with a student's educational performance or creating and intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Alito reasoned that the policy was unconstitutional because it could cover what he called "simple acts of teasing and name-calling."

The nomination is seen as bowing to the far right elements of the Republican Party - the GOP base that sank the nomination of Harriet Miers. Alito is known as being anti-gay and anti-abortion.

Miscellaneous

◆ **Helem** - a Lebanese based GLBT org (with chapters in Montreal and elsewhere) has launched the Arab world's FIRST GLBT magazine and it's actually distributed throughout Lebanon. You can check it out online: <http://www.helem.net/barra.htm>

"Barra" means OUT. The magazine is in Arabic but the website is also available in English and French

◆ **Busting Out: Breast Health for Lesbian and Bisexual Women** is a new FREE resource from Making Us Visible: Promoting Access to Breast Health and Breast Cancer Services for Lesbian and Bisexual Women: <http://www.cwhn.ca/hot/resources/default.html#bustOut>

◆ The New York based **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN)** has carried out a survey about homophobia and school climate. The study, *From Teasing to Torment*, examines several aspects of the school climate that can detract from a safe learning environment, as well as teens' personal experiences with harassment. In addition, the survey examines the overall prevalence of offensive remarks and harassment at

their school, whether experienced by that teen or their classmates, and the impact that has on their ability to learn. Secondary school teachers also contributed their perspectives on these issues and provided their views on what can be done to improve the situation.

The report can be found at:

http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/499-1.pdf.

◆ **Message from Mona (LMA coordinator):**

Dear members,

I thought it might be interesting to start a small forum in this newsletter regarding issues of interest to lesbians. I came across a news piece about a company in Santa Fe, New Mexico that has started up a **retirement home/seniors' residence for aging gays and lesbians**. It is called RainbowVision and is the only LGBT-only community for seniors in the US. As far as I know there are none so far in Canada though members of the *Reseau des Lesbiennes du Quebec* (RLQ) have suggested a lesbian retirement home as a desirable option for seniors. As much as I love our community, the idea for me to spend the last years of my life in a lesbian-only retirement home is scary.

So the question of the month is the following: *Do you think that there should be retirement homes designed specifically for a lesbian clientele and if so what should they look like? If not let us know why...*

Please send me your answers either via e-mail or regular mail and I will try to publish them in the next newsletter.

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

DECEMBER:

- ◆ **For adults and kids: Sunday December 11th, from 1:30p.m. - 5 p.m.**
Holiday activity - 8th Annual Holiday Party

The **Lesbian Mothers Association** will be having our holiday party in a new venue this year (YAY!!!). The **Greene Community Centre** is a perfect place for our families. An **activity for kids ages 0-10**, animated by **B.E.A.R. productions** (Best Educational & Active Recreation / Bon Enseignement Actif et Récréatif) is planned in the big gym starting at 3 p.m. A **Holiday Arts and Crafts activity for all ages** will be held in the attached sunroom all afternoon. There will also be **snacks and beverages for all! Teenagers interested in making a bit of spending money** are invited to help us organize the event (**please call Mona for this at 514-846-1543**).

This party is also an opportunity to meet up with members of the newly formed **Papadaddy** group. It is a group for gay, bisexual and trans dads and their children, as well as future fathers.

Location: Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave (Metro Atwater, Greene Avenue is a few blocks west of Atwater. The centre is south of René Levesque)

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JANUARY 2006:

For adults only:

Saturday January 28th at 7 p.m.

Discussion Group: The Other Mother: Second Mom or Dad?

Animated by Karine Igartua

A forum for all non-bio, non-legal and/or non-stay at home moms, their partners and future parents who are interested in this topic. What is the difference between Mommy and Mama? Who does what and why? What are the issues related to assuming traditionally "daddy" roles when you are a woman and may have anticipated being Mommy.

Location: 2401 Coursol (Metro Lionel Groulx or Georges Vanier). Coursol crosses with Atwater (on the east side) and is one street south of St-Antoine.

FEBRUARY 2006:

Saturday February 25th from 1-4 p.m.

Discussion Group: Lesbian Parenting with Babies and Young Children

Animated by Susie Mintzberg and Nathalie Tremblay

Let's get together *with* our babies to discuss the pleasures and challenges of being a new lesbian mom. This topic may also be of interest to pregnant moms and future parents in general. There will be a small play area available for young ones to hang out together, close to their moms!

Location: Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave (Metro Atwater, Greene Avenue is a few blocks west of Atwater. The centre is south of Dorchester/ René Levesque)

BULLETIN BOARD:

♦ Single Moms everywhere: Come out, come out wherever you are. Let's get together and just discuss baby issues, single mom issues, and anything and everything else. Something light and informal. Of course, with our babies... If interested, please email shariann@sympatico.ca or call Shari Ann at (514) 482-6533. Perhaps a few of us can get together at my house or anyone else's home... Hoping to hear from at least one mom.

♦ Café-Causerie Aux Fémin'Elles: L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses cafés causeries le deuxième et le quatrième lundis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 à la salle d'atelier (au deuxième étage) de chez Loblaw's situé au 1155 Boul. Talbot à Chicoutimi. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adresse aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer ! Informations: **418-541-9065**

♦ Recherchons femmes en couple avec enfant(s), ou désirant devenir mères, habitant Joliette ou ses environs, pour échanger sur nos expériences de parents. Nous venons d'aménager dans la région et cherchons à créer un réseau d'amies, bien précieux que nous n'avons pu transporter avec nous de Montréal... Nous sommes un couple lesbien début trentaine avec 3 enfants. Communiquez avec nous à:

neige-vive@hotmail.com

♦ L'Écho des femmes de la Petite Patrie est un centre de femmes qui offre des rencontres pour lesbiennes. Ces rencontres ont lieu les lundis soirs aux deux semaines de 19h00 à 21h30, et sont animées par une personne ressource. Ces rencontres, qui se veulent un lieu d'échange, de ressourcement et d'information, s'intéressent aux réalités et aux conditions de vie des lesbiennes. Les rencontres sont en français. Un service de halte-garderie est disponible avec réservation faite une semaine à l'avance.

Le centre est situé au 6032 St-Hubert (métro Beaubien). Téléphone **(514)277-7445**, télécopieur **(514)277-1689**

ADOPTIONS AND BIRTHS

- ◆ We are delighted to welcome our precious baby boy, **Jeremy Owen**. Born **May 11, 2005** at 3:12PM, weighing 6 pounds 9 ounces, 19 1/2 inches tall. He is the pride and joy of his mommies **Julie Methot & Linda Pizzi**. Thank you so much for the opportunity and the wonderful job you do with the association. Our first outing was a total success for all 3 of us.
- ◆ **Guy-Anne Lavictoire and Martine Trudel** are proud to announce the arrival from Haiti of their son **Maxime**. Our beautiful boy is now two years old. We're looking forward to introducing him to you!
- ◆ And yes, finally our little **Eliot** was born on **Octobre 13, 2005** at 10:24 a.m., weighing 7lbs 10oz, and measuring 18,5 inches... He's in perfect health and maman is doing great. The delivery went really smoothly... Maman and Mommy are filled with joy. We're looking forward to presenting him to you in person! **Valérie Mallamo and Marie-France Dubois**.
- ◆ The "little" **Cédric Duong** was born on **November 2nd**. He weighed 9 pounds and 7 ounces and measured nearly 22 inches ! Maman Sonia and Me Hanh are overjoyed, and with a little help from the grandmas, they are fulling enjoying their lives as a family of 3. **Sonia Grenon and Hanh Ngoc Duong**
- ◆ A baby is born! **Johann Walter King** came into this world on **November 5** at 3:55 am, a birthday present for Laura. Even though he found his grand entrance a little difficult (I did too, incidentally) all is well. He eats, sleeps, poops and cries with gusto (I do too incidentally, but don't worry the tears are tears of extraordinary joy). Laura and I are looking forward to introducing you to our PERFECT baby boy. Sincerely Elizabeth Schinkel and Laura King.
- ◆ On the beautiful Sunday of **November 6th** little **Benjamin** was born. He was happy to finally see his moms, **Anne-lise Gautier** and **Georgie David**. Ever since, the young man is busy burping and pooping his way into this new world of his.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ◆ **Traductrices, redactrices, etc:** We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**
- ◆ **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres** is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents**. There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption**. What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca**.
- ◆ The **Open Book Library's** collection includes over 5500 books written by glbt authors or by authors who write about our communities. Some of these books are for children and adolescents. We are very proud that approximately half of our collection is in French. Much more information as well as online consultation of the book collection is available at our Web site **www.ccglm.org/en-b**. We are located at **2075 Plessis (CCGLM)** in the Village. Come visit us! Open Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-8 p.m. (514) 528-8424.

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The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. If you have something to advertise, sell, rent or buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.

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Personalized books & CDs for all families: The text and illustrations change so that the hero looks like your child, with the same skin tone, eyes, hair colour, etc. Include yourself and your child's family & friends. All families can be represented. For children 8 & under. 15% of every order goes to AML when AML is mentioned. Visit www.printakid.com (English) or www.alphakid.com (French) or call 1-888-729-9696.