

Wash

The party's over

American Airlines severs its ties to men's 'circuit parties.' See page 16



Oath of office

Two Gay elected officials are sworn into office. See page 10



Farmer reaps honor

Washington, D.C. Lesbian activist is honored with Stonewall award. See page 8



The Washington Blade

SERVING THE NATION'S CAPITAL SINCE 1969

New Jersey sets 'policy' to allow joint adoptions

by Katie Szymanski

In a move that drew considerable press attention and misinterpretation this week, New Jersey agreed to allow Gay and unmarried couples to jointly adopt children under the same criteria as married heterosexual couples adopt children.

"It's not the first time Gay couples have been allowed to adopt jointly; courts have ordered that before," explained Matt Coles, head of the ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, which worked on the New Jersey case. "It is the first time that a state has made its policy—state policy—that Gay couples can adopt jointly. And it's the first time anyone has said that exactly the same standards should apply to Gay couples and married couples."

Most mainstream press reports identified this as the first time a state has allowed Gay couples to adopt a child jointly. But, according to Coles and Gay adoption expert Nancy Polikoff, a court ruling in Massachusetts in 1993 interpreted the state law there as allowing for joint adoptions. A judge in the District of Columbia in 1995 interpreted the city's law as allowing for joint adoptions. Polikoff, an American University law professor, said no one really knows whether any state's policy allows for joint adoptions by Gay couples until it's tested. The important distinction in New Jersey, she said, is that this is the first time a civil lawsuit has directly challenged a policy's denial of joint adoption rights for Gay couples.

According to Michael Adams, an attorney with the ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, ACLU attorneys, working with the New Jersey attorney general, agreed to settle the class action civil lawsuit there. The class action case was filed by the ACLU on behalf of more than 200 members of a

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The gift of giving

Kiana and John open gifts from Santa at the second annual Friends for Friends children's Christmas party on December 14. More than 100 children gathered in a large room of the Children's Museum for snacks, games, and the highlight of the party, Santa. As the children awaited the arrival of their guest of honor, they chanted, "We want Santa! We want Santa!" After telling Santa their Christmas lists, each child received a gift and a bag of groceries for their family, all of which had been donated to the AIDS services organization Friends for Friends during the group's toy and food drive.



'What a blessing'

The Rev. Darlene Garner led the first service in the Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia's new facility on December 14. "I can't tell you what a blessing all of this has been for me and the church."

Latino AIDS agency shuts down

City's inconsistent delivery of grant money plays role

by Kal Wright

Salud Inc., a 10-year-old AIDS service provider for the Latino community, announced this week that it has ceased operations. The organization transferred its clients in Maryland and northern Virginia to other agencies, but the fate of its programs for D.C. clients remains uncertain.

The decision to close came over the last few weeks, as the board began considering its finances for FY 1998, said Salud's board chair, Carlos Vega. Executive Director Donald Babb-Maldonado told the board that the organization would need a total of \$351,000 next year to sustain its programs, said the board's vice chair Allen Ebert. That meant raising at least \$106,000 over and above the money Salud already had secured in government grants. Ebert said the agency realized it could not meet those goals.

"It was a horrible situation. The board was enthusiastic [about continuing services] but realistic," he explained. Ebert said Salud had been in financial trouble for some



Salud's Carlos Vega blamed some of the financial trouble on delays in receiving money from city grants.

enough money to cover both past debts. Vega and Ebert declined to discuss details of the organization's financial his-

F O R T H E

Record

***D.C. Lesbian Avengers** (Thu., Dec. 11; 22 people attended) member Kimberly Keese reported on the group's promotion of self-breast exams at women's nights at local clubs, according to member Cheryl Cort. The group also expressed the need for volunteer sign language interpreters for general meetings to make meetings accessible to deaf Lesbians. The group also decided to donate \$210 dollars to Lammas, which is the amount recently stolen from the women's book store in a robbery. "We should provide Lammas bookstore with this support because we use the bookstore like a Lesbian community center," said Cort. The next meeting is Thursday, Jan. 1, at 7 p.m. at Lammas Bookstore, located at 1607 17th St. NW.

***Gay/Lesbian Fellowship of National City Christian Church** ("The Sunday Night Group") (Sun., Dec. 7; 18 people attended) sponsored a video viewing and discussion, according to Charles Keener, the group's publicity director. Two videos by Dee Moshbacher were shown.

Straight from the Heart and All God's Children. The first film focused on parents expressing their love and support for their Gay male and Lesbian children. The second explored the experiences of Gay male and Lesbian African Americans within the church and contained numerous affirmative comments by parents, clergy, and noted political figures, such as Cornel West, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and Maxine Waters. A discussion of the films was followed by a time of fellowship and a closing prayer. The Gay/Lesbian Fellowship meets Sunday nights at 6:30 p.m. in the Wells Parlor of the church's Campbell Building. The National City Christian Church is located at 5 Thomas Circle at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and 14th Street, NW. For more information call Charles at (202) 462-5934 or the group's recording at (202) 797-0115, then press 555#.

***Gente Latina de Ambiente (GELAAM)** (Sun., Dec. 7; approximately seventy people attended), the

only Latino/a Lesbian, Gay male, bisexual, and transgender organization in the area, held a successful holiday/membership party at the Hung Jury, according to Marisa Demeo, co-chair of GELAAM's board. Attendees danced to salsa and merengue music, received holiday gifts, enjoyed tamales and other foods, and received HIV/AIDS prevention materials. The activities were free in order to provide a welcoming space for the community and introduce the organization and its new board members to the community. "The Board is so happy with the feedback we have been receiving from the community about the events we have recently held," said Demeo. "It's a

sign that we are providing space the community wants, and we just hope more Latinas and Latinos bear about GELAAM and come out and join us in the future." The organization is planning a workshop in January and other social events in the future. For more information call (202) 628-4074.

***Triangle Artists Group (TAG)** (Thu., Dec. 4; about 40 people attended) introduced

Richard Lane, a performance artist from Baltimore who is planning a multimedia show scheduled for June, according to member Hank Grasso. Members Dolores Smith, Sally Laux, and Elizabeth Lytle coordinated TAG volunteers to assist with their Dec. 13 and 14 Lammas bookstore benefit art sale. Proceeds will go toward funding a film they are making with member Judith Treesburg about a mid-life Lesbian looking for love in the personal ads. Also, Mark Osele reminded members of the Jan. 15 deadline for submissions for the next issue of *SPOONfed*, which will have a science fiction theme. Member Dan Emberly mentioned that his work will be on exhibit at the National Academy of Sciences during December and January. The next meeting will be Jan. 8. For more information call (202) 546-8235.

For the Record includes notes from reporters attending group meetings and (when identified by *) from the groups themselves.

— Nicholas Boggs



Two videos by Dee Moshbacher were screened at the National City Christian Church.

Local activist wins award

Mary Farmer honored with Stonewall prize

by Wendy Johnson

Mary Farmer has worn many hats during her 25 years as a Lesbian feminist organizer. A one-time owner of Lammas women's bookstore, she has been a sporting event organizer, film producer, and conference promoter. As financial director for the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force, she is currently a behind-the-scenes manager and administrator.

On December 1, Farmer tried on one more title for size: award winner.

Farmer is one of four recipients of this year's Stonewall Award, a \$25,000 prize awarded each year to four people whose activism benefits the Gay community. This year's winners also include New York-based writer Sarah Schulman; Detroit AIDS educator Cornelius Wilson; and Portland, Ore., activist Barry Pack.

Starting out in a small town in Indiana, Farmer moved to Washington in the early 1970s after spending a semester at Georgetown University. After meeting up with members of the Furies, a Lesbian-feminist-separatist collective in 1973, Farmer quickly became active in the local Lesbian community and became a regular at a new craft store and bookstore on Capitol Hill called Lammas.

Attracted to the energy and excitement of Washington's visible Lesbian community, Farmer soon quit her marketing job and bought the business in 1976. During her 17 years as the bookstore's matriarch, Farmer turned the modest shop into a bustling Lesbian meeting space that also served as the area's unofficial Lesbian community center.

Women from across the region would come to Lammas to attend social events, book readings, concerts, and — of course — to see other women.

On weekends, dozens would come to cheer on the Lammas women's softball team or simply to chat with Farmer.

"I think everybody had crushes on her," said Joan E. Biren (JEB), a Lesbian filmmaker and Farmer's former business partner. She often served as therapist, confidant, and referral service for her female customers, said JEB.

"She was like a one-person referral system," she said. "People would ask her for referrals to doctors, therapists, ball clubs. Anybody who had problems or questions about anything would go to her. The shop was so much more than a bookstore. It was really the heart of the Lesbian community in D.C."

Farmer was also a partner with JEB in Moon Force Media, a local-based distribution company for women's independent films. Prior to purchasing Lammas, she had worked with JEB to produce one of the first feminist film festivals in the area.

"There was a tremendous hunger among feminist and Lesbian women to see and hear things that related to their lives," said JEB. "Mary proved there was a market for the films."

She also marketed women's music throughout the mid-1970s and early '80s, working to convince local record store-owners to carry more women's selections.

"A lot of the organizing that Mary did was one-on-one," said JEB, "just her talk-

ing to another person."

Between running the store and touting women artists, Farmer also found time to organize several women's sports teams, including a Lammas softball team, and several D.C. recreational basketball and volleyball leagues.

The constant mixture of sports, poli-



Mary Farmer has been at the center of the Washington, D.C. Lesbian community since the early 1970s.

tics, and art provided a sorely needed outlet for the area's emerging Lesbian community, said Farmer, and all attracted a wide variety of women. Conversations on the softball field, for instance, would often carry over into political discussions later that night. The political discussions, in turn, would fuel the work of area female musicians and filmmakers.

"Mary was one of the first people in our community to make the connection between arts, culture, and politics," said Kerry Lobel, NGLTF executive director and Farmer's current boss. "That's why Lammas was such an important store. That's the perspective that Mary brings to every piece of her work here. And unfortunately, it's a rare perspective."

Farmer sold Lammas to its current owner, Jane Troxell, in 1993.

Today, although less visible within the Lesbian community, Farmer is still somewhere near the center, working for one of the largest Gay political organizations in the country, as NGLTF's financial and administrative director.

"I suppose 30 years from now I'll be organizing old dykes," she said. "We'll probably be taking it a little easier, but probably not dropping out completely."

Farmer said she plans to spend a sizeable chunk of her award money paying for a graduate business degree at Johns Hopkins University.

"I hope to be able to use it in the service of my community," she said.

The Anderson Prize Foundation administers the Stonewall Awards each year. Founded in Chicago seven years ago, the foundation each year asks a select group of Gay community leaders to nominate a recipient. Past winners have included political organizer Mandy Carter; pioneer Gay civil rights activist Frank Kameny; and former NGLTF director Urvashi Vaid. ▼