

Enchante' News

A Transgender Newsletter



Vol. 2004-08

<http://florida.enchante.tripod.com>

August 2004

Meetings

Since we were at the Salvation Army office we've had a difficult time maintaining a comfortable place to meet. Ricki Liff has now taken over as President and has a location in central St. Petersburg. Some don't like driving all that distance though.

As VP I've discussed with Ricki the possibility of holding another meeting each month up in south Pasco County. Later this week I should be signing a lease on a new apartment and could then hold the meetings there. I'll update the website as soon as it's finalized and I'm moved in. But I think it's a good idea to hold two meetings, one at each location to better reach those in need of support.

I would like to hold this meeting from 8-10pm on Saturday night. If anyone wishes to hang out for a while after the meeting that's fine, and there is a nice club called Waterside Landing less than a mile away. It's TG friendly club, with female impersonator shows every fri. & sat.

Iowans get birth certificates

At least 21 Iowans in the last five years have obtained new birth certificates after undergoing sex-change operations. They've been able to rewrite the story of their births under a 28-year-old state law that allows sex-change recipients to petition for new birth certificates that show their true gender.

While those who have received new birth certificates declined comment or didn't return phone calls, supporters said the law simply grants them official identification that reflects who they really are. "Certainly, getting pulled over and your driver's license doesn't match is a fear," said Jordan Selha, who used to help run a transgender support group. "Changing the birth certificate is necessary to change other documents."

Iowa's 21st updated birth certificate since 1999 was approved by a Polk County judge last month! . Lawyers in Des Moines are working on at least one additional case.

A letter from the Editor

A lot is in the works right now. The (HRC) Human Rights Commission has included gender identity and gender expression to their new legislation. We're finally included in their push for new anti-discrimination and hate crime bills. It's about time!

Florida Gender Equality Project (FORGE) is a group of political activists fighting for our rights, here in Florida. They need our help with either monetary and/or participation assistance to fight for our rights. www.forgeonline.org

Human Rights Campaign Adopts Policy Supporting Modernized Workplace

"We are strongest as a community when we are united and that's why we need the strongest and most unifying protections," said Cheryl Jacques, President of the Human Rights Campaign.

WASHINGTON - The Human Rights Campaign Board of Directors today adopted a policy to support a modernized version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

The updated language includes gender identity and expression as well as sexual orientation to ensure that every gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender American is protected from employment discrimination.

"Passage of ENDA is a brass ring for our community and we're making it clear that it must have the strongest teeth possible to protect everyone," said Tim Boggs, co-chair of the HRC Board.

The Board of Directors voted to adopt the following resolution: "The Human Rights Campaign adopt! s a policy that we will only support ENDA if it is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression."

HRC took this step to ensure that ENDA will provide real protection to incidents of workplace discrimination. Attorneys who specialize in civil rights laws believe that ENDA without gender identity and expression explicitly stated may not adequately address discrimination against gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans who are often singled out because they're viewed as not conforming to gender norms.

"I am very proud that HRC continues to lead on issues of importance to everyone in our community, including on workplace discrimination," said Gwen Baba, co-chair of the HRC Board of Directors.

"We are strongest as a community when we are united and that's why we need the strongest and most unifying protections," said Cheryl Jacques, President of the Human Rights Campaign. "The staff of the Human Rights campaign will continue to ! work tirelessly to enact this comprehensive ENDA."

ENDA was introduced in 1994 and barely lost a Senate vote in 1996.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that LGBT Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Transexual Olympiads

"It's about time," Michelle Dumaresq says of the Olympic committee's recent decision to allow transsexual athletes to compete in their self-identified gender.

Dumaresq, 33, broke new ground for transsexual athletes in 2001 by asserting her right to race as a woman. Now the post-operative male-to-female transsexual from Vancouver is the Canadian national champion in the women's downhill discipline.

While the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) new rules won't apply to her – since

downhill mountain biking is not yet an Olympic sport – Dumaresq says she's pleased that trans athletes hoping to participate in the Games will no longer face the barriers that have dogged her.

Until recently, transsexual athletes were barred from competing in the Olympics. Then in May, the IOC's executive board approved a policy establishing the conditions under which athletes who have changed sex could participate in the games. The new rules kick in this Friday in Athens. "I think this clearly shows that we will always address issues on human rights. That's something that we find very important," says Charmaine Crooks, an Olympic silver medallist and Canadian IOC member living in Vancouver. "It also shows that when there is an issue, we will study it and if it fits with our fundamental values and philosophies, then we will act on it and act quickly, but also act in the best interest of all athletes."

Gwen Smith, a board member of the U.S.-based Gender Education and Advocacy group, calls the IOC decision a "very small" step forward for trans rights.

"At the very least, it further shows that transgender people are human beings. We deserve to compete," says the San Francisco activist. "It certainly moves things forward in this venue, and it also further will help show that we're here and we're able."

"I don't think you're going to see any great change in the amount of Olympic athletes that are transgendered – not in the short term," Smith continues. "That said, I think you're going to see more athletes overall who are already transgendered, who will feel that they have an actual opportunity to compete."

Smith is hoping that other sports bodies will follow the IOC's lead – though she also hopes the IOC will relax its conditions for transsexual athletes in the future.

According to the IOC's new policy, transsexual athletes must have undergone sexual reassignment surgery to be eligible to compete in their gender. If the operation took place before puberty, the athlete's gender will be respected.

In the case of a post-puberty gender transition, athletes must undergo complete genital surgery and get their gonads (their ovaries or testes) removed before they can compete. They also have to get legal recognition of their chosen gender and complete hormone therapy to minimize any sex-related advantages, the policy says.

Post-pubescent transitioners will then have to wait two years before they can become eligible to apply for a confidential IOC evaluation.

Dumaresq says the IOC's policy – including its two-year wait – is appropriate. "I believe that there should be a waiting period to eliminate the physical advantages," she says. "I know personally how long my body took to change, and two years is plenty."

Some observers have expressed concern that transsexual athletes may, in spite of the rules, possess an unfair advantage over their peers. One news report quoted an Ottawa doctor's claims that male-to-female transsexuals will have the advantage of size and strength, while female-to-male transsexuals could have an edge where endurance is concerned. The report raised the spectre of Olympic-obsessed athletes changing sex to gain the upper hand.

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Dumaresq disputes such claims. The mountain biker is adamant she doesn't have any unfair advantage over her peers.

"I have lost the ability to build muscle and have lost the muscle mass that I once had – gone," she says.

"I work out constantly just to try and maintain a strong physical fitness level," she explains. "Many have said, 'What if a pro athlete changes sex?' Well, if a pro athlete wants to go through what I've gone through, and then start racing again to try and win, let them try. SRS [sex reassignment surgery] is irreversible, and without testosterone, muscle will decrease."

The Stockholm consensus, as the IOC's new trans policy is known, was formulated by a committee of experts convened by the IOC's medical commission to make recommendations on the participation of athletes who have undergone sexual reassignment in sport.

Some of those experts had already helped abolish the IOC's old, highly controversial gender verification procedures. "In a sense, this [new policy] was a continuation of that effort," says committee member Myron Genel, who is also a professor at Yale University's school of medicine.

Gender verification testing of female athletes at the Olympics began in 1968 at Mexico City. The process – initially a gynecological exam, later a chromosomal test – was invasive and unreliable. In 2000, the IOC scrapped gender testing in time for the Sydney Olympics.

"A lot of us would feel that the IOC was much too slow in eliminating gender verification," Genel says now. "[But] I think they certainly

have taken the lead in terms of how to deal with transgendered athletes."

Like Dumaresq, the professor says he's confident that making trans athletes wait two years after their gonadectomies will be more than enough time to mitigate any physical advantages they might have due to muscle strength.

"Now, there obviously would be skeletal changes that are not reversible, in terms of size and wingspan, for example," Genel says. "But if you're going to discriminate against transgendered athletes on the basis of their height or their wingspan, then we ought to set clear limits for women who compete, since there are six-foot-six women who compete in sports such as basketball and volleyball."

The plight of transsexual athletes shows it may make more sense to group competitors by their physical attributes, such as height and weight, rather than their gender, points out local trans activist Tami Starlight.

Meanwhile, Dumaresq continues to make history in her discipline.

Cycling's governing bodies suspended the mountain biker in 2001 after some of her fellow racers filed complaints against her. The decision on Dumaresq's status eventually came down to her birth certificate, which she had changed to identify herself as female. The Canadian Cycling Association decided that since Dumaresq is legally recognized as female, she should have the right to compete in women's sports.

In 2002, Dumaresq was granted a full licence to compete as a pro mountain biker. She went on to win the Canada Cup series, become the first known transsexual athlete to earn a spot

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on a national team, and place 24th at the world championships.

Last year, she made history again when she won the national downhill championship in Whistler. She finished 17th at the world championships in Lugano, Switzerland.

Dumaresq says she knows of transsexual athletes hoping to compete in future Olympics, including the 2010 summer games in Vancouver.

"During my time racing, I have faced many people who had prejudices and intolerances towards me and people like me," she says. "I hope that I have educated some, so that it'll be easier for the next athlete with a trans history to be included."

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<http://www.tgni.com>

Transgendered Network International

<http://www.ntac.org>

National Transgender Advocacy Coalition

<http://www.temenos.net>

Temenos LGBT Community

<http://florida.enchante.tripod.com>

Enchante' - A support group for transexuals in the Tampa Bay and surrounding area.

<http://www.gpac.org/>

GenderPAC - Gender Public Advocacy Coalition

<http://www.megalaw.com>

General Law Info

<http://www.forgeonline.org>

Forge

The Florida Gender Equality Project

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