

New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting Created

BY PAT ROBINSON

As a ten year old, Mark Noel joined the largest, widely known, and respected organization for boys in the world - the Boy Scouts of America. Just like millions of others, Mark enjoyed being part of something good and right, and as he grew up, he enjoyed the duties and the honor of being an adult member also. Mark was a staff member at various summer camps, teaching rifle and shotgun safety and badge work, and all that life had to offer.

The value of being an asset to his family, troop, school and country gave Mark the courage to pursue many rewarding things in his life. He achieved Eagle Scout, and became a Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow.

Mark Noel does not see

himself as part of the problem, but instead, as part of the solution. Mark Noel became an ousted scout, part of very special group of men, whose membership with the Boy Scouts of America had been revoked. This was done following an admission of his orientation via an article that appeared in the Valley News, July 2, 2000.

Mark lives in Hanover, N.H., works for Dartmouth College, and has not given up the struggle to remain involved in scouting and his community. Mark Noel chose to make a difference and has created the New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting, following similar organizations started in Albany, N.Y. and New York City. NECIS describes itself as follows:

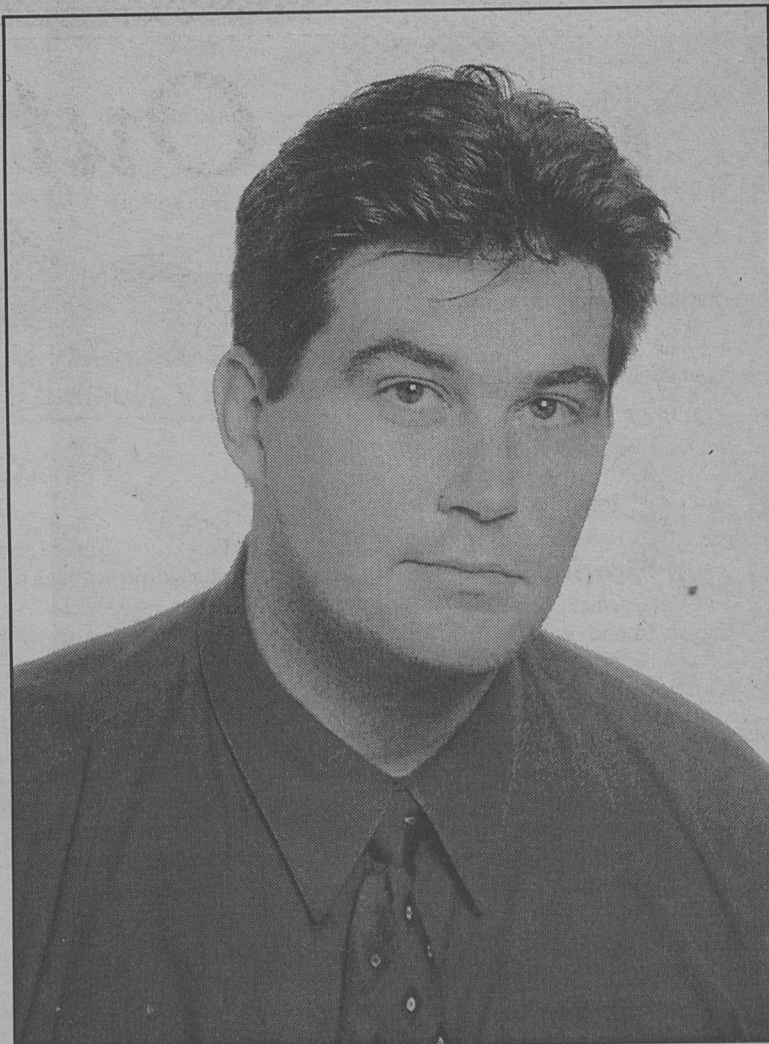
NECIS is a grassroots organization that is dedicated to fostering discussion and education about the

current state of the scouting program in the United States. It was formed in response to the discriminatory practices of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA, Inc.) with respect to religion and sexual orientation, and comprises individuals and organizations who want to find ways to both support the scouting program, and to make the benefits that scouting has to offer equally available to all youth. The coalition was formed to give a voice to those who respect all the good that scouting has done and continues to do, but who also feel that they must stand up against the discrimination and the teaching of intolerance to our youth.

We believe that concerned people must stay engaged with the Boy Scouts in a positive and constructive way. But at the same time, we must firmly and publicly take a stand against the hurtful and destructive messages that continue to be taught through these policies of exclusion. The global success of the Scouting program shows us that it does not depend on one narrow view of "traditional family values." Indeed, Scouting's appeal has crossed the boundaries of countries, cultures, and religious faiths for almost a hundred years.

We are committed to education and advocacy on these and surrounding issues, towards the ultimate goals of promoting inclusiveness, teaching tolerance, and ending discrimination in programs for our nation's youth.

Anyone interested in reaching NECIS can at: P.O.Box 1004, Hanover,



Mark Noel, ousted from the Boy Scouts of America based on his sexual orientation, recently created New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting (NECIS).

As American As...



Worldwide, scouting provides great opportunities for youth regardless of religion or sexual orientation. In the United States, however, the leaders of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) have decided to teach their own version of "traditional family values" as the only way to be "morally straight." One in five boys in the US will learn character and citizenship in the BSA, but will also learn that the way to accommodate differences of religious belief among people is to exclude the minority. **Join us and help teach the toughest lessons of real citizenship: making room for everyone to participate.**

New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting
P.O. Box 1004 • Hanover, NH 03755-1004 • (603) 387-7731
NECIS on the web at: <http://www.necis.org>

N.H. 03755-1004 or at the web page, www.necis.org.

More recently, Mark Noel learned of Boston's Minuteman Council making a change in its new policy allowing gays to serve, and applied. Mark included in his application many of the things he had done* that he believed validated his application to be a Merit Badge counselor for Rifle and Shotgun Shooting.

As reported by Boston Globe correspondent C. Holahan, (8/10/2001) on August 9, 2001, the Minuteman Council then flip-flopped on it's earlier stand and Brock Bigsby, the council's executive director had this to say: "We will not accept anybody who has

had their membership revoked by the national council; I am assuming they revoked it for good reason."

In a letter postmarked August 10, 2001; Mark Noel lost his final appeal to the Boy Scouts of America, pending since Dec. 2000.

As of this writing nothing further has happened.

*Deputy Sheriff, Cobb County, Georgia; National Rifle Association instructor; Hunter

Safety/Education Instructor, State of Georgia; and served as the firearms instructor in a video for the State of New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition, produced for the benefit of school-age children throughout the state.



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