

Views: Translating into a New Life

Editor's Note: April Elizabeth wrote a column for OITM in 2001-2002 while transitioning from male to female. She stopped writing for us when family, work, and health concerns left little time or energy for writing. April just "got done" at IBM and is facing the world as an unemployed female for the first time in her life. She sent along the following perspective on where she is now.

**april
elizabeth**

I went to HR [human resources] at IBM on a Thursday after not being able to get myself to go to work Wednesday. I talked to the diversity rep there and told her I was burned out and had enough. People would stare and talk before, and now I am more "developed," having implants, and the thought of seeing these people literally made me sick Wednesday night.

I have no bad feelings towards IBM Corp. They have treated me wonderful, backed me up 100 percent when I had problems so bad I couldn't deal with it. But I had transitioned there, so I

access to any support groups. And some people choose to work nights because they have a problem getting along socially.

It was time to go, time to move on. I tried to get a job outside the clean room so I could at least present myself in a more feminine manner. Times are tough, no job movement, and I was getting to feel pretty trapped in a situation I didn't want to be in. While talking to my HR rep, she listened, was compassionate, told me all my options including staying, and pointed out specifics about pursuing various resolutions. IBM is

tions. I couldn't have gotten where I am without their help. I will always be grateful.

I know there are a lot of stories not as good as mine. Society will take time to adjust to us in the workplace, but as long as we have diversity-friendly places like IBM, it will get better. All good things take time and patience. We just need more workplaces that walk the walk and not just talk. I walk away from IBM with pride and dignity, and sorrow as well. It's a hard decision to walk away from a corporation like that. I will still help IBM any way I can. This is tough on any company trying to make things fair while respecting others.

But I leave knowing they will keep working at it and making things better and that's all one could ask. Sometimes in life we only see the bad, the negative. Sometimes we can actually expect the bad so much we can project it on others or even make it happen. And sometimes we just have to have a bit more faith in people, and even if they don't get it right the first time, be thankful they tried and know they will keep trying. When I meet an old friend who doesn't know I transitioned, I get "he'd" a lot. They keep trying to get it right and in time they have trouble seeing you as your old self. Be wary of ignorance and bigotry, there is plenty around. But never close your eyes or you will miss wonderful, beautiful, caring people that want to support you, to respect you and yes hopefully someone to love you.

I went to IBM as an unhappy trans person living through my own internal hell as a male. I left as an unemployed woman with the whole world in front of me, with my limits being only what I make them. Life doesn't get any better than this. Who knows? Maybe someday things will pick up and I will get a job at IBM where I can wear makeup, show off my hair, wear pretty clothes, and most of all give back to a wonderful company who gave so much to me. ▼

April Elizabeth is a busy parent of two children and lives in Milton.

It's a stretch for anyone to work with a man for 2 years and have someone tell you, "This is April from now on, she is a woman now!"

can't really see things getting much better: after 2 years with the same people I still get "he" a lot. I grew up with many of my co-workers, and I work in a bunny suit: all one can see is your eyes with no make up. I don't have Britney Spears's voice, and to them I look the same as before all covered up. It's a stretch for anyone to work with a man for 2 years and have someone tell you, "This is April from now on, she is a woman now."

I know they tried, most of them anyway, and there are always the few that never will. Working nights makes it tougher as I had no

good about that – at least they always have been with me. But it got to the point I didn't want to fight anymore, didn't want to feel I always had to walk on eggshells. It's just time to move on.

We agreed on a fair way for me to leave without too much pain financially to me. They even told me they would pay for counseling for a while through a program they had. IBM has helped me through what could have been the worst time in my life. They helped me get my surgeries done, and even paid for my time off, which was extensive due to complica-

TRUE NORTH
KAYAK TOURS

Announces

"Out On The Lake"

A Special Sea Kayak Program for Gays & Lesbians

Join True North Kayak Tours for one of our full day sea kayak programs designed for paddlers of all abilities. Gain new skills while touring some of most spectacular sites on Lake Champlain. We have several dates & starting locations available throughout the summer. The \$70 program cost includes all equipment, instruction, and guide fees.

CALL US TODAY TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT
802-860-1910

Mention This Ad For A \$20.00 Discount!!

P.O. Box 875
90 Main Street

Burlington, VT 05402
802-863-2517

BLACKWOOD ASSOCIATES, PC
attorneys

blackwood.law@verizon.net

fax: 802-863-0262

Concentrating in Employment, Special Education and Civil Rights Law. Also Wills, LGBT Issues, Estate Planning, Personal Injury, other litigation and mediation.

20 Charming Rooms
Peace & Privacy

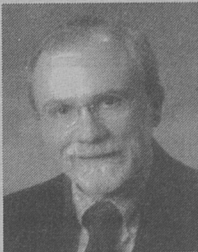
A LESBIAN PARADISE

The
Highlands Inn

P.O. Box 118
Bethlehem, NH 03574
603-869-3978
1-877-LES-B-INN (537-2466)

100 Acres • Pool
Hot Tub • Trails

www.highlandsinn-nh.com
vacation@highlandsinn-nh.com



Joseph Kress, M.A.
Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor
Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor

Individual and Couples Counseling

802-334-6301
95 Main Street, Suite 203, Newport, VT