

➔ the rest of our world

WASHINGTON, DC Red Cross Changes its Mind on Blood Donations

Seeking to reverse a 23-year-old policy banning donations of blood by men who have had sex with other men, the Red Cross announced in March it now wants to allow these men to give blood. The Red Cross has asked the Food and Drug Administration to change its policy to allow the blood donations, according to the Gay People's Chronicle.

The ban on taking blood from gay men was started by the FDA in 1983 at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. But while other agencies have favored lifting the ban in later years, the Red Cross insisted on keeping it.

According to the Chronicle, "The other collectors and the scientific community argued that the permanent deferral was irrational, scientifically unnecessary, and discriminatory.

While barring gay men, even those in long-term monogamous relationships, the policy allows blood donation by heterosexual men and women who have unprotected oral, anal and vaginal sex and multiple sex partners, and who have unknown HIV status."

Advocates for changing the rule note that all blood is tested for HIV anyway, and the test is considered to be "extremely reliable."

The FDA is expected to review the ban later this year.

MASSACHUSETTS Legislature Urged to Ban Gay Marriage

Opponents of same-sex marriage, led by Catholic Church leaders and right-wing groups such as Focus on the Family want a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in the only U.S. state that currently allows lesbians and gay men to marry.

Legislators are scheduled to hear the case on May 10, according to a MassEquality Campaign report.

Meanwhile, the state's attorney general has launched a criminal investigation into equal marriage opponents' VoteOn-Marriage signature campaign, with help from MEC in documenting more than 2,000 cases of fraud and forgery.

WISCONSIN Voters to Decide Marriage Issue

The Wisconsin legislature recently passed a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and civil unions in that state, but voters will decide in November whether the measure becomes law. An intensive statewide campaign is planned to defeat the amendment. Opposition includes the support of faith organizations representing half a million citizens and the training of more than 700 speakers to educate neighbors about the ban, rights advocates said. The Fair Wisconsin Campaign, a coalition of rights groups, are organizing to defeat the measure and have worked the past two years educating thousands of voters, according to email reports. National groups such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign are also getting into the act.

"In 2004, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people were used as a wedge issue in cynical political games," said HRC President Joe Solmonese. "This year, we are going to stop this onslaught on American families and Wisconsinites are already running a strategic and effective campaign to defeat this shameful attempt to discriminate."

SOUTH DAKOTA Boycotts Protest Abortion Ban

Protestors wasted no time organizing boycotts of South Dakota's abortion ban, legalized in March when Gov. Mike Rounds signed legislation outlawing nearly all abortions.

The Associated Press reported last month that politicians and state agencies have been "bombarded" with thousands of phone calls, letters and emails not only from U.S. citizens but from around the world. Some groups reportedly called for tourism boycotts of the Midwestern state. The ban, scheduled to go into effect on July 1, bans all abortions except to save a woman's life. No exceptions are made for women whose pregnancies result from rape or incest.

The law is seen as a violation of Roe v. Wade and is an attempt to overturn the 1973 Supreme Court decision allowing abortion, according to Planned Parenthood of New England.

vermont news

COMMUNITY NEWS

New Director Takes the Helm at Crisis Center

BURLINGTON — Cathleen Wilson, a longtime worker with the Women's Rape Crisis Center, is now serving as the organization's executive director.

"I'm most excited about ... being able to continue my work, in making sure services are available to survivors of sexual violence," said Wilson, who succeeded Celia Cuddy as head of WRCC in February.

The center's services include advocating for survivors in getting medical help, reporting incidents to police and dealing with the court system. Six of the center's 11 part- and full-time staff focus on this direct service to survivors. WRCC, which serves Chittenden County, also holds workshops for junior high, high school and college students as well as for professionals who work with survivors. Four of the staff at WRCC provide this educational work, including one person who works fulltime at UVM,

where students are at "high risk" for sexual violence, Wilson said.

WRCC is planning several events in April, including co-sponsoring the Take Back the Night March with SafeSpace.

Wilson said during the last year there has been a sharp increase in the number of sexual violence incidents, and an increase in the brutality of such attacks as well. More survivors suffered "extensive" physical injury, Wilson said. Also, the victims are getting younger, she said.

WRCC has grown and changed over the years. The number of male survivors requesting help has been "climbing steadily," and last year amounted to 14 percent of the total of people served by WRCC, Wilson said, with the remaining 86 percent of people served being female. Last year, there were no transgender persons requesting help from WRCC, she said.

A big change for the center

is the addition of male staff and volunteers. Nationally people are more aware that men and boys can be and are survivors of sexual violence, Wilson said.

Wilson is also part of a task force known as the "Joyful Sexuality Work Group" which focuses on the positive aspects of sexuality. She said she looks forward to continuing working with this group as part of her new job with WRCC.

Wilson began working with WRCC four years ago as development director. She served as assistant director for about a year and a half before being chosen as the center's executive director. ▼

➔ If you or someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence and needs support, call WRCC's 24-hour hotline at 862-1236. Anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to call the office at 864-0555.



MPM NEWS

So Long, Michel!



Michel DuBois is leaving OITM as operations manager and shared these thoughts upon his departure.

"Upon the occasion of my long-planned transition from *Out in Mountains*, a single word best summarizes my feelings: Gratitude.

It has been an unrelenting pleasure to serve you, dear reader, as your operations manager (read "factotum") for nearly three years. The lessons gleaned from my involvement with this worthwhile effort will remain with me for at least as long as the positive influence of the many wonderful people whom I have had the privilege to meet and to support.

To the many, dedicated volunteers across this great state who

have given of themselves so generously and consistently, please accept this expression of my heartfelt thanks. We are deeply proud that such a large number of volunteers works on this project month-to-month, year-to-year, decade-to-decade. And I am proud that soon I am to count myself among your ranks.

Thanks for everything "*Out in the Mountains!*" And thanks also to you, our cherished reader!" ▼

Thank you, Michel, for your dedication to OITM, and stay in touch.

➔ Michel DuBois served as OITM's Operations Manager from August 2003 to April 2005.

Welcome, Greg!

Greg Thompson has been chosen by the Mountain Pride Media board to be the new operations manager of OITM. Greg, whom a few volunteers have met already, will be taking care of the business side of the paper, including making sure all those copies get to you, our readers. Here's what Greg had to say about his arrival here:

"I moved here last April

after many years in LA to be closer to loved ones and because of the beauty of Vermont's outdoors. The cold is taking some getting used to, but I do appreciate the seasons.

Being at *Out in the Mountains* is presenting some exciting new challenges. The people I have met at the newspaper are respectful and conscientious and I know I will enjoy working with all of them.

To the readers of *Out in the Mountains*, I am pleased to come aboard. I will do my best to insure the continued success of this paper. And I urge all to stay — or get involved in our community."

Well said, Greg, and welcome to *Out in the Mountains!* ▼

