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PHOENIX, AZ

CrossWalk to Cross Country

On Easter Sunday, a newly-formed group of moderate and progressive Christians, known as "CrossWalk America," was set to begin a 2,500-mile walk from Phoenix to Washington, D.C., to promote Christianity's "core values," something too often overlooked in America, organizers said in a *US Newswire* report.

"We are going on this journey because the Christian values of compassion, a welcoming spirit, acceptance and tolerance are being drowned out in large part by a small, but vocal and well-funded minority that are using faith in America to create a divisive and polarizing atmosphere of exclusion," said the Rev. Eric Elnes, senior pastor of Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ and co-president of CrossWalk America.

CrossWalk affirms openness to other faiths, caring for the earth, inclusiveness of all people, "including God's LGBT community," and opposes the commingling of church and state.

WASHINGTON, DC

Blacklisting by Any Other name?

The Bush administration reworded rules to say national security clearances can't be denied "solely on the basis of the sexual orientation of the individual," causing gay rights leaders and gay lawmakers to believe that federal employees may be denied security clearances based on sexual orientation. *The Advocate* reported in April. The previous language, written by the Clinton administration, stated that sexual orientation "may not be used as a basis" for denying clearance to an individual.

The new wording constitutes "no change in our policy," *The Advocate* quoted White House spokesman Scott McClellan, but rights advocates say it could be interpreted to mean that sexual orientation could be used "in part" to deny clearance. Rob Sadler, a board member for Federal GLOBE, an advocacy organization for gay and lesbian federal workers, says alarm is justified.

"This (administration) doesn't do anything that's not intentional," Sadler is quoted. "On these issues, they have no credibility."

PHILADELPHIA

Emerging Rights in China

The Global GLBT Event, a weeklong event to be held here

in May, will honor China for its "emerging grassroots gay and lesbian civil rights movement," said the Equality Forum which sponsors the event.

Dan Zhou, "Chinese Gay Pioneer" and HIV activist, will discuss the civil rights movement in China with Michael Heflin, director of Amnesty International USA's OUTfront Program, on May 4th; and will be on a panel on legal rights in China on May 5th with Heflin and Scott Burris, law professor at Temple University.

Zhou is the recipient of Equality Forum's International Role Model Award, which will be presented by B.D. Wong at the International Equality Dinner on May 6th.

ALANYA, TURKEY

Gay Bar Image Spoiler

Conflict over the proposed opening of a gay bar emerged in the resort town of southern Antalya city, said Kaos Gl, a GLBT organization recognized by the government. Kemal Kacmaz, branch chairman of Justice & Development Party (AKP) in Alanya, reacted to a Netherlands gay couple's plans to open a gay bar in the resort, saying that the gay bar should not be opened, because it would cause the town's image to be spoiled.

The AKP won a landslide victory in the 2002 general elections, despite capturing barely a third of the popular vote, Kaos reported. AKP leader, former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is currently the Prime Minister of Turkey.

WASHINGTON, DC

Legislation to Protect Children of Same-Sex Couples

Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) in April introduced the Equal Access to Social Security Act, H.R. 5152, which would amend the Social Security Act to afford same-sex couples the same benefits, responsibilities, and obligations as others who pay into Social Security.

Same-sex couples are denied more than 1,000 federal benefits that other taxpayers are entitled to," Congressman Nadler was quoted in *Echelon Magazine*.

"The Equal Access to Social Security Act addresses this inequity. Ultimately, the only way same-sex couples will be treated equally is when they are allowed to marry. But until that can be a reality for the millions of same-sex couples in this country, we should make federal law fair," he said.

vermont news

PHILANTHROPY

Fund to Earmark Gay Money, Volunteer Hours

RANDOLPH – Local GLBT leaders are launching the Gay & Lesbian Fund of Vermont this month to highlight the generosity of the GLBT community. The Fund also boasts a volunteer component, "Out for Good," that will enhance the visibility of GLBT work done in the larger community.

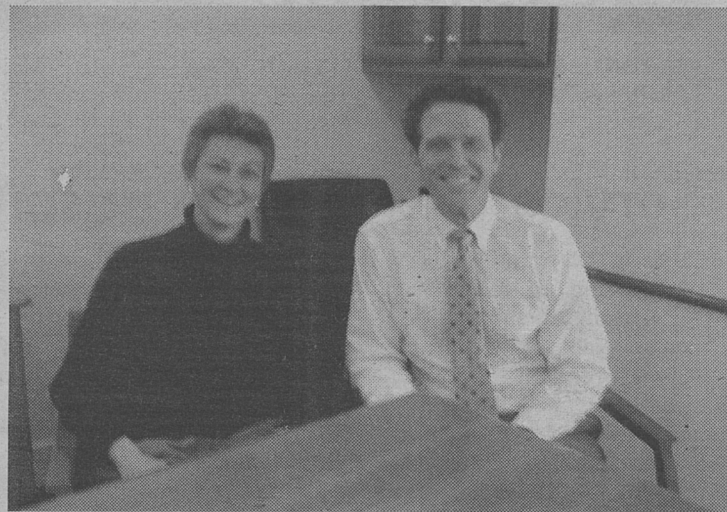
Bennett Law, a former chair of Mountain Pride Media, said he still sees "Take Back Vermont" signs in Bethel where he lives with his partner Tom. He started thinking that people putting up these signs may think that the GLBT community "wants something" from the larger community, which in this case was the right to marry, or alternatively, civil unions.

Perhaps the larger community feels that something is being taken from them, Law reasoned. If so, why not demonstrate what the GLBT community is already giving to the community, both in terms of financial support as well as time and energy?

"We give to the hospital, ambulance, and Vermont Public Radio," Law said of himself and his partner. "Alone it may not mean much," he said, but if all contributions from the GLBT community were packaged together, it would be a way for the community to be acknowledged.

So that's what Law and Susan Murray, one of two attorneys who filed *Baker v. State*, the lawsuit that eventually led to Vermont's civil union law, decided to do. They plan to combine the gifts of GLBT donors for each charity or other organization, and send that larger donation to the organization under the name of the Gay & Lesbian Fund.

During the debates in the legislature regarding the right to marry, donations were received from Vermont and around the world, "bundled," and given to legislators through the Vermont Fund for Families (VFFF), a political action committee formed to elect candidates who support equal marriage rights for gays and lesbians. Sending the donations together sent a very powerful message to legislators, Murray said. If individuals had sent their contributions instead, the donations wouldn't have had nearly the impact. "It made a



Susan Murray and Bennett Law

PHOTO: LYNN MCNICOL

"We're incredibly active in the larger community. It would be nice to be recognized for it."

BARB DOZETOS

huge difference in how the candidates perceived us, in terms of our strength, influence, ability to raise money and turn out volunteers, etc. Huge."

The Fund will charge \$5 for every check written, which will be used to cover the costs of the Fund, but is not expected to make any money beyond expenses. The entire amount of a person's contribution, including the \$5 fee, will be tax-deductible under the 501(c)3 program, Murray said.

People will be shocked at the amount given by GLBT donors, Law said. If donors come together under the Gay & Lesbian Fund banner, they can make a much bigger donation to say, the Flynn Theater, hospital or other organization.

The volunteer portion of the Gay & Lesbian Fund has its origins in a group of GLBT volunteers organized to help raise funds for Vermont Public Radio in past years. Barb Dozetos, a past editor of OITM, organized the volunteers under the name "Out for Good" for the VPR drive, and decided that it would be a good name to use for volunteers within the Gay & Lesbian Fund.

Dozetos said that GLBT volunteers put in many hours helping people in a number of community organizations.

"We're incredibly active in the larger community," Dozetos said. "It would be nice to be recognized for it."

Plans for the volunteers include wearing "Out for Good" T-shirts wherever they volunteer their time. By wearing the T-shirts, the program will demonstrate to the larger community that GLBT volunteers help the community in many ways.

"This feels like a really good thing for a maturing community to do," Dozetos said. "The world would be a much, much sadder place," she said, without the contributions of the gay community.

The Gay & Lesbian Fund board members also include Carrie Rampp, also a past chair of Mountain Pride Media; David Hooks, former director and chair of Vermont CARES; Tom Bivins, former chair of the Vermont Chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food; Heidi Schueger, retired from the U.S. military - including service in Iraq - and now employed by Middlebury College; and Jan Blanchard, a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.

Organizers will have more information about the Fund available at the R.U.1.2? dinner in Burlington on May 13th. ▼