

Out in the Mountains

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Middlebury College Grants Domestic Partner Benefits

Michael Warner

On September 1, 1993, Middlebury College joined a growing number of employers when it began extending to domestic partners the same benefit package (to the extent permitted by law) previously only available to married spouses.

Partners must meet the College's definition of domestic partner which involves filling out a Request for Dependent Benefits form. Beginning in September married spouses must also fill out the same form. The form asks that spouses/partners meet certain criteria, including sharing the common necessities of life, being over age 18, not legally married to another person, etc. Beyond that there are further conditions which must be met when a couple either can not or chooses not to produce a marriage license. The change in policy applies to opposite sex partners who are unmarried as well. It will also extend benefits to natural or adopted children of a domestic partner of an employee.

In announcing the change in policy to members of the Middlebury College Staff

Council, Tom Corbin, Acting Director of Human Resources stated that this change in policy was what the President and Trustees wanted to do and that it was the "right thing to do." Further, in the Middlebury College Employee Handbook whenever there is a listing for "spouse" that listing will be changed to "spouse or domestic partner."

Although this comes at a time when its peer institutions are making similar adjustments in benefits, it is also a victory for Middlebury College's faculty and staff g/l/b organization GLEAM (Gay Lesbian Employees At Middlebury). Group members first met with Middlebury's President John McCardell in the Spring of 1992 to discuss changes in benefits. That was followed last winter by a lengthy proposal primarily drafted by Economics Professor Richard Cornwall. Hastened perhaps by the climate on other campuses and the Vermont State Labor Relations Board's ruling affecting the University of Vermont, the proposal made its way through the administration to become policy in less than a year. ▼

Lesbian Feminist Collective in El Salvador

Stephanie Lind

The usual article about the political struggle in El Salvador begins: "El Salvador is a country the size of Massachusetts where over 75,000 people have died in the last 10 years of civil war." It goes on to talk about the struggle over land and sustainable living between the government and the civilian armed resistance: the FMLN.

At the 1993 National Conference for Women in El Salvador, a small group of women changed the usual revolutionary picture of El Salvador. They were fighting for human rights, peace and justice not only for the poor in that country, but for lesbians as well. The women are from a small group called the Lesbian Feminist Collective of the Half Moon (CO-FESMEL); the first known group to confront the oppression against gays and lesbians in El Salvador.

With a short history of 10 months thus far, they emerged from a clandestine existence to hold two workshops at the women's conference in July. The first workshop, entitled *Lesbian Sexuality*, was led by two members of the group. Participants explored and debunked myths of lesbianism. The responses varied. There was fear and homophobia as well as support among the women at the workshop. One woman said she had learned that, "If a lesbian makes a pass at me, so what? The worst that could happen is that I wouldn't be attracted to her." At the end of the workshop one woman asked, "How can we begin talking about these issues to poor women in the countryside when their primary concern is how to feed their families—Isn't it soon to be bringing this issue up? Don't we need to fight for more basic rights first?"

That question was answered the next day at the *Lesbian Mothers Workshop*. Much

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The Q Team

Team Q from Burlington place 53rd among teams competing in the 1993 Burlington Triathlon, held Sept. 12 at North Beach. Team members include: David Grist, runner, left; Brian Farrell, swimmer; and Tom Koch, bicyclist.

