

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street Cambridge Massachusetts 02139

(617) 354-8807

TTY and VOICE

1st Floor - Wheelchair Accessible

MAY '88



NAMES PROJECT

The "AIDS Quilt" consists of over 4,000 individual 3' x 6' panels, each one created by friends, family and/or loved ones of individuals who have died of AIDS. Roughly the size of 4 football fields, it is a statement of love and remembrance and hope, a symbol of national unity. "The Quilt, without any rhetoric, speaks eloquently about how the country should respond to AIDS. Just the image of it touches something that is very pure and very good" (USA Today).

The Quilt will be displayed here in Boston, June 16-19, at the Park Plaza Castle (corner of Arlington Street and Columbus Avenue). To accommodate anticipated crowds, the building will be open at 6 AM Friday-Sunday. On June 18, there will be a special unveiling of New England panels outside (rain date June 19)

Making a panel is a moving and powerful way to remember someone. It is not too late. Call the Names Project at 451-9003, for information on how to do it, or where to join a Quilting Bee.



One hundred hours and more than 200 fabric scraps went into the panel Larkin Mayo and Gary Yuschalk made for their friend Tom Castro, a housepainter.

NEW SUPPORT GROUP

An open group for women who have surrendered children for adoption has just started meeting at the Women's Center on Thursdays from 6:30 - 8:30 pm. The goals are to help each other incorporate this decision into our lives, work through the pain, and feel comfortable sharing this aspect of ourselves with others. All women who have surrendered a child are welcome to attend any meeting. Confidentiality is assured. Call the Center for info.

NEW WRITING GROUP

The focus is on writing from your own experience. The first hour is spent writing in response to a photo or something else brought in by a participant. The last 1/2 hour is spent reading what has been written and giving each other feedback. Meets every other Saturday from noon to 1:30 at the Women's Center. Open to any interested women.

LESBIAN / GAY PRIDE

GAY PRIDE MARCH

Saturday, June 11. Leaves City Hall Plaza (Govt. Center T) at noon. Rally 2-6 pm at the Boston Common. FREE! Childcare, ASL Interpreters, wheelchair accessible.

PICNIC

For lesbians and children
SUNDAY, MAY 22
11am - 3pm

Dean Playground, Brookline
Bring lunch, bats, balls, rackets, etc. Sponsored by 'Children In Our Lives' Conference Planners

COFFEE - OPEN - HOUSE

The Coffeehouse is having a volunteer open house at the Women's Center, Sunday May 22 from 6-8pm. Anyone who wants to find what makes the Coffeehouse run is most welcome.

SOFTBALL

Softball anyone? The Women's Center has been invited to join a non-profit, non-competitive softball league sponsored by the Cambridge YWCA. If you would be interested in playing, please leave your name and phone number on the sign-up sheet at the Center, or call Lisa at 497-0958.

ONGOING GROUPS

SUNDAY

- Deaf Women's Community 2-4pm
Project (3rd Sunday, monthly)
- Women's International Support. . 12 noon
Network (4th Sunday, monthly)

MONDAY

- Support for Battered Women . . 7:30-9pm
- *New Women's Chorus. 7-10pm
- Lesbian Rap 8-10pm
- Boston Bisexual Women's. . . 7:30-9:45pm
Network-Intro (1st Mon., even #'d months)
- I.R. Volunteers (3rd Monday) 7:30-9:30pm.
- All-Center Meeting 6-8pm
(biweekly)

TUESDAY

- Former Nun Lesbian Support . . . 7pm-9pm
Group (1st Tuesday, monthly)
- Discussion Group for Deaf . 7:30-9:30pm
Incest Survivors (3rd Tuesday, monthly)
- Women for Sobriety 7-8:30pm
- *For Crying Out Loud. 6:30-9pm

WEDNESDAY

- Support for Battered Women . Noon-1:30pm
- Feminist Discussion Group 8-10pm
- Lesbian Al-Anon (childcare) . . 6:30-8pm
- Writer's Support 7:30-9:45pm
- Politics of Fat (biweekly) . 7:30-9:30pm

THURSDAY

- Women Who Have Surrendered . 6:30-8:30pm
Children for Adoption
- Discussion for Incest. . . . 7:30-9:30pm
Survivors
- Lesbians Choosing Children . . 7:30-10pm
Network (second Thursday, monthly)
- *Women's School 7:30-10pm

SATURDAY

- Writer's Support Group . . . noon-1:30pm
(biweekly)
- * means group is not currently open

SINGLES MINGLE

SINGLES PARTY at the Women's Center on Sat. May 21st, 8 to 11 PM. Alcohol, drug and smoke-free. Music & refreshments. Women of all ages & stages are welcome!

BATTERED WOMEN'S SUPPORT

We welcome all battered women. Come and share this all too common problem and learn that you are not alone in what you are experiencing. We can explore options and alternatives and find ways to change the situation to allow you to grow and once again become your own person. The group meets Wednesday at Noon and Monday evenings at 7:30pm at the Women's Center.

FEMINISTS DISCUSS

Wednesdays 8-10pm

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|--------|-----------------------------|
| May 18 | Racism |
| 25 | Having and Not Having Money |
| June 1 | Incest as a Feminist Issue |
| 8 | Women's Laughter |
| 15 | Rage and Anger |
| 22 | Hating Yourself as a Woman |
| 29 | Women's Literature |

LESBIAN RAP

Mondays 8-10pm

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| May 23 | Roles in Relationships |
| 30 | Outdoors Women |
| June 6 | Family Attitudes and Being Gay |
| 13 | How Do You Know When Its Over |
| 20 | Effects of Sexual Abuse on
Intimacy |
| 27 | Lesbian Creativity |

COFFEEHOUSE

Fridays 8pm-Midnite

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|---------|--|
| May 20 | Female Fantasies of Revenge -
Bring stories, writings, songs.
Feature film - <u>A Question of Silence.</u> |
| May 27 | CASA film series - <u>Look at My
People - See How They Struggle</u>
(Spanish with subtitles). |
| June 3 | Rosario Morales, poet, reads
from her book <u>Getting Home Alive</u> ,
published with her daughter. |
| June 10 | A showing of the works of Patti
Wilson, Deaf Community Activist and
Media Artist. |
| June 17 | Shryl Bailey & friend play jazz
guitar. |
| June 24 | Another great evening of poetry
and humor with the Pleasant St. Writing
Brigade. |

I. R. CUTS BACK

Incest Resources has been a crucial resource to incest survivors since they were incorporated in 1981. Two of the founders, Elaine Westerlund and Kathy Morrissey, have continued to play major roles in keeping I.R. alive and well throughout the years. When Incest Resources was incorporated, there were no support groups for survivors.(!) The founders decided to start one for themselves. This evolved into the Drop-In Discussion Group for Women with Incest Histories which they have facilitated since 1983. It has become the most populated group at the Women's Center, generally filling 2 large rooms to overflowing.

Both Elaine and Kathy have been very involved in making and maintaining the resource book for incest survivors, writing and dispersing relevant literature, legislative advocacy and public speaking. This past year their roles have increased even more because all the other core members of the Incest Resources collective gradually left.

Sadly, but understandably, they have decided to cut back on some of the programs although they will continue to work in several capacities for incest survivors. They will no longer offer the monthly discussion group after June, and they will also stop maintaining the I.R. Referral & Resource Book after Sept. 1.

We want to commend Kathy and Elaine for all the work they have done and to express our heartfelt appreciation for their constructive impact on the lives of thousands of incest survivors. Because of their pioneering efforts, they have greatly decreased the isolation of incest survivors in the Greater Boston Area.

UPCOMING TOPICS

Discussion Groups for Women with Incest Histories: Third Thursday, 7:30-9:30pm
May 19 - Strength
June 16 - Saying Goodbye
For Deaf Women: 3rd Tuesday, 7:30-9:30pm
May 17 - Healing
June 21 - Letting Go

CENTER HOURS

Monday-Thursday 10am - 10pm
Friday 10am - 8pm
Coffeeshouse 8pm - Midnite
Saturday 11am - 2pm

NEW SURVIVERS NETWORK

Services for incest survivors will continue at the Women's Center! A group of survivors familiar with the drop-in groups facilitated by Incest Resources, have rallied together to create a new organization and decided to name it Incest Survivors Network (ISN). Members of ISN will facilitate drop-in discussion groups in September. (See ALERT about the new schedule of the drop-in groups.) A resource book, consisting of therapists, groups and other services available to survivors, will also be maintained by members of ISN and will be available for perusal in September. Anyone interested in joining ISN and participating in any way (facilitating, working on resource book, or any other project that would be helpful to incest survivors) please call the Women's Center, 354-8807, and ask to speak to Alice.

While we are sad to see Incest Resources discontinue some of its services, we are very grateful for the spirit which has nurtured us for so long and which enables us to carry on this important work.

INCEST & THE MEDIA

THE POLITICS OF INCEST: Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Media: Points that were made at this event include: While the media encourages children and adults to disclose sexual abuse, society does not respond constructively. The police, the courts and the media fail to treat sexual abuse as a serious crime, neither punishing the perpetrator nor focusing on what's best for the child. Children have no power to protect themselves and no say in where they get put when they acknowledge abuse. Abuse is fostered by our society. Males are allowed to treat women and children as their property; the family unit, where most sexual (and physical) abuse occurs, is considered sacred. Changes in these basic assumptions are urgently needed, but the mainstream media reinforces them.

ALERT: AS OF 5/12/88 DROP-IN DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR INCEST SURVIVORS OCCUR EVERY THURSDAY (FACILITATED ON THE THIRD THURSDAY EXCEPT IN JULY & AUGUST).

WALK FOR LIFE

On Sunday, June 5, people from all walks of life will gather on Boston Common for a 10 kilometer (6.2 mile) pledge walk to raise money for AIDS care and services. The largest AIDS fundraising event in New England, the AIDS Action committee is hoping to raise \$880,000 in 1988 (last year - 5,000 raised \$750,000). The proceeds will be given to 20 New England AIDS service organizations.

POLITICS OF FAT

Politics of Fat is reorganizing. We are an ongoing group that meets every other Wednesday, 7:30-9:30pm. Our goal is to create a supportive and trusting space where women can feel comfortable about their size (no matter what their size) and discuss their common experiences as women being oppressed by unattainable standards of beauty.

- Upcoming discussion topics:
- May 25 Family and Body Image: What part did/do members of our family play in the way we feel about our bodies?
- June 8 The Media: What does the media tell us about how we should look? Where can we find alternatives to these messages?
- June 22 Feminist Literature on Fat, Beauty and Body Image: Bring your favorite books and/or magazines to share
- July 6 Food as a Feminist Issue
Possible future topics include: Sexuality & Body Image, To Diet or Not to Diet, The Politics of Eating Disorders, Educating the Feminist Community about Looksism, Keeping Your Sanity in a Sizeist World.

STATUS OF WOMEN

The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women is a department of the City of Cambridge, initiated by local women and commissioned by the City Council in 1977 as a voice for women throughout Cambridge. Up to twenty women can serve on the Commission at one time; they are appointed by the City Manager for one or two terms of three years each. The Commission makes recommendations on policy and program to the City Council, Manager and other city departments and promotes education in the community on issues important to women. The Commission also works with individuals and organization in Cambridge to insure women's participation and representation in every aspect of Cambridge life.

¡Atención!

El Centro de mujeres en Cambridge ofrece una persona bilingue, la cual habla Inglés y Español.

Para más información lláme al 354-8807 y hable con Lori.

RACISM IN CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission sponsored a daylong public forum about the racism that exists in our community. Public testimony included accounts of MIT police harrassing minority students, as well as how MIT's expansion, if unchecked, will wipe out the multicultural character of the Central Square area, eliminate stores with affordable wares and reduce further housing options for low income residents.

Currently, there are 2000 applications on the waiting list for public housing, and of these, 80% are from minority populations. Rent controlled housing has no income guidelines at all and is obtained primarily through informal networks, not available to the public.

Discrimination in other areas: incorrect assumptions such as that crimes are most often committed by minority group members reinforce racist attitudes. School bus drivers strikes are greeted with, "you don't care about children," rather than "what are you getting paid." 75% of school bus drivers are people of color; 85% of those have children; they earn \$13-\$14,000/year.

MASS ACT - OUT

MASS ACT-OUT is a grassroots, direct action group of lesbians and gay men, whose primary purposes are to fight homophobia and to support the participation of lesbians and gay men in all parts of our society. MASS ACT-OUT identifies society's fearful, irrational and inadequate response to the AIDS crisis as the most immediate and dangerous manifestation of homophobia. MASS ACT-OUT is committed to fight this and all expressions of homophobia. Because homophobia is linked to other forms of oppression, MASS ACT-OUT commits itself to working in alliance with other groups that challenge oppression based on race, sex, age, ability, class, ethnicity, faith, political ideology, sexual and transgenderal orientation in order to secure true liberation for all lesbian and gay people.

Call 661-7737 for more info



Our community outreach plan is taking off! As was mentioned in the last issue of On Our Way, our main goal is to focus attention on reaching out to disabled women, women of color, older/younger women, and mothers.

We've recently attended a conference on Women and Disability in New Haven, Conn. and a rally in support of the Transportation Access Act (S1390, H3547). This act would, among other things, make public transportation in MA 100% accessible. Affordable and accessible transportation is essential to disabled women if they are to have full access into the work force and the women's movement. A number of disabled women have already said they would participate more fully in the Women's Center if they had accessible transportation. If you would like more information about this bill, call Laura Rauscher at 727-7440.

We have recently mailed our new Spanish brochure to organizations that serve Hispanic women. We are currently doing mailings to other groups serving other women of color. Outreach has also been done to organizations that work with teen-age women. We plan to meet with women from these groups during the next few months and hope to create strong ties between our organizations. If you are interested in helping with outreach, or want more info, call Lori at 354-8807.

GERMAN VISITORS

On April 4th, a group of 12 women from the Federal Republic of Germany visited the Center as part of a feminist exchange program with the U.S. called Women's Bridge, 1988. We discussed the similarities and differences between their local Women's Center and our Center. The Berliners were impressed by our size, diversity of services and stability. Their Center is much smaller than ours and doesn't provide a referral network. Funding is their main problem. On the weekends they open up as a Center Cafe to help support their existence. They also rent out space to interested individuals or groups to help cover costs.

If you are interested in participating the next time a group of foreign women want to visit us, call Lori at 354-8807.

Tituba, the Women's Center cat, has lived at the Center for the past 15 years since she was abandoned on our doorstep as a very frightened kitten. She has slowly made progress towards feeling comfortable and loved by the women who work at and visit the Center, although she still runs and hides when the commotion is too much for her. However, her presence here means that some women who are allergic to cat dander cannot use the Center, or must suffer allergic reactions when they are here. The All-Center Meeting has recently received two letters objecting to Tituba's presence here, since it makes the Center inaccessible to some women.

There is no easy solution to this dilemma. We have opened up the question to the Center community by raising the issue on graffiti sheets in the bathrooms and through this article. Many women have stated the the Center is her home, and we should not 'evict' her. Others have pointed out that although finding another home for Tituba may seem like the obvious solution, she may not survive the transition, as it has taken her 15 years to become somewhat comfortable here.

Another suggestion was that Tituba be restricted from one of the meeting rooms. This room could be used by groups with participants who are sensitive to cat dander. This would likely involve room shuffling, compromises by other groups and would be complicated if two groups needed this special room at the same time.

The issue seems to have some similarities to the recent issue of smoking at the Center, and we feel a similar strong split of women on both sides of the issue. However, here, the decision will not just affect women, but also decides the future life of an animal. Any suggestions you may have on how to resolve this issue are welcome. Send your comments to the All Center Mtg., c/o The Women's Center.

NEWOMEN

The Newoman Committee is off and running! We've had two potlucks and called more than 50 women. There are two more potlucks planned for Sunday, May 15 and Friday, June 10. For more information, or to join the Newoman Committee, leave a message for Janet Putnam at the Center.

