

# AEGIS NEWS

QUARTERLY 4 / 96 #7

ISSN 1077-162X

## So You Wanna Be in Politics?

### A Realistic Assessment of Transgender Political Involvement

by Jessica Xavier

As recently as five years ago, the very notion of transgendered people becoming actively and openly involved in our American political process was looked upon as fantasy. Indeed, many people within our community still view it as such. But as they stood in the early morning sunshine on the Capitol steps this past October on National Gender Lobby Day, one hundred transgendered Americans brought a dream

into reality. Finally, this transgendered "movement" of ours has reached a certain level where there are enough activists out in varying degrees to begin the difficult work of our liberation. In one sense, this can be seen as a culmination of previous gender

education efforts, because lobbying or demonstrating is really gender education at more ambitious levels. But in another sense, the political activism of recent years has transcended those previous endeavors, reaching toward goals once thought beyond our grasp.

Driven in equal parts by

desperation, outrage and personalities, the emerging transgender political movement has been greatly inspired by the Gay and Lesbian and Women's Liberation movements. Some of our strategy and many of our tactics are borrowed from their previous and ongoing efforts. Even our activist groups have direct antecedents in those roots: The Transsexual Menace and The Lavender Menace; Transgender Nation and Queer Nation; and It's Time, America! and its chapters and It's Time, Minnesota! Once we were

a rag-tag collection of brave individuals. Now we are groups with

members, agendas, actions and goals.

Because our numbers are tiny in comparison to the larger movements that have preceded us, we have sought to join forces with them, especially with the gay and lesbian movement. The reasons are obvious: both gay and transgendered people have grown up different, finding ourselves surrounded by a hostile majority and being forced to endure acts of discrimination, harassment and violence committed by the same perpetrators. Our self-identifications notwithstanding, transgendered persons still are almost wholly perceived as gay by the non-transgendered. But in spite of these commonalities and our involvement at the Stonewall Rebellion, working together became very problematic, largely

VISION 2001 CONTINUES

due to transphobia within the gay community and homophobia within our own. Fortunately, things are changing for the better, at least at a national level, where both communities can now engage in constructive dialogue rather than shouting matches. Although a national foundation has been laid for future cooperative endeavors, much work remains to be done elsewhere, as state and local transgender groups make their first contacts with their gay and lesbian counterparts. Similarly, communication and cooperation with women's groups like the National Organization for Women has just begun in earnest.

Our political activities have focused on two main tactics: direct action and lobbying our elected representatives. (Efforts in case law are a potential third route, but that discussion is best left for another time). Direct action and lobbying are *not* necessarily mutually exclusive; in fact, they share some similarities. Besides being ambitious forms of gender education, both tactics can be effective when executed carefully toward clearly *pre-defined* goals. Both tactics are problematic in their own way, and both impact on each other. Direct action can either create or destroy opportunities for successful legislative efforts which, by offering legal means of redress of grievances, can render direct action moot. But legislative efforts require more patience, being longitudinal in nature and becoming more so the higher the level at which they are attempted. This can give rise to the perception that nothing is being done, which leads to cries for direct action. But as we have learned from the civil rights movements of the past, the success of both direct action and lobbying efforts will be necessary if the transgender political movement is to eventually succeed.

By *Direct Action*, I mean openly demonstrating in public, either with or without civil disobedience. The Transsexual Menace describes their direct actions as "confronting with love." Direct action focuses the public's attention directly on an outrage committed against members of our transgender community, and both The Transsexual Menace and Transgender Nation have

had some success in their direct actions. Both groups have demonstrated against acts of violence toward transgendered persons and transphobia in the media. But direct action can be a roll of the dice. Despite careful planning, something can go wrong. The point of our protests may be lost on nontransgendered persons who don't understand us or the outrage we are protesting, and many in our own community are alienated by it. Civil disobedience, which sometimes leads to arrest, is largely out of the question in cities that do not segregate pre-op MTF transgendered demonstrators from non-transgendered male prison populations, like San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Whatever form they take, direct actions allow their participants to feel good about being out, being "in your face" (or more appropriately, in *their* face) and most importantly, about being themselves. It's a powerful way to shuck your shame while sticking a sharp stick in the public's eye.

But my main purpose here is to discuss lobbying and the traditional approach to political action in this country. As citizens living in a constitutional democracy, transgendered Americans possess certain rights, including the right to vote, by which we elect our representatives. As taxpayers, we pay their salaries, and therefore they work for us. We have placed them in positions of power, from which they may bring about societal change and redress the wrongs committed against us. Of course, we first must bring our needs and concerns to their attention. According to our civic textbooks, this is how the republican model of government is supposed to work, although through the years, the system has become somewhat warped. Nevertheless, I think most of "We, the People" still force ourselves to believe in it, given the dearth of viable alternatives. In our lifetimes, we have seen the Iron Curtain fall and corrupt dictators driven from power because their systems of government were even more imperfect than our own.

In August of 1994, at TRANSGEN, Karen Kerin, Jane Fee, Sarah DePalma, myself, and others, with a shove from Phyllis Frye and the other

directors of ICTLEP, formed It's Time, America! to pursue organized lobbying efforts at all levels of this democratically-elected federal republic of ours. We recognized that no such formal organization existed, and clearly the need was there. The Gay and Lesbian community already had several large, well-funded organizations producing concrete results, such as the passage of anti-discrimination laws in nine states to date. With the radical right becoming aware of our existence, as evidenced by two specific anti-transgender initiatives in Washington state, it was time to act. And as we began our efforts in earnest, the vision of our dream was quickly displaced by the reality of the American political system. Some observations:

- ▶ *Like direct action, lobbying takes courage. There are various risks to coming out to your representatives, especially if they know you in or from another life.*
- ▶ *Lobbying requires a die-hard perseverance. Ask Jane Fee: the statewide law in Minnesota that prohibits discrimination against gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people took 13 years and twenty-two attempts before it passed.*
- ▶ *Lobbying needs a clear, concise, logical message that must be repeated over and over again. We must convey to our representatives and others that contrary to the massive negative media stereotyping, transgendered people are not some crazy "fringe" group, but ordinary citizens facing tremendous difficulties while trying to live normal lives. The normalcy aspect is all-important here. Even more important is that we are born transgendered and have no choice in being who we are. The "Choice" rhetoric is for the radicals, the artists, the rich and the closeted among us. The politicians won't buy it, because it makes no sense to them why anyone would choose to become a target for nearly universal discrimination.*
- ▶ *Lobbying requires an in-depth knowledge of the congress, state legislature,*

and county or city council. When does the legislature meet? What are the various committees? What are the major bills and legislative trends for that session? It also includes knowing not just the representatives in one's district, but the other districts as well, especially the committee chairs, and, most importantly, those who chair committees which will deal with your legislation.

▮ Lobbying also means laying the groundwork within the area you are working by broadening your gender education efforts. It means getting to know all the like-minded groups like NOW, the statewide gay and lesbian group, and the NAACP and their lobbyists, in order to build coalitions that work. It means constant networking, requesting time at their meetings to speak, or just sharing our experiences. Lobbying is educating and raising everyone's consciousness. And it means working with the media: writing letters to the editors, or even going on the air with our stories. In lobbying, there can never be too much gender education, as we need as many non-transgendered friends as we can get.

All of the above are important, but perhaps most of all, successful lobbying requires a community united in its support of those efforts. We are a very small community and we need everyone to make it work. It takes a commitment at both the personal and community-wide levels. It takes transgendered people willing to be involved to whatever degree they can feel comfortable. If they can't volunteer their time, they can contribute in other ways, like signing petitions, pre-written post cards and letters, calling their representatives, or even meeting with them, but especially by giving money. Money is the single most important requirement for lobbying efforts. Lots of it. Money is perhaps the best barometer of a community's commitment to achieving a collective goal. And you might say we have some problems here, some so deep seated to the very nature of who we are that they may be insurmountable.

I live in Washington, D.C., and have for most of my life. That makes me unusual here in my home town, because

unlike almost everyone else, I am *from* here. Both my parents worked for the government, as have I for a short stretch after college. Throughout most of my life I have been saturated by a local media obsessed with politics, political campaigning and government, because here inside the Beltway that *is* the local industry, literally the only business in town. Crazy, when it came time to go to college, I studied Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, right outside DC. Through my studies and through a lifetime of media saturation, the calculus of politics became quite clear to me. Politicians alone do not make politics. Vote tallies do not really equate to elections. By itself, education does not make it lobbying. But add money to the left side of these equations, and instantly, all things are possible.

As a member of Common Cause, the non-partisan political reform lobby (a contradiction in terms?) I have been appalled at the amounts of money spent in lobbying and in campaigning. No matter how many campaign reform laws are passed, there are always loopholes, through which millions of bucks dance, occasionally right before the muckrakers' eyes, electing the representatives of the wealthy or the wealthy themselves. Ever wonder what happened to health

---

*At this point, the importance and utility of a full-time presence in Washington, D.C. should be obvious. We need to be able to lobby year-round, not just two days en masse or four visits a year, to be able to push an amendment including gender identity in ENDA (the Employment Non-Discrimination Act). We need an organization that can deal with the major gay and lesbian groups on a daily, face to face basis, rather than engage in long-distance inclusion conflicts over the Internet. We must be able to continuously network within the Beltway to build coalitions with the gay and lesbian, women's and other civil rights groups.*

---

care reform? The health care lobbies in Washington spent (by one estimate) close to half a billion bucks in 1993 to defeat it. Power in Washington is wielded by the wealthy who elect their own to push or preserve their economic programs or positions.

Lobbying is a very big, expensive

business in Washington, but it's difficult to tell exactly *how* big, because not all the money being spent to elect the right people and to push the right programs is readily visible, thanks to the aforementioned loopholes. About twenty years ago, Richard Vigurie and the Heritage Foundation mastered the art of direct mail solicitations for conservative political causes. Since then, the radical right has used the same methods to amass millions and millions of bucks to shove their vision of America right down the throats of everyone else. And not a lot of money stands in their way: Common Cause; People for the American Way; The NAACP; The National Organization for Women; and a lot of other smaller groups engaging in a lot of wishful thinking.

Since It's Time, America! or any other national transgender lobbying group with national ambitions will likely be modeled on one or more of the major gay and lesbian groups, I have studied their efforts carefully. At this point, the importance and utility of a full-time presence in Washington, D.C. should be obvious. We need to be able to lobby *year-round*, not just two days *en masse* or four visits a year, to be able to push an amendment including gender identity in ENDA (the Employment Non-Discrimination Act). We need an

organization that can deal with the major gay and lesbian groups on a daily, face to face basis, rather than engage in long-distance inclusion conflicts over the Internet. We must be able to continuously network within the Beltway to build coalitions with the gay and lesbian, women's and other civil rights

groups. It is critical that we coordinate our efforts with these other like-minded groups much more closely than ever before. We should strive for vertical synergy, not horizontal hostility.

I wish to present a model herein which will serve as a rough estimate of what is *financially* possible, politically, nationally, *if* the transgender movement seeks to follow the conventional route of lobbying our elected representatives. *Should* the national community accept this notion, it must support a national

domestic partnership, parental and adoption rights, removal of sodomy laws, hate crimes and of course, anti-discrimination measures.

Where did these groups get their money? The bottom table on page 5 shows their donor bases, as represented by their mailing list sizes.

For the sake of this argument, let's assume the vaunted one in ten figure for gays is correct, meaning there should be 26 million gay men and lesbians in this country of 260 million. Ignoring

---

*Gay men and lesbians know their rights are at stake because they know they are a minority, and they share a minority consciousness. Most of us within the transgendered community are still hiding from our shame under a blanket of heterosexuality, refusing to admit our minority status, and thus our vulnerability. And that is the greatest threat to the transgendered political movement. Unless we can disabuse ourselves of this denial, the transgendered political movement ultimately will fail.*

---

lobbying group or groups to represent us here in Washington, DC, and in every state where we live. Since I am a Director of It's Time, America!, I'm biased here, but I believe one organization, fully representative of the national community, would better serve the community than two or more such groups, which would potentially fight over each other's turf (and we have had enough of *that!*). Moreover, at this point, our community, as I will show, can financially only support one such group. This undertaking will be expensive. How expensive? Using our gay and lesbian cousins as examples, the top table on page 5, from *The Washington Blade*, shows the funding for the "Big Six" Gay and Lesbian groups from 1987 to 1995.

The eight million dollars amassed by the Human Rights Campaign (formerly the Human Rights Campaign Fund) may seem impressive, but not when compared to the tens of millions raised by the Christian Coalition, the Traditional Family Values Council, and other radical right groups. HRC's millions allows them to employ 38! lobbyists in Washington and elsewhere. Other groups and coalitions are pursuing such initiatives as same sex marriage,

duplication in the above table (one person contributing to more than one organization), 536,000 donors is about a 2% return rate, and they contributed \$17 million. Using the same math and being equally over-optimistic, if one in a *thousand* people are transgendered, there would be a potential base of about 260,000 nationwide. Assuming equal rates of contribution (2%) and ability to donate, 5200 transgendered people could contribute about \$169,000. That's enough for a Washington office and a staff of two people, along with some very limited funding of a few state groups. Like gay and lesbian groups, we could only afford to target places where we have chances to win state-wide protection which would establish legislative precedents for future endeavors. And of course, we could pursue ENDA for as long as it takes to pass it (probably fifty years).

But if your eyes glaze over past six figure sums and decade-long efforts, let me bring it down to a simple, personal level. Over the past year, I worked with two state-wide organizations, It's Time, Maryland!, a chapter of It's Time, America! and the Free State Justice Campaign, the statewide gay and lesbian

lobby here in Maryland. FSJC in their fourth year of existence, had a mailing list of about 1,000 people and an annual budget of \$24,000. They spent about \$6,000 on printing their flyers, brochures and lobbying materials; \$4,600 on postage; \$1,000 on telephone expenses; \$5,000 on a professional lobbyist; \$3,000 on a special cooperative educational project; and the rest in supplies, meetings, and other expenses. With the help of the Human Rights Campaign (in the form of a mailing list of HRC's past contributors in Maryland) FSJC barely broke even in 1995. This year (1996) FSJC will be making their fourth attempt to get an anti-discrimination bill based on sexual orientation passed by the legislature in Annapolis.

It's Time, Maryland! was formed in December, 1994, and in six months we had a mailing list of thirty people. Assuming a potential base of 4,000 in my home state of 4 million (one in ten thousand), that means we had less than one percent of the transgendered people in Maryland involved. It's Time, Maryland! had no official budget because... It's Time, Maryland! had no money. We were a start-up organization, and almost all the active members of ITM were pre-operative transsexuals or transgenderists. As was to be expected, the most motivated to join ITM were usually the most discriminated against and thus the worse off. Although I was still paying off my surgery loan, I was still able to cover the initial costs, even though I had no idea how much they would be when I started. So out of my own pocket I spent \$650 on printing our flyers, brochures and lobbying materials; \$150 on postage; and \$200 on long distance telephone calls. But we also were extremely fortunate to have an anonymous donor contribute \$1,000 to pay our Annapolis lobbyist. The TransGender Educational Association of Greater Washington (TGEA) also made a generous contribution that we returned to our donor. All told, It's Time, Maryland! spent \$2,100 our first year of existence, with contributions of \$1,400, of which \$300 was returned.

Fundraising is an onerous but absolutely necessary part of political organizing, unless you want to go quietly

## Funding for the Big Nine Gay Groups

(Source: *The Washington Blade*, March 31, 1995. Reprinted by permission)

Organization	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995
Human Rights Campaign (formerly HRCF)	\$846,000	\$1,900,000	\$4,500,000	\$5,500,000	\$7,970,000 <sup>5</sup>
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	\$687,750	\$957,037	\$1,363,000	\$3,337,392	\$3,100,000 <sup>6</sup>
Lambda Legal Defense Fund	\$677,360	\$1,200,000	\$1,592,886	\$1,795,000	\$2,282,132 <sup>7</sup>
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation	—	—	—	—	\$1,900,000 <sup>8</sup>
Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians & Gays <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	\$900,000	\$1,200,000 <sup>9</sup>
Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund <sup>2</sup>	—	—	—	\$611,215	\$921,247 <sup>10</sup>
National Center for Lesbian Rights	\$139,979	\$167,417	\$250,000	\$425,000	—
National Gay Rights Advocates <sup>3</sup>	\$800,000	\$1,661,140	\$1,100,000	—	—
National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays <sup>4</sup>	\$100,000	\$78,000	\$15,000	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,248,089</b>	<b>\$5,963,594</b>	<b>\$8,820,886</b>	<b>\$12,568,607</b>	<b>\$17,373,379</b>

1 The P-FLAG Federation was included in *The Blade's* survey of national Gay groups for the first time in 1993.

2 The Victory Fund was founded in May of 1991.

3 NGRA folded in 1991.

4 The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays did not respond in 1993 and is now defunct.

5 Estimated budget for current fiscal year which began April 1. Est. budget for fiscal year ending March 31 was \$5.95 million.

6 Estimated budget for current fiscal year which runs calendar year. Budget for 1994 was \$2.6 million.

7 Budget for fiscal year running November 1, 1994 to October 31, 1995.

8 GLAAD was included in *The Blade's* survey for the first time this year.

9 Fiscal year running October 1, 1994 to September 30, 1995.

10 Fiscal year runs calendar year 1995.

Total funding for the seven best-known and best-funded national transgender organizations, as reported in the last issue of *AEGIS News*, was less than \$500,000—Ed.

## Top Ten Mailing Lists

(Source: *The Washington Blade*, March 31, 1995. Reprinted by permission)

Organization	Donors <sup>1</sup>
Human Rights Campaign Fund <sup>2</sup>	325,000
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	50,000
Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays	40,000
Lambda Legal Defense Fund	38,000
Metropolitan Community Church	32,000
National Center for Lesbian Rights	14,000
Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund	12,000
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation	10,000
National Gay and Lesbian Health Association	10,000
New Ways Ministry	5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>536,000</b>

1 All numbers provided in response to March 1995 Survey by *The Washington Blade*

2 List has not been culled to remove names of people who don't respond to mailings or who are now deceased. HRC's David Smith estimated the "active" mailing list to total 100,000.

broke like I almost did. Within the transgender community, fundraising is extremely problematic, for a variety of reasons. The transgender community has traditionally allocated its financial resources based on meeting the needs of its majority, which was protected from discrimination by its secrecy. But there can be no denying the discrimination faced by the out minority. Pre-operative transsexuals and transgenderists in transition are twice impoverished, in paying for the medical treatment to reach their physical transformation goals, while simultaneously facing severe employment discrimination. Once out, they often lose their jobs and then either cannot get jobs or are forced to take jobs which are far below their skills and former compensation levels. This is the double economic conundrum faced by transsexuals and transgenderists in transition, and most of the It's Time, Maryland! members were in this situation.

Before 1995, it seemed that the closeted majority did not care about the out minority. In reading some newsletters, some authors thought those in transition to be crazy, thus deserving of their misfortune. Conventional wisdom was just that— put the money into the elaborate conventions which are principally gatherings for the most economically “blessed,” yet still the most visible evidence of a small, largely scattered transgender “community.” The feeling of many in the older transgender organizations was that gender educational efforts were worthy of funding, but that funding political activities was premature, as well as a risk to their non-profit status. Existing organizational rivalries amongst the Big Seven (IFGE, Tri-ESS, Renaissance, ICTLEP, AEGIS, FTM International, and the Outreach Institute) have led to competition for what little money there is within the transgender community.

But I believe that the greatest part of the hidden majority, composed of crossdressers and transitioned transsexuals and transgenderists who have assimilated, has sought in varying ways to distance themselves from their shame and thus their community. Their involvement varies from infrequent appearances

at support group meetings to total assimilation. To commit oneself to the movement either by personal involvement or financially is an overt reminder of that shame, with which most would rather just not deal. Many of us cannot even write checks to pay for our memberships in our support organizations, because our legal names are on them.

But 1995 was a year of significant change within the national transgender community. The Human Rights Campaign's excision of gender identity from the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act, announced during TRANSGEN 95, galvanized and united the national activists. The Transexual Menace coordinated actions against HRC around the country, and by using the Internet we formed a means of quick communication for concerted efforts. National Gender Lobby Day brought one hundred activists to Washington to openly lobby their congressional representatives for the first time. Attitudes finally began to change, as has conventional wisdom.

GenderPAC, which began with a collection of monies at the 1995 Be All convention, will fund “transgender political actions” in a manner similar to IFGE's Winslow Street Foundation. This funding mechanism may work for single events like National Gender Lobby Day or Transexual Menace-led protests, but not the continuous efforts of a lobbying organization like It's Time, America! which should be funded like HRC or the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, both full-time lobbying groups. Traditional lobbying requires an ongoing presence, not merely a two day lobbying event. A proposal to legally and financially unite both ICTLEP and It's Time, America!, which would facilitate funding raising efforts for both groups, was introduced at TRANSGEN 95 and is under discussion by the two groups.

1995 was indeed a turning point for the transgender movement. Yet if our money problems are a true barometer of the level of the overall commitment of the transgender community toward advancing its own rights, we political activists still have much work to do. We must continue to promote the idea of open lobbying to our own com-

munity while simultaneously lobbying our elected representatives in hopes of reaching a few precedent-setting successes. But without both the personal commitment of the activists and the financial commitment of our community, the traditional approach to winning our rights will fail, and we will be left with direct action and perhaps case law efforts to further the movement. I believe our success will be decided by our ability to teach pride within our own community, to establish the transgender identity as one without shame. If you asked most of us who identify ourselves as “transgendered” what our *primary* identification was, I'll bet it would be heterosexual male or female first, with transgendered second or third or fourth. Most of us still do not understand.

But almost all gay men and lesbians do. They are reeling under the blows of the *Hardwick v. Bowers* decision, which assures that sodomy between consenting adults is still a crime. They are still in shock from Sharon Bottoms' loss of custody of her child, through a court decision that states, in essence, that lesbians are unfit mothers. They are weary from having to fight the various statewide anti-gay initiatives that erupt every two years, lest they surrender their home states to legalized bigotry. They are living in equal parts fear and hope, waiting for the upcoming crucial court decisions regarding the constitutionality of Hawaiian same-sex marriages and Colorado's Amendment 2. They understand all too well.

Gay men and lesbians know their rights are at stake because they know they are a minority, and they share a minority consciousness. Most of us within the transgender community are still hiding our shame under a blanket of heterosexuality, refusing to admit our minority status, and thus our vulnerability. And that is the greatest threat to the transgender political movement. Unless we can disabuse ourselves of this denial, the transgender political movement ultimately will fail. — AN

*This concludes the second part of Vision 2001. In the next issue of AEGIS News, we'll be looking at The Congress of Transgender Organizations and regional & local groups— Ed.*

## Letter to the Editor

In her article, "Vision 2001: A Gender Odyssey," (*AEGIS News*, 1/96) Dallas Denny's stated goal is to provide a "sort of Consumer's Reports" so that transgendered people can make informed evaluations among the seven national support entities. This seems an entirely laudable undertaking. As Dallas states, it is important for the transgender community to be honest about its strengths and weaknesses. Quality control is something every organization should consider a priority. The value of an article like "Vision 2001" cannot be overstated. Nor can the value of objectivity.

In attempting to evaluate her own organization, AEGIS, among the others, Dallas sets herself a tremendous challenge to be fair. Having read her article, I believe she has striven to be ethical in her evaluations. I know she would wish an article of this importance to be the very best it can be. For this reason, I would like to correct certain inaccuracies of fact regarding Tri-Ess, and propose ways in which this type of study can be made even more useful.

*First:* Dallas dates the formation of Tri-Ess to 1977. There is some semantic muddiness in the question of exactly when Tri-Ess was founded. Service delivery in essentially the same form has been available since 1961, when Virginia Prince founded the Hose and Heels Club. Later, the group was renamed FPE (Full Personality Expression). In 1976, Carol Beecroft and Virginia merged their two organizations, Mamselle and FPE, and renamed the result Tri-Ess. The chapters of FPE became chapters of Tri-Ess. The antecedents are clear and the philosophy of the group was unchanged.

*Second:* On the organizational chart, Dallas cites in a footnote that AEGIS was instrumental in starting three conferences, but does not mention that Tri-Ess sponsors two conferences, the Holiday En Femme and S.P.I.C.E. Because of its uniqueness, S.P.I.C.E., a Tri-Ess program, should have been cited as a landmark contribution of Tri-Ess to the transgendered community.

*Third:* In another footnote concerning Friends of Tri-Ess membership, the article states, "Others can join in practice as 'Friends of Tri-Ess' with limited

privileges, however, in reality only a chosen few have been able to do so." This statement does not accurately reflect the attitude of Tri-Ess. Tri-Ess appreciates its friends, who support its goals and objectives. In 1992, Tri-Ess opened the "Friends" membership category for those outside its primary focus. Applications to this category are handled on exactly the same basis as are all other memberships. Local chapters are encouraged to establish an analogous "Friends of the Chapter" category. The only requirement is having a constructive interest in the goals and objectives of Tri-Ess and its chapters.

*Fourth:* The article states that Tri-Ess is open to heterosexual crossdressers and their female partners. Tri-Ess policy allows admission of partners of heterosexual crossdressers regardless of sex. Because of the excellent job done by FTM organizations, most FTM crossdressers and their partners prefer those groups. But Tri-Ess is wide open to them. I hope some day many will enter our organization.

*Fifth:* The article does not mention Tri-Ess' special expertise in family issues. Perhaps that is justifiably beyond the scope of the article. I hope it will be addressed in subsequent articles of this type.

*Sixth,* and most serious: The article makes several complimentary statements about developments in each of the transgendered organizations other than Tri-Ess. By comparison, the statement that Tri-Ess remains "fundamentally the same" hit like a brick, and caused a lot of pain. Not only does it leave a false impression of Tri-Ess in the mind of the reader, it calls into question the objectivity of the writer. If one measures Tri-Ess by the yardsticks used for the other organizations, the reader will note some interesting things. Like the Outreach Institute, Tri-Ess has developed a strong Board of Directors over the past few years. Like AEGIS, it is acquiring dynamic staff members. Denise Peters, who works with the Membership Directory; Fran Estes, Director of the Big Sister Program; Judy Daniels, Director for Chapter Liaison and Support; Dr. Peggy Rudd, authoress extraordinaire and Director of S.P.I.C.E.; and Brenda Thomas and Robyn Perry, who are giving Tri-Ess a cyberspace presence, are a few examples.

Like Renaissance, Tri-Ess is adding new chapters. In the past year Tri-Ess chapters have sprung up in Fort Worth, Nashville, Salt Lake City, Tucson, Austin and Fort Myers. Since 1990, Tri-Ess has added a Big Sister Program, a Pen Pal Program, and S.P.I.C.E. We were one of the first support organizations to admit spouses and partners as full members. In 1995, Tri-Ess was one of the co-sponsors of the First International Congress on Crossdressing, Sex and Gender. It is now helping underwrite a research project on crossdressing. Our focus may be the same, but we are developing it to the hilt!

Dallas is to be praised and not blamed for this study. It is a significant contribution to the community. Daring to undertake this work took a lot of guts. Rather than criticize her, let us build on the foundation she has laid. I would urge that all seven organizations get together and draw up criteria we can all use to insure quality control in our respective organizations. Perhaps the study can be done by a panel of objective professionals within the community. The criteria should be as objective as possible. They should deal with how well the organizations fulfill the common goal each of them has — helping people. Efficiency in handling inquiries, quality of publications, effectiveness of outreach, participation in community-building, use of financial resources, innovations, and effective use of cyberspace are all possible criteria. Possibly this will foster some competition. But this kind of competition is constructive, for all transgendered people will be the winners.

Jane Ellen Fairfax  
Chair, Tri-Ess Board of Directors

*Thank you for your Letter of Six Points, and for our discussions over the Internet and in person about the first installment of Vision 2001.*

*Had I had the foresight a year ago, when I conceived of what would eventually become Vision 2001, I would have found someone totally unfamiliar with the transgender community to check out the seven organizations. On the other hand, maybe such an objective reviewer would have been less likely to have cut any of the organizations any slack. I did approach several persons relatively unconnected with any of the organiza-*

tions, but encountered such strong negative feelings about one or more of the seven that I decided it might be better to write the article myself, even if that put me in the unenviable position of reviewing an organization I founded.

I was extremely careful in what I did and did not say about the various organizations. It was difficult to keep the length of the article to a reasonable limit. I avoided bringing up issues which would have required lengthy explanation, and at the same time attempted to give each organization credit for its many accomplishments.

To respond to your six points:

**First:** Space limitations precluded me from tracing the history of the different organizations— Tri-Ess back through Mamselle and FPE to the Hose and Heels Club, IFGE back through The Tiffany Club to the 1970's Cherrystones, AEGIS through J2CP Information Services to Janus Information Facility to the Erickson Educational Foundation of the 1960's, and Renaissance back to Leonardo da Vinci in the 15th Century. While the history of support for heterosexual crossdressers clearly dates to the '60s, Tri-Ess is a distinct organization with a clear inception date—1977. I will be looking at the history of the various organizations in the conclusion of Vision 2001, some several issues from now.

**Second:** Table 1 acknowledged Tri-Ess' conference, the *Holiday en Femme*. I had intended to footnote Tri-Ess' role in starting and supporting S.P.I.C.E., as to the best of my recollection that conference was an independent entity, but then something puzzling occurred. Linda Peacock, S.P.I.C.E. Chair and a Board Member of Tri-Ess, in one of those underreported-by-mutual-unspeakable-consent events common in the transgender community, was apparently fired by the Tri-Ess Board from both positions— this as a direct result of her divorce from a crossdresser and impending remarriage to another crossdresser. Her "resignation," as reported by her new husband in *The Sooner Belle*, the newsletter of the former Tri-Ess chapter Sigma Beta (which dropped its Tri-Ess affiliation because of the circumstances surrounding Linda's dismissal), was not of her own choosing. If Tri-Ess is in control of S.P.I.C.E., or if the Board of Directors of S.P.I.C.E. is so incestuous as to blindly follow Tri-Ess in taking such drastic action,

then S.P.I.C.E. is in reality a Tri-Ess conference, and so, would need no footnote in the table. I thought it best, in the midst of such unacknowledged controversy, to avoid even mentioning S.P.I.C.E. in the first installment of Vision 2001. I plan to discuss the various transgender conferences, including S.P.I.C.E., in a future installment.

This, by-the-way, is but one of several controversies I had to tiptoe around while doing the article. Not all the things I did not mention, of course, concerned Tri-Ess.

For the record, however, you are correct; whatever the circumstances, I should have acknowledged Tri-Ess' considerable role in putting on this much-needed conference, and its role as a sponsor of the Second International Congress on Cross-dressing, Sex, and Gender Issues.

**Third:** I'm glad Tri-Ess supports Friends of Tri-Ess status in principle, but I'm afraid that does not make it a reality— that will take clear direction from National and a lot of work. We continue to hear first-hand reports from people, including some who are members, being told they are not welcome at Tri-Ess meetings. There seems to be variability among chapters, and the policy within chapters is subject to change from year-to-year with the whims of newly-elected leadership. To your credit, you have created the new membership category and are working on it, but I think it a bit too early to claim success.

**Fourth:** I mentioned in the article's text that Tri-Ess is open to heterosexual female crossdressers. I remember hesitating as I laid out the table, asking myself whether to make the same point again. Since, to the best of my knowledge, Tri-Ess does not have a single female crossdresser in any of its chapters (I hope I'm wrong), and since the introduction of a male partner by an existing member would have severe repercussions for that member, I thought it wise to use the term "female partner" and not just "partner."

**Fifth:** Tri-Ess, perhaps more than any of the other six nationals, is the "family values" organization. Commendably, it has given wives and other female partners equal access, both in terms of membership and in leadership of the organization. This was done voluntarily, and unlike the "friends" membership category, is not a paper tiger, but very much a reality. The needs of female partners are of great concern to Tri-Ess, and their participation is

actively sought. This is a quantitative change, a sign of real progress, and I regret not mentioning it in the article.

On the other hand, just as the "Traditional Family Values" of the Christian Coalition do not accurately reflect the reality of the American Family, Tri-Ess' limitation of support to families which consist of only husband and wife and boyfriend/girlfriend does not, in my opinion, automatically give it more expertise than the other six organizations, which are open to families as they really exist in our community. The unfortunate treatment of Linda Peacock at the hands of the Tri-Ess Board only reinforced this impression. Families sometimes do break up, and all parties need support when they do.

**Sixth:** This brings us back to point one: Tri-Ess carries on a tradition of support for heterosexual crossdressers which harkens back to Virginia Prince's Hose and Heels Club in the 1960's. I acknowledged in the text— or tried to— some of Tri-Ess' many accomplishments. I unfortunately left out others. I am excited, as are you, by the addition of new chapters, the Pen Pal and Big Sister programs, Tri-Ess' aggressive outreach, and the research project. But I tried to convey in the article, without being heavyhanded, that the organization has not evolved as one might have hoped. It has not advanced ideologically, except to achieve women's suffrage, as noted above. It is indeed fundamentally the same as it was upon its inception.

It was important in the early days to establish a category for heterosexual crossdressers which was distinct from homosexuals and distinct from transsexualism. But that posture has made less sense with each succeeding decade, and is quite frankly anachronistic in the late 1990's. This is the fundamental change that Tri-Ess has been resisting.

I would like to assure you that I love and will continue to support Tri-Ess and its chapters. Tri-Ess was an important part of my own coming out process, and I will always care about it and its members. That may not seem evident from this letter and from the most recent issue of *Chrysalis* (our journal), but it is indeed true.

Your idea for the development of objective criteria to help all seven organizations serve their various populations is an excellent one. I hope AEGIS and Tri-Ess can take the lead in this— Ed.



# ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

## *The World Can Still be a Bad Place for Transpeople*

### *Trans Entertainer Murdered*

29 March, 1996. Female impersonator Christian Paige, a former regular on the Tennessee entertainment and pageant circuit, was found murdered in Chicago last Friday night, March 22.

According to the police report, Paige—the stage persona of Christopher Brown, 24—died from multiple stab wounds and strangulation. Police said Paige/Brown was stabbed at least 35 times and strangled. The murderer apparently tried to hide his crime by setting the body on fire. Chicago Police are continuing their investigation, but a suspect has not yet been arrested.

—Jeff Ellis, Editor, Query

### *Police Attack TVs in Argentina*

20 March, 1996. Members of Argentinean Association of Transvestites (ATA) held a peaceful demonstration at Police Station # 23 in Buenos Aires, joined by Gays por los Derechos Civiles (Gays for Civil Rights) activists and by the organization's lawyer, Angela Vanni. Police Station # 23 and its chief officer, Mr. Blanco, has one of the worst records on arbitrary detentions and bad treatment of transvestites.

Transvestites used a megaphone to voice their complaints and were heard attentively and respectfully by the neighbors. When the demonstration was already over and everyone was leaving, 20 policemen in plain clothes suddenly jumped on Lohana Berkins (ATA) and started to fiercely beat her ("Break the faggot's arm" shouted one of them). Angela Vanni and Marcelo Ferreyra (Gays DC) ran to help Lohana and got the same treatment: both of them were severely beaten and insulted by the policemen.

Lohana, Angela and Marcelo were (literally) dragged into the Police Station, arrested, and not allowed to make the telephone call that the law concedes to every arrested person. Other transvestites were also arrested. The three activists endured death threats and beatings for hours, until one of the other transvestites was allowed to make her phone call and the remaining organization's lawyers were informed of the situation. Lohana, Angela and Marcelo were released today, at noon time, all of them showing the emotional and physical traces of severe abuse.

This action took place during a week devoted to "memory, justice and truth," when a majority of citizens were remembering the crimes committed by the dictatorship that ruled Argentina between 1976 and 1983, ratifying their "never again" to society's compliance with State terrorism, and demanding due punishment for the perpetrators of those crimes, who are still free and unpunished.

*"Transvestite" was the term used in the press release, but it would seem to include transsexuals, crossdressers, transgenderists, and drag queens—Ed.*

*To contact the Argentine organizers, e-mail ales@wamani.apc.org*

### *Queen Mother's Surgeon Outed*

LONDON (Reuter), 28 March, 1996. A top surgeon who was part of a team of doctors which carried out hip replacement surgery on Britain's Queen Mother has admitted he is transsexual. William Muirhead-Allwood, 49, decided to reveal his secret life and issued a statement as a British Sunday newspaper was about to publish the story.

"For years I have called myself Sarah,

and that is how many of my friends know me," Muirhead-Allwood, a father of two, said in a statement.

The surgeon said his wife has known about his double life for years and his two sons learned about it several months ago. He separated from his family last year but they and his medical colleagues have been supportive, the doctor said.

He dismissed suggestions that he was a homosexual. "I am a transsexual and that has nothing to do with homosexuality. I would rather be a woman than a man. I haven't decided about a sex-change yet but by its nature, transsexuality means you end up having surgery."

Muirhead-Allwood helped to replace the arthritic hip of the Queen Mother, the mother of Queen Elizabeth, last November.

The 95-year-old matriarch of the royal family was one of the oldest people in the country to undergo the delicate operation. She made a quick and complete recovery from the surgery.

### *Bathroom Incident in Colorado*

10 March, 1996. Denver Police gave summons to a number of transpeople attending a function of the Imperial Court of the Rocky Mountain Empire (a gay philanthropic organization) for using the ladies room at the Red Lion Inn where the function was held. The organizers claim that an announcement was made, but no one heard it. It was not in their reservation literature, and no signs were posted, attendees said.

Hotel security placed themselves outside the ladies room and stopped those exiting, asking to see IDs. If they indicated "male," the victims were escorted to the security office, where the Denver Police were waiting. No arrests were made, but a number of summons were issued.

# ANTIDEFAMATION RAG

## Executive Director's Page

The proof pages of this issue of *AEGIS News* will chase the pages for *Chrysalis* to our printer in Mississippi. That means that in about ten days UPS will deliver eight or nine big boxes of folded pages which must be collated, placed inside the covers which will be shipped to us from somewhere in Pennsylvania, and stapled. Eleven hundred copies of the assembled magazine must then be loaded into a car or truck and taken to a local printer for trimming, and then picked up and brought back to the office so they can be stuffed into envelopes which will be bundled for bulk mail. The big stack of bags which results will then be driven to the post office, from where they will start their journey to you, our gentle reader, and hopefully, our member.

The printer would happily collate the pages of *Chrysalis*, but the cost is very high — almost a dollar an issue. Collating *AEGIS News* would be less expensive, but still expensive enough. And so, a total of six times a year, twice for *Chrysalis*, and four times for *AEGIS News*, we call upon the local transgender community, including our members who live in the Atlanta area, to help us with this large but necessary task. Usually, volunteers come through, but occasionally everyone seems to have other commitments and the bulk of the work falls to two or three people, and sometimes to myself alone. Many has been the time when I sat far into the night, collating pages, watching television, and taking help line calls.

All of this is very far from what I thought publishing a magazine would be like, but I've come to love being involved in the physical production of the materials, even as I am frustrated because of the delay lost to assembling them. There's something magical in seeing the loose pages turn into a polished, finished product.

I continue, after eight years, to work cheerfully (usually), with no signs of burnout (although I have been fantasizing quite a bit about a year in the National Parks, away from ringing phones), but the burden has grown too much for one human being to do alone — and especially for someone who has a full-time job. There are simply not enough hours in the day to do everything

which must be done to run this organization.

We've been slowly adding personnel, and that makes me very happy. The last thing I want is to be one of those founding directors who tries to do everything herself. My proudest day will come when I know AEGIS can survive without me. My goal, strange as it may seem, is to become nonessential.

AEGIS has slowly grown into an organization. We've had a regular Tuesday night crew of late, which fills orders, answers the telephone, and does other jobs which would otherwise fall to AEGIS' unpaid Executive Director—namely, me. It's been gratifying to see others become involved. We have an active Board which was until recently headed most ably by JoAnn Roberts, and is now chaired by Marisa Richmond, founder of the wonderful Tennessee Vals support group. We have a Chief Financial Officer (Dr. Erin Swenson), office volunteers (Donna Johnston, Carl Tripp, and Franki and Reba Bernardo), and, in the person of Paulette Stevens, a Head Librarian for the National Transgender Library & Archive.

We are moving toward the landmark day when we can open our own office. We've been looking at space, but with the Olympics only three months away, rents are at a premium. We need to find a space large enough to house our operations, including the rapidly growing National Transgender Library & Archive, at a price we can afford. And, however inexpensive the rent is, we need to be able to pay it on time—finances are difficult for nonprofits, as anyone who has worked for one knows.

AEGIS does important work. We provide people all over the world with top quality information and referrals and publish the best journal and newsletter we possibly can, without a "you must have surgery" or "you mustn't have surgery" agenda. I hope the organization can survive in the long run, which means without me. I know many of our members are ready and willing to help, but since we as yet have no conference of our own, getting everyone together poses a bit of a problem. But the day will come when the members, and not myself, must be the strength of this organization.

That doesn't hold true only for AEGIS, of course. The other national

transgender organizations are struggling as well, facing the same money and labor problems as AEGIS. Perhaps the day will come when one or more of the nationals will merge. That would require a massive setting-aside of egos, of course, something which is relatively rare in the course of human events. A merger would be advantageous, for even if there is not enough transgender money to support seven organizations, there certainly is enough to support one or two. I would like to see such a merger. I only hope that any new organization which rises, phoenix-like, from the ashes of its predecessors, will be lean and efficient, and dedicated to serving everyone in the transgender community without forcing any particular ideological perspective down their throats, and without becoming a black hole into which the community pours its money.

Considering our coverage of late of the newly risen transgender political movement, I expect some readers of this newsletter think that AEGIS has taken a political bent. That's not strictly true. The political awakening of this community is not unlike the Stonewall riots of the late '60s, which saw the birth of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. It is a happening of great importance, and we would be remiss not to cover it as we have done.

AEGIS remains primarily interested in the welfare of our members, and of transgendered and transsexual persons who are not our members. That means fighting not only for our right to medical treatment, but our right to have jobs, to be free from persecution, and to participate as full members of society. The transgender political movement gives us exciting new tools to add to our armamentum.

*Vision 2001, our look at the gender community and transgender and transsexual phenomena, continues with this issue of AEGIS News. In our lead story, Jessica Xavier takes an honest look at political issues by examining the finances of the organizations of the gay and lesbian community. In the next issue, we will look at the amazingly good work being done by local support groups and individuals across the U.S. and throughout the world. Future issues will address the state of the helping professions, literature, and the media. The series will conclude with an overview and the opinions of our readers about where we are in these closing years of the XXth century.*

## Marisa Richmond Becomes New Chair of AEGIS Board

Marisa Richmond, a current member of the AEGIS Board of Directors, has assumed the title of Board Chair. Richmond is founder and President of the Tennessee Vals support group, and a former member of TGEA in Washington, DC. Richmond will visit AEGIS headquarters in May for a strategic planning meeting with staff.

Richmond\* assumed her duties effective 10 March, 1996, upon the retirement of JoAnn Roberts, who has been Chair since 1993. Roberts, citing increasing responsibilities which make it difficult to give the organization the attention it deserves, asked to resign as Chair in early 1995, but remained an additional year at the request of Executive Director Dallas Denny. Roberts will remain as a member of the Board.



**Marisa Richmond, Ph.D.  
Chair, AEGIS Board**

### Thank You, JoAnn Roberts

For all you do for the community

Thank you for three years of service to AEGIS

Thank you for the Transgender Bill of Rights

Thank you for your work with IFGE & Renaissance

Thank you for CDS, thank you for your wit and your wisdom

And above all, thank you for speaking the truth!

THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY MAGAZINE!

### CROSS-TALK

32 PAGES EVERY MONTH OF NEWS, INFORMATION, AND COMMENTARY FOR CROSSDRESSERS AND TRANSEXUALS, WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Send **\$5.00** for the current issue and subscription information to:

P.O. BOX 944  
WOODLAND HILLS, CA 91365



California residents, send \$5.41, which includes 8.25% sales tax.  
Outside the United States, send \$6.50 in U.S. funds or 13 International Reply Coupons.

ERRATA: Phyllis Frye, Executive Director, of the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, rightly pointed out that although ICTLEP does not have a journal, it publishes a voluminous conference proceedings annually. The proceedings are a remarkable document, and I was remiss in not mentioning them in the first installment of Vision 2001.

CONGRATS: Phyllis has also informed us that ICTLEP has made the big leap, and now has an office. ICTLEP can use your financial support. Contact [pfrye@aol.com](mailto:pfrye@aol.com), or write ICTLEP, Inc., P.O. Drawer 35477, Houston, TX 77235-8452 [(713) 777-8452 Voice (713) 777-0909 FAX.

## AEGIS on the Internet

AEGIS provides a variety of on-line services, including information & referrals. Just e-mail us at [aegis@mindspring.com](mailto:aegis@mindspring.com). You can join or order books via e-mail, as well.

We have an FTP site, from which a variety of materials can be downloaded:

Host: [ftp.mindspring.com](ftp:mindspring.com) User ID: anonymous

Password: (your e-mail address): Directory: /users/aegis

And we have a mailing list to which we post breaking news and other items of interest. To subscribe, send e-mail to [majordomo@lists.mindspring.com](mailto:majordomo@lists.mindspring.com). On the first line, include the following: subscribe aegis-list <your e-mail address> (to unsubscribe, substitute the word unsubscribe for subscribe)

## Subjects Needed for Ongoing Research Projects

**Dawn R. Banks**, is doing a study on transgender expression in persons born male. Contact Dawn R. Banks, c/o Dept. of Psychology, 406 Babbidge Road, U-20, U. Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-1020 [drbanks@connix.com]

**Joshua Gamson, Ph.D.**, a sociologist at Yale University, is writing a book on daytime television talk shows and sex/gender non-conformity. He is looking for people who have appeared on topic-oriented daytime talk shows (e.g., Geraldo, Ricki Lake, Donahue, Jerry Springer). His research is about the ways talk programs about lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, and transgendered people tend to be produced, and the experiences of gender-crossing, transsexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual people on these shows. Dr. Gamson would appreciate hearing from anyone who is interested. Contact: Joshua Gamson, Department of Sociology, Yale University, P.O. Box 208265, New Haven, CT 06520-8265 [jgamson@minerva.cis.yale.edu]

**Sheila Kirk, M.D.**, is interviewing post-operative MTF transsexual persons. Contact her c/o IFGE, P.O. Box 367, Wayland, MA 01778 [(718) 899-2212; ifge@world.std.com]

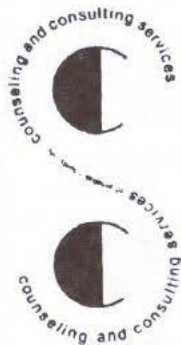
**Joy Shaffer, M.D.**, and her colleagues are conducting a brain scan study of FTM and MTF transexual and transgendered persons; contact her at Seahorse Medical Clinic, 1570 The Alameda, Ste. 215. San Jose. CA 95126 [(408) 292-1078 Voice; (408) 292-5560 FAX; seahorsemc@aol.com]

**Michael Smith, M.S.**, is a counselor and doctoral student at Indiana University who is doing a study on crossdressing and other transgender expressions. He is looking for persons born biologically male, 18 y.o. or older. Participants will have a chance to win one of three lottery prizes. [michasmi@indiana.edu]

**William Turner, M.D.**, is doing a study of heritability of crossdressing and transsexualism. He pays a small honorarium to those who participate in his study. Call William J. Turner, M.D., at 1-800-448-12981 [wjtmd@aol.com]

**Alice Webb, M.S.W.**, is researching aspects of the relationship of the female partners of FTM transgendered and transsexual persons. Contact her at P.O. Box 1718, Sonoma, CA 95476 [(707) 938-2871 Voice or Fax; hbigda@aol.com]

## Dr. Judith Meisner, Ph.D., LCSW, LMFT



- Transgender Specialist
- Marital & Sex Therapist
- Licensed and Board Certified
- Over 20 years clinical experience

## ***New Image Services***

SARAH JAMES, C.I.E.  
GENDER TRANSITION CONSULTANT

ASSISTANCE WITH VOICE, NAME CHANGE, VENDORS  
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & ELECTROLYSIS

CONFIDENTIAL ★ REFERENCES  
FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION

10 YEARS EXPERIENCE WITH GENDER COMMUNITY

809 WOODLAND AVE., ATLANTA, GA 30316

(404) 622-1848

AEGIS News is published four times a year by the American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724. Our telephone help line is (770) 939-0244; our business line is (770) 939-2128; our FAX is (770) 939-1770. Our e-mail address is aegis@mindspring.com. Our FTP site is at mindspring.com/users/aegis. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership-based corporation.