

LESBIAN MOTHERS ASSOCIATION

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VOLUME V No. III

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2004

RESEARCH NEWS

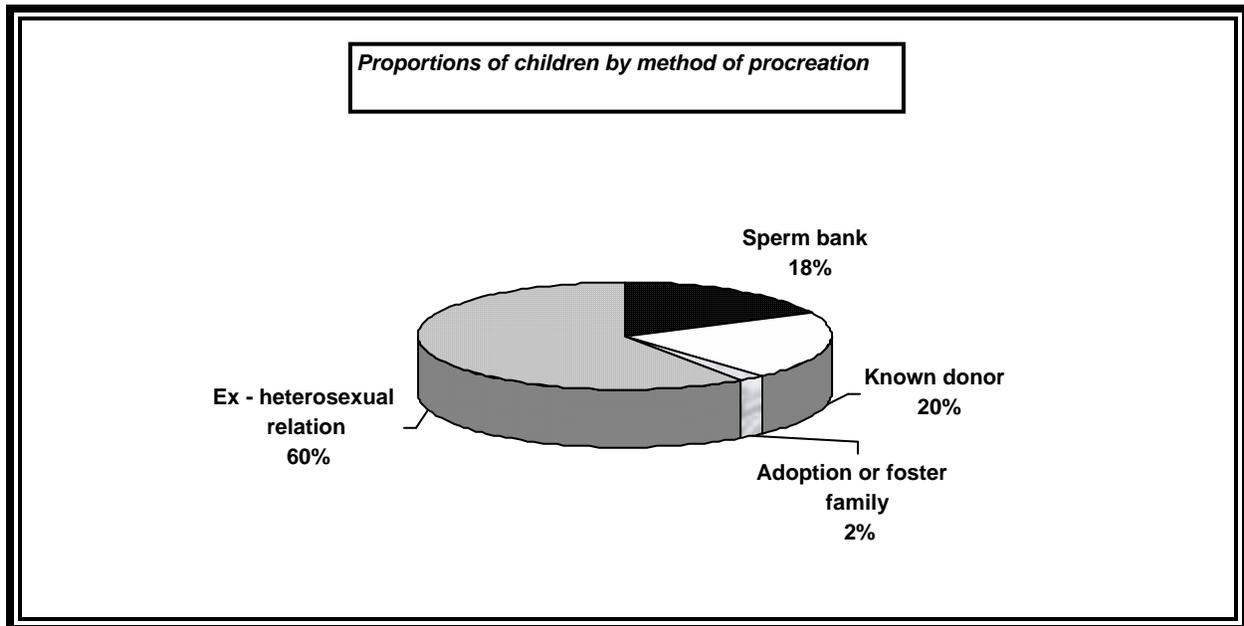
By Danielle Julien, Ph.D.

GREETINGS!

For those of you who may remember, about a year ago we started our research on lesbian-headed families, thanks to a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The research is far from complete, but we are now at a junction where we are able to provide you with some preliminary results. So far, a total of 115 lesbians agreed to participate in our study, parenting a total of 123 children! In fact 74 households were represented. That's a real success considering that 15 years ago it took me three years to recruit 33 lesbian couples for my research. Happily, times have changed and the greater visibility of lesbians allows us to better understand them and their needs.

The collaboration of the LMA has been essential for the success of this project. In fact 82% of the respondents came from the LMA. Other participants came from an ad that appeared in *Fugues* (11%) and announcements that were made on the ALGI web site (4%) and at a conference that was given by EGALÉ in Montreal last spring (3%). So the picture that we are presenting today doesn't represent lesbian mothers in general: it is most of all a reflection of lesbian mothers that are members of the LMA.

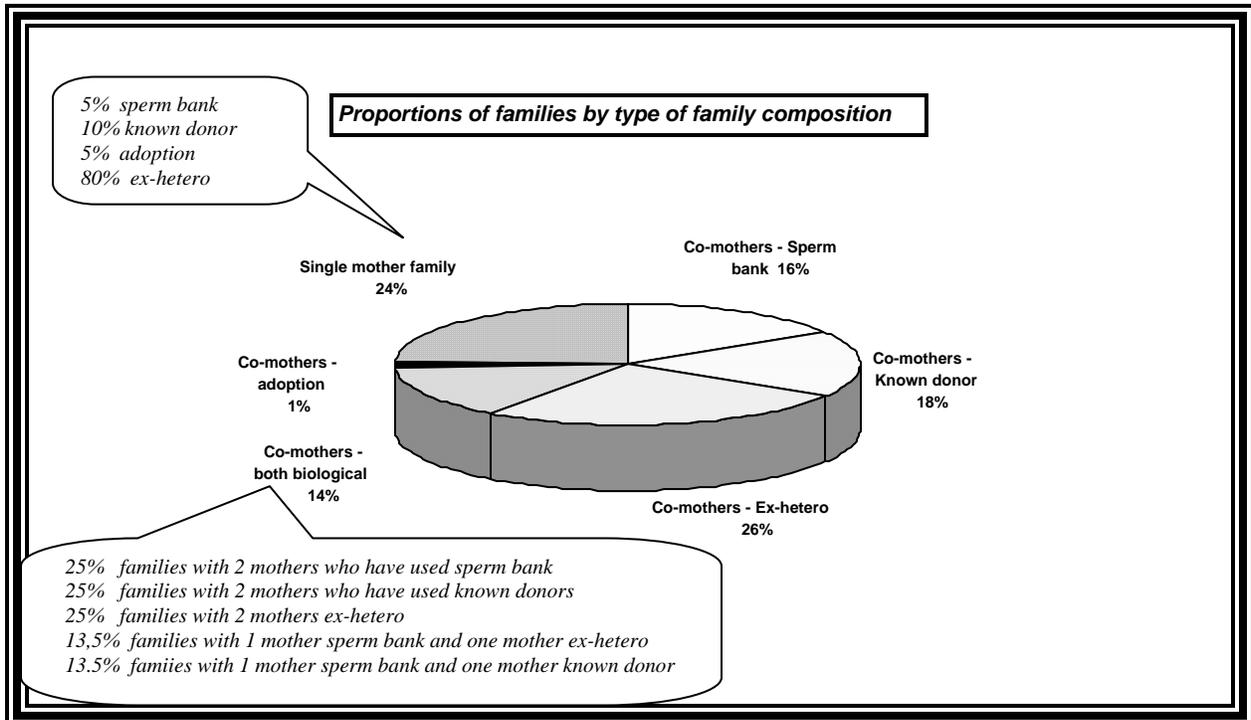
WHAT DO YOUR FAMILIES LOOK LIKE?



The children that you are bringing up are in the majority from previous heterosexual relationships (60%). However the effects of the so-called «lesbian baby boom » (meaning women that decide to have

children after coming out as lesbians) make up 40% of your children! We see about equal proportions of children born from known donors (20% of children) or from the use of a sperm bank (18% of children). Finally, a small percent of the children (2%) were adopted by lesbian mothers. What is the parental make-up of the families that these children are living in?

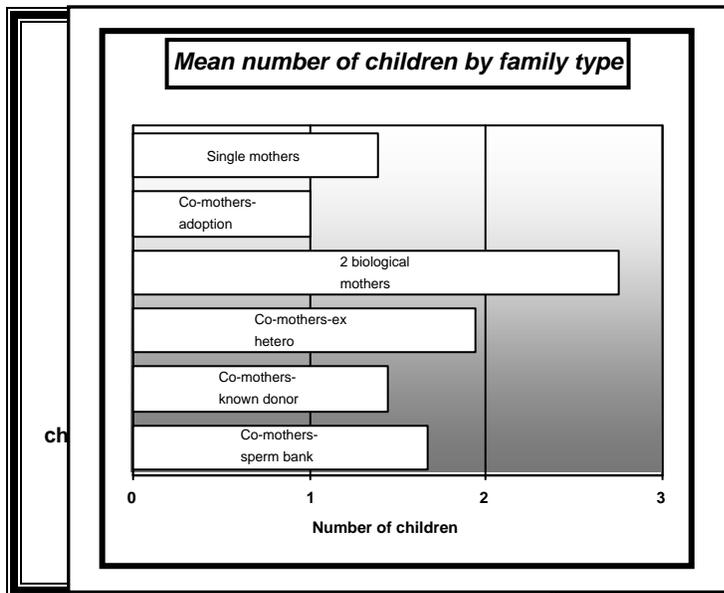
The parental make-up of your families is so varied that an analysis in terms of types almost burst the seams of the statistical analysis program SPSS!!! Goodbye to the old fashioned two-parent heterosexual family! Looking at the following table: If we take into account the structure of the household based only upon the biological status of the parent, the most common family structure is the co-mother ex-heterosexual family (26%), consisting of an ex-heterosexual biological mother and her partner.



The second most common type was the single mother family (24%). The bubble that you see on the upper left shows the means of procreation for these single moms. As for the third most common type we observed similar proportions of two-mother families having used a known donor (18%) or a sperm bank (16%). Finally, 14% of the families were composed of parents who were both biological mothers: the bubble on the lower left shows the distribution of the means of procreation for these families. Also our sample had 5 adopted children, but only one two-mother adoptive family. OUCH!! At a recent conference one of the guest speakers said that if we as researchers were having difficulties finding our way around the diversity of contemporary families, well the kids were certainly feeling right at home!

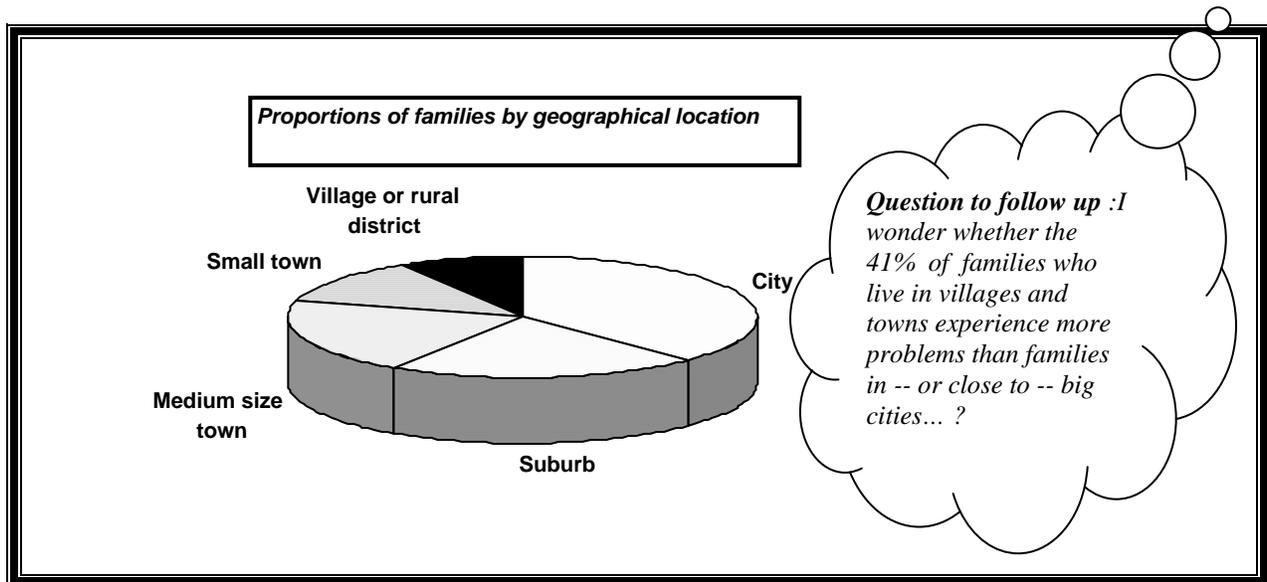
Which would lead us to the question of how many kids we find in these families?

The following figure shows that more than half of the participating families had only one child (56%).



But more than a quarter of them (28%) had 2 children, and 16% had 3 or 4 children. The average number of children in each family type was roughly the same, except for the families with two biological mothers that had, on average, close to 3 children.

We know that families with heterosexual parents do not only live in large urban centres and we were afraid at the beginning of our study not to be able to succeed to recruit families from diverse regions. Well, as you can see on the following table, the majority of the respondents (67%) live outside of big urban centres. In fact, 41% of the families live in little or medium size cities or villages. This is a very interesting fact because we are now able to study if the daily life of these families, in terms of the intolerance of the surroundings, varies according to where one lives.



Question to follow : I wonder whether the 41% of families who live in villages and towns experience more problems than families in -- or close to -- big cities... ?

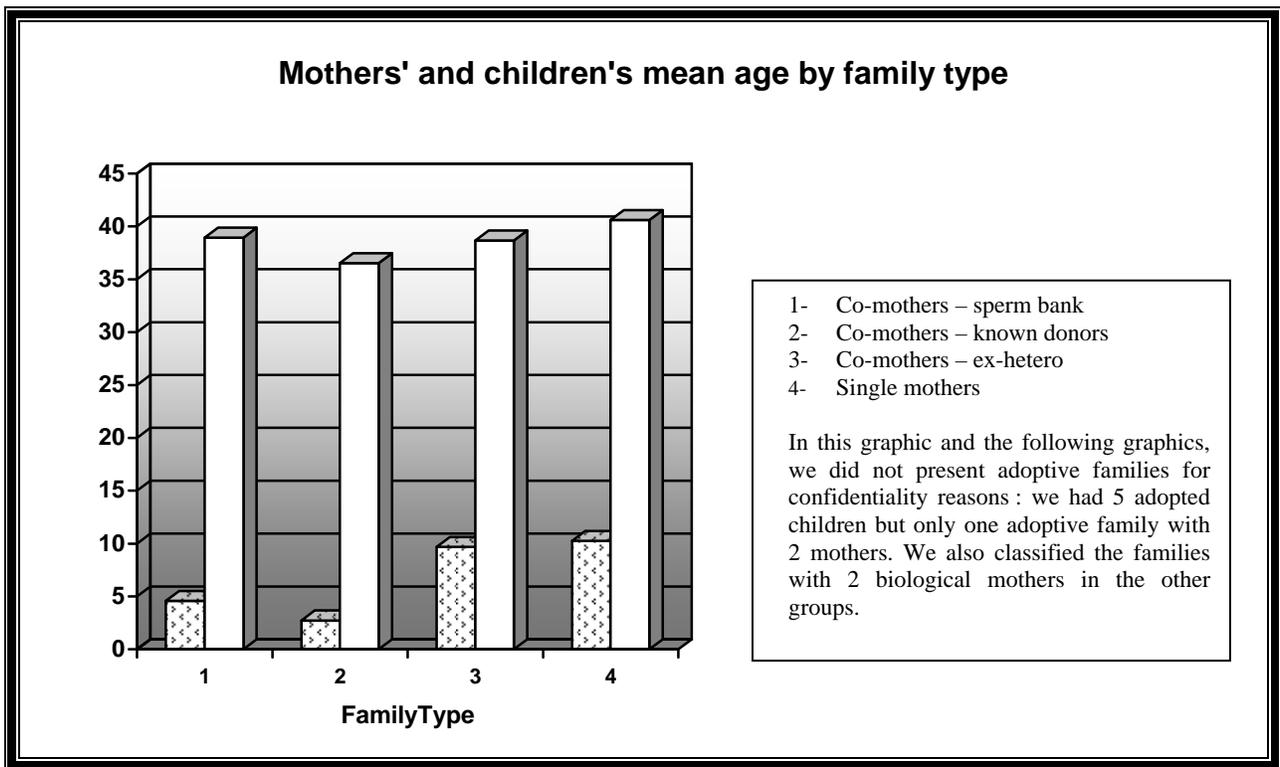
The majority of the mothers are francophone (73%). But 19% amongst them are Anglophone and 9% bilingual. Now, compared to the other types of families, the two-mother family with known donors were much more likely to be francophone (90%). This is particularly striking when we compare to mothers

having used sperm banks (44% francophone). One of our current objectives is to try to recruit Anglos from other Canadian provinces in order to examine cultural differences.

Question to pursue: I wonder if cultural influences affect the choice of method of procreation? Do francophone lesbians place more importance than anglophone lesbians on the presence of a known father?

How old are the mothers and their children?

The average age of mothers participating in this study was 38.7 years and the average age of their kids was 7.8 years. The graph below shows that the average age of the mothers, by group, varied between 36 and 41 years. The children, however, from families with ex-heterosexual mothers and single mothers were older on average (around 10 years old) than children from families that had used methods of assisted procreation.



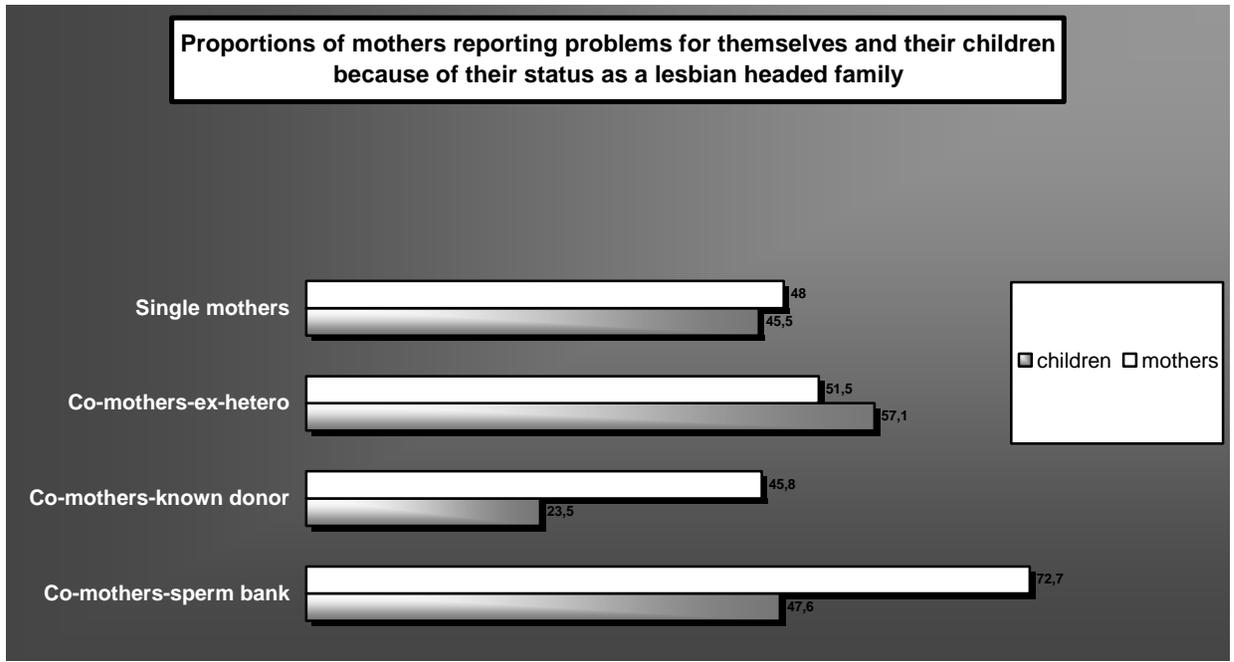
This disparity between groups in terms of the children’s age could have effects on the division of parental tasks as well as the amount of time spent at work. This could also have a specific effect on families with older children, as we know that difficulties integrating school and family life are more pronounced toward adolescence. Do we observe these differences in our data?

We can see in the graph below that mothers from two mother-sperm bank families are proportionally more numerous than mothers from any other family to report problems experienced due to their status as lesbians (white bar). We must consider however that the mothers in this group are also more

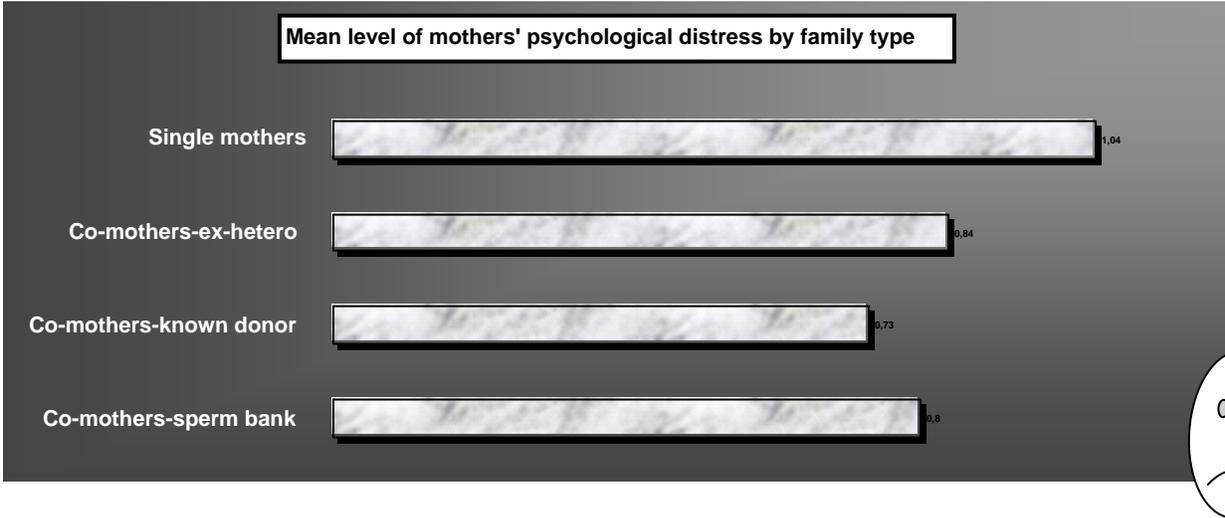
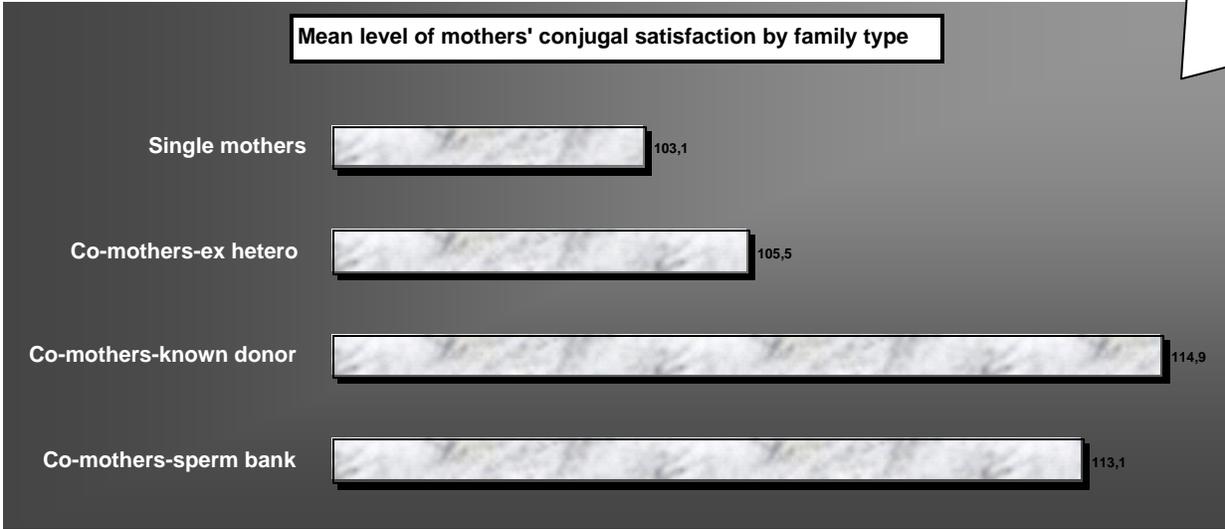
numerous than the others to have come out as lesbian mothers to diverse members of their social spheres: they are therefore proportionately more likely than the others to have been exposed to the homophobic reactions of their surroundings. Because of this we must qualitatively examine why these mothers report to have more difficulties than the others.

***Question to follow up :** Given that the co-mothers-sperm bank family type is the only family configuration that does not involve a father, even theoretically, I wonder whether these families meet with more resistance from their social environment because of their absolute choice not to involve a father.*

The same graph also shows that approximately half the mothers in each group (except for families with known donors) reported that their children experienced problems in their entourage because of their parents' sexual orientation. Remember, however that the children from known donor families are the youngest (average age 2.5) of all groups and so, have likely only encountered childcare institutions. We must examine more closely the reasons for the differences that we observe.



Finally, let's finish by looking at two dimensions of the emotional and conjugal lives of the mothers. The following figure shows that two-mother ex-heterosexual and single parent families are less satisfied with their love lives than families that had used assisted procreation techniques (sperm bank or known donors). A profile of psychological distress also showed that single mothers were experiencing the most psychological difficulties.



However we have to keep in mind that in addition to raising children that are transitioning toward high school, these families also have the largest proportion of divorced women. The difficulties encountered as the family readapts after the divorce and the eventual difficulties experienced with an ex-spouse that is still the father of the children, are not part of the realities experienced by the mothers of the first two groups. As we continue our research, we would like to tease apart the factors that are a result of the children's age (and what this implies) vs. those that are due to a family that has re-formed after a separation.

These preliminary results suggest that single mothers are most vulnerable. Not only in the face of a homophobic environment, like the other mothers, but also because they confront more stressors than the other groups: their children are the oldest (nearing adolescence) and they were for the most part (80%) born within the framework of a heterosexual relationship. These mothers have more difficulties in their amorous relationships and show greater psychological difficulties. As we continue our work we would like to pay particular attention to this group.

This presentation was a review of some preliminary results of our study. It is really a descriptive presentation as none of the differences that I mentioned have actually been put to the test of a statistical analysis. So you must take these results with a grain of salt. Despite the fact that we had a good number of participants, we still need more to be able to draw some statistically valid conclusions. It is also possible that there are differences between groups that we have not noticed because the sample size for each family type was too small. So we need more participants. If the study interests you and you have not yet signed up please contact us!



THANK YOU !!

[To sign up for Dr Julien's study please contact Nicole Tremblay at tremblay.nicole@uqam.ca or call 514-987-3000 ext. 3932]

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs- December 2003-February 2004

MONTREAL / QUEBEC

January 2004 – The owners of the old Bilitis bar (memories anyone?) have opened a new bar called “Lady Loft.” Located at 990 St-Antoine (corner Mansfield) this new bar offers dinner-dances, shows and a dance floor. It can also be reserved for birthday parties, “marriages” or office parties.

January 12, 2004 *Montreal Gazette/ Hour* - A Montreal seminary has begun testing men who want to become priests for HIV in an effort to screen for gay applicants. The decision was made by Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, the archbishop of Montreal. While officials at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal acknowledge that gay sex is not the only way a person can get HIV/AIDS it says that a positive test result will sound an alarm bell. The applicant would then be asked how he contracted the virus. If it were through a gay relationship, "we will try to see what really is the person's calling," said Rev. Marcel Demers.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Quebec Coalition of Community-Based Organizations Fighting AIDS, have formally asked the Quebec Human Rights Commission to launch an investigation into the matter of HIV testing of priesthood candidates. Canadian law prohibits employers from demanding mandatory pre-employment HIV tests because doing so is discrimination based on disability.

But - and you'd better brace yourself for this - Ginette L'Heureux of the Quebec Human Rights Commission says the Catholic Church, because it's a religious institution, is likely exempt from the Charter of Rights which protects gays from discrimination.

January 16, 2004 *365Gay.com/ montreal2006.org* - Representatives of LGBT sports groups from around the world met in Montreal for three days in what one delegate called the beginning of a new era in gay sports.

Montreal, the city chosen by the Federation of Gay Games to host the 2006 games, split from the FGG in November over disagreements involving control and funding. Montreal's Rendez-Vous 2006 will go on without

the sanction of the FGG, the group that oversees the Gay Games. Chicago and Los Angeles are bidding for the FGG 2006 games, leaving athletes and teams to choose between Montreal and the official FGG event.

Now it appears Montreal is issuing another direct challenge to the FGG. In a media statement Rendez-Vous 2006 called the weekend's meetings a "Think Tank on the future of the gay and lesbian sporting movement."

"At the request of numerous GLBT sports teams from around the world," the statement said, "Montreal 2006 arranged to host a forum. This Think Tank, brought together representatives of Canadian, American, European and even Australian sports teams, and was based on issues raised in a survey sent to 845 sports teams around the world. The total number of responses received to this survey represents more than 13,000 GLBT athletes.

The forum concluded by agreeing there is a need for a new international organization that services the needs of the gay and lesbian sports teams around the world. Amongst a number of items that were publicly declared, the group concluded to develop a worldwide events calendar of continuous sports opportunities for participants and to provide help and mentoring to LGBT athletes and teams.

The group said that it was not attempting to destroy the FGG, but that it felt LGBT sport was in need of an international body that encompassed a broader scope than just the Games.

January 26, 2004 (personal communication) - The Quebec Court of Appeal was told that same-sex couples in the province should have the same right to marry as gays in Ontario and British Columbia. The court is being asked to uphold a lower court ruling that denying marriage to same-sex couples is unconstitutional.

The federal government dropped its appeal last summer, but some conservative religious groups are seeking to appeal the September 2002 ruling by Justice Louise Lemelin that said the opposite-sex definition of marriage was unjustified. The judge had given the government two years to implement the decision. Meanwhile, the court has been informed that the federal government no longer objects to dropping the 2-year time limit imposed by Lemelin.

The couple's lawyers are trying to quash the religious intervener's appeal. "The issue has already become moot," said lawyer Colin Irving, who said the appellants shouldn't be allowed to appeal when the government isn't willing to defend its laws. Irving was arguing on behalf of a Montreal gay couple, Michael Hendricks and René Leboeuf who have been together for 31 years.

February 18th, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Montreal, Quebec) - The gay international games to be held in Montreal in 2006 has found an 'angel' sponsor. Montreal 2006 organizers say that Labatt Breweries will cover any projected shortfalls, according to the *Montreal Gazette*. The games already have support from the Canadian and Quebec governments plus the city of Montreal. In addition it has sold the broadcast rights to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for an undisclosed amount, making it the first gay athletic event to get broad coverage on network sports programs. The Montreal games are scheduled to run from July 29 to Aug. 5, 2006.

CANADA

November 29, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Ottawa) - A legacy of homophobia continues to linger over the Canadian Alliance, Canada's official opposition party in Parliament. The ruckus began on November 27th when Alliance MP Larry Spencer told the *Vancouver Sun* that homosexuality should be criminalized. Spencer said that gay rights are the result of a conspiracy that began in the 1960s when gay activists embarked on a "well-orchestrated" campaign to "convert" young boys in school playgrounds and locker rooms to homosexuality

and to "deliberately infiltrate the North America's judiciary, schools, religious community and the entertainment industry".

Within hours of the publication of the interview, Alliance leader Harper fired Spencer as the party's critic for family affairs and "temporarily" removed him from the caucus. Spencer issued an apology later in the day, saying he regretted making the comments, as politicians from various parties called for his removal from Parliament. Then, just one day later, a second Alliance MP, Reed Elley, refused to back away from a speech he made condemning the decriminalization of homosexuality.

"In 1968 then-justice minister Pierre Trudeau mouthed his infamous words 'the government has no business in the bedrooms of the nation,'" Elley told MPs who were debating the government's extension of benefits to same-sex couples. "He and his cohorts passed omnibus justice legislation which legitimized behavior which until then, for centuries had been considered outside the realm of normal and good family and personal relationships. He legitimized homosexuality between consenting adults. At that point in Canadian history, I believe our government started its assault on traditional family and marriage."

Contacted by various newspapers other members of the Alliance refused to say what their position was on the two MPs.

December 12, 2003 *365Gay.com* - (Ottawa) - For the first time, an openly gay man has been appointed to a Canadian cabinet. A week after he quit the Conservative Party and joined the Liberals, Scott Brison has been named to the cabinet of new Prime Minister Paul Martin. Brison has been given the plum position of Parliamentary Secretary for the Prime Minister and will have responsibility for improving relations between Canada and its powerful neighbor to the south. Unofficially he will be the government's point person on LGBT issues. The biggest of those issues is same-sex marriage.

Also sworn in on the same day, the new Minister of Justice, Irwin Cotler, will be responsible for implementing any federal legislation on gay marriage. Cotler, a Montreal MP, is a noted human-rights lawyer and former McGill University law professor. But, like his new boss Martin, he has sent mixed messages about marriage. Both men in the past have expressed their support for the same-sex marriage bill, but at the same time have also endorsed the possibility of civil unions.

December 22, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Vancouver, British Columbia) Vancouver gays are demanding the prosecutor increase the charges against four men accused of the vicious 2001 killing of a gay man. The full details of Aaron Webster's murder came out at the sentencing of the fifth person responsible for the violent slaying on a trail in a gay cruising area of a downtown park. The 19 year old was the first of the five to be sentenced. He and the others were charged with manslaughter, and the prosecution did not ask for hate crime enhancements.

At the sentencing of the teen who was a minor at the time of the killing, and cannot under Canadian law be named, Judge Valmond Romilly admonished the prosecutor for not including a hate crime charge. Romilly added the charge himself, saying that after reading the Criminal Code of Canada, "I failed to see why it cannot be described as a gay bashing." The teen said he and the others had been drinking and then went looking to beat up gay men who cruised the sprawling downtown park.

In his delivering sentence Romilly called the attack savage and cowardly and compared the teens to a "thug brigade" out of Nazi Germany.

Romilly sentenced the teen to the maximum allowed under young offender legislation, two years for the manslaughter and a third year for the hate crime enhancement. Vancouver activist Jim Deva said that not only is it inconceivable the prosecutor did not ask for additional time for the hate crime, but that manslaughter

was woefully inadequate. Deva said the details that came out during the sentencing show the charge should have been second-degree murder, which carries a much longer sentence.

January 2, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Edmonton, Alberta) Edmonton police are taking to heart the old adage "to know what it's like to be me walk a mile in my shoes". In a step believed to be the first of its kind anywhere in the world new police recruits are now required to spend a day in a non-gay area "pretending to be gay".

The first "exercise" was held for two new cops. The officers, wearing civvies walked hand in hand down a typical commercial street.

"I'm trying to get them to understand what it's like to be in that kind of a situation in this city," says Const. Steve Camp, who came up with the idea. Camp is one of two officers who run the city police hate-and-bias crimes initiative. Afterwards, each of the participants was debriefed at police headquarters downtown. The experience had made them feel uncomfortable, awkward, uneasy and less safe.

"One guy said the avenue seemed to close in on him," Camp says. "He felt a heightened awareness of security -- very aware of the people around him. He felt intimidated. A group of construction workers was working on a wall, and they shut down their work to see this, when these guys walked by. I think that's when the intimidation hit," Camp said.

"They can intellectualize the process, but the emotional intellect is something totally different, and that's what we tried to accomplish here -- to give them the emotional response that a lot of people they're going to be dealing with as police officers are going to have."

The pilot project has won praise from the civilian co-chairman of a liaison committee between city police and Edmonton's LGBT community.

January 7, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Fredericton, New Brunswick) - A man who attacked member of Canada's Parliament for supporting same-sex marriage has been given a nine-month conditional sentence to be served in the community.

Andy Scott was beaten about the face and body in November by Terry Curtis, 48, in Scott's constituency office in Fredericton. Scott was treated for cuts and bruises in a local hospital and has since returned to work. The Liberal MP headed a House of Commons committee that endorsed same-sex unions, casting the tie-breaking vote to accept an Ontario court ruling that allowed same-sex couples to marry.

Angry, Curtis went to Scott's office to confront him and demand that he put up posters that Curtis had brought with him denouncing homosexuality. A psychiatric assessment after the attack found Curtis has a bipolar disorder with slightly psychotic tendencies. The assessment was part of what the judge considered in handing down a sentence that included six months for assault and three months for uttering threats.

January 19, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Ottawa) The Canadian government announced it will appeal a court ruling that ordered it pay at least \$100 million in retroactive pension benefits to gays and lesbians whose partners died between April 1985 and Jan. 1, 1998. The Ontario court ruling in December was hailed as a landmark decision and the biggest award ever made in a gay rights case and it could go even higher.

In 1999 the federal government began recognizing the rights of Canadian gay and lesbian couples and passed legislation allowing gays and lesbians to receive the pension benefits of their late partners. The law was backdated to begin January 1, 1998. But, lawyers for hundreds of surviving partners whose partners died before then argued that the date should have been pegged to April 1985 when the Constitution enshrined equality for gays and lesbians. The Ontario court agreed.

The years between 1985 and 1998 were extremely hard on the gay community. It was the height of the AIDS crisis and produced an usually high number of 'widowed' partners.

Four hundred people have registered for the class action so far, but it is estimated that some 1,500 gays and lesbians across Canada are eligible for survivor benefits. That could raise the cost to the government to \$400-million. Quebec was the only province not represented in the suit because it operates a separate pension plan.

"The federal government's announcement that it is appealing the Ontario court ruling on the [pension plan] survivors benefits pension means that you and I will be financing their obstinacy in denying equality to same-sex partners who have lost their loved ones between 1985 and 1998," said Gilles Marchildon, the executive director of the national gay rights group Egale.

January 27, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Vancouver, British Columbia) Ted Nebbeling, British Columbia's Minister of State in charge of the 2010 Winter Olympics, was dropped from the provincial cabinet hours after he announced he had wed his partner of 32 years. Nebbeling's ouster was part of a cabinet shakeup by beleaguered Premier Gordon Campbell. Three other cabinet ministers were also dropped and other minister had their portfolios shifted.

The government has been the subject of several scandals. It was the first cabinet shuffle since the Liberals were swept to power in 2001.

A spokesperson for the premier said Nebbeling's removal had nothing to do with his marriage. "We all knew Ted was gay when he was elected," the spokesperson said.

Earlier on, Nebbeling announced that he had married his partner, Jan Holmberg, at a small ceremony at their apartment on Nov. 15, but had planned to keep it under wraps until the legislature began sitting again in February. The couple said they decided to get married shortly after a BC court made same-sex marriage legal in July 2003.

January 29, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Ottawa) The President of PFLAG Canada has been awarded the Order of Canada. Eldon Hay is a Sackville, New Brunswick minister and a long time gay rights activist. On hearing the news Hay said the recognition shows that gay and lesbian issues are making it to the mainstream.

Hay was an outspoken supporter of LGBT rights in Canada long before one of his own children came out. As the parent of a gay child he joined PFLAG and as president of the organization helped it develop new chapters across the country. As a United Church minister he helped orchestrate Canada's largest Protestant faith into becoming the world's largest gay-welcoming denomination.

February 6, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Vancouver, British Columbia) The British Columbia Supreme Court said that the religious freedoms of a public school teacher were not violated when he was suspended for a series of homophobic letters he had written to a local newspaper.

Chris Kempling appealed the suspension claiming that the British Columbia College of Teachers, the province's disciplinary board for the profession, violated his constitutional rights as a Christian.

In a letter to a local newspaper, Kempling wrote: "I refuse to be a false teacher saying that promiscuity is acceptable, perversion is normal, and immorality is simply 'cultural diversity' of which we should be proud." In another he wrote, "Homosexuality is not something to be applauded". Other letters condemned gay Pride day. There is no indication that he made similar remarks in the classroom.

Justice Ronald Holmes upheld the decision to suspend Kempling for a month. "Discriminatory speech is incompatible with the search for truth," Holmes said in the ruling. "It is entirely appropriate that the teaching profession, like any profession, be held to more stringent standards of conduct than the lay public," the written decision said. The ruling went on to say that Kempling was free to hold unrestricted views, "should he choose not to teach in public schools in British Columbia". Kempling said he would appeal the decision.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(Skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

November 18, 2003 (Boston, Massachusetts) The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, rules in Goodridge et al. v. Department of Public Health that barring an individual from the protections, benefits and obligations of civil marriage solely because that person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution. Under existing state law, nonresidents are barred from getting a marriage license if the union is not legal in the state where the couple live. Massachusetts will be the only state where same-sex marriage is legal.

November 21, 2003 (Toronto, Ontario) A slick television and radio ad campaign begins to promote same-sex marriage to Canadians.

November 24, 2003 (Washington, D.C.) Conservative groups across the U.S. amass tens of millions of dollars for a national war against same-sex marriage. One group, United Families International, based in Mesa, Arizona, has launched a campaign to build a \$10 million war chest to promote a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

November 24, 2003 (Ottawa) The Canadian Psychological Association announces its support for same-sex marriage. The endorsement from the group, which represents 5,300 psychologists and students across Canada, will likely be a key piece of evidence when the Supreme Court of Canada considers a federal bill that would extend gay marriage across the country. The CPA said that studies show children raised by gay parents are not worse off psychologically or more prone to be gay themselves.

November 25, 2003 (Washington) Three Republican U.S. senators introduce a proposed constitutional amendment to define marriage as only between a man and a woman. The measure seeks to permanently deny the right to marry, as well as virtually all other forms of legal recognition to same-sex couples, including the most basic legal protections.

December 3, 2003 (Toronto, Ontario) A new national survey shows that 68 percent of Canadians believe same-sex relationships should be recognized, but when it comes to whether that recognition should be marriage or civil unions the population is divided. 31 percent of those surveyed by Compas Group supported marriage, with 37 percent favoring civil unions. 30 percent said gay unions should not be recognized at all.

December 9, 2003 (Washington) An ad hoc group of African-American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender leaders has come together to form the National Black Justice Coalition, which is launching a national campaign opposing the Federal Marriage Amendment.

December 11, 2003 (Boston, Massachusetts) The Massachusetts Senate votes to ask the state's highest court if civil unions for same sex couples are as good as marriage (sound familiar?). Senate President Robert E. Travaglini said the Nov. 18 ruling that said it was unconstitutional to prevent gays from marrying was unclear on the option of civil unions.

December 16, 2003 (Washington) President George Bush said he would support "if necessary" a constitutional amendment (FMA) banning same-sex marriage, during an interview with ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer.

December 28, 2003 (Vatican City) Pope John Paul accuses gays and lesbians of distorting the true nature of marriage and family in what he calls "a misunderstood sense of rights." Speaking to pilgrims at the Vatican the pope says marriage is a "human" and "divine" gift that society has to defend.

January 8, 2004 (Trenton, New Jersey) The New Jersey Senate votes 23-9 to approve a bill extending many of the state benefits of marriage to gay and lesbian couples. Under the legislation, same-sex couples would be granted the right to collect the public pensions of deceased partners, guaranteed hospital visitation during illnesses, and qualify to receive health benefits in a partner's name.

It would not, however, make gay couples eligible for any of the federal benefits of marriage, nor would it give partners the same property rights as married spouses or many child custody rights and obligations heterosexual couples have.

January 10, 2004 (Ottawa) The Canadian government will hold hearings across the country to gauge public reaction to same-sex marriage, a move that duplicates hearings already held throughout Canada last year by the Justice Committee and which will undoubtedly delay a Supreme Court hearing on draft legislation granting same-sex marriage that was crafted by the former government of Jean Chretien. Adding further to a potential delay is pressure from within the ruling Liberals to amend the draft bill to ask the high court if civil unions would be a constitutional alternative to full marriage.

As cabinet ministers meet, about a dozen same-sex marriage advocates accuse Prime Minister Paul Martin of leaving them out in the cold. To make their point, they stage a demonstration in their shirtsleeves despite bone chilling sub-zero temperatures.

National polls show the public divided on gay marriage and the Liberals, fearful of a backlash, are fearful same-sex marriage will become an election issue and cost them votes in some parts of the country.

January 13, 2004 (San Francisco, California) California Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco announces his plans to introduce legislation that will allow same-sex couples to obtain marriage licenses in the state.

January 16, 2004 (Boston, Massachusetts) An umbrella group of 42 Jewish organizations, temples and citizens in the Boston area speak out in favor of same-sex marriage. The overwhelming vote by the Jewish Community Relations Council comes as the state's Roman Catholic bishops are stepping up the rhetoric against same-sex marriage.

January 21, 2004 (Washington, D.C.) In a speech aimed at setting the tone of his reelection campaign George W. Bush warns that if "activist judges" continue to rewrite marriage law he would support a constitutional amendment to bar same-sex marriage. "A strong America must also value the institution of marriage. If judges insist on forcing their arbitrary will upon the people, the only alternative left to the people would be the constitutional process. Our nation must defend the sanctity of marriage," Bush tells a joint meeting of Congress in his State of the Union Address.

January 21, 2004 (Vancouver, British Columbia) The British Columbia government orders officials who perform civil marriages to either agree to marry same-sex couples or resign by the end of March.

The B.C. Court of Appeal in July ruled that the federal government's definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman was unconstitutional. Since then several hundred gay and lesbian couples have tied the knot in the province. But, some couples have found it difficult to find marriage commissioners willing to perform the ceremony.

January 23, 2004 (Ottawa) The initial list of interveners in the Canadian Supreme Court reference hearing is out. On the list of those in favour of same-sex marriage: the couples who are asking for marriage through the courts, the Foundation for Equal Families, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Ontario HR Commission, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Manitoba HR Commission, le Mouvement laïque québécois, the Metropolitan Community Church and the Liberal Rabbis for same-sex marriage.

Against us: Senator Anne Cools, Focus on the Family, R.E.A.L. (as opposed to F.A.K.E.) Women, the Interfaith Coalition, the Catholic Civil Rights League, the Evangelical Fellowship, the Mormons, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, as well as the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops.

January 26, 2004 (Montreal, Quebec) The Quebec Court of Appeal is told that same-sex couples in the province should have the same right to marry as gays in Ontario and British Columbia and lawyers attempt to quash the religious interveners appeal.

January 28, 2004 (Ottawa) The new Canadian Justice Minister throws a wrench into the timetable for legalizing same-sex marriage by adding a fourth question to the three others that have been placed before the Canadian Supreme Court. The high court was planning to hear arguments on the marriage questions April 16. The announcement by Minister Irwin Cotler means that the court will likely delay this schedule for weeks or months.

Last year, the administration of Jean Chretien decided to legalize same-sex marriage throughout Canada. Prior to placing a bill before Parliament, his government asked the high court to weigh in on a trio of issues: Does Parliament have ultimate authority over federal marriage law? Is same-sex marriage legislation constitutional? Does the Charter of Rights and Freedoms -- Canada's version of the Bill of Rights -- protect the right of religious groups to decline to perform same-sex marriages?

Now, the new administration of Paul Martin has added a controversial fourth question, asking the court to decide, "whether the opposite-sex requirement for marriage for civil purposes is consistent with the charter". In effect, the high court will be obliged to go over the same ground that has been covered by the top courts of Ontario and British Columbia, both of which legalized same-sex marriage in their provinces last year.

This move will delay the Reference between six months to a year and will open up many legal issues during the hearings and ruling. It will also assure that the Supreme Court ruling, and any possible legislation, will be after a spring election.

The Justice Minister and the Prime Minister said that they are still committed to introducing equal marriage legislation. However, they caution that the final decision will be up to Parliament, when the legislation is put to a free vote. They refuse to ensure that the legislation will pass.

February 3, 2004 (Columbus Ohio) The Ohio House passes what is regarded as the toughest anti-gay marriage law in the country. It bans gay marriage; forbids the state from recognizing same-sex marriages, civil unions or domestic partner agreements legalized outside the state; and makes it impossible to provide state benefits to gay couples.

Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) who sponsored the bill says it was necessary to prevent "liberal" judges from rewriting family law and preserve "the sanctity of marriage" in light of the Massachusetts Supreme Court

ruling that legalized gay marriage. Seitz says the new law will not remove any existing benefits that same-sex or domestic partners currently have, including the ability to challenge a will. More than 30 states have so called Defense of Marriage laws, but the Ohio legislation is considered particularly punitive because of the benefits' ban.

February 4, 2004 (Melbourne, Australia) Jason McCheyne and Adrian Tuazon, both Australian citizens who live in Melbourne, exchanged wedding rings and vows in a January civil ceremony at Toronto's city hall.

The Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia legalized same-sex marriage last year, but Australian Prime Minister John Howard is strongly opposed to the idea. That isn't deterring McCheyne and Tuazon. They are now preparing to mount a court challenge, probably in the Family Court, to have their Canadian marriage declared valid in Australia.

February 4, 2004 (Boston, Massachusetts) The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court splits along familiar lines, ruling that civil unions are not the constitutional equivalent of civil marriage.

The four justices, who appeared to legalize same-sex marriage last November in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, confirm the plain language of their earlier opinion, stating without hesitation that ordering a separate but equal civil union status "would have the effect of maintaining and fostering a stigma of exclusion that the [state] Constitution forbids."

The proposed civil union bill, presented to the high court by the state Senate as a compromise plan, "would deny to same-sex 'spouses' only a status that is specially recognized in society and has significant social and other advantages," writes the court. "The Massachusetts Constitution, as was explained in the *Goodridge* opinion, does not permit such invidious discrimination, no matter how well-intentioned."

The first same-sex couples to wed in the United States will be able to lineup in Massachusetts to get marriage licenses on May 17 following this ruling. May 17 is a significant date, not lost on gay activists. It is the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* - considered the most important civil rights ruling ever handed down by the US Supreme Court.

Once same-sex couples get their marriage licenses they will have to wait three days and are required to submit a blood test. That means the first weddings will take place May 20.

February 7, 2004 (Washington, D.C.) The Senate begins work on a bill to amend the US Constitution to prevent same-sex marriages and playing a key role will be the former Texas Supreme Court justice who dismissed challenges to the state's sodomy law. Republican Sen. John Cornyn voted to throw out lower-court decisions that declared the state's sodomy law unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional last year.

February 12, 2004 – (San Francisco) The city of San Francisco jumps ahead of Massachusetts as the first place in the United States for same-sex marriages, under an initiative launched by newly elected Mayor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat. Two San Francisco women marched down the aisle into history, becoming the first of dozens of same-sex couples to be married in a government-sanctioned civil ceremony in the United States.

February 13, 2004 - (Washington, D.C.) Gay Republican insiders tell the *Washington Blade* they expect President George W. Bush to endorse the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA), which would force states to deny recognition of same-sex marital relationships.

February 15, 2004 – (Melbourne, Australia) 300 same-sex couples exchange vows in what organizers say was the world's largest mass same-sex commitment ceremony.

February 19, 2004 - (San Francisco) A week after San Francisco starts issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, the city sues the state of California over its prohibition of the practice.

February 20, 2004 – (Ottawa) – Hearings for the Canadian Supreme Court reference are scheduled for the 6th, 7th and 8th of October 2004.

February 20, 2004 – (New Mexico) Same-sex couples begin getting married in Sandoval County, N.M., after the county clerk determines state law does not prohibit it.

February 20, 2004 – (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) Moved by television footage of San Francisco's marriage spree, the king of Cambodia calls for marriage rights to be granted to same-sex couples.

INTERNATIONAL

November 21, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Beijing) The first doctor in China to come out says he hopes his action helps young medical students understand homosexuality and the needs of gay patients. In the tightly controlled country with little tolerance for homosexuality few gay Chinese come out of the closet. That it should be reported in the official media was a major advancement.

The doctor, identified only as Zhitong, is teaching an optional course titled "Homosexual Health Sociology" at Fudan's medical college. The Chinese news agency Xinhua reports that Zhitong decided to come out to his students saying, "For medical students, anatomical practice is important. And as a gay, I'm willing to serve as a living sample for you to study homosexuals." To his surprise, students in the classroom responded with a big applause to show their appreciation and understanding for his courage and responsibility. Fudan launched the nationally unprecedented homosexual course this fall.

The exact population of China's gay community is unknown, but Xinhua reports that by the conservative estimate of three percent of the population it would amount to 30 million people. Over the past decade China has been attempting to understand the LGBT community and its needs. The government launched its first hotline for gays in Beijing in 1997. One researcher, Professor Zhang Beichuan with Qingdao University's medical college, says discrimination has led to about one-third of gays to consider suicide and about a third of that number to actually carry it out.

December 1, 2003: A memorial for the thousands of gay men killed by Nazis in the Second World War has finally been given the green light in Berlin.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/12/15/5>

December 9, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Sydney, Australia) A gay Bangladesh couple has won a landmark judgment in Australia's High Court which ruled persecution over sexuality could be grounds for refugee status. The men fled Bangladesh, where homosexuality is illegal, in February 1999. Australia's Refugee Review Tribunal ruled they were not entitled to refugee status saying that because they could keep their sexuality secret by being closeted there was no proof they would be imprisoned on their return. The men, who lived together in Bangladesh from 1994, said they had been ostracized by their families and had been mobbed and beaten over their sexual orientation.

The Tribunal's ruling was upheld in the Federal Court. But the High court disagreed. The 4-3 decision, said that gay asylum-seekers fleeing sexual persecution are on a par with people fleeing religious or political persecution. The court also ordered the government to pay all costs in the case. The ruling means the case will now return to the Tribunal where it is expected the men will be granted permanent asylum.

"We are grateful to the court, to our lawyers and to Australia," one of the men told The Australian newspaper. "We want to live here for the rest of our lives."

It is believed that Canada is the only other country which grants asylum to people fleeing homophobic persecution. The couple's lawyer, Bruce Levet, predicted the judgment would have a wide impact. "Refugee decision-makers all over the world follow each other's rulings, and the outcome in this case has the potential to influence decisions in all countries that accept refugees," Levet said.

December 11, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Rome) The Italian Senate has passed legislation barring same-sex couples and single women from having access to artificial insemination. The bill, which passed 169 votes to 90, deeply divided both the center-right government and the opposition center-left. The far right and the Roman Catholic Church supported it.

The legislation bans insemination by a third party outside a heterosexual married couple and bars women from becoming pregnant using the sperm of a deceased partner. In addition, it limits a woman's chance of pregnancy through artificial insemination to three embryos, each of which must be implanted in the womb, contrary to the practice elsewhere in Europe where the fertilized embryo can be kept in cold storage.

December 14, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Melbourne, Australia) A Melbourne gay couple has been granted co-parent status for a baby boy born to a surrogate mother in the United States. It is believed to be the first time in Australia that a court has approved dual parental custody to a same-sex couple. Family court judge Sally Brown ruled that it was in the best interests of one-year-old Mark to be looked after by the two men, identified only as Mr. X and Mr. Y.

Justice Brown said she believed that Mr. X, who donated the sperm, was a parent in the ordinary meaning of the word. Her comments contrast with an earlier court ruling that a sperm donor was not a parent under the terms of the Family Law Act.

Mark's surrogate mother, Ms S, carried an embryo created from an anonymously donated egg and Mr. X's sperm as part of a surrogate agreement reached in California. Neither Ms S nor her husband wished to have any parental relationship with the boy, who has been in the care of Mr. X, 38, and Mr. Y, 41, since his birth on May 31, 2002.

Mr. X and Mr. Y had sought orders from the court that they have joint responsibility for the long-term care, welfare and development of Mark and that he live with them. Justice Brown said the couple operated within a circle of extended family and friends, and daily demonstrated their commitment to and understanding of the responsibilities of parenthood.

December 16, 2003 *PlanetOut.com* (San Francisco) The National Center for Lesbian Rights has filed a lawsuit in a San Francisco court against the nation's largest online adoption service, Adoption.com, for discriminating against same-sex couples. The suit was filed on behalf of Michael and Richard Butler, two gay men who are registered as domestic partners in California and have been licensed and approved as adoptive parents by the state. The couple sought the services of Adoption.com, which include posting a "parent profile" on the site to allow prospective birth mothers to choose a family for their children. The site includes parent profiles from every state, including 43 couples from California.

After the Butlers submitted their profile data and paid their fee, Adoption.com notified them that because they are a same-sex couple, their profile would not be posted.

"What's clear is that the discrimination is purposeful, intentional and baseless. And, thankfully, it's also a violation of California law," said Kate Kendell, director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). NCLR is working on the case with a San Francisco law firm that has taken the case pro bono.

Adoption.com has links to approximately 1,000 adoption-related Web sites and services. According to the complaint, it is the "largest, most active, and most well-known Internet adoption-related business in the nation." The company markets itself as "the Internet's most effective registry of hopeful adoptive parent profiles," and claims a million visitors a month to its sites. The goal of the lawsuit, Kendell said, is to have Adoption.com accept profiles from same-sex couples that are based on the criteria applied to every other couple seeking to adopt.

December 17, 2003 *Gay.com U.K* (Peru) The prime minister of Peru has been fired after rumors regarding her sexuality reached the country's Parliament and media. President Alejandro Toledo dismissed Beatriz Merino, the country's first female prime minister, because he was worried the lesbian rumors would cast doubt over her political life. But Merino claims a rival who wanted her out of office spread the rumors.

"Eight weeks ago I was informed by several sources that people were preparing a series of attacks aiming to damage my personal reputation," Merino told reporters. She refused to comment on the rumors directly, or her future career.

Homosexuality, particularly lesbianism, is still taboo in Peru's society, which holds strong ties with Catholicism and conservative values. Merino has denied she is a lesbian, but the very fact she is the center of such a scandal has reportedly led to Toledo losing faith in her abilities to manage the country. The president, who is set to choose a new prime minister in the coming weeks, also fired her complete cabinet.

December 18, 2003 *PlanetOut.com/ Behind the mask* (Uganda) Gay activists in Uganda are outraged over the apparent suicide of a student who was harshly punished in front of other students following accusations that she was a lesbian. According to a report in the Red Pepper newspaper, Paula Rwomushana, 18, was found dead in her dormitory on Dec. 8 at St. Joseph's Secondary School in Nsambya. A week earlier, she was suspended from school, but her parents returned her to the school on Dec. 3. She was reportedly caned several times in front of the student body because she had received love letters from other girls.

The school has issued no comment on the incident. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Uganda (GLAU) expressed outrage over the incident and criticized the government for being silent about it. According to GLAU, Uganda laws against homosexuality address sexual acts only.

"Paula was accused based on rumors," the group said. "No one is guilty until proven so by the court of law. You can't punish someone based on accusations and allegations."

December 28, 2003 *365Gay.com* (Brussels) Only months after the country's first gay wedding, Belgium is now preparing to allow same-sex couples to adopt children. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's Dutch-speaking Liberal Party said it will table a bill in parliament to abolish laws preventing gay adoption. In February 2003 the Belgian government voted to give gay couples the same legal status as heterosexual ones and the first same-sex marriage was held in June when the law took effect.

The three parties which opposed gay marriage, the Francophone Liberals, the far right Vlaams Blok and the Francophone Christian Democrats, say they will vote against allowing gays to adopt. But, with help from the Socialists and the Greens -- who have always supported the gay legislation, the adoption bill looks set to carry a majority in parliament.

75 percent of Belgium's 10 million people are Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, the country has become one of the most liberal in Europe, legalizing the possession of marijuana for personal use in 2001 and in 2002 allowing mercy killings.

December 31, 2003: Brazil has become the first Latin American nation to amend its immigration policy to recognize relationships between same-sex, binational couples.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/12/31/2>

January 5, 2004 *365Gay.com* (Honiara, Solomon Islands) A Solomon Islands woman has been jailed on charges she is a lesbian. At a court appearance she was denied bail. The charges include "committing an indecent practice, having sex with a person of the same gender."

Magistrate Jefferson Leua said the offence was serious and ordered her held behind bars to "ensure there is no interference with witnesses." The woman's name is being withheld. She is described as a middle-aged, divorced mother. The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) is monitoring the case.

"We should be trying to comply with international standards, and clearly some things have been happening here that do not," said Ashley Wickham, the head of the UNHCR's Honiara Office.

January 6, 2004 *365Gay.com* (San Francisco, California) A California school district that six students said was rife for years with homophobic bullying and harassment has agreed to end a five year legal dispute. The Morgan Hill Unified School District agreed to a wide-ranging staff and student training program and policy protections. The district, about 12 miles south of San Jose, California in Silicon Valley, also agreed to pay the students \$1.1 million to settle the suit which was brought on their behalf by the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

The students, five girls and one boy, were repeatedly mistreated both physically and verbally. One student, Alana Flores, found a pornographic picture taped to her locker. A handwritten note attached to it read, "Die, Die. . . Dyke bitch, Fuck off. We'll kill you." When Flores asked for help, the assistant principal brushed her off and told her to go back to class, saying, "Don't bring me this trash anymore. This is disgusting."

"The kind of abuse I had to deal with every day when I went to school was horrible. No student should have to face that. Making schools safe for all students through this kind of training is something every school should do," said Flores, on learning of the settlement.

Under the agreement, all administrators, teachers, campus monitors, custodians, school safety officers, and bus drivers in the district will take part in a mandatory annual training program devoted exclusively to issues of harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The district is also implementing an age-appropriate training program for students and an anti-discrimination policy that bars harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

January 14, 2004 *365Gay.com* (London) A British court has refused to issue an arrest warrant for Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe reputedly the most homophobic ruler in the world. British gay rights advocate Peter Tatchell sought the warrant. In a 52 page brief Tatchell outlined a regime of brutality, homophobia, and repression of civil rights. It detailed accounts of political opponents being rounded up and imprisoned and quoted extensively from reports made by more than a half dozen international human rights groups and contains interviews with victims of the regime.

Tatchell has for several years attempted to have Mugabe arrested for crimes against humanity. The Zimbabwe president is accused of inciting "anti-gay hatred". In numerous attacks, he has described gays as lower than "pigs or dogs."

Tatchell asked a British judge to issue a warrant for the arrest and extradition of Mugabe under UK law and the UN Convention Against Torture. They were the same provisions that led to the arrest of Augusto Pinochet in 1998, when the former Chilean dictator visited London for a medical operation. Judge Timothy Workman however ruled that Mugabe is immune from foreign arrest since he is still the Zimbabwean head of state.

January 28, 2004 *365Gay.com/ HRC news* (Atlanta, Georgia) A federal appeals court has upheld Florida's ban on gay adoption. In a written ruling the court rejected a challenge by four gay men to the 1977 law.

"We exercise great caution when asked to take sides in an ongoing public policy debate, such as the current one over the compatibility of homosexual conduct with the duties of adoptive parenthood," wrote Judge Stanley Birch. "The state of Florida has made the determination that it is not in the best interests of its displaced children to be adopted by individuals who 'engage in current, voluntary homosexual activity' and we have found nothing in the Constitution that forbids this policy judgment." Birch said that the only way to overturn the law was through the state legislature.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which represented the gay couples, had argued that Florida has allowed couples with drug and alcohol problems or histories of domestic violence to adopt children. Florida judges also allow some gay couples to become a child's permanent legal guardians, but were not allowed to adopt, the ACLU had told the court in arguments last year. The state told the court that children are better off in homes with dual-gender parenting.

"Given the state's frank acknowledgement that lesbians and gay men pose no risk of harm to children, and its willingness to place children with lesbians and gay men permanently, it is impossible to credit the idea that the ban was adopted to promote child welfare," the ACLU said in a statement. "The only purpose the ban could possibly serve is the forbidden one: expressing the state's disapproval of lesbians and gay men."

Steve Lofton a plaintiff in the case, and his partner Roger Croteau, have been the only parents that their son Bert, now 12, has known since he was an infant. The Florida law prevents them from adopting him, in spite of the fact that they have served as foster parents for Bert and the family's four other children for most or all of the children's lives. The American Civil Liberties Union brought the case on behalf of Lofton, Bert, and four other plaintiffs. 3,000 children are currently in Florida foster care homes awaiting adoption. Florida is the only state with an outright ban on gays adopting.

January 30, 2004 *365Gay.com* (San Francisco, California) The U.S. federal government's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which for months has been investigating *Cirque du Soleil* for firing performer Matthew Cusick because he has HIV, has concluded that Cirque likely engaged in illegal discrimination.

Shortly after the decision was announced, the world famous Cirque said that it would accept mediation and offer to re-integrate Matthew Cusick as a performer. Cusick was dropped by the world famous acrobatic circus last year, shortly after it found out he was HIV-positive even though Cusick had informed Cirque's own doctor before he began rehearsals and despite the doctor's appraisal he was in good health and posed no risk.

In its defense of firing Cusick, Cirque informed the commission that it would only hire people with HIV for positions that don't involve bodily contact -- such as dishwashers, food and beverage staff, and souvenir vendors. But, it said, it would not allow people with HIV to work with other performers.

"For the last eight months, we have tried to get *Cirque du Soleil* to understand the seriousness of firing someone simply because he has HIV. At every juncture, we've been met with claims that are based on fear

and ignorance instead of science and medicine. We are very encouraged that the federal government's findings will force Cirque to finally take this seriously," Lambda Legal's AIDS Project director Hayley Gorenberg said. "There has never been a documented case of HIV transmission in athletics, ever."

Cirque du Soleil's PR head honcho Renée-Claude Ménard acknowledges *Cirque du Soleil's* reaction was unfortunate. "We have learned that the risk [of transmitting HIV] is infinitesimal. We are now putting in place new policies and procedures to ensure this doesn't happen again."

January 30, 2004: Advocates for GLBT rights were outraged after the Kansas Court of Appeals ruled that the state can punish homosexual acts between minors much more severely than heterosexual ones.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/01/30/1>

February 18, 2004: A lesbian has won the right to adopt her partner's twins, after a Spanish court ruled for the first time in favor of same-sex co-parenting.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/02/18/4>

MISCELLANEOUS

December 3, 2003: A new gay magazine, launched in January 2004, focuses on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender professionals, entrepreneurs and executives.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/12/03/2>

December 9, 2003 HRC news - The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's National Coming Out Project launched a new online resource today focusing on the coming out experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Asian Pacific Americans. These materials provide supportive information on issues such as family, religion, and language that are important in the coming out process of Asian Pacific Americans.

"Coming Out in Communities of Color: Asian Pacific Americans" is part of a series spotlighting the diversity of the GLBT community. The series includes practical advice and information about coming out, as well as profiles of notable GLBT Asian Pacific Americans. Among the profiles are directors Arthur Dong and Nisha Ganatra, comic Margaret Cho and actor B. D. Wong. A list of resources is also included featuring links to national and local organizations, books and movies.

To read "Coming Out in Communities of Color: Asian Pacific Americans" visit: www.hrc.org/CommunitiesOfColor. Future topics covered in this series will include coming out as HIV-positive, coming out as bisexual and coming out as transgender. The National Coming Out Project earlier this year released "African-Americans and Coming Out" and "Latinas/os and Coming Out," which can also be viewed at www.hrc.org/CommunitiesOfColor.

RESEARCH

November 26, 2003: The year 2003 has been the most deadly on record for transgender people, with more victims of anti-transgender killings reported this year than in any year prior.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/11/26/4>

December 8, 2003: The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network reported that the grades and college aspirations of GLBT students are directly linked to whether they're harassed in school.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/12/08/3>

December 19, 2003: Women in their 20s are more likely to admit being lesbian or bisexual than women in their 40s, but the same trend is not evident among men, according to an Australian study.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/12/19/2>

January 21, 2004 365Gay.com 2004 (New York City) A new survey of gays and lesbians shows that 52 percent are in committed relationships. The 2003-2004 Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census was conducted this past August by GLCensus Partners. The survey found that only 26 percent of those surveyed are single, 15 percent are single and dating, and 5 percent were in a civil union or marriage. Two percent were widowed.

Of those people in a relationship, 31 percent had been in the relationship between one and three years and 15 percent had been in committed relationships for more than 12 years. Nearly 8,000 people were asked not only about their relationships, but also about consumer products ranging from electronics to pets and travel. The gay market is estimated to be worth more than \$514 billion annually.

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

MARCH:

Adults and kids: On **SATURDAY MARCH 20**, just in time for the spring equinox, the **Lesbian Mothers Association** will have a **SUGARING-OFF PARTY at CAP-ST-JACQUES (Pierrefonds)**. This is a good chance for all of us to see each other once again, to catch up on news and to make new friends. For those who don't have kids yet, this activity is for you too. About one third of our members now are mama-wannabes, so you will not be alone. Also if there are nieces and nephews or children of friends that you would like to bring along, please feel free to do so. Come and celebrate together the coming of spring!

Cap St-Jacques is a wonderful small farm, in a beautiful location, on the Island of Montreal. The event will begin at **10:45 a.m.** A full lunch will be served between 11:00 and 12:30 p.m. Following this, there will be a guided tour, horse-drawn sleigh rides of the property, as well as sugar-candy ("tire") preparation and tasting in a giant tee-pee. Our space must be reserved, so we are asking people to pay in advance. If you are interested in participating **please call us at 514-846-1543.**

APRIL:

For adults only: Workshop #4: Legal Questions

Guest Speakers and Hors d'œuvres (Thai food)

Saturday April 17th 2004

Time: 6-9 p.m.

Place: CCGLM (Centre communautaire gai et lesbienne de Montréal) 2075, rue Plessis (metro Papineau)

Recognition of non-biological parents, multi-parent families, known donors, civil unions, adoption, etc. How do the new laws affect us? Me Anne-Marie Lecouffe and Me Isabelle Carrière-Roussin, two lawyers who specialize in family law will be available to answer all types of questions that pertain to our families. This interactive question and answer session can be useful both to those who already have kids and those who are thinking of starting a family.

NB- if you already have some questions in mind please submit them to us in advance at info@aml-ima.org or by phone at 514-846-1543.

MAY:

Workshop #5: Unresolved Questions

Discussion Group and Hors d'œuvres (Chinese food)

Saturday May 15th 2004

Time: 5-7 p.m.

Place: 6642A Christophe Colomb (metro Beaubien)

Let's talk about questions that are still in our minds: How are we dealing with the emotional roller coaster of trying to start a family, how does our donor fit into our everyday lives, what if the donor is unknown, do our kids face homophobia in the schools and do we fit in with our neighbours and all those straight families, etc. This is the workshop for those who still have questions and ideas that they would like to discuss. Those who participate will set the agenda. A therapist who specializes in problems relating to infertility and international adoption (Hélène Zylberszac, M.S.W.) will be on hand to help facilitate this open discussion.

Please RSVP with Sylvia or Sylvie at 514-521-9783 (so we can know how much food to prepare!)

BULLETIN BOARD

MISCELLANEOUS:

A message from **Mary Zver and Silvana Parnas** who were **married** last summer: Thank you for sharing the union of our love. **July 4th** will forever remain a memory full of joy and happiness shared amongst loving friends and family. We appreciate you!

November 22, 2003 Partenaires, collaborateurs, amis, connaissances nous vous invitons a visiter un **nouveau site Web dédié aux jeunes gais, lesbiennes et bisexuel(le)s**. Nous sommes très fiers de vous présenter ce site. Il est virtuellement tout chaud de ce matin! C'est un site d'information et d'éducation qu'il faut faire connaître le plus possible. (French only)

www.jeunesgaislesbiennes.ca

For women who were, or are, **married to men** and have **come out later in life**, after having kids, this is a web site that may interest you. An online discussion group (unfortunately only in English) for lesbian moms. Check out: http://members3.boardhost.com/Ask_Joanne/

Traductrices , redactrices, etc: We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**

Are there any new moms out there who want to get together for coffee and conversation? If interested, call Suzie at 514-842-6884.

Bonjour à toutes ! Nous venons tout récemment d'amménager dans la ville de Québec et nous trouverions enrichissant de rencontrer d'autres mères et futurs mères lesbiennes comme que nous. Alors si ça vous intéresse, écrivez-nous ! À bientôt! Marie-Christyne Élie & Mélanie Lambert Mariechristyne@hotmail.com

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents**. There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are

waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption**. What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.**

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. If you have something to advertise, sell, rent or buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.

THERE IS NO FREEDOM WITHOUT FINANCIAL FREEDOM - LA LIBERTÉ PERSONNELLE PASSE PAR LA LIBERTÉ FINANCIÈRE. Financial services for individuals and small businesses: budgeting, debt management, investments, future planning, personal taxes, wealth enhancement strategies. No charge for initial consultations, 20% of all subsequent fees will be donated to the LMA. J. Freed, 514-483-5130, jfreed@videotron.ca