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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME IX- No. II - December 2007

TURNING DOLLARS INTO ACTION!

By Mona Greenbaum, LMA coordinator

At the end of the summer we sent out our newsletter to over 750 families with an attention-grabbing article asking you to remember to renew your membership promptly and to help us out financially according to your means.

The article seemed to have touched a nerve because so many of you gave generously. It seems that the take-home message was understood: Donating to the LMA is an investment for our families and especially for our children. We raised over \$5000 in donations!

As many of you know, we have tried for a number of years to obtain government funding without success. The answer is always the same: We are eligible and fulfill all the necessary criteria, but there is no new money available for community organizations. In times of budget cutting, lesbian moms and their children are just not a priority.

This situation has put our association and the work that we do in a constantly precarious position. If it wasn't for the donations *and* the thousands of hours of volunteer work carried out by our members, the LMA we would not be able to continue.

Many of our members attend the parties, the discussion groups or the guest speakers but have no idea about the political action that we do behind the scenes to advance the social recognition of our families and to fight the homophobia and heterosexism that our families and especially our children confront.

So as coordinator of the association it is with pleasure that I would like to tell you a bit about three of our projects for the year 2007-2008.

1. *Ulysse et Alice* (2006) by Ariane Bertouille was the first book in Quebec for young children to speak of a family with two moms. We noted that although many teachers were interested in using the book in the classroom setting a lack of knowledge and resources held them back. We decided to put together a kit to accompany the book that has two activities to be carried out in the classroom, a guide to answer questions from children like "How can two women make a baby?" as well as section for both teachers and school administrators to assist them in answering parents' questions about the appropriateness of talking to young children about families with same-sex parents.

The Montreal School Commission recently accepted the project for use in a special program to be carried out in primary school libraries. Our next step is to approach other school boards as well as day-care associations.

2. It was, up until recently, difficult for lesbians and gays to adopt Quebec-born children. Nowadays it's possible, but many of us are still confused about how it all works. To correct this we wrote a guide about adoption and fostering that is geared specifically to gay and lesbian prospective parents. It is also useful however to those who work in social services as it refers to some of the prejudice that we, as families, confront.

The final draft of the guide is currently being proofed and it will be launched within the next few weeks. The Association des centres de jeunesse du Québec has agreed to present our guide on their web site and to help us to distribute it in all related agencies of Quebec.

3. We are currently working on a grant proposal to elaborate a workshop/ training session about families with lesbian and gay parents. The project is being developed in partnership with the LGBT Family Coalition (*Coalition des familles homoparentales*), Danielle Julien UQAM professor and specialist in families with same-sex parents, UQAM's *Service aux collectivités*, as well as Dr. Karine Igartua, director of the McGill University Sexual Orientation Centre (MUSIC).

The goal of the training sessions will be to increase knowledge about families with LGBT parents in order to promote open attitudes towards our families. The workshops as well as the didactic tools that we will develop will be geared toward those working in primary schools both teachers and non-teaching professionals, to future teachers, to those working with youth as well as to those working in the ministries of education and family.

Children living in families with LGBT parents feel "invisibilized" and ignored at school. This is especially hard given that for young children their identities and self-esteem are tightly bound with their families and the social recognition of their families. Like all other parents, gay and lesbian parents want their kids to grow up in environments that are accepting and safe. We hope that these projects will help to make a difference.

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: September - December 2007

Montreal and Quebec News

September 20 - The Supreme Court of Canada has refused to hear the case of a sperm donor who wanted his paternity legally recognized. The man who cannot be identified accepted to help his two lesbian friends to conceive a child in **Quebec**. He signed a document in 1999 renouncing his parental rights and responsibilities. He nevertheless saw the baby a few times after its birth. Relations between the parents and the donor started to deteriorate in 2000 and visits were stopped completely in 2003. The donor went before the courts to have his paternity recognized. The Quebec superior court rejected his request in March 2006. In his decision Judge René Hurtubise said that the donor was not a parent in the legal sense. The court of appeal confirmed this decision.

Canadian News

September 12, 2007 (Ottawa) Same-sex unions are growing at five times the rate of opposite-sex ones according to census numbers that also reveal, for the first time, the number of gay marriages in Canada.

Some 45,300 couples, both common law and married, reported as same-sex in the 2006 census, up from 34,200. Those numbers represent a 33 per cent surge since 2001, while heterosexual couples grew by just six per cent in the same time period.

The historic Statistics Canada query on same-sex marriage, coming in the wake of Parliament legalizing such unions in 2005, revealed 7,465 gay and lesbian marriages.

That's considerably lower than numbers reported by the now-defunct advocacy group Canadians For Equal Marriage. The group, based on its own research of municipal records, reported last November that 12,438 marriage licenses had been granted to same-sex couples since provincial courts began recognizing such unions

in 2003.

Some critics attribute the discrepancy to the way the census question was asked. Couples were instructed to check the "Other" category at the bottom of a list of relationships, rather than the box marked "Husband or wife."

"The census, we believe, made an error and they were unfair to married same-sex couples," said Helen Kennedy, executive director of Egale Canada, a gay rights advocacy group that organized a petition last year and urged couples to ignore the "Other" box.

Anne Milan, a senior analyst at Statistics Canada, stands by the accuracy of the census data but concedes the limitations of relying on the answers people provide. "It's the first time that we've asked same sex marriage so it's really a benchmark number," said Milan, who added it's "difficult to say" what effect Egale's dissent had on the numbers.

According to the census, same-sex couples accounted for 0.6 per cent of all couples in Canada. That falls in line with numbers reported in the United States, New Zealand and Australia. More than half, or 54 per cent, of same-sex married Canadian spouses were men.

About nine per cent of Canadians in a same-sex relationship had children under 24 years old living in the home, more commonly in female unions (16 per cent) than male ones (three per cent). Children were present more in same-sex married couples (16 per cent) than common-law ones (eight per cent).

September 19, 2007 (Halifax, Nova Scotia) Faced with a human rights complaint that it was discriminating against same-sex parents who are legally married the Nova Scotia government has announced it would change its birth-registration process.

Earlier Jamie and Emily O'Neill had filed a complaint with the provincial human rights commission over Nova Scotia's refusal to recognize Jamie O'Neil as a parent of the couple's newborn baby. In Nova Scotia only the names of the birth mother and the birth father could be listed on a birth certificate.

The O'Neills were legally married in Halifax two years ago, after the Canadian government legalized same-sex marriage in 2005. After Emily O'Neill gave birth to their daughter Jordyn on August 7, Jamie discovered that she had no legal parenting rights to the baby. A government official told her that under Nova Scotia's Vital Statistics Act she would have to adopt Jordyn if she wanted to be considered a co-parent.

A week later the government announced it has changed the birth-registration process to conform to the federal marriage law. Nova Scotia cabinet minister Jamie Muir said his government is committed to ensuring that same-sex couples are treated with the same respect and dignity as everyone else.

The new Vital Statistics regulations allow the same-sex partner or spouse of the birth mother to be registered as the other parent on the birth registration.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

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

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

August 18 (Cheverie, Nova Scotia) Liberal politician Scott Brison makes history by becoming the first MP to marry his same-sex partner since gay marriage was legally recognized two years ago.

September 7 (Sacramento) By a strong 22-15 vote, the **California** Senate challenges Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to show his moderate side by signing an equal-marriage bill.

September 10 (Jerusalem) Despite intense pressure from ultra-Orthodox religious parties **Israel's** Justice Minister backs down on a plan to define common-law marriage as between "a man and a woman" in a new bill on inheritance rights.

September 12 - According to the latest government census **Canadian** gay men and lesbians are coupling up, or at least standing up to be counted, at five times the rate of their straight counterparts.

September 18 (Sacramento) Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announces he again will veto legislation that would allow same-sex couples to marry in **California**. And he warns lawmakers that they can keep on passing the bill and he will continue to veto it.

October 5 (Stockholm) Legalized same-sex marriage moves closer in **Sweden** when the country's three opposition parties introduce a marriage equalization bill. Sweden already has civil partnerships under a law enacted in 1995 that gives most of the rights and obligations of marriage to same-sex couples who register.

October 6 (Bogota) **Colombia's** highest court orders the government to provide same-sex couples with the same rights as married opposite-sex couples. The Constitutional Court does not go so far as ordering the government to legalize gay marriage, or offer pension or inheritance rights, but says it must provide the same health benefits as married couples.

LGBT rights groups say they will file another lawsuit to gain pension and inheritance rights.

October 8 (San Francisco) A multi-million dollar TV ad campaign promoting same-sex marriage rights is launched in **California's** five major cities.

October 12 (London) More than 16,000 same-sex couples took advantage of **Britain's** civil partnership law in its first full year the government says.

October 15 (Ottawa) The Anglican diocese of Ottawa votes to approve the blessings of same-sex relationships in a move likely to open a new front in the war between conservatives and liberals in the worldwide Church.

October 16 (Montreal) Two men in federal prison in **Quebec** will marry in the first same-sex marriage at the Cowansville Penitentiary.

November 5 (Dublin) **Ireland's** government announces that it will introduce legislation legalizing civil unions for same-sex and heterosexual couples by March 2008, but gay marriage is not an option.

International News

September 7, 2007 (Tetu.com) (France) Born in **Quebec** in February 2006, Lucien has two French mothers. He obtained his Canadian citizenship however because he was born on Canadian soil. His parents Severine Galus and Mathilde Henninot wanted him to have his French citizenship recognized as well given that both his parents are French. "Our identity is foremost as citizens of France," explained Mme Galus. "Also we just recently wrote a will and designated guardians for our son who happen to live in **France**. Having a French passport would have simplified things."

In the beginning of September the two women, married since two years under Canadian law and permanent residents of Canada since 6 months asked for a transcription of Lucien's birth certificate from the civil registry of the French consulate in Montreal. A few days later they got a call from the consulate stating that the agency could not produce the document. Their letter was returned to them without an explanatory letter, nor a notification of refusal, with a simple note stating the date of reception. Lucien's Quebec birth certificate mentions the names of his two mothers without distinguishing who is his biological parent. It is in conformity with provincial law, which authorizes the recognition of his filiation with two parents of the same gender.

"We were not asking that our parental rights were recognized in France but simply that Lucien could have a French passport. We are even ready to do a sworn declaration stating who is Lucien's biological mother." The couple feels that this is discrimination toward their son and have already spoken with 2 senators whose responsibilities include relations with Canadian residents from France. For the two women the situation is even more surprising given the multitude of bilateral conventions between Quebec and France (for Health, diplomas, etc) to facilitate interactions between the two countries. "We don't want France to make a scape-goat of our child." Says Mme Galus saying that other families with same-sex parents would be affected by this decision as well.

September 24, 2007 (365 Gay.com and IGLHRC News)(**New York City**) Gay activists holding posters of what is general believed to be a picture of two gay men being executed in **Iran** joined hundreds of other demonstrators protesting the appearance of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Columbia University.

During a question and answer session following Ahmadinejad's address he was asked about reports men who are gay or perceived to be gay have been executed. He refused to confirm or deny that executions of gays had taken place but then compared homosexuals to drug dealers and other criminals. "Why should they get sympathy?" he asked. "Don't you have capital punishment in the United States?"

When pressed further Ahmadinejad said: "In Iran we don't have homosexuals like you do in your country. We do not have this phenomenon. I don't know who's told you that we have it." The remarks were greeted with loud jeers and laughter from the mostly student audience.

The assertion brought a rebuke from America's biggest LGBT civil rights organization. "Today's assertions by President Ahmadinejad that there are no homosexuals in Iran would be simply absurd were it not for the fact that international human rights watchers have long documented some of the most horrific acts of persecution and violence committed against gay people in Iran," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign.

Some international gay rights groups believe that more than 4,000 lesbians and gay men have been executed since the Ayatollahs seized power in 1979.

Upon monitoring the Iranian press reaction to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech and comments at the forum hosted by Columbia University, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) discovered an odd disparity. The English version of the President's official website (www.president.ir) provides a full and complete transcript of his speech and the Question & Answer segment where he claimed that homosexuality does not exist in Iran. However, the Persian-language transcript has excised both the question about treatment of lesbians and gay men in Iran and President Ahmadinejad's soon to be legendary response. The President's website purportedly provides the authoritative transcripts of his speeches and is relied upon by the news media in Iran.

October 10, 2007 (365 Gay.com, IGLHRC News) (**New York City**) The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission said that it has uncovered evidence that the Bush administration has funded

groups in **Uganda** that actively promote violence and discrimination against lesbians and gays.

The IGLHRC said it began an investigation into the groups following a series of events in Uganda this summer. At an August 16 press conference, Sexual Minorities of Uganda - a coalition of LGBT groups - launched Let us Live in Peace Campaign, calling for understanding and respect of sexual minorities.

Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and is punishable by between 14 years and life imprisonment. Last year, the Ugandan Parliament passed a constitutional amendment making same-sex marriages illegal.

The Let us Live in Peace campaign was met with an increase in hate speech by religious groups. The primary instigator of the backlash was Pastor Martin Ssempe, leader of the Makerere University Community Church and spokesman for the Interfaith Family Culture Coalition Against Homosexuality in Uganda.

Ssempe organized an August 21 rally in Kampala at which more than one hundred demonstrators, including several government officials, demanded official action against LGBT people. Ssempe has called homosexuality, "a criminal act against the laws of nature," and has said that, "there should be no rights granted to homosexuals in this country."

According to the U.S. Embassy in Uganda's website, Makerere University Community Church received a grant under a program designed to provide funds for AIDS prevention, treatment and care programs in Africa.

Ssempe and his coalition, which includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and Evangelicals, have threatened the safety of Ugandan LGBT rights activists by posting their names, photos and addresses on a website. With support from conservative organizations such as Family Watch International in the United States, Ssempe has launched attacks not only on homosexuals but on Uganda's women's rights and HIV activists as well, the IGLHRC said.

"The U.S. government's funding is meant to alleviate suffering and support effective AIDS initiatives in Africa, not to further blame and stigmatize already marginalized groups," said IGLHRC Executive Director Paula Ettelbrick.

November 6, 2007 (365Gay.com) (London) The British government will bring in legislation in the current session of Parliament to give equal legal status to the same-sex partners of lesbians who have children using in vitro fertilization. The announcement was made in the Queen's speech to Parliament outlining the agenda of Prime Minister Brown's government.

The Human Tissues and Embryos Bill will enshrine in law for the first time the concept of a two-mother family. Under the legislation when one woman in a lesbian relationship gives birth using artificial fertility, the partner - even if the women are not in a civil partnership - will be granted all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of parenthood.

The bill would also say that the sperm donor would have no rights or obligations. The legislation would bring lesbian couples in line with current laws covering opposite-sex relationships. It does not, however, include partners of gay men who have children through a surrogate mother.

Conservative family groups have condemned the announcement. "We are embarking on a dangerous social experiment with serious consequences for individual children and for society as a whole when we start tampering with the natural order and deny to children something as fundamental as having a parent of each sex," Norman Wells, of the Family Education Trust, told the Daily Telegraph.

The government also announced that it would expand hate crime law to include gays, lesbians and transsexuals. The proposed legislation must still be filed in the House of Commons and withstand a vote in committee before going before the House of Commons and the Lords.

Miscellaneous News

Danielle Julien, of the department of psychology at the *Université de Québec à Montréal* has won the prestigious **Excellence Award in Research and Creation (career category)** for her exceptional contribution in health sciences and education. Danielle Julien has exhibited a visionary approach in both the subjects that she has studied (homosexuality and LGBT families, intersection of homosexuality and ethnicity) as well as in her methodology. Many of her research studies have been published in specialized journals such as *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Developmental Psychology* and *Family Process*. She has gained a national and international reputation for her work and has served as a consultant on a variety of LGBT issues. In 20 years, Dr Julien received close to \$3.8 million in research grants either in solo or team projects. \$ 1.6 million have been granted to the Human Development Research Centre of which she is the ad joint director. With her arrival at UQAM, she started up a research laboratory with a stable staff that has had a structuring effect on the work she carried out. In addition to this she supervised 14 doctoral theses and 12 master's theses. With her students she has prepared and written numerous articles, book chapters and scientific communications. 60% of her published juried articles were carried out with her students. She is a member of the consultation committee for the Institute of Women's and Men's Health that is part of the Canadian Health Research Institute. Finally, over the years, she has developed solid research partnerships with community organizations, which have placed her in the position of being a privileged voice for knowledge transfer. The Excellence Award in research and creation is accompanied by a \$15,000 grant.

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association UPCOMING MEETINGS

December 2007 :

- **SATURDAY DECEMBER 1ST FROM 1-4 P.M.**
10TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK PARTY

The Lesbian Mothers Association and the Papa-Daddy Group are proud to invite you to our 10th annual holiday potluck party!! Saturday December 1st from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

What's planned? Storytelling: the "HEART of the Holidays" with the **STORYTELLER ISABELLE CRÉPEAU**, let yourselves be transported to a world of stories and songs to the heart of holiday magic ...Glimmering tales to warm the ears of both young and old.

And also...A HOLIDAY ARTS AND CRAFTS ACTIVITY, A VISIT FROM SANTA, GAMES IN THE BIG GYM, SNACKS FOR ALL

Although the LMA will be providing snacks it would be great if you can help us out by bringing a snack to share (remember: no peanut products because of allergies).

Teenagers interested in making a bit of spending money are invited to help us organize the event (please call Mona for this at 514-846-1543).

Where: Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave (Metro Atwater). Greene Avenue is a few blocks west of Atwater. The centre is south of René Levesque / Dorchester.

When: Saturday December 1st from 1-4 p.m.

Cost: FREE!

• **WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 5TH AT 7:30 P.M.**
ADOPTION AND FOSTERING ISSUES GROUP

The next meeting of the **Adoption/Foster Family discussion group (a joint initiative of the Lesbian Mothers' Association and the Papa-Daddy Group)** will be held on **Wednesday, December 5th at 7:30 pm in Room V-2445 of Pavillion V of UQAM, 209 rue Ste-Catherine East.**

In June 2006 amendments were made to the Québec Loi sur la protection de la jeunesse (Youth Protection Act – in force since July 9, 2007). These amendments determine the maximum periods by which a permanent plan must be established for a child who has been removed from his biological family by the DPJ, with the objective of limiting the amount of time that a child spends being shunted between homes. These modifications will likely have a significant impact on placements and adoptions through the mixed bank of the Québec Centres jeunesse.

Discussion among adoption group members regarding these changes and the openness of the Centres jeunesse to our families. Experiences of couples currently working with a Centre jeunesse under the new legislation.

January 2008:

• **THURSDAY, JANUARY 17th at 7:30 p.m.**
VIDEO AND POPCORN NIGHT

Two documentaries about our families: La Politique du coeur by Nancy Nicol (French with English subtitles) and Dialogue sur l'homoparentalité by Julie Huard

Where: UQAM, 320 Ste-Catherine East (corner Sanguinet)(metro Berri)
Room DS-2901

February 2008:

• **(EXACT DATE(S) TO BE ANNOUNCED)**
PART 3: PARENTING COURSE: LESBIAN-ONLY COURSE ON CPR-LIFESAVING

This is a one-day, **6-hour session** to learn the basic **red-cross CPR techniques for children and babies**. You will learn how to baby-proof your home, prevent injuries and learn what to do in a sudden emergency when a child stops breathing or their heart stops beating, such as choking, drowning, falls, allergic reaction etc. The course includes Red Cross CPR/AED manual.

The course is useful for people who already have kids, for those who have children around them, or are thinking of starting a family in the near future.

Because we want this to be a lesbian-only course we need to know how many people can commit to a full weekend day in February 2008 and then reserve in advance.

The cost of this course is approximately \$44 for individuals and \$80 / couple

If you are interested and available please let me know, **before December 15th**, so that I can reserve a space for you. You can contact me **at 514-846-1543 or by e-mail at info@aml-ima.org**

BULLETIN BOARD:

- ◆ Hello there, my girlfriend and I are interested in meeting other lesbian couples. We have children (1 week out of 2) and are seeking some adult conversation. We are interested in traveling, arts, shows, but mostly good conversation. We are looking for any couple aged from 35-50. Encourage anyone interested to reach us via e-mail. jenny_brodeur@hotmail.com
- ◆ Bonjour, J'ai 43 ans. Je veux rencontrer quelqu'une sérieuse-d'amour. J'ai un garçon de 7 ans. **Line 514-678-8935**
- ◆ **L'association des lesbiennes aux femin'elles:** L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses soirées le premier et le troisième mardis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 au CLSC situé au 411 Hotel Dieu à **Chicoutimi**. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adressent aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer! Informations: **418-550-2259**.
- ◆ **L'Écho des femmes de la Petite Patrie** est un centre de femmes qui offre des rencontres pour lesbiennes. Ces rencontres ont lieu les lundis soirs aux deux semaines de 19h00 à 21h30, et sont animées par une personne ressource. Ces rencontres, qui se veulent un lieu d'échange, de ressourcement et d'information, s'intéressent aux réalités et aux conditions de vie des lesbiennes. Les rencontres sont en français. Un service de halte-garderie est disponible avec réservation faite une semaine à l'avance. Le centre est situé au **6032 St-Hubert (métro Beaubien)**. **Téléphone (514)277-7445, télécopieur (514)277-1689**
- ◆ **OUTSPOKEN!** is an emerging group who's mission is to create a venue that will enable lesbians in the Montreal area to get together for business and social networking, as well as educational and inspiring events. Our initial focus will be monthly coffee meetings, and once the membership expands, we will add workshops, supper events and more. Come to our website to get more information. Join our mailing list, and be the first to find out when our first coffee meeting will be. www.outspokenmtl.com <<http://www.outspokenmtl.com/>>

MISCELLANEOUS

- ◆ **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**
- ◆ **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 **Open Book Library's** collection includes over 5500 books written by glbt authors or by authors who write about our communities. Some of these books are for children and adolescents. We are very proud that approximately half of our collection is in French. Much more information as well as online consultation of the book collection is available at our Web site www.ccglm.org/en-b. We are located at **2075 Plessis (CCGLM)** in the Village. Come visit us! Open Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-8 p.m. (514) 528-8424.

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.

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