

IFGE NEWSLETTER

International Foundation for Gender Education

Summer 1996, Volume 2, Number 2

Don't Forget to Renew... Your IFGE Membership, That Is.

Dear Member:

Thank you for your support of the International Foundation for Gender Education.

There are so many wonderful things happening and your membership and support has made a difference. In 1995, your contribution helped us educate, perform outreach and work for your legal rights as a TG individual.

Last month in Minneapolis, at the IFGE board meeting, we formed two new committees: The Youth Information Committee, chaired by Dr. Sheila Kirk; and the Technology Committee, chaired by Jamie Fenton.

Sheila Kirk's committee, with the help of Dr. Sandra Cole, will develop a program for TG youth that children can access on the Internet so that they and/or their parents can surf the net and find out that they are not unique and alone, but special and part of a beautiful community.

Dr. Kirk is the IFGE's resident medical expert and has been lecturing, writing, and giving information to the TG and professional communities for

nearly a decade. She is in the process of doing the following research:

- Teenage Cross dressing
- Post operative M2F female survey
- The Androderm testosterone skin patch study for the F2Ms
- A study of breast disease, both benign and malignant, in the transgender male taking estrogen
- A study of prostate disease benign and malignant in the transgender male taking estrogen
- A study of the transmission of TG spirit and behavior in families, siblings, and parent/child relationships
- A study of people of color in the transgender community

And now we are giving

Dr. Kirk even more to do as chair of this new committee providing information for children over the Internet.

Jamie's committee will help us develop the technology to put this program and all IFGE programs and research on the Internet. And IFGE (supported by your membership and contributions) is the prime mover behind all this research. Powerful and exciting, isn't it?

What did IFGE do this year? You know about the Partner's in Diversity

Award. This award is just the beginning. Michelle Martin is our chair of the Partners in Corporate Diversity Committee and she and her committee will be out there looking for other companies to impact and add total diversity acceptance to their employment policies. In fact, definitions are changing every day to accommodate diversity. This year, Aetna Life and Casualty changed the definition on their homeowner's and automobile policies to read "domestic partners refers to two adults, of the same or opposite sex, engaged in a spouse-like relationship characterized by mutual caring and dependency."

This year, we also opened in Waltham the first public bookstore de-

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**"IFGE
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IFGE Newsletter

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IFGE Membership

Basic Membership:

\$25.00 per year.

Membership newsletter, IFGE ID, BOD voting privileges, and 10% discount on products.

Supporting Membership:

\$100.00 per year.

Basic membership, 15% discount on IFGE products, and 10% discount on IFGE sponsored events.

Benefactor Membership

\$500.00 per year.

Supporting membership, 15% discount on IFGE sponsored events. **\$400.00** will be treated as a contribution, and will be applied towards a life membership.

Life Membership:

\$2,500.00.

A supporting membership for life, and is based on accumulated contributions.

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Linda Buten
Chair, IFGE Board of Directors

For many years now, whenever *TV/TS Tapestry Journal* came back from the printer, Yvonne would send me a case (60 magazines). I always sold whatever I could, which usually totaled 20-25 copies of each issue.

When the new and improved issue #74, renamed *Transgender Tapestry* came out, my sales jumped into the mid-thirties. I was excited about the 30% jump in sales.

Back at the office, sales are measured in returns. Many distributors will take large quantities of the latest issue, and then return any unsold previous issue. We never would know what was sold until months after distribution. (Unsold magazines are given away to helping professionals at events like the American Psychiatric Association or the Social Workers conventions.)

As *Transgender Tapestry* #75 is now hitting the bookshelves, we are witnessing a very small return rate. In fact at one time we only had thirty copies left in the office to sell.

I am now informed, orders for #75 have exceeded the number of copies we normally print by over 300. Subscriptions have also jumped to an all-time high. Obviously this is great news. If this keeps up, we will have to consider bumping up the printing on #76.

Since Vanessa Murray has been in charge of the bookstore (Jan.'96), book sales have also jumped through the roof. She sold \$4500 worth at the IFGE Convention alone! Way to go girl! And a special thanks to those of you who helped her stock the shelves to begin with.

Certainly the income from these two sources helps keep the IFGE doors open. But realize that a huge amount of important information is also reaching those in need. This means the primary purpose of IFGE to distribute educational materials is being met.

Our last board meeting brought

discussion on whether we should stay in the convention business, especially since we lost money in '95. What a difference a year makes. This year everything went right. We made money, attendance was up, and everyone was pleased with the entire program.

I especially enjoyed the awards night on Saturday. It was very entertaining for the first time in ten years, and many of the awards were very emotional. Particularly, what Mr. Baker, a vice-president with American Airlines said after Michelle Martin thanked him for the corporation's support for transgendered individuals. And said something like, "It's a real shame when someone has to come into my office to thank me for treating them like a human being."

Signs indicate the Convention in 1997, will be the best ever. The California groups who are cosponsoring the first ever combined gender event with us are very excited, and so is the IFGE Board. This will also be Alison's first chance to show us some of her real talents in running conventions. Stay tuned for more IFGE/California Pride 1996 news.

I'd love to tell you what Alison's up to, but truthfully, this lady is hard to keep up with. If I get to speak with her every ten days or so, I'm doing great. And when I do, she speaks so fast about so many good things, I hardly get a word in. She's been bouncing around the country for the past year now, trying to meet with everyone possible, in hopes of increasing unity in the gender community.

I want to thank the many groups and individuals who have made Alison's work possible by donating Frequent Flier miles and other forms of transportation. I also want to thank those of you who so graciously opened their homes to give her a warm place to stay and a bite to eat. Your generosity, whatever it may be, is always welcome and needed.



1996 IFGE Board of Directors Election Results & Appointments

The right to vote for IFGE Directors is a privilege of IFGE membership. Two hundred eighty-eight ballots were returned, which represents a solid portion of the membership. Linda Buten, current Chair, Naomi Owen, Holly Cross, and Laura Caldwell were all returned to the board for three-year terms. Melissa Foster, Winnie Brandt, and Kristin James were selected as first and second alternates and will be appointed to fill any vacancies created by resigning board members. Nancy Nangeroni, whose name was mistakenly included on the ballot, will remain to serve for one more year, and will stand for re-election this year, if she so chooses. ▼

How May We Help You?

Alison Laing

Every day, the phones in the offices of IFGE in Waltham, Massachusetts ring dozens of times, and are answered with the greeting, "IFGE, how may we help you?"

Many of the calls are routine: book orders, subscription questions, address changes, and requests for general information. Others are more serious: TG people, professionals, and community leaders in search of important information. In most cases, we can fulfill the caller's needs relatively easily, but they are not all that simple.

On the average day there are always a few calls from people in a crisis situation: "My wife just discovered that I'm a cross dresser." "My boss found out that I used to be a woman." "I think my twelve-year-old child is a transsexual!" "I cannot go on living this way any longer." . . .

We do our best to help, often by referring the caller to gender-sensitive professionals, or to local support groups. But listen we must; care we must; and this takes a much greater amount of time than most people realize.

Recently, when addressing one local TG group, I ended with, "You've heard from me; now I want to hear from you. What can the IFGE do to help you

in your mission of serving the TG community?" After a lively discussion, a few members of the audience lingered to continue discussing specific interests. The very last person who had patiently waited for the others to finish, finally approached. I said, "Now, what can I do for you." To my astonishment she replied, "You're doing it. You are willing to listen. So many leaders have been unwilling to listen to us who have to do the work at the local level."

Wow! If this is true, it is a sad commentary on the leadership of our community. How can we learn what is needed if we do not listen? How will we know what we, the leaders and organizations can do to help those who have needs and issues relating to their gender expression, if we do not listen?

So my message is two fold. First, if you are part of the leadership at any level-local support group, or a national educational, service or outreach organization-take heed. Our constituents want our ear and we must be willing to listen. Then we must show some response. This is the price, and a good one, that we must pay to be effective and responsive as leaders and as organizations.

Secondly, please know that at the IFGE, the question "How may we help you?" applies to all our constituents-but especially to each and every member of IFGE in a special way. You have contributed your money and your interest in what we are doing. Please tell us your needs, your issues, and what you think we can and should be doing, for you and for others. We care and are here to help. Let us know how. ▼

Visit Our Web Site:
<http://www.transgender.org/tg/ifge/index.html>

California Unity - 1997 IFGE/California Dreamin' Convention to Reflect True TG Community

In an unprecedented teaming of the IFGE and major California TG organizations, the IFGE 1997 Annual Convention will join with the California Dreamin' conference to become "California Unity." The six-day event will be held April 15-20, 1997 on the Queen Mary luxury liner and hotel, now docked in Long Beach, California.

The main IFGE/California Unity site will be the Queen Mary's exclusive three-deck convention center. Evening activities will be held in the art deco charm of the First Class ballrooms, dining rooms and lounges. Daytime programs will include the key personalities of the TG community and helping professionals. Speakers, enter-

tainment, and award ceremonies promise to exceed anything IFGE has had in the past.

Rooms start at \$65.00 for roomettes and go up to \$280.00 for the bedroom/parlor Royal Suites. Registration information should be out in July. Of course the April weather in Southern California is most delightful. ▼

IFGE/Minneapolis Pride Convention Huge Success!

The 1996 IFGE National Convention In Minneapolis, Minnesota will be covered in full color in the summer issue of *Transgender Tapestry*. Attendance was a total of 181 paid registrants, plus 25 staff and volunteers making a total of 206 people who came and participated.

The convention more than broke even with a gross margin (because we do not charge Waltham operations overhead) of about \$4,000.00. This provides enough seed money to get the 1997 convention underway. The sum involved represents not only the success of the convention but also donations from caring individuals, including a grant from American Express which helped underwrite IFGE's financial risk in the initial phases.

The Winslow Street Fund received donations of over \$1,500.00, while bookstore sales were about \$4,500.00 - an all time high.

The comments we received after the event told the story. "The convention was a major turning point in my life." "I never experienced such positive energy and love." "The programs were fine and the banquet was great." "In one word: Wow!" "Great! Looking forward to next year!" And many, many more.

If you weren't there this year, won't you please try to join us next year in Long Beach, California?

And if you have never been "out" before - whether a CD, TS, TG, F2M or M2F - then by all means plan to attend. You will never encounter a friendlier, more supportive atmosphere in which to explore and express your inner self. ▼

1996

Winslow Street Fund Grants Made

Winslow Street Fund announced the recipients of their 1996 grants at the **IFGE Convention** in March, 1996. Winslow Street is a resource for financial assistance for TG community programs. A total of **\$3,500.00** was distributed to four organizations this year:

\$1000 for the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy;

\$1000 for GenderPAC (Lobby Day);

\$750 for Spouses/Partners International Conference for Education (SPICE);

\$750 to AEGIS.

This is the fifth year the Winslow Street Fund, has made grants, and also the fifth year that it has been able to increase level of the grants.

Though supported by IFGE, Winslow Street is independent from IFGE. Please consider contributing to the Winslow Street Fund and these worthy grants. ▼

**4 More TG-Oriented
Businesses
Offer 10% Discount to
IFGE Members!**

24 TG community vendors now offer discounts to members of The International Foundation for Gender Education. These vendors provide a 10 percent discount on most of their products and services to IFGE members. Be prepared to provide your membership number at the time of purchase. Membership discount may not apply in some cases, such as on already discounted specials or close-outs, and for special items such as events and special presentations. If you run into problems using this procedure, please let us know immediately so we can rectify it.

If you know of a vendor not listed that you believe we ought to include or you are a vendor who would like to be included, please drop us a line with their name, address, phone number, and the product or service offered.

IFGE is proud to welcome these fine services aboard:

Jim Bridges
12457 Ventura Blvd.
Studio City CA
(818) 761-6650
Make-overs, wigs, cosmetics and more.

Allante Personnel
80 Eighth Ave.
New York, New York NY
(212) 229-0600
P/T & F/T job placement

Georgia W. Dahlberg
Registered Aesthetician
854 Salem St.
Malden MA 02148
(617) 322-0736
Skin care, facials, make-overs, waxing.

Creative Design Services
POB 61263
King of Prussia PA 19406
(610) 640-9449
Applies to CDS published books and tapes only.

And here are the 20 who have been previously announced:

A New You Electrolysis
61 Spring Brook Rd.
Old Saybrook CT 06475
Electrolysis, skin care
(860) 395-0730

A&A Electrolysis
815 Washington St.
Newtonville MA 02160
Electrolysis, skin care
(617) 964-1000

Adams Electrology
380 Lowell St. #202B
Wakefield MA 01880
Electrolysis, skin care
(617) 245-0005

Allana of New York
160 E. 56th St. 9th Fl.
New York NY 10022
(212) 980-0216

Amelia James
1312 Shady Oak Place
Santa Rosa CA 95404-2741
(707) 526-4826

Carox Co.
POB 14025
E. Providence RI 02914
TG clothing and prostheses
(401) 438-8507
c/o Carol Sunderland

Ed's Forms
POB 501
Williamstown MA 01267
Breast forms by mail
(413) 686-7409

Eileen Davidson RE
120 W Harwich Professional Center
Rt. 28, POB 533
W. Harwich MA 02671
Electrolysis, skin care
(508) 432-6330

Electrolysis Unlimited
6780 Rochester Rd. #C
Troy MI 48098
Electrolysis, skin care
(810) 879-2232

Especially for Me
113 N. First Ave.
Upland CA 91786
Clothing, publications, etc. by mail
(909) 946-6251
(909) 946-5500 (fax)

The Greater Woman
10360 Ellison Cr.
Omaha NE 68134
Women's clothing, large sizes by mail
(402) 493-4667

Fantasyland
POB 682
Owen Sound Ontario
Canada N4K 5R4
Clothing, publications by mail

Johanna A. Bartkiewicz, R.E.
93 Union St., Suite 321
Newton Centre, MA 02159
(617) 964-9536

Lydia's TV Fashions
13837 Ventura Blvd. #2
Sherman Oaks CA 91423
Clothing, prosthesis
(818) 995-7195

Newton Studio of Electrolysis
93 Union St. #321
Newton Center MA 02159
(617) 964-9536
Electrolysis, skin care

Pat Butterworth RE
281 Nimble Hill Rd.
Newington NH 03801
Electrolysis, skin care
(603) 433-6566

Sexy Shoes
POB 48
480 N. Second St.
Rogers City MI 49779
Women's shoes by mail
(517) 734-4030 ATTN: Sandy Ruttan

Shoe Express
POB 31537 Dept. T.
Lafayette LA 70593
Women's shoes by mail
(318) 235-5191
(318) 235-5359 (fax) ATTN: Ann West

Suzanne Anderer & Co.
26 E. Lincoln Hwy.
Frankfort IL 60423
Electrolysis, permanent hair removal
(815) 469-0050

TGIF
POB 272819
Tampa FL 33688
Electrolysis, permanent hair removal
(813) 884-7835 ATTN: Kim

**CANDY SCOTT
TO HEAD
IFGE
REGIONAL
COORDINATOR
EFFORT**

IFGE's program designed to assign Regional Coordinators in 15 to 20 regions around North America has been given a new boost with the appointment of Investments' past-president Candy Scott to head the project.

Six Regional Coordinators have already been named, and with Candy at the helm, the rest should be named by year's end.

Among other responsibilities, Regional Coordinators will liaison with local groups to verify mailing addresses, phone numbers and contact points. Other duties include surveying TG outreach at the local level, listening to concerns that IFGE can help with and providing performance feedback for the IFGE staff.

Anyone interested in participating can contact Candy Scott at POB 354, Sagamore MA 02561.

IFGE on the Road



IFGE staff and board members are constantly on the road performing education and outreach made possible only by your support through membership and donations.

IFGE, represented by Sheila Kirk MD, Yvonne Cook-Riley, Alison Laing, Ken Morrison, Dan Duncan, Marriette Pathy Allen, Christine James, Michelle Miles, and Abby Saypen has just had a successful presence at the annual **American Psychiatric Association**

Convention.

During the next few months, members of the staff and board will be representing IFGE in a number of places. Sheila Kirk, M.D., Director of Medical Liaison and Research, will be making a presentation at the **First Annual New England Transgender Health Conference**, June 6, 1996, in Boston. The IFGE board, as well as several from the staff, will be at **Be-All** in Detroit, Michigan, June 6 through 9. Alison Laing, our tireless Executive Director, along with Sheila Kirk, MD, will be at the **American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT)** in Baltimore, Maryland, June 13 through 16. Alison will also be making a presentation at the **International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy's Transgen '96**, Independence Weekend, July 3 through 7, in Houston, Texas. Later, Alison and Maryann Kirkland, Jane Ellen Fairfax

and other IFGE board members will be at the annual **Spouses/Partners International Conference for Education (SPICE)** in Wilmington, Delaware, July 25 through 28. Alison has been invited to be the Saturday luncheon keynote speaker at the annual **Southern Comfort** conference, September 26 through 29 in Atlanta, Georgia. Sheila Kirk MD and others will also appear at **The National Association of Social Workers** conference, November 13 through 16.

Vanessa Murray and the IFGE Traveling Book Store will be at several of these events but expects to have a major presence at the **Be-All** and at **Southern Comfort**.

Please be sure to support the book store and these events when you can. Also take advantage of the presence of the IFGE staff and board members that you meet to give them your inputs on how we are doing. ▼

IFGE Board of Directors Annual Meeting

The IFGE Board of Directors meets four times each year, usually concurrent with a major transgender community event. The Annual Meeting took place at the Minnesota Pride Convention on March 29, 1996, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Every aspect of IFGE's function and activity is reviewed and planned by this seventeen-member body.

Chairperson Linda Buten opened the meeting. Seventeen members were present. The meeting dealt initially with the reappointments of officers and committee heads. Committee chairpersons then made their reports.

Laura Caldwell, Chair of the Budget/Finance Committee, reviewed various considerations on the income and expense prospects for the coming year and felt strongly that IFGE might

see a small gain in its income/expense margin—something not realized for several years.

One area of great importance is the creation of a subcommittee within the Nominations Committee. Michelle Martin is in charge of this new committee and will spend the balance of the year evaluating companies for the next Diversity Award, to be offered in 1997 at the IFGE Dreamin' Convention in California. Michelle was instrumental in creating this award and in its first presentation to administrative officers of American Airlines at this year's convention in Minneapolis. Nearly twenty of the company's officers were present to accept the award.

Reports from various committees were numerous and important to IFGE's growth and to the

energetic outreach it gives to the community. The Winslow Street Fund, chaired by Abby Saypen; the Membership and Fund Raising Committee, chaired by Sharon Saypen; and Medical Liaison, chaired by Sheila Kirk all had important information for this board meeting, and the work of these committees will be vital and on-going as this year continues.

The IFGE Board is progressive and alert to the needs of the community as the staff of IFGE works to serve and satisfy the community. The Board of Directors welcomes input and exchange with you. Address your comments and suggestions to:

Linda Buten, Chair
PO Box 229
Waltham MA 02254-0229 USA ▼

100 Visit New IFGE Web Store and Magazine on First Day!

Without prior announcement of the addresses for our new Web bookstore and magazine, more than 100 members of the TG community logged in on Monday, April 29, 1996, during the first 24 hours after they were opened for business.

Visitors got to check out issue #1 of *Tapestry Journal Electronic*, review a brief description of IFGE, and view an announcement of our new on-line bookstore (to open for business approximately May 20) and vendor sites.

The main IFGE site is [HTTP://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/IFGE.HTM](http://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/IFGE.HTM) and those checking in there will be able to access the bookstore, magazine and vendor areas.

Those looking for a shortcut to our on-line Bookstore can go directly to [HTTP://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/BOOKS.HTM](http://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/BOOKS.HTM) where they will find our 1996 catalogue.

Those who want to check out the magazine and by-pass the rest can reach *Tapestry Journal Electronic* directly at [HTTP://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/TAPESTRY.HTM](http://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/TAPESTRY.HTM) where they will find new and reprinted articles, columns, fiction, F2M and M2F material, passing tips, and a whole lot more.

Those wishing to access our vendor area can do so at [HTTP://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/VENDORS.HTM](http://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/IFGE/VENDORS.HTM) which will also provide a list of community vendors who offer 10% off to IFGE members.

All four sites connect with each other with a single click of an icon.

IFGE On-Line is a Service of DB Assoc. [HTTP://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/MENU.SHTML](http://WWW.TIAC.NET/USERS/DBA/MENU.SHTML) E-Mail DBA@TIAC.NET

IFGE Media Outreach Update.

IFGE staffers continue outreach to the media in an effort to encourage fair, accurate, and positive portrayals of the TG community.

At the IFGE/Minneapolis Pride '96 Convention, board members Jane Ellen Fairfax and Alison Laing appeared on Gender Education Center founder Debby Davis' radio show, euphonorously monikered *Teatime with Debby*.

Crews from Asahi Television, Japan's number one television network, lensed the proceedings at our 10th Annual Convention for replay at home. According to a report from the segment's delightful and gracious producer Fuimiko Miyamoto, the footage, aired in Japan on April 3 and proved such a big hit that local stations began calling in asking for rebroadcast rights.

Meanwhile, Publications Director Jean Marie Stine was interviewed for Innvestments member, Jessie Martin's Cape Cod cable access program, as well as by the weekly arts paper, the *Boston Phoenix*.

IFGE's 1996 Book Catalogue Due Mid June!

This year's IFGE book catalog is an exciting one. Bookstore and mail order manager Vanessa Murray and the rest of the IFGE Waltham staff have added almost double the number of books and tapes carried in our 1995 catalog.

The 1996 catalog will also arrive in a new format. The old one was too small to contain all the material we want to offer to the gender community.

Let us know what you think about the new format and the new books and tapes. And please notify us if you have not received your copy by mid-June.

And remember, IFGE members now receive a **10% discount** on all items in the catalog; except for special sale items as noted.

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voted to the TG community. It's a wonderful facility, on the first floor of our headquarters, where people from the community and the public will find much food for thought.

This year we published a quarterly newsletter to keep all our members informed about what's happening and to reach out to all the local groups around the country.

This past year we became a membership organization and we currently have more than 900 members.

And our members receive special benefits. We have more than two

dozen vendors providing 10% discounts on most services and products - with more vendors on the way.

Please re-join IFGE and ask everyone else you know to join and become part of a growing group of people who stood proudly with Riki Anne Wilchins and Phyllis Randolph Frye in Washington on National Gender Lobby Day 1995, and are willing to speak up for what they believe.

Sharon Saypen, Chair
Fundraising and Membership
Committees

MEET

Sharon Saypen

Chair, IFGE Membership and Fund Raising

Sharon Saypen is Chair of both IFGE's Membership and Fund Raising Committees. She says serving on both is "a privilege." In response to a request for information Sharon wrote this about her background and involvement with the IFGE:

"It is not very often in life that one is given the opportunity to truly put their beliefs about themselves to the test. As a young girl growing up in a strict orthodox home, I found freedom in reading.

"Every book I read from Arthurian romances like Tristan & Isolde to Joan of Arc to Ann Frank gave me inspiration that there was more to life than just going about your business; that life had more meaning than to just live for yourself; that helping others and standing up for the rights and freedom of others gives life its essence, its immortality.

"As a young woman, I looked for a modern role model - and I found a remarkable one - Eleanor Roosevelt. Though like us all she had her flaws, she put her life to the test many times and in dangerous places to support the freedom and well-being of others. I would fantasize about being in battle at the Warsaw Ghetto uprising or the war for Israeli independence in 1948. But it was easy to fantasize; reality is a much harsher test.

"I was in college in the 1960s. I had my first exposure to protesting and standing up for something I believed in. I joined my fellow students in protesting the Vietnam War and was pushed around by police. So I learned there was a price. Still, a little pushing around with a large group of people is no great accomplishment. Then, like everyone else, I moved into a life of marriage, children, family, friends, doing some charity work here and

there, and teaching English.

"But I believed I was the defender of equality, civil rights, gay rights. It was easy to mouth the words and not have to be put to the test - I really did not have black friends or gay friends or transgender friends.

"Then I went back to school for my doctorate and studied under a brilliant woman who became my mentor. She pushed my borders and gave me inspiration. I spent many hours at her home with her, fellow students,

"And that's why I became active in IFGE. I saw the possibility to stand up for what I believe in, help others lessen their suffering, make a difference, enrich my life, and surround myself with beautiful people".

and her partner discussing philosophy, spirituality, language theory. She was gay and was the most extraordinary and brilliant woman I had ever met. She had great humanity for all of us even though she had suffered much in her life.

"Why am I telling you all this? Because all these were safe tests of my belief system.

"Then it happened - I didn't know when I met Abby that he was the one who would not only share love with me, but give me the opportunity to extend the love and respect for myself by being able to follow through on my beliefs about diversity, dignity, freedom of self-expression, and about accepting a human being for the beauty they have

inside. When Abby and I are in public and people look at us and occasionally laugh, I hold Abby's hand more proudly because I am living what I believe and we are extending the possibilities for other people.

"And that's why I became active in IFGE. I saw the possibility to stand up for what I believe in, help others lessen their suffering, make a difference, enrich my life, and surround myself with beautiful people".

"When Abby introduced me to the community a few years ago, I saw a community in conflict, full of fear with a terrible need to be legitimate - but also filled with wonderful people. I had an instant new family and everyone I have met has added to the richness of my life. I also thought about how sad at all the suffering and fear in the community; but how uplifting is the joy when you allow yourselves to be who you are. And so I found a home for my battle, a battlefield to be a warrior for diversity. But to fight the battle together, we have to have a vision for the future, and we have to live our present from this future and not live the present from the past.

"It appeared to me that IFGE was an organization worthy of my energy, time, money and commitment. Here was a charity trying desperately to provide outreach to people in need; here was a young charity struggling with the community to find a clear identity in helping that community establish credibility. And here was a community that could help change the world.

"I can't do it alone, you can't do it alone, but we can do it together as a united front. To quote a proverb from Hillel, a great Jewish philosopher, 'If I am not for myself, who will be; if I am only for myself, who am I?'" ▼