

## National Gay and Lesbian Task Force holds annual conference in Kansas City, Mo.

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By Courtney Hagen

2,000 supporters, advocates and members of the LGBT community gathered for five days to discuss methods for creating change throughout the nation

*Building political power, building the rights of transgender and disabled segments and creating awareness of HIV/AIDS within the LGBT community were a few of the issues discussed at the 19th annual conference. The Kansas City conference was the Task Force's first event held in the Midwest.*

T-shirts, posters, magazines and condoms were displayed on several floors of the Westin Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo., last weekend, all promoting the same cause: lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender rights.

About 2,000 supporters, advocates and prominent members of the LGBT community filled the hotel for five days for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 19th annual Creating Change conference.

Pedro Julio Serrano, **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force** communications coordinator, said the Task Force held the conference in Kansas City this year in the Midwest. The conference has previously been held on the East or West coasts in places such as San Francisco, Miami and New York.

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Jonathan Pryor, KU Queers and Allies director and Columbus senior, was not able to attend the conference but said he hoped that it would help to spread awareness and tolerance in the community.

"Being that the conference is so close to Kansas I hope it reminds people that we are not alone in our fight for equality and that we have a whole nation of LGBT and allied members behind us," Pryor said. "I hope those who were able to attend can bring back what they took from the conference and spread it through KU and our local communities."

Held just days after the 2006 election, this year's conference focused on building political power within the LGBT community. The conference took advantage of the gathering to set the agenda for issues, concerns and actions that will be undertaken in the upcoming year.

Serrano said the Task Force is targeting the rights of the transgender, disabled and multicultural segments of the LGBT community.

"One of the things we are focusing on now is that there can not be a federal non-discrimination law without including transgender individuals," Serrano said. "That can not happen and we will not let it happen."

The conference also discussed the HIV/AIDS crisis, which began 25 years ago. Several key figures in the AIDS awareness and support movement spoke about the disease's pervasive effects Saturday.

Marjorie J. Hill, Gay Men's Health Crisis chief executive officer, roused the crowd to take action on awareness, prevention and assistance of the disease. She said there are 40,000 new cases each year in the United States.

"The answer here is not about HIV," Hill said during her speech. "It's about creating change."

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— Edited by Kate Shipley