



Creating Change 2008 planning underway Enthusiastic crowd attends first meeting at Affirmations

Originally printed 04/19/2007 (Issue 1516 - Between The Lines News)
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FERNDALE - It's the largest annual meeting of LGBT activists in the country, and it's coming to Detroit. Planning for the 2008 **Creating Change** conference officially kicked off last Thursday with a well-attended meeting at the new Affirmations. About 75 locals showed up for the meeting, a number that conference organizer Sue Hyde said tripled the attendance of the first planning meeting in Kansas City, Mo., which hosted the 2007 conference earlier this year.

Hyde has been with the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, which produces the conference, for 21 years. She helped plan the very first conference, in fact, in 1988, the idea for which she said was birthed at the second ever march for LGBT rights on Washington a year earlier. About 300 activists attended that first conference. Next year, Hyde hopes 2,500 or so will converge upon Detroit.

"Your colleagues around the country are a little concerned about February in Detroit," Hyde told the crowd. "There are two things to tell them. First, it snowed in Kansas City this year and second, the hotel is heated."

At the 2008 conference, the Task Force will present an award in Hyde's honor to recognize longevity in the movement. Triangle Foundation Executive Director Jeff Montgomery might well be in the running for that award. He has attended no less than 16 Creating Change conferences through the years.

"It's an incredible focus of energy - from all kinds of facets of our community," Montgomery said. "We all have incredible things to bring to that. No one's idea has primacy over any others. I can't tell you what an experience it is to leave one of those conferences feeling like the world is, indeed, ours - or at least soon will be."

Hyde called the conference an "incubator for emerging ideas in our community." For his part, Hyde's boss, Russell Roybal, director of movement building for the Task Force, said his agenda for the conference was to get people "to think about what are our priorities are going to be and craft them together."

The 2008 Creating Change conference is scheduled for Feb. 6-8. The conference will take place at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center. Scheduled speakers include NAACP Chair Julian Bond and the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson, bishop of New Hampshire and the first ever openly gay Episcopal bishop.

The conference came to Detroit once before, in 1995, and took place at the same hotel, which was then known as the Westin. Attendance for that conference topped out at 1,600, which set an attendance record at that time. The current record is held by the city of Oakland, Calif., which hosted 2,700 activists in 1999.

Registration for the conference costs between \$150 and \$300. There are also scholarships for youth, and folks 16 and under and 65 and over can attend for free. About 500 volunteers will be needed for the conference. The work of the volunteers will be overseen by the local host committee, which, in turn, will be overseen by four conference co-chairs, to be selected by Hyde. The host committee will meet monthly, with sub-committee meetings taking place between full committee meetings.

To join the host committee or volunteer for the conference, contact Hyde at 617-492-6393 or via email at shyde@thetaskforce.org.