

GAY NEWS BITS

Task Force Taps Seasoned Leader Darlene Nipper

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Darlene Nipper brings years of Experience to the Task Force.

Darlene Nipper, a seasoned leader with nearly two decades experience in nonprofit management and program development, public policy advocacy and outreach, budget management and coalition building, has been named deputy executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, effective Oct. 1, 2008. Task Force Movement Building Director Russell Roybal has been promoted to the position of deputy executive director of external relations, and Brian Johnson, formerly the deputy executive director for finance and administration, has received the new title of chief financial officer.

Darlene Nipper brings nearly 20 years of management and advocacy experience to the Task Force. She has held leadership positions in the government, corporate and nonprofit sectors, including the city government of Washington, D.C.; Black Entertainment Television (BET) Foundation; the National Mental Health Association; and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), where she served as chief operating officer.

In 2005, she was appointed director of the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Affairs, in the Executive Office of the Mayor, District of Columbia, where she served as a senior advisor to the mayor on issues related to the LGBT community, provided key policy direction, and worked closely with government agencies to ensure appropriate training and consultation related to major legislative and regulatory guidelines affecting the local LGBT community. She served in that post through 2007.

Nipper has an extensive background as a health advocate, working with those affected by HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental illness and other health issues. An ordained interfaith minister, she most recently served as executive director of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington.

“As any executive director knows, there are few things more valuable than an outstanding ‘No. 2’ to help guide an organization in fulfilling its mission. Darlene Nipper is that person. Her breadth of experience will serve the Task Force well and I am confident our colleagues in national, state and local organizations will enjoy working with her. Our leadership team will be even stronger with the addition of her expertise, energy and passion for this work. I couldn’t be more thrilled,” says Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

As deputy executive director, Nipper will oversee all Task Force program activities, including the Policy Institute, the LGBT community’s premier think tank; state and local organizing work, which has an unparalleled record of assisting partner organizations and working against anti-LGBT ballot initiatives; federal and state public policy and advocacy work; and building the long-term strength and sustainability of the LGBT movement through the Task Force’s Academy for Leadership and Action and the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change. Additionally, she will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the organization’s strategic plan.

“I believe strongly in the Task Force’s mission and vision. Its emphasis on addressing LGBT issues at the intersections of multiple social injustices resonates with my own belief that human beings in general, and LGBT community members in particular, live at these intersections,” says Nipper. “I look forward to working with Rea Carey and the entire Task Force team to ensure that the Task Force continues as the organization that pushes our policymakers and society to respect the broad range of human expression that is the truest reflection of who we are as a community.”

Nipper fills the position left vacant after Carey, who had served as Task Force deputy executive director since 2004, was named executive director earlier this summer.

Nipper’s appointment wins immediate praise from a broad spectrum

“Having known Darlene for a number of years, I can only marvel at what a gift she will be to the Task Force. Her years of experience at every level, her incredible personal skills and her magnificent talents put to continued use for the LGBT community will make us all richer. It is a great coup for the Task Force to add her to their impressive roster.” — David Mixner, Author, Political Strategist, Civil Rights Activist and Public Affairs Advisor

“It is rare that you find an individual who can effectively orchestrate operating NAMI — a national organization that has 1,100 affiliates across the nation. Darlene Nipper’s leadership is not just about design, rather it is an innate skill-set that transcends traditional management. She leads by example, with a presence like none other. Through her collaborative approach she galvanizes people to work with her to serve the interests of a national movement and to be the fearless voice for those who cannot advocate for themselves. As the chief operating officer, she used her strategic approach and collaborative leadership style to lead the NAMI community at the local, state and national levels. With her legacy, we continue to glean insights and stand proud of the foundation that she laid for us to follow.” — Nancy Carter, Executive Director, NAMI Urban LA, National Board of Directors, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

“Darlene Nipper has spent a career helping people combat discrimination. She understands that achieving social justice means building systems to channel energies, identifying resources and

allies, and enabling communities to effectively advocate, educate, cogitate and demonstrate. She is a formidable foe of marginalization and a proven advocate with enormous skill and experience in organizational development, communication and strategic action. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force continues to demonstrate a keen eye for talent and leadership; Darlene will be an impact player in helping the LGBT community advance its social justice mission.” — **Dr. Richard C. Birkel, Executive Director, Rosalyn Carter Institute for Caregiving**

More about Darlene Nipper

Nipper was a member of the D.C. Mayor’s LGBT Executive Committee; a regular facilitator at the National Youth Advocacy Coalition’s Annual Summit; coordinated depression screening and education events for the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League in 2001; and ran HIV/AIDS and substance abuse support groups for the Inner City AIDS Network (D.C.) during the early 1990s.

In 2004, she served as the executive director of the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Foundation, where she oversaw a national media campaign to reduce obesity in African-American women. Beginning in 2001, she was national director of the Multicultural and International Outreach Center of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), which she founded in order to increase membership of racially and ethnically diverse people in NAMI and the cultural competency of NAMI programs. She was later named chief operating officer, managing the overall operations of NAMI’s national office.

As senior director and then-vice president of public education for the National Mental Health Association, Nipper managed programs that worked with 340 mental health associations across the country. From 1994 to 2000, she was the director of community living at the Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute, a community residential services program for adults with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.

As an employee of the D.C.-based Koba Associates, Inc., Nipper managed several campaigns to improve understanding and prevention of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. She was the campaign director for the African American HIV/AIDS Education Campaign; curriculum director for the National Institute of Drug Abuse AIDS Education and Research Project; and director of Spectrum Extended Services, AIDS Outreach for Minority Communities.

Nipper received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Howard University and a Master of Science in Administration from Trinity College. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her partner of 12 years, Katrina Higgins.