

Summer 2004

Alternatives to Marriage Project Update - Summer 2004

The "Redefining Family" Issue

IN THIS ISSUE:

Announcing AtMP's Double Dare Campaign

AtMP Unveils New, Improved Website

AtMP Celebrates Same-Sex Marriage in Massachusetts

AtMP Leads Movement to Preserve Domestic Partner Benefits

Announcing New LGBT Marriagefree Yahoo Group

Chapter News: Twin Cities, NYC, Others Around the Country

2004 Edition of Legal Guide for Unmarried Couples Available

AtMP in the Media

Opinion: Fear of Friendship, by Dave White

Profile: Children's Book Writer Todd Parr, by Karen Sosnoski

Meet an AtMP Board Member: Ashton Applewhite

Announcing AtMP's Double Dare Campaign

We dare you -- no, we double dare you! AtMP needs your help in our most ambitious project yet: a campaign to double everything about ourselves so we can achieve twice as much. We want to double our number of donors, the size of each donor's gift, the size of our budget (\$29,000 in 2003), and the size of our staff (1), so that we can reach double the number of people and make twice as much of an impact on the world!

You'll be hearing more about our Double Dare Campaign in the upcoming months. We double dare you to add fireworks to the campaign's launch by:

1) Making your first donation to AtMP. If you enjoy this newsletter or have ever thought, "Gee, I'm glad this group exists," please don't take us for granted! You can give online at our secure

site or by mailing a check to the address at the bottom of this message. Do it right now!

2) Doubling what you've given in the past. If you gave \$25 before, please make it \$50! If you gave \$100, please give \$200! Every gift helps -- but a double gift helps twice as much. The link to give online right now is in #1.

3) Pledge to match the gifts of new donors. Challenge people who've never supported AtMP before to make their first donation by offering to match it, so it counts twice as much! Matching donors can set an upper limit on how much they're willing to match.

Thank you for daring to make a difference!

AtMP Unveils New, Improved Website

If you haven't paid a visit to <http://www.unmarried.org> recently, you're in for a treat! Our new design makes it easier to find what you're looking for and features Hot Topics sections like Cohabitation, GLBT issues, Marriagefree, and Common-Law Marriage. Let us know what you think! The website is still a work in progress, so check back for more features (including interactive messageboards) in the near future. A million thanks to board member Meaghan Lamarre and volunteer Janice Wallace-Robinson for their massive investment of volunteer time and talent to create this new site.

AtMP Celebrates Same-Sex Marriage in Massachusetts

Congratulations to the Alternatives to Marriage Project members in Massachusetts who gained the right to choose whether or not to marry! Many people ask what AtMP's position is on same-sex marriage -- you can read our May 17th press release and position statement [here](#).

Also read in #4 below about our work to preserve domestic partner benefits in Massachusetts, and in #5 about our new group for LGBT people who don't want to marry.

AtMP Leads Movement to Preserve Domestic Partner Benefits

AtMP celebrated when the state of Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage last month. When employers in the state announced plans to withdraw their domestic partner benefits plans, however, we jumped to action. Employers rationalized that now that all their employees had the right to marry, they no longer needed to provide health care benefits for domestic partners.

In response, AtMP has:

- Had an op-ed published in the Boston Metro, a major Boston commuter newspaper, arguing that ending domestic partner benefits is a mistake.

- Had an op-ed published in In Newsweekly, a New England paper for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community, responding to that paper's misguided editorial in favor of ending domestic partner benefits.

- Been in close contact with human resources experts and LGBT groups around the country who are interested in working with us to stop the elimination of domestic partner benefits.

Stay tuned! There's more to come from AtMP on this important issue. If it affects your life or you'd like to help, let us know!

Announcing New LGBT Marriagefree Yahoo Group

As legal (and potentially legal) same-sex marriages have been taking place around the country, AtMP has heard increasing frustration from some LGBT people. While nearly all LGBT people celebrate having the right to choose whether to get married, those who prefer not to, are frustrated by sudden pressure to marry, or challenge the LGBT movement's increasing tendency to privilege marriage above other forms of relationships may find their perspective missing from the conversation. That's why we're pleased to announce "LGBT Marriagefree," a new Yahoo group (discussion listserv) for LGBT/queer people (and supporters) who choose not to marry or want to question the institution. To subscribe, send an email to LGBT-Marriagefree-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

AtMP-Talk, AtMP's long-standing general discussion listserv, has also had lots of conversation lately about LGBT marriagefree topics. To subscribe to it, go [here](#).

Chapter News

Twin Cities

AtMP's Minneapolis/St. Paul chapter announces its own Yahoo Group to allow AtMP supporters in that area to meet online, discuss local issues, plan chapter events, and announce upcoming local gatherings. To join the group, send a blank message to this email address: AtMP-TwinCities-subscribe@yahoogroups.com .

New York City

Alternatives to Marriage Project organizers in NYC are making plans to launch a local chapter with a first gathering this August. The chapter could organize local social or support events, do political advocacy work on issues affecting unmarried people, or work on other projects -- from fun to serious -- that inspire its members. If you live in the area and want to find out about upcoming NYC events, contact us with "NYC chapter" in the

subject line.

Around the Country

People also have recently expressed interest in forming AtMP chapters in the following areas:

Austin, TX

Chattanooga or Nashville, TN

Manitoba, Canada

Milwaukee, WI

Philadelphia, PA

Phoenix, AZ

San Francisco, CA (Bay Area)

If you live nearby and would like to help organize or get involved, contact us with "[name of city] chapter" in the subject line.

Interested in starting a local AtMP chapter in your area? If you have some time and energy, we can send you a Chapter Organizer Kit with ideas, materials, and assistance! Contact us to learn more.

2004 Edition of Legal Guide for Unmarried Couples Available

AtMP gives *Living Together: A Legal Guide for Unmarried Couples* our highest recommendation. Written in an accessible style, this book teaches everything you need to know and may not want to pay a lawyer to ask. Topics covered include renting and buying a home, parenting issues, wills and estate planning, sample living together agreements for a variety of situations, medical decisions and hospital visitation, joint accounts, sharing income, and countless other legal issues. If you buy your edition from the Alternatives to Marriage Project, the profits support our work for fairness for unmarried people and their families. Media mail shipping is free, or you can pay for faster shipping. Visit the AtMP bookstore.

AtMP in the Media

CNN Features AtMP, Member Couple

The CNN show "Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees" produced a short segment on the national "marriage boycott". It featured AtMP couple Jim and Amy and their baby, and AtMP executive director Dorian Solot. Solot said, "We're very concerned that the laws in this country are really out of step with the reality of families." You can read the transcript [here](#).

Newsweek, Boston Globe, LA Times, Others Feature AtMP Members

One of the strengths of having an organized community of unmarried people is the ability to help journalists find real people in their areas who are willing to share their stories and "put a face" on the issues. AtMPers have been busy recently, including:

- Alongside a feature on same-sex marriage, Newsweek included a sidebar on couples choosing not to marry. It featured a photo of AtMPers Darcie Kline, Michael Christophersen, and their two kids cuddling on the couch, and quotes from Amber Settle, Andre Berthiaume, and Hillary Gross.
- The Boston Globe Sunday Magazine recently printed a "Two Voices" article, with AtMPer Dakota Butterfield participating in an "I Do, I Don't" conversation with a woman who opposes same-sex marriage.
- A Los Angeles Times article on the marriage boycott featured AtMPers Kaethe Morris Hoffer and Matt Hoffer Morris, who had a spiritual marriage in a Quaker meetinghouse in 1999, but chose not to get a civil marriage.
- Twin Cities chapter organizer Julie Bluhm was interviewed by host and AtMP supporter Abigail Garner on the local radio show "Fresh Fruit."

AtMP Op-Ed Condemns North Carolina's Anti-Cohabitation Law

The Wilmington Star-News published an op-ed by AtMP board member Sarah Wright, which pointed out how North Carolina's law against cohabitation harms real families. She told the true story of a young woman on probation who is living with the father of her child. Both are married to other people and cannot afford to file for divorce, and both are reluctant to re-marry given their previous bad experiences. The couple moved to North Carolina to be closer to their families, but that state is threatening to force them to marry or live apart since their family is against the law there. Wright questions the constitutionality of the law and urges prosecutors to make the "moral choice."

Other AtMP media appearances in the last quarter included:

Print Media: Wall Street Journal, Albany Times-Union, Boston Metro, Brown Daily Herald, Daily Egyptian (University of Illinois), Courier-Post (NJ), Herald-Mail (MD), Kiplinger's Retirement Report, In Newsweekly, Lansing State Journal, Metroland (Albany, NY), Newsday, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, San Antonio Express News, Savannah Morning News, Seattle Times

Radio: Man Talk (XM169national)

Online: ABCNews.com, Annabelle Magazine, Benjamin Rose, IntheFray.com, Nerve.com, UK Gay News.com, Voice of America, Women.MSN.com

Opinion: Fear of Friendship, by Dave White

Are deeply loyal friendships a threat to the institution of marriage? Some marriage-promoters act that way, argues Dave White in his op-ed "Fear of Friendship." Find out why, according to White, loyal friendships might be competition for traditionally gendered family values and laissez faire economics.

Profile: Children's Book Writer Todd Parr, by Karen Sosnoski

Missing some of the rituals and books from her conservative upbringing, Karen Sosnoski is happy to have found the alternative-family friendly ritual of sharing Todd Parr's progressive children's books with her daughter and partner. Learn more about this children's book author in Sosnoski's profile of him.

Meet an AtMP Board Member: Ashton Applewhite

In this first in a series of introductions to members of AtMP's board of directors, discover how Ashton Applewhite, author of *Cutting Loose: Why Women Who End Their Marriages Do So Well* overcame her fear of becoming the cliché "weeping divorce on the solitary barstool" to find a satisfying life beyond marriage as a successful writer, mother, partner, and AtMP board member, one who gives "the virtuecrats a run for their money." Read about her here.

Interested in applying to join the board? See our page of information for prospective board members.

Newsletter Editor: Karen Sosnoski

Articles written by individuals are the opinions of the authors, and not necessarily the opinions of the Alternatives to Marriage Project.

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