

June 2000

Alternatives to Marriage Update:

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In this issue:

Don't Miss ATMP's Dance Party!

In the Media

In the ATMP Office

Seeking Your 15 Minutes of Fame?

Tidbits

Sizzling Statistics

News From the United States

News From Around the World

Domestic Partner News (U.S.)

Don't Miss ATMP's Dance Party!

In the Boston Area? Mark Your Calendar!

Celebrate love in all its forms at the upcoming ATMP fundraising dance party, L'Amour! It'll happen the evening of Friday, July 7th in an indoor/outdoor space on the banks of the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Percussion instruments welcome; DJs to be announced.

Stay tuned for other ATMP fundraising activities, as well!

In the Media

ATMP Responds to Annual Marriage Report

The National Marriage Project released its annual "State of Our Unions" report and a "special report" on twentysomethings entitled "Sex Without Strings, Relationships Without Rings." The report warned that young people are seeking "low-commitment relationships" and advised parents to "help their children think wisely about marriage." ATMP issued a press release in response to the report, "Ozzie and Harriet Don't Live Here Anymore: Marriage Report Frets Needlessly Over Changing Times." It starts with a quote from Executive Director Dorian Solot, "The National Marriage Project's new report says that views of marriage are changing -- and they're right. Rather than losing sleep about how to turn back the clock, it's time to recognize and celebrate today's changing families." Our full press release is available on our website.

Korean TV Features ATMP

ATMP made its first overseas television appearance on MBC News, one of the major Korean television networks, which has correspondents in New York City. The segment featured ATMP founders Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot, a woman selecting a sperm donor, and "man on the street" New Yorkers, with commentary in Korean about the increase in cohabitation in the United States and the similar trend in Korea.

In the Office

The Alternatives to Marriage Project welcomes our first intern, Smith College student Nina Lanza! We are thrilled to have Nina's enthusiasm, insights, and energy in the office, and impressed with how much she's accomplished in her first few weeks.

Seeking Your 15 Minutes of Fame?

Every once in a while we renew our call for people in unmarried relationships who are willing to be interviewed by reporters. As ATMP grows and gains visibility, journalists from print, television, and radio media are calling us with increasing frequency, often asking us to help them find an unmarried couple to interview. We maintain a database of people who are willing to *consider* talking to the media, and we're hoping you'll contact us to tell us we can add your name. If you're on the list and you fit the description a journalist is seeking, we'll give them your e-mail address or phone number (whatever you prefer). You always have the option of deciding on a case-by-case basis: if you find out more about their story and decide you'd rather not be interviewed this time, you can always say so. We are in particular need of (1) unmarried couples raising children, and (2) unmarried couples over age 60 who are willing to be interviewed, but we welcome any kind of relationship or family who is willing to tell their

story!

Tidbits

Hallmark Recognizes Unmarried Moms?

While selecting Mother's Day cards for our own moms, we came across a Hallmark "Improptu" card with the message, "Happy Mother's Day to my partner in living, in loving, in raising a family." With recognition from the country's leading card-seller, unmarried families seem to have achieved a new level of demographic validation!

Sizzling Statistics

Most Divorced Canadians Remarry

A Canadian study shows that a growing number of divorced people will return to the altar with another partner. In 1970, there were just 29,975 remarriages in Canada; by 1989, the number was 62,276. There was a slight dip in the early 1990s but by 1996, the numbers were up again.

British Women Marry Later in Life

In the United Kingdom, only 6 per cent of women over 65 have never been married, compared with more than 10 per cent in 1980. A profile of the elderly by the Office of National Statistics showed that 44 per cent of women in this age group were married compared with 38 per cent 20 years ago. The remaining 18 per cent were women who are widowed, divorced or separated, said the report on lifestyles of the over-65s living in private households.

Americans Support Same-Sex Rights, Not Marriage

A recent Associated Press poll found that only 34% of Americans believe same-sex couples should be allowed to marry, but 41% believe same-sex couples should be allowed to form a domestic partnership that would give them the rights and benefits of marriage. The poll found that at least half

of respondents support the rights of gays to receive health insurance (53 percent), Social Security benefits (50 percent) and inheritance (56 percent) from their partners. Report Finds Less Marriage in Michigan A report found that in Michigan between 1980 and 1998, the number of newlyweds plummeted from 86,000 a year to 67,000 a year. Since 1980, the only age bracket marrying in larger numbers in the state is people over 35.

News From the United States

NY Democrats Push Same-Sex Marriage Equivalent

New York State Democrats agreed during a work session to study the issue of marriage-like recognition for same-sex couples. The decision to explore the issue in New York comes one day after Democrats held their high-profile convention to nominate Hillary Clinton for Senate. Clinton believes same-sex couples in committed relationships deserve the same set of rights and protections as married couples. Legislators were apparently inspired by Vermont's recent adoption of a civil union bill, which allows same-sex couples many of the same rights as legally married different-sex couples.

Lawsuit and Catholic Bishops Attack Vermont's Civil Unions Law

Opponents of Vermont's new same-sex civil unions law have filed suit to block it from taking effect next month. They allege a House betting pool gave lawmakers a conflict of interest, and that 14 supporters should have been disqualified from voting on the measure. Legislators have admitted that some chipped in a dollar apiece on the promise that whoever came the closest to predicting the vote accurately would win the pot. The plaintiffs say the 14 bettors' bets gave them a personal stake in the outcome, making it illegal for them to vote on the measure.

Sixteen Catholic Bishops from across New England signed a statement urging Vermonters to "rectify the situation (that) brought about the passage of the civil unions bill." The statement also said, "The Legislature of the state of Vermont, by passing the civil unions bill, has attacked centuries of cultural and religious esteem for marriage between a man and a woman and has prepared the way for an attack on the well-being of society itself."

Utah's Anti-Unmarried Sodomy Law Upheld

A federal judge upheld an earlier judge's decision to dismiss a lawsuit that claimed Utah's sodomy and fornication laws violate a constitutional right to privacy. The case claimed that unmarried couples are discriminated against by the state's sodomy and fornication laws because such practices are legal for married residents. The federal judge said that since the laws are not enforced, the plaintiff was suing for hypothetical, not concrete reasons.

Navy Considers Housing Stipend for Unmarried Sailors

The Navy is considering ways to make it possible for unmarried, junior sailors to live in town rather than on board their ships. When assigned to ships, single sailors in the lowest four ranks don't generally qualify for an allowance that pays for housing in town unless they have children or other dependents. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James L. Herdt called the subject an important quality of life issue.

News From Around the World

English School Children Taught Different "Family Forms"

In London, children are to be taught to cope with divorce, separation, and "re-partnering" as part of the new curriculum. The guidelines stress the importance of "stable relationships" but say that marriage is only one model; single-parent families and same-sex partnerships are also included.

Women in Mozambique Oppose Polygamy

Mozambican women from the Muslim community in Maputo have expressed their strong disagreement with the practice of polygamy despite the fact that prominent Moslem men in the country vehemently defend the practice. The debate arose as a result of a draft family law that would recognize traditional and religious marriages as well as civil ones -- but only if they are monogamous. Muslim men have been arguing that in the name of religion, polygamy should be recognized by law as well. The men, however, do not extend this recognition to polyandry, the practice whereby a woman takes more than one husband.

Zambian Union Warns More Women May Remain Unmarried

At a Zambian conference of trade unions, the National Union of Transport and Allied Workers general secretary warned that most women will lose their "marketability" and risk remaining "unmarried forever" if they blindly abandon all the cultural values of an indigenous African. He advised women to cooperate if they were to score success in their fight for equal opportunities and balanced power sharing in society's crucial decision making positions, and said women should stop gossiping about their colleagues who were close to male power holders.

Domestic Partner News (U.S.)

Carnegie Mellon U., Washington State, Approves DP Benefits

The Carnegie Mellon Board of Trustees overwhelmingly approved the proposal to offer domestic partner health care benefits for both same and different-sex domestic partners of Carnegie Mellon employees. The benefits are likely to be available beginning July 1. Eight trustees voted against the proposal out of approximately sixty trustees voting.

Starting in January, Washington state employees with same-sex domestic partners may add their partners to their health insurance plans. These employees must submit an "affidavit of domestic partnership" to sign up their partners; requirements may include both partners being over 18, each being the other's sole partner, and sharing a residence and family finances for at least six months.

Providence Unions , Northwest Air Flight Attendants Get DP Benefits

Three unions with members who work for the City of Providence have signed contracts stipulating that their members are entitled to benefits for their same-sex or different-sex unmarried domestic partners. A fourth union now is negotiating its contract, which also carries the stipulation. The benefits include health coverage and bereavement leave.

Air flight attendants for Northwest Airlines approved a new five-year contract that includes full health benefits for domestic partners.

Big Three Auto Makers Offer Same-Sex DP Benefits

General Motors, Ford and DaimlerChrysler's Chrysler division jointly announced that they will offer domestic partner health benefits to the same-sex partners of their hourly and salaried employees. The move was considered significant because it affects nearly an entire industry at once, because domestic partner benefits have historically been less common in the manufacturing industry, and because these benefits have been less common among employers in the Midwest. The American Association for Single People announced its concern that the plans will exclude different-sex domestic partners, a concern that ATMP shares.

Employers Offer Individual DP Benefits Keep Top Talent

A recent article about a candidate for a teaching post at Carnegie Mellon University discussed the practice in which employers that don't offer domestic partner health benefits strike benefits deals with potential employees they consider valuable. In this case, the candidate was deciding between a job at Harvard, which would offer health benefits to the candidate's partner, and Carnegie Mellon, which didn't at the time. In his and others' cases, employers are negotiating additional lump sums or separate payment streams to match the DP benefits offered elsewhere. No one knows how many employees are benefiting from these types of arrangements are, but one labor economist said they're not uncommon.

Montana University Workers Denied Benefits for Same-Sex Partners

Same-sex partners of Montana University System employees will not receive the same benefits package offered to different-sex spouses, including health insurance and retirement options. The Montana Board of Regents voted unanimously to deny a request that such benefits be extended to same-sex partners. Opponents claimed that it was an issue of morality, not of fairness. Julie Millam, executive director of the Christian Coalition of Montana, wondered if the regents would extend partner coverage to the "guy who wants to marry his horse."

Highmark Charges DP Surcharge

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield has received state approval to impose a 2-percent surcharge on premiums for companies that offer coverage to

same-sex and different-sex domestic partners. Highmark cited HIV/AIDS as a potential factor that could raise the cost of coverage for same-sex couples. However, studies have shown that the cost of healthcare for same-sex couples does not differ significantly from that of different-sex couples, and that female couples are at lower risk for HIV/AIDS than different-sex couples. Most other insurance companies offer same-sex coverage without a surcharge.

CA Governor Vetoes Domestic Partner Leave-of-Absence Bill in CA

California Governor Davis vetoed a bill which would have required employers to grant unpaid family and medical leave to employees who needed time off to care for their domestic partners.

Faculty Urges Pitt To Reconsider DPs

Faculty leaders are urging the University of Pittsburgh to reconsider its six-year opposition to giving health benefits to the same-sex partners of employees. The Faculty Assembly unanimously approved a resolution Tuesday asking the school's chancellor and board of trustees to create a joint committee on same-sex benefits. "This is an issue on which Carnegie Mellon [which recently extended DP benefits] has acted impressively, and we have acted like idiots," Faculty Sen. Jerome Wells said.

Special thanks to Nina Lanza for compiling and editing the news in this issue!