

Lesbian moms learn legal rights

By Valerie Dutton
special writer

Lesbians are choosing to have families through artificial insemination and to fight former husbands in custody battles for children, the founder of the Lesbian Rights Project told an Ann Arbor audience of 200 recently.

Those were just some of the many changes that have occurred in the past 15 years in the lesbian community, said San Francisco attorney and lesbian mother Donna Hitchens when she spoke at an all-day conference in Ann Arbor sponsored by the University of Michigan's Human Sexuality Department.

Laura Sanders, coordinator, said the conference was prompted by the new crop of babies in the lesbian community through artificial insemination.

"THE TIME WAS right" for such conference, Sanders said. "No one in Ann Arbor knows the legal aspects of lesbian parenting like she does."

She added that it was important for

lesbians to have Hitchens' professional insights.

"Having children is part of our right," Hitchens said. "However, lesbians in many states still find it very difficult to gain custody or even retain visitation rights to their children."

Some states still consider homosexuality a felony carrying a harsher penalty than wife-beating, child abuse, rape or manslaughter.

"But more and more women are gaining custody," Hitchens said encouragingly to the 200 women assembled in the University of Michigan's Union ballroom. "These women have asserted their right to be both a mother and to be a woman who loves another woman. They have been an important force in changing the climate... outside our community. This change has enabled many of us to become mothers after we have come out as lesbians."

SHE ACKNOWLEDGED that the legal system in America reflects society's values and that most in society do

not view an "alternative" family, or growing up with a lesbian mother and co-parent, as beneficial to children. She said lesbians had not put enough energy into profiting an alternative institution.

"We must take control of the definition of our families and not give that control over to a society or system that has never been supportive."

Hitchens said the legal system does recognize a child's biological mother and biological father — even if it's a father through artificial insemination — but not a co-parent. The biological mother can not legally pick up the child from school, from a police station or even take a child for hospital care without these safeguards.

The mother can also give the co-parent durable power of attorney. A co-parent can not legally pick up the child from school, from a police station or even take a child for hospital care without these safeguards.

"Co-mothers, or 'other' mothers, can feel a strong emotional bonding to a child they are raising. They also feel a lot of fear. It is a fear of the state, of the grandparents and it is a fear of

what will happen if the biological or legal mother should die. We have not been successful protecting the co-parent's rights.

Sanders, a self-proclaimed "gay advocate," said she was pleased with the response she received from those at the conference.

"So many came up to me, thanked me and told there is so little support out there. This reached a lot of women."

Lupus foundation hosts statewide public forum

The Michigan Lupus Foundation will host a statewide meeting for lupus patients and their families at 1 p.m. Sunday, May 6, in Sinal Hospital Zacherman Auditorium, 6787 West Center Drive, Detroit. The meeting will be a "lupus forum" with Dr. E. Newton Rotenberg, Dr. Donald R. Kaufman, Dr. Nathan W. Levin, Dr. Federico Mariolo and Professor Myron A. Leon speaking on various aspects of lupus. The

meeting is open to the public at no charge.

The Michigan Lupus Foundation is a volunteer organization that puts most of its limited funds directly into patient services such as patient education and counseling programs. It also supports research into the cause and cure of lupus. Membership is \$8 per year.

Lupus is a chronic inflammatory, auto-immune disease, which means that the body's defense system attacks the tissues of its own organs.

Beta Sigma Phi celebrates its founding

Five metro chapters of Beta Sigma Phi will join 6:30 p.m. Tuesday to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of its founding at a dinner in Leather Bottle, Garden City. Similar celebrations will be taking place around the 250,000 mem-

bers in 12,500 chapters throughout the world.

Beta Sigma Phi was founded in Kansas in 1931 during the depression years. The group offered social and cultural outlets. Then opportunities for personal growth were offered; and after that opportunities to serve.

A typical year now finds the chapters donating about \$3 million in mon-

ey and another 2 million hours of work.

Host for the celebration here is Xi Beta Zeta Chapter. Diane Frederickson of the host chapter will serve as mistress of ceremonies.

Others taking leading roles in the evening's festivities are Ellen Gates of Xi Delta Eta; Dolores Montgomery of Xi Delta Psi; Polosan Carlson and Wilma Brant of Xi Delta and Marvel Steiger of Alpha Tau.

Fun-Run set

A one- to six-mile Fun Run (or walk), tailored for people of all ages and degrees of fitness, is being sponsored by Wayne State University Professor Arthur Weaver and his Better Living Seminars.

The Fun-Run, which emphasizes personal improvement rather than competition, will start at 10 a.m. Sunday, May 6, in the parking lot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, 4295 Napier Road, Plymouth. To register for this free event, call Sylvia Donahue at 882-7348.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
May 7, 1984 - 7:30 P.M.

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. on May 7, 1984, in the Council Chambers, 21855 Eleven Mile Road. All interested persons will be provided an opportunity to present oral or written comments regarding the proposed Capital Improvement Program 1984 through 1988.

Copies of the proposed Capital Improvement Program will be available for public review at the City Clerk's Office, City Hall, 21845 Eleven Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays; the Farmington Branch Library, 22787 W. Twelve Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday; also at the Farmington Branch Library, 22816 Liberty, Farmington Hills, Michigan, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

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