

INDIGO GIRLS AND WINONA LADUKE VISIT MISSOULA FOR NETWORK BENEFIT

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Human Rights in Action is a publication of the Montana Human Rights Network, a non-profit organization based in Helena.



MHRN is a proud member of Montana Shares. Learn more at: www.montanashares.org

The Montana Human Rights Network's 2007 annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day benefit featured environmental activist and former vice-presidential candidate Winona LaDuke and the singer-songwriter duo the Indigo Girls.

The event, called "Honor the Earth," was part of an effort to rally Montanans to support renewable energy production and protest coal-bed methane development on Montana's reservation lands.

More than 750 people came together at the University Theater in Missoula to hear great music and learn more about human rights and environmental justice.

A highlight of the evening for many was Missoula singer-songwriter Amy Martin's special appearance with the Indigo Girls on a great collaborative version of the song "Closer to Fine." Amy Martin, a longtime activist and friend of the Network, also opened the event.

Local Groups Celebrate MLK Day

As they often do, many of the Network's local affiliate groups sponsored celebrations on MLK Day in their communities.

The Bitterroot Human Rights Alliance hosted two speakers, Debbie Smith and Michael Donahoe, who discussed issues surrounding the debate over immigration policy. The Helena Human Rights Task Force sponsored a sold out showing of the documentary "Citizen (MLK, cont. on page 3)



Missoula's Amy Martin (left) performs with the Indigo Girls during the MLK Benefit for the Network held in January.

KICKING OFF THE “FOUNDERS’ FUND:” EVENT HONORS KEN TOOLE’S EFFORTS FOR THE NETWORK

On March 30, 2007, more than 100 people gathered to say thanks and happy trails to former Network co-director Ken Toole. Ken won a seat on Montana’s Public Service Commission in the fall of 2006. He has long been devoted to environmental and energy issues, so this new position is a great move for him and the people of Montana.

Speakers at the event included former U.S. Congressman Pat Williams, Network board member Denise Juneau, and Interim Executive Director Travis McAdam. Ken was also honored with an honor song by the Magpie Drummers and presented with a star blanket for his work for and support of the Last Chance Community Pow Wow and Native Americans across Montana. The evening featured a video “documentary” about Ken’s life and career that was created by Network organizer Kim Abbott.

Contributions in honor of Ken’s work have totaled more than \$7,000 so far. These funds are the beginning of an endowment, which we’re calling the “Founders’ Fund,” as a tribute to Ken and all the other Montanans who came together to form the Network. This fund will ensure that the Network has the resources to continue working for social justice long into the future.



Ken Toole

If you would like to make a contribution to the “Founders’ Fund,” please contact the Network.

You may also be interested in taking advantage of the Montana Tax Credit by making a planned gift to benefit the Network’s endowment. For more information, contact the Montana Community Foundation at (406) 443-8313.

COLLEAGUE THANKS KEN

Founding director Ken Toole left his position with the Montana Human Rights Network in January 2007 when he was sworn in as the elected Public Service Commissioner for District #5. The staff at the Network misses him and wishes him well as he serves the public in a new way.

I did not know Ken Toole when he first pulled activists together from around the state to try to respond to growing incidences of white supremacist activity—whether it was the anti-Semitic Posse Comitatus along the Hi-Line trying to convince ranchers that Jews were the problem, the Aryan Nations activists in the Northwest who later started the Militia of Montana, the League of Pace Amendment Advocates in Helena promoting a constitutional amendment allowing only white people to be citizens, or the anti-

Indian activity in the Flathead. But I am sure that Ken Toole approached those battles in the same way I’ve come to count on—with clear insight, thoughtful creativity, smart strategy, and passionate advocacy.

Ken and I have been partners in this venture since 1992, when he hired me to help lead the fledgling organization. It’s come a long way, and it wouldn’t have happened without Ken and his vision, not only for the organization, but for a just, fair and democratic Montana. Thank you, Ken, for what you gave me, this organization, and all of Montana. We’re not there yet, but because of you, Montana is a safer and more fun place to be lesbian and liberal.

*Christine Kaufmann
Executive Director*

If you haven’t
visited our website
lately,
take the time to
check it out at
www.mhrn.org.

(News, continued from page 4)
other social justice documentaries during the Montana legislative session. This film series concluded with a double feature of films on access to health care. The Task Force is currently planning a screening of “Uprooted” to spur discussion on the issue of just and comprehensive immigration reform.

In the Flathead: In January, the Network organized a community meeting in response to the presence of white supremacist activists in the area. The meeting drew 70 people and was filmed by a British documentary film crew. The

meeting included a talk by the Network’s Research Director Travis McAdam and concluded with the attendees breaking into groups and brainstorming ways to address the presence of white supremacists in the area, including the notorious Gaede family (see October 2006 issue of *Network News* for more info).

In June, the Network organized an event in response to an anti-gay hate crime in Columbia Falls. The event included a panel discussion and an audience question and answer period. The panelists included Dr. Bryan Cochran, psychology professor from the University of Montana; Jim

Rogers, high school teacher and Pride board member; and state Senator Christine Kaufmann, the Network’s executive director. The discussion was moderated by University of Montana professor Anya Jabour. Local white supremacist April Gaede disrupted the meeting during the question and answer session. She stood up and falsely accused the Network of harassing her and her family. After ranting for about 10 minutes, Gaede left and the audience got back on track and had an engaging conversation about hate crimes.

MONTANA SHARES RAFFLE TICKETS ENCLOSED



Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a sheet with tickets for the 11th Annual Montana Shares Raffle. The Network is one of 36 member groups in Montana Shares, a federation that supports Montana non-profits through workplace giving campaigns.

As you can see, there is an abundance of fabulous prizes to win. Donations to Montana Shares, while not required with a raffle entry, are welcomed and will support the work they do with our organization and the other members. For more information, visit their website: www.montanashares.org or link to theirs from our website: www.mhrn.org. Thanks for supporting this partnership!

(MLK, continued from page 1)

King” at the Myrna Loy Center in Helena. The Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition sponsored an art and essay contest in elementary, junior and secondary schools for MLK Day. The winning entries were displayed at the group’s culture fair. The Missoula Advocates for Human Rights co-hosted the annual MLK Day celebration in Missoula. It featured local singer-songwriter Amy Martin and speakers Jason Washington, a University of Montana student, and Reno Charette, coordinator of Indian Affairs for the Governor’s Office.

The Montana Human Rights Network also participated in an MLK Day celebration organized by the Flathead High School music department. The celebration included music, speakers, and presentations. It was held in the high school auditorium. Two performances, one in the afternoon and the second in the evening, were both well attended. The special guest speaker was Network board member Wilmot Collins who spoke about his experiences immigrating to the United States, as well as the reception he received once he had arrived in Montana.

NETWORK JOINS PLANNED-GIVING CAMPAIGN

The Network is pleased to announce its membership in LEGACY MONTANA. LEGACY MONTANA is a partnership of three dozen local agencies that participate in a collaborative public-awareness campaign designed to educate Montanans about the importance and ease of leaving a gift to a non-profit organization.

If you would like to learn more about planned giving or would like to consider a bequest or planned gift to the Network, please call our office or speak with your attorney or financial advisor.

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK'S LOCAL AFFILIATES

Anaconda Coalition for Tolerance Education: In February, ACTE hosted a statewide summit on bullying, harassment and intimidation in K-12 schools. The summit featured a keynote address by Esther Williams. Williams is a nationally renowned expert on the issue of bullying in schools. In addition to the keynote speech, the summit included a panel discussion, workshops facilitated by the Montana Safe Schools Coalition, and a screening of the Network's documentary "The End of Silence." In April, ACTE sponsored events for the Day of Remembrance for the Holocaust.

Bitterroot Human Rights Alliance: In February, BHRA responded to an attempt by the Religious Right's Liberty Counsel and a local resident to push their brand of Christian fundamentalism at the Lone Rock School District. The Liberty Counsel and the local resident tried to force the school board to okay a Christian nativity scene at the school. They also wanted the school board to acknowledge claims by the Religious Right that there was a "War on Christmas."

In March, BHRA organizer Bill LaCroix, along with staff and members of the Montana Human Rights Network, participated in a press conference at the state Capitol to protest anti-democratic activities occurring during the Montana Legislature. Bill spoke at the press conference dressed as an eight-foot tall blue dinosaur, in honor of House Joint Resolution 21. The resolution encouraged

science curriculum in Montana schools to be based on sound scientific principles, not biblical creationism or so-called "Intelligent Design." The resolution was killed by House Education Committee chair Rick Jore (C-Ronan), who struck a deal to get the bill tabled without having a proper hearing.

Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition: In February, FRHRC organized a culture fair, which opened with a Salish prayer for peace. The fair included Polka music, tribal drumming, Hawaiian dancers, and various kinds of ethnic cuisine and artwork. Organizations from around the state tabled at the event. The six-hour event was attended by approximately 200 people.

Gallatin Valley Human Rights Task Force: GVVHRT continues its work on creating a resource directory for the gay and lesbian community. The directory lists supportive businesses, resources and programs that are in the Bozeman area. The Task Force was also actively involved in lobbying and organizing activities during the 2007 legislative session. The Task Force worked hard to hold members of Bozeman's legislative delegation accountable to their community for their votes on human rights measures.

Helena Human Rights Task Force: The Task Force has had a very active year so far. Building on its showing of "Citizen King" for MLK Day, it continued screening
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