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MPD Admits Mistake, Promises a New Kind of Leadership

By Don Hoffman

In an open attempt to reach out to the gay community, Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) officials admitted they were wrong in how they dealt with numerous media requests from Q Life in December of last year.

"When you make a mistake, you admit it and then you must move on," said Anne E. Schwartz, public relations manager for the MPD.

The missteps Schwartz was referring to were highlighted last month on the cover page of Q Life.

During the course of writing a story on the recent bar raids in some area LGBT clubs, Q Life attempted to contact the MPD on several occasions for information on what exactly happened during those police actions.

Although we followed proper protocol, the police department stonewalled our request for any written documentation and even went as far as having us show up to get information that they then refused to give us.

In an editorial, Q Life called on the MPD and Chief Nan Hegerty to look into why the cops were being mum. We also asked the department to review some of the other allegations that we uncovered during the writing of the story.

Assistant Chief of Police Joe Whiten contacted Q Life and informed us that he has been reviewing the bar raid files. Whiten said he will let us know what follow-up, if any, the department will take.

He also promised to share all the written reports that he is allowed to.

As far as not being able to get anyone to call us back?

Schwartz responded that she is not yet sure about all the specifics of what went on while we were trying to get our information. She asserted, however, that this type of behavior will not happen again.

"My policy, and now the policy of this department, is that we return media calls in a timely fashion. We also will share what information we can in an open fashion, period," Schwartz said.

In addition, Schwartz says it's important for the community to know that other issues that were brought up

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By Patrick Flaherty

In what appears to be a victory for gay rights advocates, a lobby day organized by Action Wisconsin against the constitutional ban on civil unions and gay marriage brought more than 400 people from around the state to the Capitol in Madison on Jan. 27.

"The turn-out was nearly double the previous lobby day attendance back in 2003," said Christopher Ott, the executive director of Action Wisconsin. "We really made our presence felt."

However, Ott was quick to add, "We aren't celebrating just yet — this challenge is far from over, in fact, we've just begun," said Ott.

The Uphill Fight

Action Wisconsin co-sponsored the event with 30 other organizations statewide, including the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center which sent a bus, a car caravan and nearly 80 people to Madison. The lobby day was scheduled to try to stop the proposed constitutional ban by defeating it in the legislature.

The legislature passed language for the amendment in March 2004 that would forbid Wisconsin courts and legislators from opening up marriage to gay and lesbian couples.

Civil unions and comprehensive domestic partnerships would also be prohibited by the amendment's second sentence, which bans any "legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage."



More than 400 people from around the state lobbied at the Capitol in Madison on January 27.



Other legislators or their aides privately admitted that they were uneasy with the ban, but that they feared being voted out of office if they voted against it.

However, for the ban to become part of the state's constitution, it must be passed again by the legislature before being approved by voters in a general election.

Ott and other activists fear that early action by the legislature this year would place the ban before voters as early as April 2005 — too early in their eyes to educate the public about the broad reach of the amendment.

"We think time is important — we need as much time as possible educating the public on what this amendment really says," Ott said. "As soon as people understand that this ban goes too far and bans civil unions as well, hurting real families, people in Wisconsin will say no. Fair minded people will reject it," said Ott.

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ARCW Launches Major HIV Awareness Campaign

By Jamakaya

"Focus on the Negative" is the theme of a bold new AIDS awareness campaign being launched this month by the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW). Targeted to young adults ages 18-34, the ads encourage viewers to educate themselves and get tested for HIV.

"I am a negative person" is the eye-catching declaration that appears across the faces of the appealing individuals featured in the print ads. "HIV negative," the ad clarifies. "Knowing is a positive thing. Get smart. Get tested." The ads then steer viewers to www.FocusOnTheNegative.com and to the AIDS Hotline,

800-334-AIDS. From there, they can find out where to be tested.

The new campaign, involving print, billboard, bus shelter, radio and TV ads along with posters in popular bars and clubs (both straight and gay), covers three Wisconsin markets: Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay/Appleton.

According to Kate Venne, public affairs manager at ARCW, the Milwaukee-based brand management agency Kohnke Hanneken played a critical role in the planning and design of the campaign — all on a pro-bono basis: "We couldn't have done it without

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