

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

LBGC plans campus events for BGLAD

By Erin Miles
Contributing Writer

To correspond with National Coming Out Day, the Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Gay Coalition (LBGC) has organized Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days (BGLAD) at Columbia from Oct. 9-17.

The programming will include a Queer Carnival on Low Library Plaza tomorrow, and a rally on Monday, National Coming Out Day.

“This is the first year we have done programming of this sort, and it’s an indication of the increased amount of energy and mobilization in the lesbian/gay community at Columbia this year,” said LBGC Co-chair Conor Kennedy Ryan, CC ’96.

Organizations co-sponsoring the events include GABLES, the association for gay, bisexual, and lesbian employees at Columbia, and the Fun Committee of LGBC. Additional groups taking part in the programming include the Lambda Health Alliance, the Gays and Lesbians Law Students Association, Queers in Political Science, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual groups at the School of Social Work and at Teachers College, and the Gay and Lesbian Jewish Activists.

Sarah Chinn, a fifth year graduate student in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the chair of the Fun Committee, said various lesbian and gay campus groups are sponsoring booths at the carnival, which will feature a variety of activities.

“It will be fun and also educational,” she said.

Among the activities will be a psychotherapy stand based on the one run by Peanuts character Lucy

one run by Fearless character Lucy, blood pressure checks, a queer "Jeopardy" contest, safe-sex advice, and condom distribution, Chinn said.

In addition to speakers from within the Columbia community, the National Coming Out Day rally will include Michelangelo Signorile, author of *Queer in America*, and Ann Northrop, a member of the Aids Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT-UP) and the Lesbian Avengers.

"The issues will span the gamut," Chinn said. "Each person brings his or her own agenda. We invited people from all aspects of the University: under-graduates, faculty, and staff who come from a variety of different standpoints."

Although the programming centers around the rally on Monday, forums throughout the week will address more specific issues.

"The events are as varied as possible for a variety of people," Chinn said. "For the people who are active and out, this is a way to build community. For people afraid to be out, we want to show support for them and we hope this week will be helpful in providing and generating that support," she added.

Included among the forums is a program about lesbian issues entitled, "What is the Status of Lesbians at Barnard?" and a discussion of being "out" at Columbia entitled "Queer at Columbia."

The role of straight members of the community will also be explored in a forum entitled, "What Lesbians Need and Want from their Straight Friends and Colleagues," which aims to familiarize people with the

gay agenda, according to Assistant Director of Library Systems Stephen Davis, who is a member of GABLES.

"It had to do with equity and acceptance," Davis said. "We find a great deal of lack of information about the issues. Once you step outside of New York City, gay people can be denied housing, jobs, and services. Most straight people don't even know that."

The forum will include stories about people who hide their homosexuality as well as those who have come out, and will provide information on social and legal issues to help people who feel they need to stay in the closet, Davis said.

University Provost Jonathan Cole and Ombuds Officer Marsha Wagner will speak at the forum.

Other programs include a brunch open to the Columbia community, an Interfaith panel, two films featuring gay issues, and a "Queer Coffeehouse."

"This is one of the biggest events on campus all year," Chinn said. "There has been a real flowering of community of the gays on campus."

The BGLAD programs are modeled after the GLAD programs at Yale University, where Chinn was an undergraduate.

"It's intended to provide a positive sense of identity for the lesbian, gay, [and] bisexual community," Davis said.

Ryan called BGLAD an example of what can happen when members of the University community work together.

"The campus is very fragmented," Ryan said.

"This sort of joint event leads the

This sort of event leads the way for the future. Only with unity and cohesion will we accomplish what's important and see our goals met," he added.



SPECTATOR/ARIANA E. CHA

HEADS UP: The warm weather and sunny skies, a throwback to spring days of last semester, brought students out for a game of ultimate frisbee on South Fields.