

LGBA looks for increase in members and respect

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Spectrum Staff Writer

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance (LGBA) was originated in the early 70s to give lesbians, gays and bisexuals a place to gather.

The LGBA's main goal is to provide a comfortable environment for lesbians and gays to come out and find each other, according to Lori Hartmann, an active member for the past two years.

"We provide a safe place to study or just hang out," she said.

"Gay liberation will only come from a lot of people 'coming out,'" she continued. "However, it is a personal decision that people have to make and I would never make someone feel badly for not 'coming out.'"

The organization also holds a coffee house during the weeks between meetings. These take place in Harriman Hall at 7 p.m. on Fridays. The coffee house is a social gathering in a relaxed atmosphere where lesbians and gays can go to meet other people.

"Since the meetings conduct most

of the business, it is nice to have a social activity," Hartmann said.

Speaking out for rights

Recent events the LGBA has cosponsored include National Coming Out Day, Gay Rights Anti-Discrimination Day and Queers on Film, a lesbian/gay film festival.

Some events coming up (with tentative dates) are Gay Cultural Awareness Week and another Stop the Hate Rally. A speaker from the Graduate Group of Feminist Studies is expected to speak about lesbians and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Thom Kulsea, the treasurer of LGBA, believes these activities will help inform and educate the public at the same time.

There is also a free library, located in the LGBA office, which is open to the public and available for discussion groups.

Although the LGBA does not claim to be a counseling service, they do have a support group called Gay Adult Children of Alcoholics. There is also a new lesbian discussion group meeting on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the LGBA office.

Not a discriminatory club

The majority of the LGBA's members are white males.

"One reason minorities are not involved with us in large numbers is because of institutionalized racism," said Susan Huber, another active member.

"Problems that lesbian and gay minorities face are harder to deal with because they are more visible," Kulsea added.

Darleen Garner, a speaker from the Philadelphia Commission of Sexual Minorities, recently visited UB to speak about life as a black lesbian. Also, Renee McCoy, from the National Coalition for black lesbians, has spoken at UB about problems such as the Civil Rights Movement, the peace movement and the gay movement.

"In the past, the LGBA has been cut off from other clubs, but this year we are more friendly with other organizations," Hartmann said. "Since the relationships have gotten better and stronger, it will make it easier for minority gays and les-

The LGBA has been harassed in different ways on campus, including verbal abuse, crank phone calls, graffiti, destruction of their flyers on walls and having their office egged. Many members claim to have been insulted by faculty members who have blatantly made "jokes" in class about homosexuality.

"People have to be aware of when they are being discriminatory," Hartmann stressed. "So many people make jokes. They think that because they are jokes it won't hurt. It does."

Hartmann doesn't believe that all students and administration are against the LGBA. However, she said, "Students and faculty that are supportive are not as vocal as those who are against us."

Kulsea's main objective would be to stop the violence against the LGBA.

"I would like gay, lesbian and bisexual students at UB to be able to be open on campus without being threatened and harassed," he said.

He added that he would like people to find out what is going on and realize they are ignoring certain problems.

"People don't want to think about discrimination that others face," he said. "People don't want to deal with things that don't hurt them."

Meetings for the club are held every other Friday at 5 p.m. in the LGBA office in Talbert. Although approximately 50 to 60 people are currently involved with the club, members expressed a need for more support.

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Lori Hartmann

biens to come out."

Major obstacles for members of the LGBA are people who are "homophobic." These are people that for one reason or another have a strong prejudice against lesbians and gays.

Harassment on campus