



Dateline

Monthly News Bulletin

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DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

DignityUSA Board of Directors Meeting

The **DignityUSA** National Board of Directors met in Washington, DC, September 30-October 2, 2005. The weekend began on Friday morning with a training session for new directors. The board re-gathered in the evening. After prayer and introductions, the board listed positive things to celebrate which have occurred since the last meeting in July 2005. Some of these notable accomplishments include:

- There were 75 news stories in 30 days in which **DignityUSA** was referenced. These have been both national and international, and do not include the many other contacts in other media such as TV and radio. Announcement of Debbie Weill's appointment as **DignityUSA** Executive Director was carried in the *Advocate* magazine. The press release team has done great work and has coordinated with chapters in California, Boston and with **Dignity Canada Dignité**.
 - All bank statements have been reconciled through July 2005. New budget was presented during weekend meeting.
 - Good orientation session for new directors. They feel empowered by being elected and are ready to get working.
 - **The Defenders USA**, an affiliate of **DignityUSA**, has new life and new leadership.
 - **DignityUSA Convention 2005**, held in Philadelphia, PA, was a success. **Dignity/New York** had the largest contingent (just beating the Boston chapter). There were many young members at the convention.
 - National board member, J. Montoya, signed up new young members at a conference he was at in August 2005.
 - Lewis Tanner is getting a special award from his chapter for his service. Mark Matson is getting the Matthew Shepard Award, an interfaith award.
 - **DignityUSA's** Elections and Nominations committee has new members on board.
 - Re-energizing **DignityUSA's** Committee for Women's Concerns (CWC) is being investigated.
 - Meeting of past and present **DignityUSA** leaders held in Chicago in August 2005 went well. Long term plans for **DignityUSA** were begun.
 - **DignityUSA** sponsored a liturgy on a RSVP cruise. 125 people participated in the event. **DignityUSA** marketing brochures and cards were distributed.
 - Debbie Weill, our executive director, has had the opportunity to begin networking with the executive directors of other GLBT organizations.
- The remainder of Friday night was spent going over the financial report and proposed budget.

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Saturday morning session began with looking at the strategic plan from the past year and evaluating what worked, what didn't, what was accomplished, and what needs to be carried over into the next year. We looked at what lessons were learned from the past year. The work session moved onto evaluating the long range plan created by the task force that met in August 2005 (see article in the September Dateline.) The board accepted the six proposed goals as the goals for the next 5 years.

The balance of the weekend involved working in small groups to develop the goals and strategies for the year 2005-2006; reporting to the group as a whole; getting feed back and working again in the small groups. By Sunday noon, we had created the strategic plan for this coming year including the actions to be taken to accomplish these goals. Each director was assigned responsibility for a committee or goal to be achieved.

Volunteers will play a key role in helping to accomplish the goals this year and over the next 5 years. **DignityUSA** members, who filled out a "Culture of Leadership" survey at the Philadelphia convention or online, should be hearing from a director soon. If you are interested in working on a committee, task force or short term project, please contact secretary@dignityusa.org.

Saturday evening the board met with **Dignity/Northern Virginia** members for liturgy and a town meeting. Members from **Dignity/Washington** were also present. The main topic for discussion was communication. Ways to improve communication between the national office and national board with local chapters were discussed.

The next board meeting will be in January 2006 via a teleconference. Any member of **DignityUSA** desiring a copy of the meeting minutes should contact secretary@dignityusa.org.

DignityUSA Vision Statement

DignityUSA envisions and works for a time when Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Catholics are affirmed and experience dignity through the integration of their spirituality with their sexuality and, as beloved persons of God, participate fully in all aspects of life within the Church and Society.

**Happy Anniversary
& Congratulations to:**
Northeast Pennsylvania (PA) - 27 years
Suffolk (NY) - 29 years
Atlanta (GA) - 31 years
St. Louis (MO) - 31 years

We Got Your Questions

Questions, questions and more questions. How does one answer them all? We can't. However, **DignityUSA's** Board of Directors will try to focus on a few of the questions which surfaced on the survey forms you completed in July 2005.

Your main questions seemed to center around our focus — what should it be and how to accomplish our tasks. Should we center ourselves in major metropolitan areas or try to reach out to the whole country? Should our priorities be very specific or broad-based? If we can't achieve our goals, should we merge with another group to form a strategic alliance? How can we maintain our "grassroots" legacy and still act as a national voice and advocate? Big questions. Hard questions. No easy answers.

Over the last several years, the National Board of Directors has created an annual strategic plan. This time we decided to do things a better way and include some long range planning. We decided to look at what we want to accomplish by 2010. We looked at the questions and tried to see at what point we may be able to answer some of them.

For the near term or short range, it was decided that our focus would be our members and chapters. We would look at where we are now and focus on issues that are happening around the country. However, we look to you, our members, to assist us. If we don't hear from you, we may not know of the issues. **DignityUSA** will stand with our members and chapters and speak our voice with them, if we know what is happening in particular cities, towns and regions. We will develop resources to help members and chapters with issues that are on their agenda.

Our outreach to increase membership will continue. We will try to expand our membership to include more women, young adults and multi-cultured people. How we do this will be part of our discussion in committee work. All ideas and help will be appreciated.

We will continue to align ourselves and network with like minded organizations. Our Executive Director will continue to attend meetings and speak for us. Part of the Strategic Plan of the Executive Director is to evaluate our attendance at these meetings to see if we are using our time and resources to the best of our ability.

Our long range plans include looking at our communication tools and how we can improve, especially in the area of technology. We will commit to fundraising and development of funding to support yet to be identified projects, and perhaps set up advisory boards within **DignityUSA**.

All of these hopes and dreams of this organization cannot be accomplished by the Executive Director and members of the National Board without assistance. The Cultivation of Leadership survey was one way the board can reach out and include you, our members. If you are interested in working on a committee or project, please contact secretary@dignityusa.org.

DignityUSA is alive and well. Working together our questions will be answered.

*Wishing You and Yours
A Blessed and
Happy Thanksgiving*

Executive Director Travels and Networking

Executive Director Debbie Weill represented **DignityUSA** at the Southern Comfort Conference, held September 20-25, 2005, at the Sheraton Colony Square Hotel, Atlanta, GA. Celebrating its 15th Anniversary, the Southern Comfort Conference is the largest annual transgender conference. Over 650 people attended this year. It was the first time, **DignityUSA** was represented at the conference, and perhaps the first time our organization has been present at any major transgender conference. Our presence was well received.

Debbie represented **DignityUSA** at the National Religious Leadership Roundtable (**NRLR**) meeting, held September 26 and 27, 2005, in Cleveland, OH. **NRLR**, a project of, and convened by, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (**NGLTF**), is an interfaith network of leaders from pro-gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) faith, spiritual and religious organizations..

The primary topics of the two-day meeting included: parenting issues, progress at the United Church of Christ (**UCC**), Creating Change and a 90 minute film by the UCC about a transsexual minister. UCC leaders spoke on the ramifications of their action to conduct same-sex marriages. Along with doing what God is calling them to do, the UCC clearly sees new positive opportunities developing as a result of this action. The UCC film, entitled "Call Me Malcolm," was very well done. It detailed Malcolm's gender transition and his faith journey to become a UCC minister.

National Religious Leadership Roundtable (**NRLR**) meetings, usually held three times a year, are a great opportunity to network with other leaders of LGBT faith, spiritual and religious organizations and learn from their experiences.

On October 15th, Debbie was the keynote speaker for the 36th Anniversary Dinner of the **Dignity/Los Angeles** chapter. This was a wonderful event with **DignityUSA's** founding chapter and a great chance to meet chapter members from Los Angeles and other area chapters.

DignityUSA's Voice in the Media Circuit

DignityUSA provides a strong, clear voice challenging the Vatican's homophobic inspections of Catholic seminaries in the United States. The national office news release, "DignityUSA Condemns Seminary Visitation as Witch Hunt," is posted on our website, www.dignityusa.org. At the same location, **DignityUSA** made available a copy of "*Instrumentum Laboris* [guidelines and questions] for the Apostolic Visitation of the Seminaries and Houses of Priestly Formation in the United States of America," as well as the communication rules set by Vatican offices.

DignityUSA's voice was present amidst news items reporting gay men were about to be banned from catholic seminaries worldwide. Within a month's time, **DignityUSA** was cited in 85 newspapers around the country presenting an articulate LGBT voice in contrast to Church leaders. In addition, **DignityUSA** national and local spokespersons appeared on CNN, the Gay Television Network and on radio programs around the country including Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis and many other cities, as well as in Germany and Ireland.