

# 'mo

**'mo exclusive  
Corporate LGBT  
Groups Unite**

the green-eyed monster  
**jealousy**  
in divergent relationships

**august '07**

**celebrating seattle's gay community**

**the jealousy issue**

# History in the Making?

By Lisa Walls

Exciting changes are afoot for corporate employees in Seattle's LGBT community. Last February, Kevin Carothers—a Senior Marketing Manager for Seattle's Best Coffee (now owned by Starbucks) and Vice President of Starbucks Pride Alliance Network—organized a roundtable meeting for leaders of the area's corporate LGBT groups. Jennifer Olson, a Microsoft Program Manager and GLEAM Community Outreach Co-Director, shared Kevin's vision. Together, they contacted other companies.

"Before we had our first meeting we had 'socials,'" Jennifer said. "We realized how much we had in common even though our companies are really different." This group has evolved rapidly; it's morphed from an informal gathering to a structured, half-day forum with speakers who present 'case studies.' At the last meeting, Jennifer spoke about GLEAM's history and how Microsoft communicates with its global partners on the issues and challenges of communicating with their worldwide employees.

"We learned a lot from the Microsoft case study," said Kevin. "Wells Fargo was interested in it, too."

Older groups teach each other new tricks. "In June we talked policy, budgeting, and learned how to move to the next level. Some of the companies that don't have organized groups don't know where to start." These interested fledglings can receive mentoring from behemoth corporations like Microsoft, a company that's had domestic partnership benefits for 14 years and an LGBT nondiscrimination policy since 1989. In true frontier fashion, Microsoft upped the ante last year when it added partial coverage for transgender surgery to its already existing trans-specific health benefits.

"GLAAD and the HRC came to the first meeting," said Kevin. "Starbucks sponsored them. They came to a 'lunch and learn' at the corporate headquarters. It was a great audience for them. We'd like to invite more groups in the future."

Jennifer said, "At the first meeting we said: here we are and this is what we do. At the second meeting we asked: what is this group and what is it not? We don't want to duplicate others' work. We want to be thoughtful about what we're doing. We have a lot of people who want to participate."

"We're going to put together a mission statement and circulate it next week," said Kevin. They want to apply to become a Pacific Northwest chapter of Out and Equal. This San Francisco-based national nonprofit has regional chapters around the U.S. The organization envisions "workplace equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or characteristics."

Once Kevin and Jennifer's group gains chapter status, Out and Equal will provide



Jennifer Olson of Microsoft's GLEAM

support for communications. "Once we have a formal web site we'll get information to other companies," said Kevin. "We have 20 participating now, and we'd like to double that number by next year." Soon there will be even more opportunities for networking and sharing best practices and resources.

In addition to building community within the corporate world, Kevin and Jennifer plan for their group to serve as a conduit for volunteer work. "If you make it easy for people to give back they will do it," she said. "It's about what we can do for the greater good of the LGBT community and the extended community. I think we can accomplish some remarkable things."

## Trailblazers

The following companies participated in June's meeting:

Alaska Airlines  
Amazon  
AT&T  
Boeing  
Deloitte Financial Services  
Group Health  
IBM  
Macys  
Microsoft  
NIKE  
Russell Global Leaders  
Safeco  
Starbucks  
T-Mobile  
Wells Fargo Bank

You don't have to be part of a Fortune 500 company to get involved! If you're sitting in your cubicle wondering how to start an LGBT group within your small company, contact Kevin at [pgc@starbucks.com](mailto:pgc@starbucks.com), or Jennifer at [jolson@microsoft.com](mailto:jolson@microsoft.com).

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