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This letter is being written to you as a present or past participant in an existing social program. I am sure each of you, as I, have wanted to do something to help our crossdressing sisters. I have given a bit of thought to this, and would like to pass some of these thoughts on to you for your consideration. I would also like to hear your thoughts as well.

On May 18, 1978 I distributed an outline on how we might develop an effective social and service organization with headquarters located in the Greater Boston area. Hopefully you had a chance to read it. In it I mentioned the hope of working cooperatively with the Outreach Foundation whose primary function is education and service, with the I.A.M.F. whose function is both service and social, and with Tri Sigma and Cherrystone whose primary functions are social. I thought together we could develop a social club and service program. However, there seem to be some problems, and I would like to talk about these problems with you to see if we can overcome them.

First let us recognize that we crossdressers are the flakiest and most unreliable bunch of human beings on the face of this God's earth. Quite understandably our personal situations are paramount. Our personal problems and fears and needs prevent us from doing what we would like or as much as we would like for others. That has a way of frustrating well intentioned people. However, in spite of this I believe with a will to help others, a sense of direction, and with patient dedication we can achieve our goals.

I would like to pass on to you a short assessment of existing organizations as I perceive them, their good points and problems. Your comments of course would be greatly appreciated.

The Outreach Foundation: Directed by Ariadne Kane, its primary functions are: 1.) public education, 2.) to train and aid professional therapists and counselors so they may be more effective in dealing with persons with gender related problems, and 3.) to provide these professional services to those who may need them. Besides these important services the Foundation also sponsors such programs as Fantasia Fair, Boutique Fantastique, and annual fund raising galas. These services have been proven to be extremely valuable to the crossdressing community. We know their value well, for most of us have suffered the consequences of ignorance and inexperienced ineffective and biased counseling. Many of us have also taken advantage of and enjoyed the Foundation's social programs. Because of this we acknowledge the importance of the Outreach Foundation, and should therefore support it.

The Foundation has the advantage of dedicated and responsible leadership, but like most projects dealing with the crossdressing phenomenon it lacks personnel and financial support. Also, although the Foundation sponsors some socially oriented programs such as Fantasia Fair and the galas, the Foundation's primary function remains service and education, and is not and should not be the primary motivating force behind the development of a social club.

Tri Sigma: The intention of Tri Sigma is to provide a social outlet for heterosexual male crossdressers. Tri Sigma is a national project with members thinly scattered across the nation. Due to the efforts of Carole Mayfield and Jenny Lee a small active group has congregated in the Boston area. It is a good group. However, Tri Sigma tends to be fairly exclusive, and small, catering to the special needs of a select few who are probably

a little older, married and well-educated. Also, it only meets once a month and has no facilities. Because of its structure and conservative nature of its members, Tri Sigma is particularly vulnerable to the old problems - trying to get anybody to do anything (a problem we all know well), and survival.

Tri Sigma is an important organization and fills the needs of many. But because of the conditions already mentioned, because of its limited membership and growth potential, and vulnerability to failure, Tri Sigma could not and should not be a motivating force behind any growth oriented organization. It is important in its own way, and like Outreach, has its niche.

International Alliance for Male Feminism: This organization had the grandest ideas, the best organizational structure and the most admirable goals. Under the energetic and dedicated leadership of Linda Ann Stevens, this organization sought to do it all. It sought to unify the TV organizations that did not have sex as its primary objective. It sought to develop Tri Sigma type social chapters nationally and internationally. It tried to provide educational, professional and commercial services, hot lines, libraries, and even a voice training service. Also, as the name implies, it placed a heavy emphasis on the politics of male feminism and expected the membership to support these political goals.

Although the Alliance achieved three times the membership of Tri Sigma, it eventually fell victim of its own ambition and the two nemises of TV organizations, lack of money, and worse, lack of support.

Before the beginning of its demise nearly a year ago, the alliance had by far the best communication system, and most complete, informative and interesting publication - the I.A.M.F. Journal. But, no matter how dedicated the person, or good the work, unrewarded enthusiasm must eventually wane. The Alliance had such promise, such potential importance that it saddened me to watch it fade. So much to do, nobody to do it, no money to do it with.

TVIC Albany: This group deserves mention, not because it bears much relevance for projects in the Boston area, but because it is beautiful, and it works. Helen and Wilma Thordsen have tailored a group that is more like a family affair than a social club. They have one of the most extensive communication systems, and certainly the most delightful newsletter - a reflection of their personal attitudes of friendship and understanding. At the meetings as well as in the journal they take great pains to reflect an attitude of fun, kindness, affection, and genuine camaraderie. At their monthly meetings Helen and Wilma open their home and help make each person feel welcome, like a member of the family.

Although Helen and Wilma have a lovely group, it is their private project independent of complications and national ties. Unfortunately, Helen and Wilma cannot keep their project operational indefinitely, and eventually will leave their effort to others. There are few others of the caliber of these two wonderful people.

The beauty of their group is an example of what a little love, understanding and self-respect can do for people who cross-dress.

Cherrystone: Due to the efforts of such members as Linda Franklin and Kay Campbell, Cherrystone has long been the social focal point for less sexually oriented crossdressers in the Greater Boston area. Cherrystone has an informal organizational structure and maintains a small apartment in which members can dress and store personal items. Over the years hundreds of crossdressers and their wives and friends have visited and enjoyed Cherrystone.

Because Cherrystone is established, well known, has existing facilities and a core membership, or any existing organization it has by

far the greatest potential for growth and service to the crossdressing community. Unfortunately, Cherrystone has some overwhelming obstacles to the realization of its potential. First, it is basically small and disorganized. It is not even a legal entity. Because of this Cherrystone can only provide a place to dress, which in turn attracts those who merely need a place to dress. Those who need growth and fun are soon gone leaving the responsibility of decision and policy making in the hands of those who are happy with the status quo thereby frustrating any attempts to reorganize and grow. These persons should be accommodated, not required to do the accommodating or decision making, for their personal needs are most important to them and they would quite understandably resist any project that might endanger the status quo. This leaves those who want something more frustrated with nothing to do, no place to go, and no reason to belong to Cherrystone. They leave, thereby perpetuating this tragic vicious circle.

There are so many people, good people, all deserving happiness and peace of mind. Help me, help them, help us all. Let us work together.

With affection,

Merissa Sherrill Lynn

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