



# Life Quality News

## The History of Work/Life/Family Efforts at Cornell University

In the late 1980s, the university began addressing the challenges of “balancing” work responsibilities and other responsibilities, including those related to family. In 1988, the Task Force for Working Families was established to look at the problems faced by working families. The committee was charged with defining “family care” as it related to the university, identifying work and family needs, and reviewing existing policies and practices with the goal of recommending changes that would help employees address both work and home responsibilities.

The committee developed 39 recommendations, most of which have been completed in the years since then. One of these was to establish the Work and Family Advisory Council, which has now been in existence for nearly 15 years. This Council has kept work/life and work/family issues on the “front burner” for the university. The 2005-2006 Council will be tackling a number of issues, including the revision of the flex policy to increase utilization, increasing the number of diaper-changing stations throughout the campus, establishing lactation rooms, developing strategies for addressing elder care, reviewing academic and nonacademic policies that impact work/life/family issues, and exploring creative options for infant and toddler care for faculty, staff, and students.

The Work and Family Advisory Council has launched this bi-annual newsletter to provide information on the university’s progress in addressing work/life/family challenges of the Cornell community. The Fall newsletter will be published in celebration of Work and Family Month, which was launched in 2003 by the U.S. Senate to build awareness about the importance of effectively managing work, family and personal

life. The Spring newsletter will be published in conjunction with Women’s History Month to include highlights of the accomplishments of women at Cornell University.



Kevin Stearns, U. Photo

From left to right; front row: Gwendolyn Dean, LGBT Resource Center; Amy Lutomski, WDELQ; Jean Healy, Financial Aid; Kris DeLuca-Beach, The Cornell Commitment; Lynette Chappell-Williams, WDELQ; Linda Haas Manley, WDELQ; Michael Esposito, Academic Personnel Policy Office; Beth McKinney, CU Wellness Program; back row: Brenda Irvin-Bryant, LEPP; Sara Strickland, Arts and Sciences Human Resources; Harry Evans, UAW; Helen Steh, Transportation and Mail Services; Linda Starr, EAP; Janet Shortall, Cornell United Religious Work; Lauren Jacoby, Staff and Labor Relations; Cynthia Farina, Law School; Maria Wolff, WDELQ. Not Pictured: Regina Duffey-Moravek, ILR Office of Career Services; Dave Richardson, PDC Administration and Operations; Mary Jean Welsler, Geneva Horticultural Sciences

### Significant Accomplishments Stemming from 1990 Task Force for Working Families Recommendations

- Catastrophic leave donation policy
- Flexibility in the workplace policy
- Long term care insurance coverage
- University Summer Day Camp program with tuition based on a sliding income scale
- Adoption Assistance Program to provide monetary supplement to offset adoption-related expenses
- Child Care Grant Subsidy Program for faculty, staff, and students

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# Life Quality Programs

## Expanding Families with Adoption Assistance

The Adoption Assistance Program helps faculty, staff, and post doctorates who seek to expand their families by offering a reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per adoption, with a maximum of three adoptions per family. Response to the program has been very positive with many Cornellians expressing their appreciation for the benefit.

Since the inception of Cornell University's Adoption Assistance Program on January, 1, 2005, five families have opened their doors, hearts, and minds to children in need of adoption. One adoptive parent, expressed that the new program "provided a stepping stone for couples thinking about adoption to move in that direction."

For more information on the Adoption Assistance Program, contact Maria Wolff at <mw284@cornell.edu> or visit <<http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/workLife>>.



Provided

*Samantha Shao-Fei Sturman came to her family from China. Samantha was the first adoption through Cornell's Adoption Assistance Program.*

## Setting Nursing Mothers' Minds at Ease

Nursing mothers have a unique need for privacy and convenience that is not currently met with the available facilities on campus. For this reason, the university is in the process of creating private, and secure spaces on campus for lactating mothers. The construction of lactation rooms will help faculty, staff, and students who are returning to work or classes maintain their work/life/family responsibilities. The university plans to have a minimum of one lactation room per quad. The first room is under construction in Day Hall with an anticipated finish date of November 2005. Another location has been established in the College of Veterinary Medicine in Schurman Hall. Updates will be available through the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality.

## Support for Diaper Changing Stations Increases Throughout Campus



Many Cornellians who have babies know the daunting task of changing a diaper in a campus restroom. Whether it's trying to fumble through a diaper bag for supplies while keeping the baby from falling off a makeshift changing table or even trying to find a safe, sanitary place for the baby to sit while you take care of your own restroom needs, the task can be very stressful and time consuming. Students who bring their child to campus know this all too well.

In order to provide support for parents with young children, Cornell has installed six diaper stations in the Engineering quad and plan to install two more in the Big Red Barn. The university is in the process of identifying additional places on campus for changing stations. Toddler seats will also be installed in these areas so that toddlers will have a safe place to sit while their guardian uses the facilities.

## LQ Facts:

According to information from the National Work-Life Initiative Web Site:

- 85 percent of U.S based employees have immediate, day-to-day family responsibilities off the job
- 16 percent of employees are parents with children under the age of 18 who live with them at least half time
- Almost one out of every four Americans, more than 45 million Americans total, provided or arranged care for a family member or friend in the past year

# Focus on Diversity

## Work/Life/Family Programs for Cornell's LGBT Community

Since 1994, same-sex partners of Cornell endowed and contract college faculty and staff have had access to benefits. There are a number of procedures and tax implications involved; please refer to the "Same-sex Partnership Questions and Answers" found at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/lifeEvents/marriage.html> for full information and to the Benefits Chart on the same page. Recently, parental leave became available for the instance when the same-sex partner is the birth parent or when either partner is the primary adoptive parent.

In addition to local laws and university policies that forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the Safe Place program was created to make the campus climate more welcoming. Co-sponsored by the Cornell University Gay/Straight Alliance and the LGBT Resource Center and endorsed by the University Diversity Council, the program asks individuals to display Safe Place cards as their personal statement of support for LGBT members of the Cornell community. More information can be found at <http://lgbtrc.cornell.edu/safeplace/>.

For the past three years, informational workshops that target the interests of the LGBT community have been held, including, this past fall, Life Cycles informational workshops on learning about transgender issues and on coming out in the workplace. In the spring, two additional workshops will be held: "Supporting Friends or Family Coming Out" and "Building Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families."

The university has also provided social networking opportunities for the LGBT community as part of its retention effort. In addition to the welcome receptions and monthly Pizza Nights offered by the LGBT Resource Center and by the LGBT employee social group Out & About, the Sharing Our World event for the LGBT community has provided an additional opportunity for networking. This year, two lunchtime events will be held. According to Gwendolyn Dean, coordinator of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center, "Each year, Cornell becomes more inclusive of and welcoming to LGBT employees."

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## Cornell Makes "Best Employer" List

On September 22, 2005, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) recognized Cornell University as fifth among the 50 honorees it named as best employers for workers over the age of 50.

In determining the awardees, the AARP considered a number of issues that concern all employees: recruiting, training and development, health benefits, pension plans, and alternative work arrangements. Cornell was singled out for its educational benefits and for its wellness program, which allows retirees to purchase Cornell gym membership and access to wellness classes. Cornell is the only college or university to be named this year from New York State and one of the three colleges or universities nationwide.

AARP's recognition underscores Cornell's commitment to and innovation in addressing work, life and family challenges for its diverse employee population, not just for its workers over 50 but for all of its staff and faculty.



*From left, Bill Novelli, AARP CEO; Marie Smith, AARP President; Mary George Opperman, vice president, OHR; and Lynette Chappell-Williams, director of WDELQ, accept an award on behalf of the university at a special AARP event in Chicago on Sept. 22. Entrepreneur George Forman, far right, holds the commemorative crystal plaque.*

# Events & Resources

## Calendar of Life Quality Events

**February Multicultural Reading Circle Events:** Four-part series. Cornell faculty member will read from a selected book and speak about African Diaspora, Caribbean and other related issues. Tompkins County Public Library, Thursdays in February, 7-9 p.m. For more information contact Valorie Rockney at <vrockney@tcpl.org>.

### Life Cycles Series

To register for Life Cycles Series workshops, contact Organizational Development at 254-6400 or visit <<http://register.cit.cornell.edu:8000>>. No Charge.

- **Work-Life Integration: Managing Holiday Stress;** November 15; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Life Transitions: Grandparents Raising Children;** December 6; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 a.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Parenting Skills: Surviving the Teen Years** (Three-part series); January 10, 17, 24; 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Parenting Skills: Parenting an Infant or Toddler;** February 7; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Parenting Skills: The Stepparent's Role in Parenting;** February 21; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Effective Relationships: Supporting Friends or Family Coming Out;** February 28; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Parenting Skills: Building LGBT Families;** March 7; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.
- **Life Transitions: An Overview of Eldercare Issues and Caring for the Caregiver;** March 28; 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.; 170 Roberts Hall.

## School Closing?

Find out if there is an unplanned local school closing by subscribing to the school closing list! Thanks to WVBR and the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity, and Life Quality—and many area schools for their participation—Cornell offers interested parents the opportunity to subscribe to an electronic mail list of school closings, SCHOOL-CLOSING-L.

Members of the list will be notified when weather conditions worsen in the middle of the day, or if there is an unexpected school closing. Unit and departmental managers may also want to subscribe to this list to communicate with those who do not have computer access.

To subscribe to SCHOOL-CLOSING-L: Send e-mail to: [listproc@cornell.edu](mailto:listproc@cornell.edu) with a blank subject line and the message: subscribe SCHOOL-CLOSING-L Firstname Lastname

### How SCHOOL-CLOSING-L works:

Once you have subscribed to the list, you will receive e-mail messages when there is a school closing. The name of the school will appear in the subject line. If your children are not in that school, disregard the message. Please do not call the schools.

**Participating local schools are:** Candor, Cortland, Dryden, Groton, Homer, Ithaca, Lansing, Moravia, Newfield, Odessa-Montour, South Seneca, Southern Cayuga, Spencer, Trumansburg, and Watkins Glen.

Be sure you and your children devise and review emergency procedures for an unexpected school closing.