

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS ANNOUNCED

NAAFA awards are given to individuals and groups outside of NAAFA in recognition of contributions made to the advancement of self-respect, dignity, and a better life for fat people.

This year marks the creation of a multi-level recognition system. The top award, as always, is NAAFA's Distinguished Achievement Award which is given for outstanding contributions, usually of either national scope or continuing effort. Achievement awards are presented for outstanding achievements--more local in nature or of shorter duration. Honorable Mention awards are given to recognize achievements that are important, but of lesser scope than the top two awards.

Distinguished Achievement awards were presented to :

...Alice Ansfield, publisher of **RADIANCE** magazine, an outstanding publication for fat women.

...Marlene Solomon, publisher/editor of **MAGNA**, the excellent fashion and lifestyle magazine for big and tall men.

...Fat Lip Readers Theater for their years of continued artistic public education and entertainment.

...Jane E. Brody, nutrition expert and nationally syndicated Personal Health columnist for the New York Times, for her March articles in the Personal Health column: ("For women who haven't gotten the message yet, 'Thin isn't necessarily in'"); and the Science Times section: ("Research Lifts Blame for Many of the Obese" .)

Achievement Awards were presented to:

...Bonnie Liebman, M.S., Director of Nutrition, Nutrition Action Health Letter, for her article in the January/February 1987 issue entitled "Fated to Be Fat?"

...MATRIX (Santa Cruz, CA.) and the editorial staff (including some NAAFA members), of the April 1987 issue which was devoted to fat liberation and size acceptance.

An Honorable Mention Award was presented to the **Sears Catalog**, for their print ad campaign for men's fashions that read, "At Sears we care just as much about the big and tall guys as we do the little guys."

Some service awards were also announced at the convention. A full listing of service awards will be published in an upcoming Newsletter. □

JANE BRODY ACCEPTS AWARD

Upon hearing about the Distinguished Achievement Award presented to her by NAAFA, Jane Brody sent a hand-written letter to Paula Dachis, NAAFA's awards chairman, accepting her award. Ms. Brody wrote:

"This award is especially gratifying because for decades I shared the societal prejudice against fat people. It is only recently that I have come to understand that heavier people are not fat simply because they are weak-willed, lazy, self-hating, or emotionally crippled. It is only recently that I've come to realize that some of the thinnest among us are actually the sickest. It is only recently that I've recognized that--as for height--there is a "normal distribution" for weight in the general population--and we can't all fit into the bottom ten percent of the weight distribution curve.

We all have societally-scorned yokes to bear, some more obvious than others. We all should be taking the hand we were dealt; doing the best we can with it and getting on with life.

Our society wastes far too much time, money, and physical and emotional effort being obsessed with weight and weight-loss diets. It is time to speak up for normalcy, and what is normal for me is not necessarily normal for you or the person on the bus next to you.

--Jane E. Brody, Personal Health Columnist □

NAAFANS PARTICIPATE IN EMPLOYMENT STUDY

Within the next few months, NAAFANS will be receiving a questionnaire that is part of a study on size discrimination in employment and other areas. The study is being conducted by Dr. Esther Davida Rothblum and her colleagues at the University of Vermont. NAAFA has provided some of the funding for this study.

There seems to be a wide range of opinion on whether size discrimination exists in the workplace. Many fat people would say it does. But within the general population, many people do not believe that size discrimination exists. Others believe that weight is a factor in employment--they're sure that there's an influence, but acknowledge that there is very little data to support their claim.

There have been a number of lawsuits filed over the years that would indicate that some people believe that they have been discriminated against because of their weight. Some of the

suits have been successful, others not. There have also been several studies: (one sponsored by the state of Maryland, one by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh, and one conducted by Dr. Rothblum.

No studies to date, however, have been conducted within a general population of fat people. Dr. Rothblum hopes that a study of both fat and thin people's employment and educational histories (and related topics) will yield statistics on size discrimination, if such discrimination can be shown.

Dr. Rothblum is a clinical psychologist with a special interest in obesity and social stigma. She is joined in this study by her colleagues: Dr. Carol Miller who is also a social psychologist, and Pamala Brand who is a graduate student in social psychology. Both have an interest in weight and stigma.

Dr. Rothblum has been a member of NAAFA for 3-4 years. She is a fat women herself. Her interest in this field began when she noticed that she rarely sees fat people with advanced degrees or receiving high salaries.

Dr. Rothblum told the Newsletter: "The interesting part of this survey is that NAAFA members make up a cross section of fat people--some employed, some not; some with high paying jobs, others working for lower salaries; some well educated, others with less education. There are also a lot of women in NAAFA--women are often the hardest to find in executive work settings."

Education is also covered in the study. According to Dr. Rothblum, "Colleges ask for height and weight on applications. With all factors equal-- identical grades, background, SAT scores, family incomes, etc.--thin applicants are more likely to get admitted. This is especially true of Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges. If you can't get into college--or a good college--its harder to get the edge on a higher paying job."

The study will also look at the differences in discrimination between men and women, and will be examining medical and housing discrimination and whether fat people try to conceal their weight in some situations.

HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS STUDY:

All NAAFA members will receive two copies of the study--one to fill out themselves and the other to give to a thinner (or fatter) sibling, or friend or other family members from a similar background.

Be honest in your answers. All information provided will be confidential. You will not have to include your name. You may also attach anecdotal material describing specific incidents or events.

When your survey arrives, please complete it as soon as possible. It would be very helpful to the researchers if you would return your survey before the announced deadline if possible.

Articles in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of NAAFA, Inc., unless specifically noted. Please contact the NAAFA office about specific NAAFA policies. Commentaries in this Newsletter, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by a member of the editorial staff.

-----ACTIVISM LETTERS-----

TO: WTVC, Channel 9 in Tennessee
FROM: Susanna Worley (TN)
DATE: April 1987

I think that it is wonderful that WTVC is presenting the Rotation Diet Plus program. It offers the public a free alternative to the expensive diet programs now on the market. However, have you considered offering a program about an alternative to dieting? You are presenting only one side of the issue when you present programs such as these. Although I am sure that diet programs are good for your ratings (billions spent on diets annually), many studies exist that illustrate that not only do over 90% of the people who lose weight gain it back, but that dieting can actually make you gain weight by slowing down the body's metabolic rate, thus weight gain after the diet can be rapid and in excess of what was lost. This can leave the fat person even fatter than before the diet. Also, when weight is lost, one loses both fat and muscle tissue, however; when the weight is regained it is nearly always fat.

What do I mean by an alternative to dieting? I am speaking of raising the fat individual's self-esteem. I never see anything about this issue being shown. It's not that a fat person chooses to be fat. Most have tried and failed on too many diets to count. Many studies show that the average fat person eats no more than the average thin person. Even doctors lay the sole blame of a failed diet on the fat person. This results in more guilt on the part of the fat person, thus an even lower self-esteem. This cycle of guilt needs to be brought to an end!

So what can a fat person do to raise their self-esteem? First, realize it is no ones' "fault" they are fat, least of all their own. Second, join a self-help group, such as NAAFA to receive support from others in the same situation who understand what it means to be fat. Third, and most important, work towards achieving a fair attitude from society towards fat people.

Why not find some programs about how difficult it is for a fat person to find a job or about how fat people are discriminated against? Perhaps you could even help me in starting a local chapter of NAAFA by giving NAAFA some publicity. This is perhaps one way in which your could present both sides of the DIET issue.

Thank you for your time. I sincerely hope that you will give serious consideration to my suggestions. I look forward to hearing from someone on your staff about this matter in the near future.

ACTIVISM UPDATE

In our May issue, we wrote about NAAFA's Tamsen Cooper's complaint about U.S. Trust's offensive advertising campaign. The Boston-based bank compares its two largest competitors to two fat men "sitting around on their assets". The fat men used to illustrate the ad are seen only from the rear.

Since then, Tamsen has written U.S. Trust and the Boston Globe that carries the ads. In her letter she said, "These ads directly insinuate that being large (fat) is synonymous with being lazy, greedy, stupid, indecisive, selfish, incompetent and slow, among other things. You can have no idea how often competent large people are accused of (or assumed to

be) sitting around on their 'fat assets' just because of their appearance, rather than the actual level of their performance. Fat people are no more lazy, etc. than any one else... It is rude, unkind and inaccurate to imply otherwise."

In the meantime, NAAFA has received a letter with a different opinion. It is from Captain Haggerty (NY) who writes: "...A NAAFA member is an actor that appears in the U.S. Trust ad campaign--myself! I think NAAFAn Cooper is overreacting but perhaps I'm prejudiced because I'm seen in the commercial. The campaign "Fat Cats" makes fun of size rather than fat people. In truth, I must admit that I do not consider if an ad or commercial is derogatory to fat people--I'm just trying to make a buck! I'd recommend a positive approach. Compliment the people that use ample people in their advertising. I've noticed this on occasion and we should be alert for this, too."

Editor responds--We are alert for all advertising using fat people, and NAAFA gives awards to ads that depict fat people in a positive way. Remember the Roy Rogers Restaurants award last year? Sorry, Captain. I don't expect to hear about an award for this ad campaign, even though they used fat actors. But good luck with your career. I know that it's tough for large actors and models to get work.

THE SIREN SONG...

--an open letter to the Newsletter editor
from the Activism Editor, Peggy I. Williams--

I have had a siren song sung to me and the sound is tempting. But if I were to listen, the results could be mutilation and possibly death.

I have hereditary degenerative arthritis in my hip, and movement for long distances is painful. Sleep is also often painful. The doctors say that while they can give me medication for the pain, my condition will slowly worsen and that, as time passes, I will become increasingly immobile. However, the local specialist has offered an end to my pain and immobility. All I have to do is have a weight loss operation, lose 250 pounds, and get an artificial hip.

When the pain is severe, this offer of an easy way to lose weight by surgery, to keep the weight off forever, and to again walk free from pain, becomes a tempting siren song. Fortunately, just as Odysseys' crew tied him to the mast of his ship to prevent him from leaping to his death on the rocks when he heard the song of the sirens, the medical information from NAAFA has lashed me to the mast of reality now that doctors are singing their weight loss surgery song to me.

There may be a few who have had the surgeries out there who are thin, healthy, and have no further problems, but I know too many who have lost weight, money and health, (or just their money and health), or even their lives. Weight loss surgery will not likely leave me thin, with a new hip, and free from pain forever. If I were to live through the surgeries, I would probably have problems with my digestive system as well as the ones I already have with my skeletal system.

[Editors note: If there are any members who have information about artificial hip replacement and obese patients, please write us through the NAAFA office. We'll forward your information to Peggy and other members who may also need it.]

WHY NAAFA NEEDS AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Conrad H. Blickenstorfer, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Board

Thanks for reelecting me for a second three-year term to NAAFA's Board of Directors. I consider this your vote of confidence in my work and I will continue to do my best.

This is perhaps a good time to examine an issue that comes up in candidates' election statements every year: One of NAAFA's major weaknesses is a lack of membership. Even though we have been on a steady uphill trend for the past three years, there aren't enough members. We need more. What are we going to do about it? Why don't we have more members?

Unfortunately, NAAFA's message isn't popular in a thin-oriented society. Our potential membership is in the millions, yet we only reach a small fraction of them. We have nothing to sell but an idea. The idea that you don't need to be thin to be happy and that fat discrimination ought to be outlawed. I consider it a pretty terrific idea, but apparently it can't compete with diet soda or even "Dream-Away" miracle pills. As a result, NAAFA continues to suffer from a lack of resources which would enable us to grow and pursue our goals more effectively.

Getting new people to join isn't easy. Advertising is certainly a good way to get people to learn about NAAFA - and our ads are in many publications - but it is expensive and we can only do so much. Free publicity, such as appearances of members on TV or on the radio help. Getting a favorable mention from one of the leading columnists such as Dear Abby or Ann Landers is invaluable, but you can't count on it. I presented some of my own ideas in the 1987 election statements, but the fact is that there is no miracle cure to the membership blues.

Or is there? There was a period in NAAFA's history where membership tripled within three years. That was between 1977 and 1980 when NAAFA had an Executive Secretary. Was it the presence of a full-time manager that did it?

As a matter of fact, most tax-exempt public-benefit corporations have an Executive Director to handle day-to-day management of the organization. That person is usually a well educated career professional who knows how to take charge, handle publicity, pursue funding sources, and generally apply the full-time management expertise so sorely needed by a volunteer movement.

There are steps in the life of any organization and each one requires a different type of management and leadership. NAAFA has outgrown the stage where a volunteer Board of Directors can run the organization. We need an Executive Director. This is the only way NAAFA can achieve the next period of growth and approach the 1990s as a truly influential civil rights organization. Otherwise we'll stay the same.

My opinion is that NAAFA must locate and hire an Executive Director within the next twelve months. We will need to find ways to pay for the first year's salary. After that, increased membership will generate enough additional revenues to carry that expense and we're on our way. I welcome your ideas and comments.

A WORD ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

by Conrad H. Blickenstorfer, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Board

Article VIII, Section 1 of the NAAFA BYLAWS states: "NAAFA shall rely on much Committee work and much work by the Board of Directors and officers as part-time efforts by concerned people...". In other words, NAAFA is a volunteer organization which needs people's help. Even though, today, NAAFA has a national office with a small full-time staff, much of the work is still done by volunteers, concerned men and women who donate their time and services to NAAFA for free. Some of them spend hundreds of hours every year helping NAAFA. These are hours which could otherwise be spent on leisure time, on a hobby, with family, etc. The rewards of volunteerism are obviously not financial. But you get to know new people and make new friends. You may learn new skills you never knew you had. And there is the satisfaction that comes from a job well done and the warm feeling you get when you are needed and appreciated. There may be frustrations as well, but overall, offering volunteer services to an important cause can enrich one's life tremendously. The more you give and become involved in NAAFA, the more you get out of it.

How do you become involved? I've often heard people say that they have offered their services but were never taken up on it, that they have written to NAAFA but never received a reply, that they showed interest in joining a certain committee but never got an answer. Unfortunately, many of those complaints are justified. Sometimes a call or a letter are not answered as quickly as they should, and NAAFA possibly loses out on a person who might have become an important volunteer or leader or friend. Some of the people who offer their help feel hurt and unwanted and may never offer their services again. This is very unfortunate, because NAAFA truly needs you, but it is one of the fundamental problems in a volunteer organization: Those already involved are often too overburdened with work to keep up with everything and NAAFA's small office is working overtime just to keep above water. So it's nothing personal. If you really want to help and become involved in NAAFA, don't be discouraged by our shortcomings. Don't give up! Try again and give us another chance. Call or write again. Let us know that you are still there and that really mean it! We need you!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I would like to respond to some of the thoughts expressed in the "So Who Are We Anyway?" editorial in the July NAAFA Newsletter and to the devotion of a full page (25% of then entire Newsletter) to a special interest group's movement." [referring to Karen Scott-Jones' article "Fat Feminist: A Herstory--Ed.]

When I joined NAAFA in 1979, it was because it was an organization that promoted SIZE ACCEPTANCE. Granted, I assumed that there would be a variety of people within NAAFA, with not only different body sizes and preferences, but also with different cultural, social, economic, political, and educational backgrounds; people with diverse outlooks on life, love, happiness, religion, sex, careers. (And all these things I have found in NAAFA...)

Now your recent editorial seems to be urging us to not only accept, but seemingly to embrace the RIGHTS and special interests of, among others, F.A.'s exhibiting less than acceptable behavior; and "radical feminists," some of whom might be lesbians.

I'm sure your intent was to stop all the recent infighting within the ranks and promote acceptance of ALL NAAFAs as human beings. The intent is certainly magnanimous. The outcome of giving forums within NAAFA, however, to EVERYONE who "hears a different drummer" might ultimately disunite us...

There's a difference between DISCRIMINATION and the act of being DISCRIMINATING. There's also a difference between LIBERAL and LIBERTINE. Is it possible that within our zeal to be all things to all fat people we are losing sight of our original purpose? Will we allow so much permissiveness within our ranks that we lose our NAAFA identity and our singleness of purpose?

Will we someday have special interest groups and unswerving devotion and acceptance for the ideals of ...Fat Felons? ...Fat Atheists? Fat Klansmen? ...Fat Vegetarians?

Where will it end? When will we say:

"No, stop! We support and defend your RIGHT to hold whatever ideals you hold, and you as a PERSON are welcome within NAAFA to join NAAFA's cause. BUT if your public behavior or the unsolicited dissemination of your personal concepts contradicts or offends the standards held by the majority of NAAFAs, THEN your behavior MUST be curtailed."

Let's get back to basics, NAAFA. Yes, we are a widely diverse membership. Yes, we all have special interests, desires, and preferences. Heaven knows we all have our own PERSONAL unconventional and non-conformist ideas...

Let's not as NAAFAs become so ultra-tolerant and ultra-indulgent of other's anomalies that we as NAAFA become absurd.

---Donna Marie Ryan (IL)

[Editor's response: As of the July issue in question, this editor has published 244 Newsletter pages--of which only one and one-third pages have been devoted to feminist issues. As the risk of angering my feminist friends, I must also point out that I have devote more space to humorous articles about fat pets than space to fat feminists. (By the way I understand that there are currently almost 200 names on the Feminist SIG mailing list!)

I agree that we should maintain a singleness of purpose, but I feel very strongly that we need all of our allies. Many fat feminists are our allies. Many F.A.'s are our allies. Many thin people are our allies. And if any of our allies feel less than welcomed in NAAFA, aren't we "big" enough to make room for them?

No one is suggesting that we allow people in with "less than acceptable behavior". But most of that sort of behavior is covered by NAAFA's Code of Minimum Standards--and the committee that handles such matters is fully staffed and in operation. And they deal with individuals--not with stereotypes!]

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