



NAAFA Newsletter

Official Publication of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance

**Late Summer
2004**

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Dear NAAFA,

In this issue we'll be focusing on the 2004 NAAFA Convention. An Associated Press wire story on August 2nd gave us a level of press coverage unmatched in recent memory. More than 100 stories about NAAFA appeared in print, on the web, and on TV. Having so many media people there made things chaotic at times, but I think it was worth it. We got our message out, and most of the coverage was positive. (By the way, if you see an article on the web or in print, let me know at newsletter@naafa.org.)

Paul Campos was our keynote speaker again, and had us alternately laughing and angry at the public health establishment's treatment of fatness as a disease.

The workshops were great, and Rochelle Rice talks about the fitness workshops in her regular column below. I've put some of my favorite photos and quotes from the Convention in the featured article section (the left-hand column for those with HTML).

You'll also find co-chair Kara Brewer Allen's 2004 State of NAAFA address, plus an article on "where we are" based on a speech by our other co-chair, Carole Cullum.

There were raffles, a fashion show, a costume ball, a semi-formal dance, the not-so-silent auction, pool parties, hospitality suite parties, and more stuff than I was able to attend.

In a non-Convention related article, Deb Lemire talks about how fat folk can and should find common ground with those who aren't fat.

Read on and enjoy!

• **The State of NAAFA 2004**

by Kara Brewer Allen *co-chair, NAAFA Board of Directors*



Ladies and Gentlemen, My dear NAAFA Family and Friends: NAAFA has been a civil rights organization for 35 years now; since meager beginnings in 1969. Thirty five

[Avery Ray Colter listens in](#)

[Joy Allen and Carla Denhartog](#)

[Terri Weitze as Shirley Temple, with Spaceman Bill Weitze](#)

[Terri shows her stuff at the fashion show](#)

Quotes

"Ask your doctor if social hysteria is right for you." -
-Keynote Speaker Paul Campos, satirizing drug ads and the madness surrounding the "obesity epidemic"

"It's as if the public health establishment is overrun with alcoholics, giving us advice about social drinking." --Paul Campos again, observing that public health officials act like people with eating disorders

"We're going to have the healthiest society, but everyone will have a disease." --NAAFA Board Member Frances White, on how the drug industry redefines "unhealthy" levels of blood sugar, cholesterol, and so on, to help sell drugs

"We're not giving up anything, except shame and self-hatred." --NAAFA Board member Mary Ray Worley, on how to respond to those who say you're giving up on losing weight.

<http://www.naafa.org>

years of providing advocacy, education and support for people of all sizes of large! I am so proud to say that I have been a NAAFA member for over twenty years and get just as excited and passionate about our cause as I did so long ago. In fact, in the midst of the current political climate and the blatant search and destroy media mission called the "war on obesity", I have renewed commitment to volunteer and work for this beacon of sanity called NAAFA.

Since 1969, NAAFA has continued to have a proud history. Strong leaders and committed members of NAAFA have made an incredible impact on the lives of others through their tireless dedication and efforts. We need to take a moment to acknowledge where we came from and give appreciation to our former leaders. We acknowledge our founder Bill Fabrey and his vision of a better life for fat individuals. There have been many, many effective leaders that have stepped forward over the last 35 years - Conrad Blickenstorfer, Leslie Dimaggio, Sally Smith, Lyn Meletiche, Barbara Altman Bruno, Paul Ernsberger, Nancy Summer, Frances White and our dear Maryanne Bodolay, to name only a few.

[Click here to continue reading](#)

• **A False Sense of "Thin" Security**

by Deb Lemire *Founder, Queen Bee Productions*

The women walk into the room and find their seats. Some are chatty, some hope they are invisible, some wait until the very last minute and slide in at the back. All of them, hoping that a workshop called "Fat & Happy" will not talk too much about being "fat" and a lot about how they can be "happy" with their bodies.

The workshop begins. I explain to them that when we say "fat" we are referring to women who are physically fat as well as those that perceive themselves to be fat. I explain the media's images of false beauty and the diet industry's relentless insistence that we participate in hating ourselves unless we change how we look, affects all women regardless of her actual size or shape. I give examples of the misinformation, exaggerated statistics and outright lies, all told in the name of the almighty dollar. I make clear the link between our culture's obsession with thinness and the current hysteria on obesity with the increased incidence of eating disorders and disordered eating. I remind them that size and shape are not a reflection of our morality, self worth or horrible childhood as some talk shows would have us believe.

The women begin to talk. They share their stories. We laugh, we empathize, we begin to recognize the common ground we, as women, stand on when it comes to the diet industry's patriarchal approach to trap us in a vicious

cycle of self hate. And then it happens. A woman of size will raise her hand and then turn to a woman, who by current standards would be considered "average" or "normal" size, and asks with a mixture of anger, envy, pain and fear, "What are you doing here?"

It's an uncomfortable moment for all of us in the room. But it is the most telling and the most important thing that happens in this workshop. Now we can talk about the reality. The reality that the diet industry and those that perpetuate it, participate in it, support it, feed off of it, is not there to bring women together under the common goal of becoming healthy and beautiful (meaning thin). It is a brilliantly designed tool to dilute women's power by separating us from our money and from each other.

If a thin woman talks about her issues with her body image, a fat woman says, "What do you know about it? You're thin!" If a fat woman talks about finding her self-esteem and loving herself as she is, the thin woman says, "well you're just looking for an excuse to stay fat!" And we stand divided.

We spend 50 billion dollars a year on the diet industry. This includes books, magazines and talk shows, surgeries, diet drugs and supplements, as well as exercise equipment, gym memberships and weight loss programs bought with a mixture of guilt and high- pressure sales. And while some of that money is spent by men, most of it is spent by women. Imagine what we could do if we stopped buying into the self-hatred machine. We could house the homeless, feed the hungry, provide education and medical coverage for all and still have enough money to put a woman in the Whitehouse. We would have power! 50 billion dollars worth of power. We would rule the world. Hmm . . . maybe that is why they want to keep us distracted and weak from hunger.

<http://www.queenbeeprod.com>

- **Fitness Column: Big Dreams Moving at the 2004 Convention!**

by Rochelle Rice, MA, with Sandy Schaffer, ACE Certified Trainer



This year's convention was once again filled with all types of movement, thanks to Sandy Schaffer and Melissa Taylor who ran the workshops. Both Sandy and Melissa are certified fitness professionals and have helped NAAFA continue to "dream big" when it comes to movement for its members.

Aqua classes were still a favorite for attendees as bodies moved gracefully through the water, free from joint pain and back discomfort. Chair Dancing was very well attended despite the amount of media present at the

workshop. Chair Dancing is fun and all levels of movement were welcomed. This class proved once again that no matter your level of mobility, there are joys and benefits to moving your body.

Yoga was interesting this year. We have offered it in the past and noticed we did not have quite as many attendees as in previous conventions. It might help to state again that trainers can modify the yoga positions to suit your body. It is amazing to teach people the importance of breath and the ability to slow down. By committing to staying still during yoga class, attendees were able to turn their senses inward and listen to their bodies.

Pilates class was offered for the second year and was well attended. Attendees came to understand the challenges of small movements. Larger bodies may often experience low back discomfort, which means the abdominals and back muscles need to be strengthened. The Pilates class helped attendees find and understand their core muscles (abdominals and back) and how they relate to daily life.

Congratulations to all who participated in dreaming big with movement! By moving your body safely and freely, you act as a role model to others who desire to lead an active lifestyle. Special thanks to Sandy and Melissa who serve as role models in the fitness community.

- **State of the Movement**

Carole Cullum *Co-chair, NAAFA Board of Directors*



This article is adapted from Carole's speech at the 2004 NAAFA Convention.

As I stand here today, and look out across this room, I realize that we ARE the Movement. We have been around for 35 years, we are the founders of NAAFA, we have been members for 30 years, and have been members for 2 months. We gather together to celebrate in dances and pool parties, in classes and workshops. We are the members that assemble in New York to stand in opposition to a surgical procedure which has killed and maimed people across the country and to demand an end to the Fat Oppression. We are also the young members of NAAFA who proudly identify themselves as politicians, demanding an end to discrimination based on weight in their universities. We span the ages from early 20s to late 60s.

The US government has declared war on obesity and we, as fat Americans, have been identified as the "weapons of mass destruction." Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human services, has issued a "call to action," targeting all of us, our children, and most recently the aged, those who are the most vulnerable. As a movement, we have stood up and taken a stand against this witch

hunt. As a recognition of our strength, we have been besieged with press from all over the world this weekend, eager to understand and report on this powerful organization strong enough to stand up and take a stand - a stand for health at any size, a stand against the discrimination faced by all fat people. Yesterday at our New York demonstration, it was reported that there have been 116 articles in newspapers across the country about NAAFA and our efforts. We are everywhere! So, for those of us who are concerned that we are "not getting anywhere," take heart! We came together at our demonstration in New York yesterday, OutBODIES/OutSELVES, organized by our incredible organizer Marilyn Wann, to celebrate our bodies, to celebrate all bodies. There were more television cameras and press there than at a politician's press conference. We have spread our word loud and far.

The movement is big enough for all of us; we are the movement; we are NAAFA.

- **Chapters: The Soul of NAAFA**

NAAFA headquarters puts on the Convention every year, and keeps things humming throughout the year, but much of the action happens in the chapters. As an example, the Capital Chapter has two events every month. Click on the link below to find a chapter near you. And if there isn't a chapter near you, you can e- mail Chapter Liaison Carla DenHartog at chapters@naafa.org and start one yourself!

[Link to NAAFA Chapters](#)

- **Did You Read about NAAFA?**

If you read about NAAFA on the web or in print, please drop me a line at newsletter@naafa.org and let me know. If it was a web page, please send me the link. If it was in print, please mail a copy to NAAFA at P.O. Box 188620, Sacramento, CA 95818.

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