Donna Yarborough takes over the LGBT Center

by LAURA REED
Contributing Writer

Donna Yarborough became the director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Center on Jan. 22, replacing Judith Brown. Yarborough will also serve as the advisor for the Rainbow House.

Yarborough comes to Tufts from the University of Virginia, where she co-founded that university’s LGBT Center. Tufts’ reputation — both academically and as a queer-friendly place — and the Boston area played a large role in attracting Yarborough.

Although she is still settling in, Yarborough has been quick to plan events and meet with students and staff. She organized Freedom to Marry Day — to be held Feb. 12 — that will include a same-sex wedding cake to be served at noon in the Campus Center.

Another of Yarborough’s plans is to expand the men’s group, a weekly conversation group sponsored by the LGBT, in order to bring it in line with the already well-established women’s group. The men’s group met for the first time last Friday.

The new director is excited about student participation at the center.

“Students come in and hang out here — I really encourage students to come in, it’s quiet upstairs here to study and it’s social too, I keep my door open and I encourage students to come and see me,” Yarborough said.

Although there appears to be no need to expand the Rainbow House in the near future, Yarborough said, she has an understanding with Residential Life that an expansion request would be granted.

Yarborough also plans to host the Safe Colleges Conference, started by Brown, on April 5. The regional conference of 400-500 students will include 30 workshops with significant LGBT figures.

Topics to be addressed include male and female body images, homosexuality and religions, transgender issues, improving your LGBT student organization, and dating in the LGBT community.

The LGBT center — located in Bolles House at 226 College Ave — offers counseling and referrals to off-campus professionals, information and resources to the LGBT community, and research assistance on topics related to sexuality, in addition to on-campus workshops, training, and events throughout the year.

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