

Gay and Lesbian Center Director Fired Without Warning

Santa
Barbara

□ **Rhonda Levine**, executive director for the past six months of the Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, was fired this week by the center's board of directors, surprising many in the community. The GLRC runs the AIDS Counseling and Assistance Program providing support to people with HIV and AIDS, as well as conducting general education about gay and lesbian issues. Levine, who was herself a GLRC board member for six years before taking over from former director Cheryl Walters, has been a powerful presence not only within but outside of the gay community, from her appearances at numerous community events to her helping organize such events as AIDS WALK and the local celebration of National Coming Out Day.

GLRC board chair Tom Roberts was vague about the reasons for Levine's dismissal, saying board members were constrained for reasons of legality and confidentiality from saying much. He said there was no implication or suspicion of criminal wrongdoing, and that Levine was still in a probationary position when she was dismissed. He referred to "different styles and ideas about the way things should be going."

Both Levine and Roberts acknowledged that there have been differences of opinion within the GLRC about whether the organization should concentrate exclusively on AIDS assistance or broaden its focus to include broader gay and lesbian issues; Levine favored the latter position, neither would say whether that was a factor in the termination. Levine said she did not have a clear idea of the board's dissatisfaction unless they simply needed "more power—because believe me, I understand, I am a powerful person." Levine said although the letter of termination they handed her referred to "differences in vision," she and the board had tussled primarily over "micromanagement issues."

Steven Sharpe, formerly the assistant executive director, will take over as interim executive director until a permanent replacement is found. (MS)