

## Gay Games VII

The 7th Gay Games was held in Chicago from the 15th to the 25th of July 2006. An opportunity for not just for sportsmanship, but an expression of solidarity and fellowship, the Gay Games has empowered tens of thousands of LGBT athletes from around the world. Built upon the principles of participation, inclusion and personal best the Gay Games has celebrated the achievements of sexual minorities for over twenty years. The WSG is proud to announce that the two members of the WSG (Upeksha Thabrew and Maria Kenny) who were among the team that represented Sri Lanka at the Gay Games has clinched several medals with record-breaking success yet again!

Upeksha who took part in the javelin, 800 meters sprint, discus and long jump events won a gold medal for the javelin and silver medals for discus and long jump, while Maria who took part in the shot putt, discus, javelin and 200 meters events secured a bronze medal for javelin and silver medals for all her other events.

Undoubtedly, the Gay Games has continued to make a valuable contribution to the LGBT community worldwide in keeping with its primary vision. Our participants recall their experiences with exuberance.

'Being part of the event was an experience of a life time' says Maria, about her first-time participation at the Gay Games. In her view, participation is not only about success or failure at the events. She recalls that men and women took part in the events as united members of one community.

Both Maria and Upeksha consider it an honor to participate in the Gay Games as it is the most important international sports event for the LGBT community.

Upeksha, who also participated in the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney and won the first ever medal in the Gay Games for Sri Lanka, speaks of the event as an opportunity to meet with sports men and women from all over the world. In her experience, all participants are filled with community spirit and the competition is a healthy and self satisfying experience.

One of the most important factors, as Upeksha points out, is that the Gay Games acts as a place for further networking for LGBT groups from around the world. For a small group like the WSG, this is a valuable opportunity because such meetings are few and far between among the LGBT community. Furthermore, the Gay games is also special in that it focuses on sports, which is still a space filled with homophobia in the outside world.

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to Astraea Foundation, U.S.A., who sponsored part of the expenses relating to WSG's participation at the Chicago Games. Our success is also a reflection of their support.

### Fundraisers for the 2006 Gay Games

Since the Astraea funding was not sufficient the WSG needed funds from local sources. Unfortunately, there were no local sources that wanted to fund the WSG. To this end, we organized two fund raising events in Colombo.

On 29th March 2006 we organized a party at Rhythm 'n Blues. The theme was Dykes 'n Divas. Around 200 - 250 Gay and Gay friendly people attended to this party.

But since the expenses were so high (air fare, lodging, transportation from and to the stadium to be paid in dollars!!!) we had to organize another party.

On 28th June 2006 the party was held at Taboo. This time, the theme was Pride & Spirit around 200 gay and gay friendly people showed up for this.

In both parties there were many entertainment events including guest performances. Every one had a fabulous time and they all enjoyed the parties. Thank you all for coming and supporting our athletes and your money was not wasted because our members came back with 07 medals.

### Medal Celebration

It was a proud moment for all WSG members and its supporters as our two members gave Sri Lanka a significant position in 2006 Gay Games. They were welcomed back with lots of cheers. A party was organized in honor of their achievements. It was a joyous atmosphere, every one was so happy and proud and we all celebrated with glory.