

Hate crimes update: one Park Ave. defendant "not guilty"; Spencerport case goes to prosecutor

By Ove Overmyer

In February of 2008, a New York State appeals court reinstated a felony hate crime charge against two Rochester women, one of whom was put on trial in March and acquitted. Charges are still pending against the other alleged attacker.

The two women were accused of attacking two other women (who they perceived to be lesbians) outside a Park Avenue bar in 2006, a charge that put in motion a series of legal procedures and advocacy efforts that took over 21 months to unfold.

This case catapulted the lgbt Rochester community back into the national spotlight for a second time in recent weeks. Resi-

dents and workers of Rochester, Monroe County and New York State are still trying to grasp the significance of the *Martinez v. County of Monroe* (MCC) court decision that was handed down by the NYS Appellate Court on Feb. 1, recognizing out of state marriages of same-sex couples.

LGBT advocacy organizations say that anti-gay incidents tend to happen more frequently around Pride events or when gay issues are newsworthy, such as after the legalization of same sex marriage in Massachusetts in 2004.

Jury finds defendant not guilty

Opening arguments of the Park Ave. court case began on March 24 and ended four days later, according to Monroe County Assistant District Attorney William Gargan.

Late on the evening of March 27, Monroe County Court jurors acquitted Yalidsa Ortiz, 27, of third-degree assault as a hate crime for the alleged attack on June 27, 2006.

The jury also found Ortiz not guilty of a lesser misdemeanor charge of third-degree assault. She had faced a maximum penalty of one year in jail under the misdemeanor charge.

(Hate Crimes continue page 7)



Lance Neve was attacked at a Spencerport bar on March 7. He speaks out in an interview on page A 6. Photo: Ove Overmyer

Paterson: NYS will push on to marriage equality

New York Governor David Paterson addressed a standing-room-only audience at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's New York Leadership Awards on April 7, in which he was honored for his longstanding work on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights.

"Held hostage" to the Albany budget process, Paterson sent an extraordinary message via video to the assembled crowd. Remembering that this year commemorates the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and remembering King's legacy of "his ability to go beyond the issues of his neighborhood," Paterson urged "New York's civil rights leaders to recognize that the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-

gender communities deserve equal rights as well."

The governor said he was "proud to have run on a ticket that advocated for marriage equality and to win on that premise." Underscoring the remarkable triumph of the passage of the marriage equality bill in the New York State Assembly, Paterson reiterated that more people understand "that when people love each other they should be able to express it in every way that they deem necessary and possible and they should have all the rights that the rest of us have."

He vowed "to push on until we bring full marriage equality to New York state" and promised to fight for an end to bullying in schools, for transgender rights and for affordable health care for everyone.

Paterson concluded with a call to "change the face of New York, which will be a catalyst for change in national policy." ■



RPD Chief David Moore. Photo: Susan Jordan

Chief Moore forms team to plan diversity trainings for RPD

By Susan Jordan

Rochester Police Chief David Moore has put together a team to create a video and other materials to train all RPD officers about sensitivity toward the lgbt community. Officer Jim Hall, lgbt liaison, and Christopher Hinesley, executive director of the Gay Alliance, are part of the team.

Chief Moore told the *Empty Closet* that Hall and Hinesley will recommend a high-quality sensitivity training video that the RPD communications section can use as a model for their own video, to be used in all RPD trainings. "That's the next major step," Moore said, "for the team to start getting the video together. We need to do whatever we can to get the message out that something is being done."

Moore said that the team includes his second in command, Executive Deputy Chief George Markert; Deputy Chief Administrator Mike Smith (who is in charge of all programs) and Lt. Jerry Smith (training coordinator, in charge of the Police Academy and also of in-service training).

Moore said, "All 750 officers have to go through in-service training every year. The trainings are often based on state requirements that all NYS police be trained in any changes in legislation – domestic violence is an area where there were changes most recently. Our officers are required not only to get through in-service training, but more importantly, to become familiar with community groups and issues. People interpret diversity differently, but to me it's the Webster's definition, difference,

and it's all about quality of life. We need to be as familiar as we can be with the different parts of the community."

He commented, "One of my biggest challenges as Chief is trust. The 'don't snitch' mentality is an example of loss of trust. The police department has a great relationship with most of the Rochester community, but there are parts of the city where trust has broken down. Officers need to understand issues of quality of life. We have a great relationship with the Gay Alliance, and that's important, because we need to be aware of changes in the different communities, even changes in terminology."

Developing the trainings

The chief said that the RPD trainings will consist of two parts. First is a training bulletin, which was created to go out at the end of last month, after EC press time. "That's going to be disseminated to all police department employees, including 150 civilian employees," he said. "That's important because civilians work with the public in various locations which are crucial. The bulletin was developed by the team and will be discussed at every roll call to ensure clarity."

Although the chief cannot appear at every roll call, he said, "My biggest challenge as chief – and I have many – is trying to stay in front of the officers and give them a message personally. I do it through videos, memos, etc., but we will be going to every roll call (with the bulletin)."

The second element in the (Moore continues page 8)

NewsBriefs

LOCAL & STATE NEWS

ESPA honors Powell, Martinez and Golden

The Empire State Pride Agenda will honor activist Keith Powell and Patricia Martinez and Lisa Golden, whose lawsuit against Monroe Community College made history.

The Spring Dinner will take place May 17 at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, with a reception starting at 5:45. The dinner and program will follow at 7 p.m. Caroline Rhea will serve as emcee. For tickets and other information, call the Pride Agenda at 212-627-0305 or see www.prideagenda.org.

Prom is May 9

The Gay Alliance Youth Group will host the 2008 Big Gay Prom on May 9 at the Robach Community Center, 1 Beach Ave., Ontario Beach Park, starting at 6 p.m.

The Prom is for lgbt youth ages 15-25, and for their straight youth allies. Admission is \$10. The dance is drug and alcohol-free. DJ Chuck Argento will provide music to dance to until 10 p.m. For tickets, call Jess Cohen at 244-8640, ext 13.

Rainbow Seniors to host Cinco de Mayo dance

The Rainbow Seniors, not to be outdone by the Youth Group, will host a dance on May 3 at the Roger Robach Community Center, 1 Beach Ave, Ontario Beach Park.

The dance will observe the Cinco de Mayo holiday and will run from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$5 in advance for members and \$7 for non-members, and \$10 at the door. Tickets are available at Equal=Grounds and Outlandish, or by calling 325-1640.

Gay Alliance annual meeting will be June 25

The Gay Alliance will host its annual meeting on June 25, at 6 p.m. in the Youth Center, on the first floor of the Auditorium Center, 875 E. Main St. For more information, see the June *Empty Closet*.

The Gay Alliance appreciates the continuing partnership of businesses within our community who support our mission and vision.

Platinum: Citi The Student Loan Corporation, Eastman Kodak Company, Nixon Peabody LLP

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4/16

SEASON DRAGS ON, CIVILITY IS BEING STRETCHED TO A GOSSAMER FILAMENT.

Dykes To Watch Out For - Page B9

©2008 BY ALISON BECHDEL

CHILDREN ARE DIVIDED AGAINST THEIR PARENTS.

I JUST WANT TO UNDERSTAND. IF THEIR POSITIONS ARE VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL, WHY ARE YOU SO SOLD ON OBAMA?

HE'S A MAC!

SHE'S A PC!

I JUST CAN'T SEE SHE AND BILL SA OF MILLIONS OF WITH THEIR

NEED WE SAY MORE?

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The Empty Closet is published by the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley 875 E. Main Street, Suite 500 Rochester, New York 14605 © 2008, All rights reserved.

Editor-in-Chief: Susan Jordan

Graphic Design: Jim Anderson

Ad Sales:

Richard Nielsen: 585-764-3713
National Advertising Representative:
Rivendell Media: 212-242-6863

Advertising policy:

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Submissions:

For publication, submit news items, ads, photos, letters, stories, poetry, ads, photographs or art by mail or in person to The Empty Closet office by the 15th of the month. Design services for non-camera ready ads are available for a fee. (www.emptycloset@gagv.us)

Publication Information:

The Empty Closet is published 11 times a year (December and January combined) by The Empty Closet Press for the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, Inc. Approximately 5000 copies of each issue are distributed during the first week of the month, some by mail in a plain sealed envelope. The publication of the name or photograph of any person or organization in articles is not an indication of the sexual or affectional orientation of that person or the members of that organization. For further information, please write to The Empty Closet, 875 E. Main St., Rochester NY, 14605, call (585) 244-9030 or e-mail emptycloset@gagv.us.

The Empty Closet is the official publication of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, Inc., as stated in the bylaws of that organization. Its purpose is to inform the Rochester gay community about local and national gay-related news and events; to provide a forum for ideas and creative work from the local gay community; to help promote leadership within the community, and to be a part of a national network of lesbian and gay publications that exchange ideas and seek to educate.

Part of our purpose is to maintain a middle position with respect to the entire community. We must be careful to present all viewpoints in a way that takes into consideration the views of all - women, men, people of color, young and old, and those from various walks of life.

The opinions of columnists, editorial writers and other contributing writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the collective attitude of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley or The Empty Closet. The Empty Closet shall not be liable for any loss or expense that results from the publication (whether correctly or incorrectly) or omission of an ad. In the event of non-payment, your account may be assigned to a collection agency or an attorney, and will be liable for the charges paid by us to such collection agency or attorney.

Letters to the editor

The opinions of columnists, editorial writers and other contributing writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the collective attitude of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley or The Empty Closet. We will print letters at the editor's discretion and on a space available basis. Only one letter by the same writer in a six-month period is allowed. We will not print personal attacks on individuals, nor will we be a forum for ongoing disputes between individuals. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. We will print anonymous letters if the name and phone number are provided to the Editor; confidentiality will be respected. Submissions are due by the 15th of the month at: The Empty Closet, 875 E. Main Street, Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605; e-mail: emptycloset@gagv.us. Online edition of EC available at www.gayalliance.org.

FROM THE Empty Closet Editor SUSAN JORDAN



Still open season on LGBT people

The March 27 acquittal of one defendant charged in a hate crime on Park Ave. in 2006, and the failure of last year's Goodman St. hate crime case to even come to trial, may or may not be sound legal outcomes to those particular cases. Either way, they send an unfortunate message, both to those who hate gays and to the LGBT community.

This is not the place to debate the legal details. We will probably never know why the Goodman St. case did not come to trial. A lawsuit filed by some of the victims against the city, and charges against some of the victims placed by the RPD, may be part of the reason for the outcome, since those involved in one case could not testify in the other cases.

County Court Judge Frank P. Geraci initially defined the Park Ave. case as not qualifying as a hate crime. The DA's office didn't buy that, since the alleged attackers used homophobic hate language and did not previously know their victims, and Geraci's decision was reversed on appeal. However, the trial in March of one defendant resulted in an acquittal, apparently because one plaintiff had been "intoxicated" and was the first aggressor -- according to the defendant's lawyer -- and because the plaintiffs did not allege anti-gay language until 10 days after charges were filed and had not immediately

informed police that they were lesbian. The defense blamed advocacy by the Gay Alliance for the added hate crime charge.

The consequences are not good for any NYS citizens. Assistant D.A. William Gargan told the Empty Closet several months ago that the D.A.'s office was concerned that Judge Geraci's ruling would make it hard to prosecute other hate crimes in future, and to use the hate crimes law as it was intended -- to discourage haters from terrorizing entire groups of people.

Unfortunately, in these two cases the wrong messages were sent, both to the violent and to the innocent.

Those who look for chances to assault gay men and lesbians were sent the message that they are free to attack the people they hate, without being called by society to accept any consequences of hate violence.

The LGBT community gets the message that we are still not safe from hate violence, and that the justice system may victimize us a second time.

Gay, trans, bi and lesbian people know all too well that if they want to go out for a drink, give their same sex partner a kiss in their parked car, or just walk down the street in our supposedly free society, they must beware of potential attackers screaming obscene insults. We must also realize that gay people who have had too much to drink may be giving attackers a chance to "get the fag/dyke" with impunity. "It was just a drunken brawl... the drunk fag/dyke started it..." Homophobic juries may be happy to blame the gay victim.

We can only hope that anti-gay hate crimes will be prosecuted more successfully in the future, because they will continue to occur. Until straight society's prejudice ends, we must continue to live in fear of random, violent attack by strangers who have been taught by their religion to hate us.

That's also known as terrorism. ■

FROM THE Gay Alliance Executive Director CHRISTOPHER HINESLEY



A new look

A new look and expansion of services at the Gay Alliance means more help for victims of crime and bias, more speakers educating our community about LGBT issues, more training for law enforcement officers, and more presence and support on college campuses.

For 35 years, the Gay Alliance has been educating the community and providing services to LGBT folks. With renewed government funding, corporate support, United Way gifts, outright donations, and advertising sales, we are able to expand into more areas of training, education and services.

The New York State budget passed with an increase in funding for members of the LGBT Health and Human Services Network. The Gay Alliance is a long-standing member of the Network and will receive over \$300,000 from government sources this year, including member item support from Senator Joseph Robach and Assemblywoman Susan John.

This month we have posted a position called Health and Safety Education Specialist. This position replaces the Anti-Violence Coordinator position vacated by Alex Cobus. The new focus on changing the systems that create and reinforce bias provides more opportunity for interaction with the leaders and decision makers in the community, and a continued focus on the needs of survivors and those at risk of violence

and bias. Adding the Out for Justice networking group to our list of networking and education groups has added a whole new group of advocates and allies for changing the institutions that knowingly or unknowingly reinforce bias against LGBT people.

The Youth Program continues to see phenomenal growth in the number of participants coming to drop in hours at the Youth Center. Upwards of 50 kids are regularly arriving to the program. The addition of Kelly Baumgartner to our staff has meant a strengthening of our youth services and victim/survivor services, as Kelly works in both areas. Kelly has logged calls from victims, requests for resources and referrals, and meetings with police officials.

Leading all of our program areas is Scott Fearing, Program Director. You can read all about what staff members are doing by finding their monthly articles in the Community section of the Empty Closet.

A successful year of the new program called Campus Out was completed in April, with Rebecca Newberry, full-time intern from SUNY Brockport. Rebecca graduates this month and we couldn't be prouder to be a part of her degree. Rebecca built the program from the ground up with a grant from the Community Foundation. In its second year, we hope to find another intern to continue the program. Eight area colleges participate in Campus Out.

Upcoming programs include continued research on LGBT homelessness in our area, as well as training and support for health care providers of LGBT patients.

Don't forget to plan your vacation around the Pride Parade and Picnic, July 19-20. And, if you give to the United Way campaign, designate the Gay Alliance by choosing number 1135. Thank you for your support of the great resource and voice in the community, the Gay Alliance. We are here for you. ■

You can:
You can march for equal rights.
You can protest for safe schools and workplaces.
You can join an organization that supports your ideals.

Call, write or click - and we'll get you set up with a membership in the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley.

Membership begins at \$30 and supports the things that you support. It can include a subscription to this newspaper.

So get in touch: Gay Alliance, 875 E. Main St., Suite 500, Rochester 14605 • 585-244-8640 • membership@gagv.us

We can...

Yes we can.

NewsFronts

LOCAL AND STATE



Daniel O'Hanlon, Lori Lippa, Chris Hinesley, John Stevens. Photo: Susan Jordan

Planning for Rochester Pride '08: Parade is July 19, Picnic July 20

By Daniel J. O'Hanlon

Rochester Pride '08 will be spectacular. The Rochester Community Business Forum (RCBF)/Streets of Pride is the lead organizer of the parade and the festival afterwards, which will be at the Armory on East Main St. this year.

The Business Forum has gained a bunch of new board members, which has spurred a new vision and passion for pride. Lori Lippa (a.k.a. Mama) is the new chairperson; we could not ask for a more vivacious and lively chair.

The board this year has a combined experience and love for Rochester Pride. The uniqueness of Pride 2008 is that the RCBF/ Streets of Pride is working to bring the sense of community back to the Rochester LGBT community by working jointly with the Gay Alliance to co-host a Rochester Pride Weekend and not separate Pride events.

It is an honor and a duty to bring to the forefront the best and the brightest people and ideas. We look forward to a strong and exciting Rochester Pride '08 and to the LGBT community living "happily ever after" (theme for Rochester Pride '08).

From the Picnic Committee: save July 20 for celebration!

By Jeffrey M. Lamica, Co-Chair and Kathryn Rivers, Co-Chair

The 2008 Pride Picnic, sponsored by the Gay Alliance of the Genessee Valley, will take place on Sunday, July 20, from 1-7 p.m. The picnic brings over 2,000 people together each July in Genessee Valley Park to celebrate the LGBT community and the progress it makes towards equality.

The picnic is in alignment with the mission of the Gay Alliance and its dedication to cultivating a healthy, inclusive environment where individuals of all sexual orientations and gender expressions are safe, thriving and enjoy full equal rights. The picnic is an annual event that brings our community together to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year.

The Pride Picnic committee is looking

forward to seeing you, your friends, and family members this year. We are pleased with the way this year's picnic is shaping up. There will be information booths, food and merchandise vendors, a family pavilion, a dog show, antique cars and motorcycles on display, community tug of war, sports venues, and, as always, dancing, with music by Rochester DJs.

In addition to celebrating our pride, the Gay Alliance uses this event to raise funds for necessary programs, such as our Youth Center Services, Community Outreach Program, Anti-Violence Project, Speakers Bureau, and others. Advance tickets will be \$5 for students and seniors (62 and older) and \$10 for pre-purchase, and the "at the gate" price will be \$15.

Volunteers are working tirelessly to provide you and your family with a fun, safe, and memorable day. These volunteers are the backbone of the picnic. It takes between 60 and 70 volunteers the day of the picnic to ensure everything happens as smoothly as possible. In reaching out to our community, we ask each of you to consider volunteering two hours of your time the day of the picnic.

It is a great chance for you, or a group you are involved with, to come together to support the work of the Gay Alliance. We need help with pre-picnic set-up (the morning of the event), parking lot attendants, family pavilion volunteers, park maintenance, information/volunteer booth, and post-event tear-down/clean-up. **HELP TO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN!** Volunteer by contacting the Gay Alliance at 585-244-8640 x 22, or email us picnic@gagv.us. ALL volunteers will receive FREE admission to the picnic!

The Gay Alliance has exclusive use of the north side of Genessee Valley Park on July 20. Therefore, only people with valid tickets to this annual Pride event will be allowed in this section of the park during those hours. There will be a separate entrance for those who have already purchased tickets. Those who do not purchase tickets in advance may do so at the ticket table.

Handicapped parking will be in the lot by the Roundhouse and will be strictly enforced. Alternate parking will be available in the University of Rochester parking lots.

Show your pride, have fun and take part in a wonderful weekend of events! See you there!

Marriage equality wins: Appellate Court vacates Funderburke ruling

The New York Appellate Division has vacated the decision of a lower court, which ruled that Bradley Davis was not entitled to spousal health insurance benefits, even though he and his spouse were lawfully married in Canada and New York State recognizes out of state marriages that could not be entered here.

"The decision from the appellate court wipes the lower court ruling off the books," said Susan Sommer, Senior Counsel at Lambda Legal.

Duke Funderburke married his partner of more than four decades, Bradley Davis, in Ontario, Canada in 2004. When Funderburke asked that his retirement benefits from the Uniondale School District be extended to his spouse, he was refused. A lower court ruled in favor of the school district. However, while the case was on appeal, the New York State Department of Civil Service (DCS) agreed to extend benefits to same-sex spouses of public employees covered under the New York State Health Insurance Program, including Funderburke and his spouse. The Appellate Court dismissed the appeal as moot and, significantly, vacated the lower court opinion.

The Appellate Court decision to vacate the lower court ruling follows now uniform decisions by a number of other New York courts that out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples are entitled to respect in New York.

Rulings made on the basis of the original Funderburke decision should now be seen as invalid and presumably the Monroe County appeal of the Martinez decision will not be heard by the Appellate Court, much less upheld.

State budget includes LGBT Health and Human Service Network

Health and human service providers across New York State targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities will receive almost \$8 million from the 2008-09 State Budget.

Governor Paterson's Executive Budget provides \$5.89 million and the Assembly Majority provided \$2.084 million from its discretionary funding.

"We know that this is a difficult time for New York State fiscally and we are very pleased that Governor Paterson and the Assembly have essentially maintained the historic level of funding that our community received in last year's budget," said Empire State Pride Agenda Executive Director Alan Van Capelle.

"More than 600,000 New Yorkers receive services every year due to these funds. We thank the Governor and the Assembly Majority for continuing to recognize the importance of funding community-based organizations that are working every day to address the longstanding health and human services needs of New York's LGBT communities. We also thank the Assembly for increasing its base level of support from \$1.373 million to \$2.048 million."

"We'd especially like to thank Assembly members Richard Gottfried and Deborah Glick for their leadership on this issue. Because of their individual advocacy — and that of a core group of other Assembly allies — there was sufficient support to not only set aside funds for these crucial services, but also increase base funding to its highest level in years," said Van Capelle.

State funding is used to support the health and human services programs provided by members of the New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network (Network). The Network is a coalition of more than 50 community-based organizations serving LGBT people in 54 of the state's 62 counties. The Pride Agenda coordinates the Network's education and advocacy efforts in Albany.

The funding supports tested and proven service delivery mechanisms that the LGBT community has developed in localities to provide health and wellness programs, including primary and preventative care, mental health services, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, homeless youth services, violence prevention and crime victim assistance and other critical human services. Traditionally marginalized LGBT populations that make use of these services include seniors, people of color, youth, low-income individuals and crime victims.

New York State began funding the Network 10 years ago. Since then, about \$38 million has been provided to sustain existing and help launch new programs from Erie to Suffolk County. Speaker Silver and the Assembly Majority provided funding through its discretionary budget for each of the 10 years. Funding through the Executive Budget started seven years ago.

Almost all Network members receive support through either the Executive Budget or Assembly discretionary funds. For those that do not, the Pride Agenda and the Network had hoped to have them included this year for the first time.

"While we are pleased with the funding level this year for the Network, several Network members are still not part of either funding stream. We will continue to work with the Assembly to find ways for these front-line service providers to be part of the list of organizations who are eligible to receive state funding," said Van Capelle.

Christine Quinn's career may be harmed -- or helped -- by NYC council financial allocations controversy

According to the Associated Press, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn "was widely thought to have a shot at becoming New York's first female and openly gay mayor, but her ascent to the top may be complicated by revelations that the city council, under her leadership, allocated millions of dollars to fake organizations."

Quinn, who is openly lesbian, admitted in April that the council has appropriated some \$17.4 million dollars since 2001 to groups that didn't exist, listed in the budget under made-up names like the Coalition for Strong Special Education and Senior Citizens for Equality.

After the story was first reported in the *New York Post*, Quinn said she first learned about the practice of faking budget appropriations last spring while working on the fiscal 2008 budget plan.

The maneuver of setting aside "reserve funds," which could then be doled out later in the year, dates back at least 20 years, she said. Using phony names to conceal where the money was going goes back to 2001, she said.

Quinn insisted that she ordered an end to the reserve fund practice when she learned of it, but said her staff kept doing it anyway. She said she did not know it was still going on, and that bogus names had been faked in the budget, until a few months ago when the council was pulling together information at the request of federal and city investigators for a broader probe into council finances.

"I was obviously deeply troubled when I found out about this information. I had no knowledge of it," she said. "It's something that I believe is completely inappropriate and should not have gone on and will no longer go on."

Quinn's chances to become a viable candidate for Mayor of New York City may be harmed if opponents can use this against her.

However, the AP quoted one commentator as saying that Quinn could benefit if she positions herself as the whistle-blower trying to end shady practices.

(NewsFronts continues on page 14)

NewsFronts

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Arizona to give domestic partnership benefits to state employees

The Arizona Governor's Regulatory Review Council unanimously voted on April 1 to provide domestic partner benefits to unmarried state employees. The extension of benefits is scheduled to become effective in October 2008.

"This is exciting news, and great news for same-sex couples in Arizona and their families," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "GLBT state employees in Arizona work just as hard as their straight counterparts. Today's action sends a clear signal that they deserve to receive equal benefits for their work."

Arizona would become the 15th state, plus Washington, D.C., to provide domestic partner benefits to state employees. To learn more about state-by-state laws, visit the HRC Laws and Elections section online: http://www.hrc.org/laws_and_elections/state.asp.

The Human Rights Campaign congratulated Equality Arizona, the state GLBT advocacy group, for their work in achieving this result for same-sex couples and their families.

ENDA, hate crimes bills face trouble in Congress

Supporters of two gay-related bills before Congress say that the measures will probably not clear the Senate before the body adjourns this fall.

The House of Representatives passed ENDA (Employment Non Discrimination Act) and the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2007. Although Democrats now have a majority in Congress, the two bills may not pass the Senate this year, as supporters had hoped.

Capitol Hill insiders told the *Washington Blade* that the bills face problems including threats of a Republican filibuster, the upcoming distraction of election year politics, and insufficient time on the Senate calendar to schedule a large number of competing bills.

The hate crimes bill, which would allow the federal government to prosecute anti-gay and transgender hate crimes, may be held up by Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), who, according to some Republican lawmakers, does not want to bring it to a vote for fear of helping the re-election chances of moderate Republicans who support the bill.

Reid's spokesperson Jim Manley denied that claim and said that Reid is working with Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) to determine the best timing to bring the bills forward, whether to attach them to other legislation which the President would be reluctant to veto, and whether there are enough votes for passage. Manley said that Senate Republican leaders are the problem, since they are threatening a filibuster to block both the hate crimes bill and ENDA, both of which President Bush has said he would veto if passed. Democrats would need 60 votes to end a filibuster.

Log Cabin Republicans said they would oppose a Republican filibuster, and that they want Congress to pass both bills this year; they blamed the hold up on Democratic leaders.

Gay rights organizations have called on Congress to pass the hate crimes bill in spite of the threat of veto, saying that a Bush veto would tend to harm Republican election chances, since the bill enjoys widespread bipartisan support.

ENDA would ban job discrimination by private sector employers based on sexual orientation. An attempt to include transgender protections was defeated last year, causing a major controversy and making many transgender and gay activists reject the strategy of the Human Rights Campaign, which first promised support for a trans-inclusive version and then abandoned that commitment in a futile attempt to pass the bill.

HRC's director of field operations, Marty Rouse, has been quoted as saying in a leaked memo that it would be best to wait for an ENDA vote until 2009, when chances of passage of a trans-inclusive bill would be better. HRC spokesperson Brad Luna said that Rouse's memo did not speak for HRC.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has called on Congress to pass only a trans-inclusive version of ENDA, and said that an exclusionary bill would not be acceptable.

-*The Washington Blade*

Gay executives meet to discuss challenges

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people remain under-represented in top corporate executive positions based on the small number of openly LGBT C-suite executives at Fortune 500 companies.

The first annual Out & Equal Executive Forum, held in San Francisco in April

and gathering 24 high-ranking corporate executives from diverse industries, discussed this challenge and the potential to continue increasing LGBT representation at the top levels of leading companies.

Participants discussed the unique challenges of being openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in management positions, the barriers to more equitable representation, the competing demands of business interests and personal interests and ways to build a network and support one another despite coming from different industrial or service sectors of the marketplace. Over the course of the program, the executives dedicated themselves to being more visible as LGBT people and role models for other executives or potential executives who may fear that coming out will cost them opportunities for success.

"This is the first step toward our goal of all executives being free to live and work authentically," said Out & Equal Executive Director Selisse Berry.

"Our hope is that we have created a space and a network that will ripple outward from this event, allowing more and more LGBT executives to be open about who they are, as well as the hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide who look to them as an example of how to be successful while being true to oneself."

"Being with other openly LGBT executives was a rare and unique opportunity," said Donna Griffin, Managing Director at Chubb.

"Seeing other executives who are facing the same challenges, and have the same kinds of intimidation, the same kinds of excitement, and the same kinds of opportunity was very exciting for me," said Ken McNeely, President of AT&T California. "It was very rewarding to see my peer group around the country and very encouraging."

"It felt as if something special has begun," said Melinda Haag, an executive with Crowe Chizek and Company, LLC. "We have all committed -- to each other and to the people who are not here and those people who may come after us -- to keep this going."

The event was held at Hotel Vitale and featured keynote speakers Rayona Sharpnack, founder of the Institute for Women's Leadership; Chip Conley, founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre; Maggie Stumpp, Chief Investment Officer of Prudential; Kenneth McNeely, President of AT&T California; and Donna Griffin, Managing Director of Chubb. Christie Hardwick served as moderator.

Executives who participated included Ed Baklor, Senior Vice President, Adventures by Disney (Burbank, Calif.); Selisse Berry, Executive Director, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates (San Francisco, Calif.); Scott Beth, Vice President of Procurement and Order Management, Intuit (Mountain View, Calif.); Tara Bunch, Vice President Global Consumer Support and Service, Hewlett-Packard Company (Fort Collins, Colo.); Jim Freeman, Vice President, IBM Global Services, IBM (San Francisco, Calif.); Michael Garrison,

Director of Marketing, Global Services, Dell Inc. (Austin, Texas); Donna Griffin, Managing Director, Chubb (Warren, NJ); Melinda Haag, Executive, Crowe Chizek and Company, LLC (Chicago, IL); Jane Harper, Director, Collaborative Innovation, IBM (Half Moon Bay, Calif.); Julie A. Hogan, Vice President, Xerox Services, Pacific Region, Xerox Corporation (Pleasanton, Calif.); Michael Jungen, Director/ Ticketing & Gift Card Services, Walt Disney Parks & Resorts (Celebration, Fla.); George A. Kalogridis, Chief Operating Officer, Disneyland Resort Paris (Paris, France); Judy Lively, MD, Physician-in-Chief, Diablo Service Area, The Permanente Medical Group (Sebastopol, Calif.); Uxio Malvido, EMEAC Diversity and Work Environment Leader, Merck & Co (Madrid, Spain); Pat Martel, City Manager, City of Daly City (Daly City, Calif.); Cynthia Martin, retired Vice President Blue Shield of California and Eastman Kodak (Berkeley, Calif.); Kenneth McNeely, President, AT&T California, AT&T (San Francisco, Calif.); Tom Moore, Partner, Ernst & Young LLP (San Francisco, Calif.); Steve Sears, Vice President Marketing, Stacy's Pita Chip Co. (Randolph, Mass.); Rayona Sharpnack, Founder, Institute for Women's Leadership (Redwood City, Calif.); Kayla Shell, Legal Director, Dell Inc. (Round Rock, Texas); Michael Welch, Partner & Chief Financial Officer, Stephan Pyles Concepts (Dallas, Texas); Gary Wright, Distinguished Engineer, IBM (Tacoma, Wa.)

In addition to the Executive Forum, Out & Equal offers a wide array of programs and services to promote LGBT workplace equality. Upcoming activities from Out & Equal include the First Annual Out & Equal Dinner and Gala, June 12, 2008, Hotel Nikko, San Francisco; and the 2008 Out & Equal Workplace Summit -- the world's premier conference on LGBT workplace equality -- Sept. 10-13, 2008, Austin Convention Center, Austin, Texas.

Study: Same sex marriage would positively impact Iowa budget by 5.3 million

On April 17, the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law released a new research study estimating that same-sex marriage in Iowa, if permitted, would have a positive impact on the state budget of approximately \$5.3 million annually.

This net impact will be the result of an increase in state income and sales tax revenue as well as savings in expenditures on state means-tested public benefit programs. The full text of the report is available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/IowaFiscalImpact.pdf>

"This study demonstrates that equal marriage rights for same-sex couples are not only good for those couples, but they're good for the state budget," noted co-author Lee Badgett, the research direc-

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tor of the Williams Institute. "Iowa's policymakers do not need to worry about the impact of this policy change on the state's fiscal health."

In calculating the net benefit to the State, the study approximates that half of Iowa's 5,833 same-sex couples, or 2,917 couples, would marry in the first three years of being able. The study estimates that the state would see an increase in income tax revenue of over \$1.2 million per year, but a loss of approximately \$1.4 million in inheritance tax revenue. The study also finds that same-sex weddings and associated tourism would generate \$160 million in spending over three years, providing a boon to the state economy. Further due to this spending, the state would see an increase in sales tax revenue of about \$2.7 million per year.

In addition to overall increased tax revenue, the study finds that same-sex marriage in Iowa would result in a decrease in state expenditures on means-tested public benefits programs, saving the State at least \$100,000 per year and as much as \$2.8 million. The study also concludes that the impact of permitting same-sex couples to marry on the cost of state employee retirement benefits would be negligible. Negligible effects would also be felt in state court and administrative systems because fees paid by couples will cover any costs generated by same-sex marriage.

The Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy advances law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates its work through a variety of education programs and media to judges, legislators, lawyers, other policy makers and the public. This study can be accessed at the Williams Institute website, www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute.

Houston transgender employee "deception" case may go to trial

The District Court for the Southern District of Texas on April 4 denied motions for summary judgment from both sides in the case of a transgender woman who found her job offer from a Houston medical clinic withdrawn after a background check disclosed her sex as male.

Both Lambda Legal, representing 27-year-old Izza Lopez, and attorneys for River Oaks Imaging and Diagnostic had asked the judge for summary judgment, a ruling issued without trial based on undisputed facts. The court's denial of summary judgment means the case will proceed first to mediation, and if no resolution is reached, then to trial.

"Neither we nor attorneys for River Oaks dispute the basic facts in the case, which we feel strongly support Izza's claims, so we're disappointed the court denied our motion for partial summary judgment," said Cole Thaler, Lambda Legal Transgender Rights Attorney. "But we're very pleased at the points the court

made in reaching its decision. This court followed the lead of other courts by ruling that transgender employees may advance sex-stereotyping claims. The court agreed that Izza never misrepresented herself in any sense, and rejected River Oaks' claim that transgender people have a duty to disclose their biological sex to employers."

In her 31-page decision, Judge Nancy Atlas wrote, "Lopez has presented ample evidence... to show that her conduct did not constitute the 'misrepresentation' the company claims. Although Lopez listed only her adopted name on her resume, she listed both her adopted and legal names on her job application. In addition, Lopez listed 'Raul Lopez' as her 'Full Name' and 'Izza Lopez' as an 'Other Name Used' on her background check forms."

The court also rejected River Oaks' claim that "any person who dresses in a manner inconsistent with traditional gender stereotypes is necessarily deceptive."

In September 2005, Lopez applied for the position of scheduler with River Oaks Imaging and Diagnostic, a medical imaging company in Houston. Lopez sent in her resume, was invited in for an interview, completed a background check and drug test, and on October 4, 2005, she was asked to start work as soon as possible. On October 10, however, Lopez received a phone call from River Oaks' human resources director and one of its employment recruiters saying that River Oaks was rescinding its offer of employment because of her "misrepresentation" of herself as a woman. Lopez was unable to get her previous job back and was without employment for several months.

Lambda Legal filed I in the Southern District of Texas in the Fifth Circuit of the federal court system. The lawsuit charges that River Oaks violated Lopez's rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in employment.

Lambda Legal Transgender Rights Attorney Cole Thaler is lead counsel on the case and Ken Upton, Senior Staff Attorney in Lambda Legal's South Central Regional Office in Dallas, is assisting him.

Change is in the wind for the Methodist Church, ministry says

The Methodists are coming! Not by horseback as their founder, John Wesley, did in his circuit riding days, when Wesley traveled more than 200,000 miles, but by plane, train, and automobile.

Almost 1,000 elected United Methodist delegates are coming -- half clergy and half lay members -- from around the world and have arrived in Fort Worth, Texas for legislative sessions beginning April 23 and running through May 2. Once every four years, delegates and several thousand support staff and observers gather to sing, pray, praise, argue and vote on policies. It is a Christian tradition.

The United Methodist Church, with

eight million members, is second only to Baptists among Protestants and tends to mirror the attitudes of the broader culture in the United States. As such, the United Methodist Church has become a key battleground between conservative and progressive forces, with gay issues at the center.

Supporters of full inclusion point to the United Methodist slogan, "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors," and ask why there is a double standard for gay and transgender Christians. Opponents promise a split if gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people are accepted. In 2004, members of Confessing Movement, a conservative Methodist organization, proposed "amicable" separation and sent shockwaves through the church.

Related events during the last four years, since the last General Conference, include: In 2005 the Good News conservative caucus urged managers of Lake Junaluska United Methodist Conference center to not allow a meeting of Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) which supports full inclusion. The Ku Klux Klan protested the meeting in North Carolina and 43 United Methodist Bishops followed up with letters supporting RMN.

In a 5-4 majority, the Judicial Council -- the United Methodist supreme court, led by Bush surgeon general nominee Jim Holsinger -- made moderates and progressives cringe at its conservative judicial activism, when Holsinger led the way on a decision to allow a local pastor to block membership to an openly gay man in Virginia.

Transgender pastor The Reverend Drew Phoenix was reassigned in good standing to St. John's United Methodist Church; when members of the conference brought charges to have Rev. Phoenix removed from his charge, the Judicial Council reluctantly ruled that a pastor in good standing could not be removed.

"At stake now, for the first time, is basic church membership for gay persons," said Troy Plummer, executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network. "The Holsinger court let a pastor refuse membership to a gay man. The Council of Bishops unanimously opposed this unfair decision, but when the court had the opportunity to revisit its decision, it refused."

"We have to remember," Plummer said, "Jim Holsinger published an anti-gay paper in the 1980s when he was part of a United Methodist taskforce on gay people in the church, and then resigned from the taskforce when the majority was ready to recommend basic civil rights for gay people. The paper, which surfaced after his nomination to the post of U.S. surgeon general, was so unprofessional that his nomination stalled."

"A statement in support of basic civil rights for gay people is still in the Book of Discipline (the book of official policies)," Plummer said, "but that positive statement is the exception. The Discipline forbids ordaining openly gay people, it bans funding any group that supports the

acceptance of gay people and it prevents people from marrying the person of their choice.

"This year, the church may add transgender clergy to their list of banned people," Plummer said. "Delegates will also decide if clergy should be banned from blessing gay families, and they will decide if campus ministries are forbidden to discuss gay and transgender issues or forbidden to allow gay groups to meet in their buildings."

"But things are changing. Even though insults have been added to injuries every four years for thirty years, the margins of the votes are moving in our direction," said Plummer. "In 2004 the split was 45 to 55 percent on key votes. With a 5-percent shift, the policies will change and young people may lead the way. A recent Barna Group survey revealed that 80 percent of evangelical young adults felt their churches had 'excessive contempt' for gay people and felt that churches were 'hypocritical.' Change is coming."

Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is an independent movement of Methodists who advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons in the church. RMN is planning a series of events to challenge and educate delegates, including a keynote by The Reverend Bill Taylor, who was put on leave from his United Methodist congregation when he wouldn't condemn his gay son; a transgender panel and press conference (co-sponsored with Affirmation) and a 24-hour drumming and youth rally.

Gays urge D.A. to charge alleged Lawrence King murderer as minor

A coalition of 27 groups fighting for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights is urging Ventura County, Calif. prosecutors to try 14-year-old Brandon McInerney in juvenile court, and not as an adult.

McInerney has been charged as an adult in the Feb. 12 murder of his E.O. Green Middle School classmate, 15-year-old Lawrence King. Students say McInerney targeted King because the victim was openly gay and because he wore women's jewelry and makeup.

LGBT civil rights organizations, including Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Transgender Law Center, have delivered a short statement to Ventura County District Attorney Gregory D. Totten, calling on him to try McInerney as a juvenile.

"We are saddened and outraged by the murder of junior high school student Lawrence King," the statement reads. "At the same time, we call on prosecutors not to compound this tragedy with another wrong. We call on them to treat the suspect as a juvenile, not as an adult."

"The facts in this matter seem clear: one boy killed another in a climate of intolerance and fear about sexual orienta-

(NewsFronts continues on page 15)



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Interview



Ozzie Maldonado and Lance Neve. Photo: Ove Overmyer

Lance Neve is fighting back

By Ove Overmyer

A city man is still recovering from serious injuries, including a skull fracture, more than seven weeks after he was beaten up, allegedly because he is gay. Despite his temporary disabilities, Lance Neve, 26, said nothing is going to stop him from getting justice in this case.

Lance grew up in Spencerport and has never had a problem going anywhere. He would be the first to tell you he's all "hugs and handshakes." He and his partner, Ozzie Maldonado, 28, live in northwest Rochester. He said that every time he's out these days, he can't help but look over his shoulder.

According to Ogden police reports, Lance was with Ozzie and another friend at Snuggery's Bar in Spencerport the night of March 7. They allegedly were subjected to derogatory comments throughout the night from Jesse D. Parsons, 24, of Spencerport. On several occasions, Parsons called Neve "fag" and the couple "fag-gots".

About 1 a.m. on March 8, Parsons apparently asked to shake Neve's hand because he had "never shaken a fag's hand before," according to Ogden police Investigator Scott Okolowicz. Neve politely refused, not wanting anything to do with the heavily intoxicated patron. When Lance ignored him, Parsons then allegedly grabbed Neve and beat him to a pulp.

When police arrived, Lance was unconscious. He was transported to Strong Memorial Hospital, where he was treated for a fractured skull, nose, left eye socket and upper jawbone and blood on the brain.

Parsons, who is facing a charge of second-degree assault designated as a hate crime, was arrested and arraigned on March 16. According to Ogden police reports, he was remanded to the Monroe County Jail on \$30,000 bond or \$15,000 cash bail. The Monroe County District Attorney's office has assigned ADA Perry Duckles to prosecute the case.

By request, *The Empty Closet* sat down with Lance and Ozzie at Spot Coffee on a recent Saturday afternoon to see how they were progressing. This is Lance's story, in his own words.

EC: How are you doing right now?

LN: I'm pretty much healed, thank you very much. But I still have a long way to go -- I'm scheduled for plastic surgery in May and my doctor won't let me do too much. I still can't drive. I haven't worked in a while, and Ozzie is basically taking care of me. This thing has brought us even closer together.

EC: What can you remember from that night?

LN: We were in the bar minding our own business. This guy overheard me

introduce Ozzie as my boyfriend. He was very drunk. I was punched and I went to the floor. The guy continued to beat my head into the floor.

I didn't remember much until I woke up at Strong Hospital with a tube down my throat and my arms tied to the bed. I was almost beaten to death. If I don't stand up to this, who will? I am strong willed and will see this through.

EC: What was it like waking up in a hospital bed and what were you thinking at that time?

LN: I had fractures in my face and skull. I was in a lot of pain. I remember Ozzie being there and then I remember talking to the news reporter from NBC-TV. I was thinking I'm glad it wasn't Ozzie who was attacked. I was also thinking that this stuff only happens in the movies.

EC: Mainstream news media can be very fickle about reporting incidents like this. Why did your story make the news?

LN: My best friend Julie Emmons called Channel 10 to tell them what happened to me. At first, Ozzie was going to do the talking, thinking that I couldn't. I told them I am not ashamed of anything -- let them see me and what this guy did to me.

EC: You told the TV news reporter that you feel bad for your attacker. You were reported as saying, "If maybe you would've got to know me as a person I guarantee this wouldn't have happened. We could've been pretty good friends." Don't you think there are people out there that would disagree with you, that some individuals can't be persuaded to accept gay people? What would you say to them?

LN: First of all, the news reporter got my statement twisted. What I was trying to say was that most reasonable people who know me know that I am again, all hugs and handshakes. I know some people will never accept it. But I think if you give me a chance I could show them who I am.

EC: It's shocking to think someone could do this to a person, to people who identify as gay. How is the criminal prosecution against Parsons going and how is it working with the District Attorney's office?

LN: Assistant District Attorney Perry Duckles and the police have been absolutely wonderful. They asked me what I wanted out of this and I said, I will take it all the way. You never really get totally over something like this, and people have to know that they don't have to take it. It is nice to know the state laws are there to protect us, and that somebody cares. I believe in the justice system we have.

EC: Has this episode in your life made an activist out of you?

LN: I guess so. I am willing to speak about this to anyone who wants to listen. This should never happen to anyone. If I can help anyone who has been a victim of crime better deal with it, I can give back. I would consider it a gift to do so.

EC: I heard you passed out educational leaflets about lgbt issues at the Spencerport Post Office in March. How was that experience?

LN: It was great. I met some wonderful people that day.

EC: Have you been recognized out

and about?

LN: One day Ozzie and I were shopping for rings and this elderly woman who I've never met came up to me and held my hand, looked me in the eye and said, "What happened to you was disgusting. I'm praying for you." People have come up to me in the supermarket too and have said kind things. Everyone has been very positive for the most part.

EC: What would you like to say to the readers of *The Empty Closet*?

LN: I am inspired by all the caring people I have met. It's good to know you don't have to go through this alone. ■



Pam Barres, Ed Roselene and Anne Tischer leaflet about the hate crime issue at the Spencerport post office on March 29. Photo: Bess Watts

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(Hate Crimes from page 1)

The two victims, who do identify as lesbian, told police they were leaving a Park Ave. bar when they were attacked by two strangers, Ortiz and Vega, who shouted anti-gay epithets. Ortiz was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor of third-degree assault, but refused an offer to plead guilty.

A grand jury indicted her, as well as Vega, on charges that the assault was committed as a hate crime, elevating the allegation to a felony. The legislation allowing such a charge was enacted by the state legislature in 2000.

The case is viewed as historical because it is believed to be the first in Monroe County where a defendant was criminally charged with committing a hate crime against gays or lesbians.

State law says people are guilty of hate crimes when they intentionally commit specified crimes, such as murder, assault, rape, robbery or larceny, "because of a belief or perception regarding the race, color, national origin, ancestry, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation of a person."

Ortiz's lawyer, John DeMarco, told media sources that he didn't believe the incident rose to the level of a hate crime. DeMarco also said there was insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the dispute was motivated by hate.

In a *Democrat & Chronicle* report, DeMarco said, "Jurors heard evidence that had not been presented to a grand jury: that one of the alleged victims was highly intoxicated and was the initial aggressor in the altercation and that neither victim told police initially that they had been targeted because of their sexual orientation. I think the facts in this case were very thin," said Ortiz's lawyer.

Appellate Court ruling

The Appellate Division of state Supreme Court ruled that Monroe County Court Judge Frank P. Geraci Jr. erred when he dropped the hate-crime element of an assault charge against the women in the Park Ave incident, reducing the charge to a misdemeanor of third-degree assault.

The appellate court's written decision said, "The grand jury evidence established that defendants were strangers to the victims; the crime was unprovoked by the victims; defendants began to beat the victims after inquiring about the victims' relationship; both during and after the incident, defendants repeatedly made derogatory comments concerned the sexual orientation of the victims; and they spat on one of the victims as they fled the scene."

Gargan told *The Empty Closet*, "Obviously we did not agree with Judge Geraci's previous ruling. We thought the way the judge interpreted the law would preclude our bringing other hate crimes to trial, especially for these two women in this case. The District Attorney's office has the right to appeal, and I'm glad for the appellate court ruling."

As for the Ortiz verdict, Gargan said,

"The case is now officially sealed. You have to respect the decision of the jury."

Gargan also stated, "It was the work of Gay Alliance that showed us there was more to this case than a misdemeanor. The Gay Alliance worked with the victims and came to us and we re-evaluated the case. We then realized that there was more to this. The defense wanted the jury to believe that the Gay Alliance's advocacy efforts were also on trial."

Gargan said that the case originally went to the grand jury when the DA indicted the two individuals for assault in the third degree (causing physical harm) as a hate crime, which would take the level of the offense from a misdemeanor up to a class 4 felony.

After Geraci reviewed testimony before the grand jury, he said he found insufficient evidence of a hate crime and ruled in April 2007 that the charge should be reduced to third-degree assault. The case was put on hold while Gargan and the District Attorney's Office appealed.

The Appellate Division, however, said it found sufficient evidence to sustain the hate-crime charge.

An identical charge of this hate crime as a felony is pending against Ortiz's co-defendant, Carmen Vega, 29.

Spencerport beating under review

A Spencerport man is still recovering from serious injuries, including a skull fracture, after he was beaten up at a bar allegedly because he is gay.

On March 7, Jesse D. Parsons, 24, allegedly harassed Lance Neve and his partner at a Spencerport bar, finally asking to shake Neve's hand because he had never shaken a gay man's hand, said Ogden police Investigator Scott Okolowicz. Neve politely refused, and Parsons then allegedly grabbed Neve and beat him up. Neve's injuries also included a broken nose, an injured eye and blood on the brain. He was treated at Strong, and will need future medical procedures.


A prosecutor has been named in the Neve case, but it has been not determined whether the defendant will be prosecuted under the NYS hate crimes statute.

A group of activists, including Neve, passed out literature at the Spencerport Post Office on March 29 to help educate the community about hate crime. On the whole the reaction from passers-by was favorable.

Gay Alliance reaction

Christopher Hinesley, executive director of the Gay Alliance, calls these recent crimes ugly and violent. He said, "They show that gays and lesbians are targets for violent people, and they reinforce the need for effective use of hate crime status for violent crimes against people who are targeted because they are vulnerable or different. Assistant District Attorney Gargan has been a tremendous ally to gays and lesbians in Rochester. The case in Spencerport is a tragedy for the victim and for all of us who work hard to end bias and hate. We will continue to work for safer schools and workplaces so these crimes

(Hate Crimes continues on page 8)





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(Hate Crimes continued from page 7)
become less and less common.”

FBI: hate crimes on rise

The 2006 FBI Hate Crime Statistics showed an 18 percent increase in hate crimes against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. LGBT people now make up 16 percent of hate crimes reported in the United States.

About 40 percent of gay men and lesbian women say they have been victims of hate violence at some point in their adult lives, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. ■

10 Reasons Why People Don't Report Bias/Hate Violence, Harassment

By Kelly Baumgartner

- 1.) Distrust of law enforcement and fear one will be further victimized by responding officers if perceived as LGBTQI
- 2.) Fear of seeming weak
- 3.) Fear of repercussions from perp
- 4.) Feeling like incident isn't severe enough to warrant reporting
- 5.) Embarrassment about situation surrounding incident
- 6.) Fear of being "outed" to family, friends, employer and community
- 7.) Fear of further abuse by medical personnel who may be homophobic
- 8.) Belief that "nothing will be done anyway" because the justice system is prejudiced against the LGBTQI community
- 9.) Feeling that the LGBTQI community doesn't deserve protection/justice
- 10.) Feeling of isolation and that there is probably no support available

10 Reasons Why People Should Report Hate

- 1.) Self respect and self empowerment: believing that the LGBTQ commu-

- nity does deserve protection/justice
- 2.) To receive needed support; legal, counseling, LGBTQI friendly medical or dental care etc.
- 3.) To help keep community safe from those who may be serial offenders, adding to local statistics proving that changes are needed in felony assault and hate crime laws
- 4.) To help GAGV track trends of violence in and towards the community, so they can push for change
- 5.) To claim possible reimbursement for lost or damaged property, medical costs, counseling expenses, and lost earnings
- 6.) Your report may provide a friend with the strength to do the same
- 7.) To prevent recurrence of violence to self
- 8.) To help local law enforcement track serial violence in area so they can take action to prevent further incidents and will take hate crimes seriously
- 9.) To help compile national statistics on LGBTQ hate crimes that could be used to pass federal hate crime legislation
- 10.) To show the straight community that LGBTQ people have traditionally been terrorized and even killed; that to condone homophobia is actually to support the violence and that we are not taking it anymore ■

(Moore continued from page 1)

trainings will be the roll call video, which will be produced by the RPD communications section and shown over ETIN. One officer creates the videos, working with an artist; the communications section works with WXXI to produce their videotapes.

The ETIN Network is the law enforcement channel, which can be viewed only at headquarters, at the Eastern and Western subdivisions, and at all of the mini-stations, such as Special Ops on Child St.

Chief Moore said that the video will also be shown at the Police Academy and will be part of normal training for recruits.

Also, a page will be added to the RPD's external website, describing the role of Officer Jim Hall and his affiliation. The website, www.rochesternypolice.com, is currently being updated to include the new page.

Chief Moore said, "We constantly evaluate the department's training. We're committed to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the lgbt community. It's about people and it's all about establishing trust. That's very important to me – to establish personal relationships – because when strangers sit down and try to talk it's usually a problem. I want to do whatever we can do in the department to strengthen relationships."

Moore acknowledged, "We have some challenges, especially in the area of finances. Every officer needs to be trained, which is why I like videos. Everyone gets the same material and it takes about 20 minutes. We realize we have a long way to go. My intent is to make sure that the Rochester community keeps moving forward. It's a great place to work."

The issue of trust

The word "trust" kept recurring as a major part of Moore's concerns. As an African American who graduated from high school in Camden, N.J., one of the most violent towns in the country, he understands the reasons why people, especially so-called minorities, often mistrust the police.

"When people ask me about the issue of mistrust," he said, "I say that 'no snitch' happened as a reaction to an aggressive approach to the community. Zero Tolerance is all over the community, and is not targeting one particular group. I went on many media circuits talking about how Zero Tolerance is about quality of life, and when people understand that, they accept it."

"We need to be mindful that we work for the community and our mission is to make the law apply equally to everyone. We look at every citizen with their uniqueness with one thing in mind – upholding their constitutional rights. We will be tough on crime, but within the Constitution. That's a precious part of our heritage."

Goodman St. internal investigation

Chief Moore also commented on last year's Goodman St. incident, one result of which was that six officers became part of an internal investigation to determine whether they violated department policies.

Although state law mandates that the names, specific violations and disciplines of officers found to have violated regulations must be kept confidential, Moore said, "I promise you I will make a general statement when the arbitration process is finished. We have been working with the law department and the union. This is truly the last phase."

"All information on the internal investigation will go to an outside arbitrator; each individual officer has the right to have an arbitrator. The arbitrators will present to me whether they feel there has been a violation of policy and will recommend discipline, if misconduct is found.... The Chief is the final arbitrator; I will make the final decision. It's a very tricky and touchy process. It takes a long period of time because of the complexity of the facts and because there are six officers involved. I said at the press conference last July that I have concerns about several officers' conduct. All of the officers are back on regular patrol, pending the outcome. The process is so long that I didn't feel I could keep them off patrol for such a long time."

"I am very confident that we've done everything to make sure that the officers are given due process. Jim Hall has reached out to the victims to keep them informed about what is going on." ■

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Opinion

10 things you should know about John McCain (but probably don't)

By *MoveOn.org*

1. John McCain voted against establishing a national holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Now he says his position has "evolved," yet he has continued to oppose key civil rights laws.¹

2. According to Bloomberg News, McCain is more hawkish than Bush on Iraq, Russia and China. Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan says McCain "will make Cheney look like Gandhi."²

3. His reputation is built on his opposition to torture, but McCain voted against a bill to ban waterboarding, and then applauded President Bush for vetoing that ban.³

4. McCain opposes a woman's right to choose. He said, "I do not support Roe versus Wade. It should be overturned."⁴

5. The Children's Defense Fund rated McCain as the worst senator in Congress for children. He voted against the children's health care bill last year, then defended Bush's veto of the bill.⁵

6. He's one of the richest people in a Senate filled with millionaires. The Associated Press reports he and his wife own at least eight homes! Yet McCain says the solution to the housing crisis is for people facing foreclosure to get a "second job" and skip their vacations.⁶

7. Many of McCain's fellow Republican senators say he's too reckless to be commander in chief. One Republican

senator said: "The thought of his being president sends a cold chill down my spine. He's erratic. He's hotheaded. He loses his temper and he worries me."⁷

8. McCain talks a lot about taking on special interests, but his campaign manager and top advisers are actually lobbyists. The government watchdog group Public Citizen says McCain has 59 lobbyists raising money for his campaign, more than any of the other presidential candidates.⁸

9. McCain has sought closer ties to the extreme religious right in recent years. The pastor McCain calls his "spiritual guide," Rod Parsley, believes America's founding mission is to destroy Islam, which he calls a "false religion." McCain sought the political support of right-wing preacher John Hagee, who believes Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for gay rights and called the Catholic Church "the Antichrist" and a "false cult."⁹

10. He positions himself as pro-environment, but he scored a 0 — yes, zero — from the League of Conservation Voters last year.¹⁰

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Record memories of Albert Wurzer

Albert Wurzer passed away in April and is mourned by many friends. His sister Pat Brown says that anyone with special memories of her late brother is invited to write those memories on a special website. She said, "For the next 60 days (starting April 22), you can go on a web site and write a short message. Please feel free to write as often as you want. Somehow it seems to comfort me for a few moments."

To access the site, go to:

www.newcomerfamily.com
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Tax Day 2008



PHOTO: DENISE FINNERTY

TAX DAY: Over two dozen people demonstrated in front of the Jefferson Rd. Post Office on April 15, Tax Day, for the second year, organized by SAME (Social Action for Marriage Equality) and Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church. Protestors said they pay equal or higher taxes and deserve equal marriage rights. Federal tax laws penalize same sex couples by forcing them to pay unfairly high taxes that straight couples do not have to pay. Most passers-by waved and honked their approval; very few indicated hostility. Early in the demonstration, a young man shook hands with each protestor and thanked them for being there.



PHOTO: OSCAR DURAND



PHOTO: DENISE FINNERTY



PHOTO: OSCAR DURAND



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The Art of Giving: Five check writers who help make our local movement possible

By Ove Overmyer

The power of a signature can literally change a movement for generations to come -- when carefully applied to a money transfer or personal checkbook. No doubt there are many people in our area who give way beyond their means.

However, five local citizens immediately come to mind -- a couple, two men and a woman -- who have been invested in keeping their names out of the lime-light to allow the lucky recipients of their efforts to take center stage, when fighting for major victories at the ballot box, in the courts or on the streets of our community. These people put their money where their mouths are -- and their actions speak more loudly than their words.

In the past three decades, gay philanthropies such as the Horizon Foundation, Pride Foundation and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice have helped shape today's lesbian and gay community, funneling millions of dollars into numerous HIV/AIDS treatment services, civil rights, social advocacy and political campaigns.

According to a group that advises grant makers, New York-based Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues, grants made to gay organizations nationwide have more than doubled from under \$30 million in 2002 to \$65.5 million in 2006.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement has traditionally depended on smaller, grassroots donations for specific causes. However, more aging philanthropists are making end-of-life gifts to help secure the future of their communities.

Here is a sample of some generous local folks who have made an impressive impact on the Rochester community.

Arnie Pegish

An Irondequoit native who passed away in 2007, Pegish gave significant amounts of money to civic groups in his hometown for years, often preferring to remain anonymous. However, it was only after his death that the magnitude of his generosity became clear with a bequest from his estate to the Gay Alliance.

This money guarantees an immediate and long-term impact on the work and mission of the Gay Alliance, with funds being earmarked for a community center facility to house all the agency's programs and services.

From working in a grocery store as a younger man to owning a successful bar called the Bachelor Forum in the Neighborhood of the Arts, Arnie was a true lover of mankind. He seemed to have a knack for getting things done -- he initially helped AIDS Rochester find a facil-

ity back in the early days when they were a struggling entity and in the early '90s he helped the Gay Alliance find a home at their first community center at 179 Atlantic Ave.

Arnie's primary focus for many years was helping gay youth. Their plight and their need for services occupied his thoughts, his heart, and his soul right up until his death less than a year ago.

Emily Jones

An Eastman Kodak retiree, Ms. Jones is another major giver to lgbt groups at the local, state and national level. She can be best described as having "unparalleled quiet dignity."

A former Gay Alliance Board President and major player with the Human Rights Campaign and Out and Equal, Emily has helped green light many local projects with her generous financial support and organizational acumen.

Today, the activist is still fully engaged. Not only does she give her money to help worthy causes, but Emily also donates her time by lobbying our lawmakers in Albany and Washington in the ongoing battle for lgbt equality. A crucial source of stability for the agency, she has also found a place for the Gay Alliance in her will.

Mark Siwec and Duffy Palmer

Longtime Empire State Pride Agenda activists, Mark and Duffy have parlayed their professional and personal career skills to the benefit of every New Yorker who demands political and social justice. As Rochester's ultimate power couple, they have directed countless thousands of dollars to help lgbt-friendly candidates get elected and have been instrumental in shaping state and local governmental policy.

Mark is widely considered the top realtor in the Rochester real estate market. He is a member of the Rochester Economic Development Corporation Board who was appointed by Mayor Robert Duffy and serves on the New York State Association of Realtors, appointed by former Governor Eliot Spitzer. He is also a member of the Strong National Museum of Play Board of Trustees and the Co-chair of the Rochester Area Community Foundation's 2008 Evening Out At Home.

Duffy Palmer, a retired teacher, has been co-chair of the Empire State Pride Agenda Board for many years and received their Community Service Award in 2007. Palmer was appointed by Governor Eliot Spitzer to work as a Deputy Director of Education and continues to be an effective agent of change in Albany.

Siwec's and Palmer's kindness and philanthropy stem from a sense of civic



The late Arnie Pegish

self-sacrifice. They have opened up their hearts and their home for many successful fundraisers. More importantly, they have opened up their wallets to make Rochester and Monroe County a better

place to live.

Michael Robertson

Michael Robertson is a library software specialist who retired from RIT a few years ago. Michael is also a past Gay Alliance Board President who has consistently supported political and social justice issues since the early 1970s.

Recently, Michael has taken on the task of digitizing past issues of the Gay Alliance's *Empty Closet* newspaper and has contributed financially over several years to keep the Alliance properly funded.

Mr. Robertson has also made arrangements to give an end-of-life gift to the agency. Michael is truly a pillar in the foundation he helps to create -- an activist community which recognizes the need to advocate, educate and celebrate. ■



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Shoulders To Stand On: May is Women's History Month

By Evelyn Bailey

This month, Shoulders To Stand On will focus on the women in our early period, 1971-1972, who made history by speaking openly about their sexual orientation at a time when the American Psychiatric Association identified homosexuality as a diagnosable mental disorder in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II).

In order to understand the extraordinary risks that Patti Evans, Karen Hagberg, "Mike" and Rosanne took, you need to understand the times in which these women lived. The mere fact that of these four, only two used both their real first and last names, is an indication of the fear of reprisal that existed within the community. This was true for men as well.

Women during this era, after having won the right to vote decades before, were finally beginning to fight for their rights in the workplace and in education. In 1966, preceding the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (precursor to the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley), the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded by a group of feminists including Betty Friedan (who was anti-lesbian; lesbians had to claim their right to be part of NOW).

The largest women's rights group in the U.S., NOW sought and continues to seek to end sexual discrimination, especially in the workplace, by means of legislative lobbying, litigation, and public demonstrations. In 1967, Executive Order 11375 expands President Lyndon Johnson's affirmative action policy of 1965 to cover discrimination based on gender. As a result, federal agencies and contractors must take active measures to ensure that women as well as minorities enjoy the same educational and employment opportunities as white males.

In 1970, in *Schultz v. Wheaton Glass Co.*, a U.S. Court of Appeals rules that jobs held by men and women need to be "substantially equal" but not "identical" to fall under the protection of the Equal Pay Act. An employer cannot, for example, change the job titles of women workers in order to pay them less than men.

Against this backdrop of ignorance, inequality, and homophobia, the women in the Gay Liberation Front courageously spoke out on numerous occasions. On Tuesday, May 25, 1971, Gay Liberation Front members Patricia Evans and Stephen Lein appeared on the WROC TV show "Cross-Fire," hosted by Tom Ryan. This was the first recorded appearance of the Gay Liberation Front on television to be viewed by Rochesterians from the comfort of their living rooms.

One of the most historically significant appearances of the Gay Liberation Front was on July 14, 1971. Karen Hagberg, R. J. Alcalá and Jim Fishman appeared in a live broadcast, "Call 21", on WXXI, Channel 21. People watching were able to call in questions which were presented to the panel by the moderator, Barry Goldfarb.

The questions that reached the panel during the show enabled the panel to cover a wide range of topics: the purpose of Gay Liberation in general, oppressive laws, the involvement of organized religion with Gay Liberation, as well as many more personal questions concerning our own experiences as gay people.

One person called from St. Catharine's, Ontario to ask if we believed that New York State laws would ever become as tolerant as those in Canada. The people at the station were very pleased with the general response to the show; they received 129 calls that evening. This was the second largest response in the history of the show (a Black Panther holds the record).

Of the 129 questions received, there was time to answer only 32. Mothers wanted to know how not to make their children gay. Men expressed outrage at having been propositioned at some time

in their lives by other men (although they didn't deem it outrageous that they themselves were taught to proposition women at every opportunity). Some people were simply appalled that homosexuality, such a forbidden topic of conversation, would appear on their own television screens. (The program director at Channel 21 observed that people forget there is an "off" as well as an "on" switch to the receivers!)

One indignant mother informed the station that she would no longer allow her children to watch "Sesame Street" or any other program on Channel 21. In my mind, WXXI took a courageous step in requesting that the Gay Liberation Front appear on a Wednesday evening talk show! For this, I think they deserve a round of applause.

In March of 1972, Patti Evans began a gay women's consciousness-raising group. The group's purpose was to meet, get to know each other, and to help and support each other as gay women. Sometimes these meetings took place at the University of Rochester, and sometimes at the Riverview bar (now sadly defunct) in downtown Rochester.

On March 22, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification. Originally drafted by Alice Paul in 1923, the amendment reads: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." The amendment died in 1982 when it failed to achieve ratification by a minimum of 38 states. Also on March 22, in *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, the Supreme Court rules that the right to privacy includes an unmarried person's right to use contraceptives.

In Rochester, in May 1972, after being denied educational benefits by a Monroe County welfare eligibility supervisor on grounds she was socially handicapped by her homosexual preference, "Mike," a Rochester woman, contacted the Gay Liberation Front and the Legal Assistance Program. Legal pressure was brought to bear and the welfare department, admitting it had insufficient grounds for denying funds for employment training, restored "Mike's" educational benefits.

"Mike," who will begin studying drafting at Rochester urban center later this month, urges gays to stick up for their rights. "I want the people to know about this," she said, "so they won't be afraid to seek help when hassled."

On June 23, 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments bans sex discrimination in schools. It states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." As a result of Title IX, the enrollment of women in athletics programs and professional schools increases dramatically.

In July, 1972, the first regular issue of *Ms. Magazine* is published. The magazine becomes the major forum for feminist voices, and cofounder and editor Gloria Steinem is launched as an icon of the modern feminist movement.

Four Rochester gay people were heard on WBBF radio Sunday, July 23, 1972. R.J. Alcalá, Walt, Patty Evans, and Rosanne were guests on a regularly scheduled talk show, "Dialogue." Listeners called in to voice their opinions and ask questions of the panelists. The Gay Liberation Front spokespersons tackled a great variety of questions, ranging from what causes homosexuality to some more personal subjects, such as, what did your parents think and when did you realize that you are gay.

They dealt with each question with great honesty and many responses were quite eloquent. The majority of callers were women and most callers appeared to be sympathetic with our aims. Two of the four speakers, Walt and Rosie, did not use their last names; for these people being identified as homosexuals in their ordinary lives would not be an accept-

May History Corner: the more things change...

Compiled by Evelyn Bailey

Following are excerpts from *The Empty Closet* May 1974 issue.

May 1974: the Gay Alliance relocated to the Genesee Co op at 713 Monroe Avenue.

EC Headlines:

38 arrested in massive parks cleanup

Where: Durand Eastman

Penalty: Possible jail time, fines, recorded as a sex offender.

Man maced, mugged by youth in Durand Eastman Park

Reported to the GAGV, not the police.

Police reps address GAGV meeting: Well received

Gay Alliance provided the first gay forum for the Rochester Police on April 21
- Lt. Gordon Urlacher and Sgt. DiAngelo spoke before a packed meeting.

Two Women Exchange Vows. Patty and Dusty were United in the eyes of God by Walt Zymanski, an Episcopalian priest.

May 12, Jim's Great Gatsby Costume Party

(Jim's was a famous old time Rochester gay bar.)

More from the May 1974 EC:

Speaker's Bureau engagements include MCC, CCFL, RIT, U of R, and a group of medical students at Strong Memorial Hospital.

Calendar of Events (Excerpts from May, 1974):

Tuesday, May 14: BINGO for the benefit of the GAGV 8 p.m.

Sunday, May 19: GAY COFFEE HOUSE

Sunday, May 26: GAY MUSIC featuring Bruce Jewell of Green Thursday radio program WCMF.

Rochester, NY Gay Groups:

Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley

University of Rochester Gay Liberation Front

Gay Revolution of Women (GROW)

Rochester Gay Task Force

Rochester Gay Youth

Comment: EC headlines in this issue are very similar to headlines regarding violence towards gays that appear in the Empty Closet in 2008. In many senses we have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

able thing.

To give you yet another picture of what it was like for the Gay Liberation Front and for homosexuals in Rochester to be active in the movement in 1972, the *Empty Closet* reported in its August, 1972 issue that the Gay Liberation Front was one of the organizations on a list of 400 organizations being watched by the Secret Service to prevent political assassinations.

Also on the list was the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliances, the NAACP, and the Iranian students Association. The Quaker Action Group was put on the list because they are opposed to the war and the use of nuclear weapons. The *Empty Closet* expressed sincere hope that Quaker Richard Nixon, who was President at the time, would be especially closely watched by the Secret Service because of his access to high government officials. Unlike many of the organizations listed the Gay Liberation Front has no national organization despite the existence of several hundred local groups.

In November of 1972, the women of the Gay Liberation Front formed a committee and held meetings of social interest to women. One of the first meetings was a potluck supper. In mid-October the committee sponsored a panel discus-

sion trying to answer the question, "Can we be sisters with Women's Liberationists?" The pros and cons of lesbian participation in the feminist movement were the main topic of discussion. This committee continued in existence, and I believe eventually became the Lesbian Resource Center.

The following year, 1973, as a result of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court establishes a woman's right to safe and legal abortion, overriding the anti-abortion laws of many states.

Take a moment and reflect on being in your 20s. What an exciting, scary, challenging, and changing time! Today, the Gay Alliance has reconnected with Rosanne. Karen Hagberg and Patty Evans have been and continue to be strong supporters of the GAGV. "Mike," unknown then, is still unknown today. We are proud to identify these women as four of many women's Shoulders To Stand On!

If anyone has recollections of these events or these people, the Shoulders To Stand On Committee would be very interested in hearing from you. You can contact us at www.shoulderstostandon.org or at "Shoulders To Stand On" c/o GAGV, 875 East Main St., Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605.



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LOCAL AND STATE

(NewsFronts from page 3)

Alex Cobus receives award from Domestic Violence Consortium for work with Gay Alliance*By Ove Overmyer*

The Rochester and Monroe County Domestic Violence Consortium's Outstanding Performance Award was given to Alexandra Cobus at the Executive Committee meeting on March 18.

Cobus worked as the Director for the Gay Alliance's Anti-Violence Project between 2004 and 2007. She was honored for her activism that has enhanced the quality of life in our community for the survivors of domestic violence.

The Rochester and Monroe County Domestic Violence Consortium (RMCDVC) consists of agencies, community groups, and others who are concerned with the problems of domestic violence and whose primary affiliation is within the Greater Rochester/Monroe County area.

This group is committed to the elimination of domestic violence through a coordinated community response that promotes safety for victims and their families, ensures batterer accountability, and fosters community awareness.

The RMCDVC Executive Committee reviewed all nominations for compliance with the award criteria to make the final selection on each recipient group or individual.

Cobus was recognized for her leadership acumen. Her ability to motivate and direct the efforts of others, articulate a service-related vision for the community and formulate and implement ideas and activities have had a significant benefit to the community and to domestic violence survivors.

Cobus has also been responsible for training and professional development for member agencies to assure quality services and referrals.

Cobus has also counseled victims and survivors throughout the region and has worked to expand shelter services for all domestic violence persons, including men.

She has brought domestic violence awareness beyond Rochester by working with a film director who is documenting local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence issues.

Alex Cobus resigned from the Gay Alliance in January and is now employed by the RMCDVC as the project coordinator.

For more information on the RMCDVC, please log on to: <http://www.rmcdvc.org> or call 585-428-2215.



Sandra Telep, Program Director for Pride at Work, AFL-CIO

Pride at Work official visits Rochester branch of lgbt labor group

Sandra Telep, Program Director for Pride At Work, AFL-CIO in Washington DC, will be visiting Rochester on May 16-17 to meet with the members of the newly established Pride at Work chapter here.

Sandra has been with Pride At Work

Heads Up!

**Rochester Area PFLAG Meeting
Sunday, May 18, 2-4pm**



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for five years and in her current position brings together the LGBT and Labor communities around issues of fairness and equity. In the past she has also worked for the ACLU's legislative office and the Human Rights Campaign. Sandra said that she is excited to support a new chapter that has already made an impact on their community in such a short amount of time.

Bess Watts, the president of the local chapter, said, "I am grateful to have the opportunity to brainstorm and understand how best the national chapter can support our local needs, as well as to show our members how much power we have collectively in creating change in our workplace."

Tom Privitere, Vice President, will be hosting Sandra at his table for the Empire State Pride Agenda's annual dinner on May 17 at the Riverside Convention Center.

RIT opens GLBT Center

By Michael D'Arcangelo, Director of the Center for Campus Life at RIT

The GLBT Center at RIT has officially been in existence since fall 2007, and sponsored an informal opening event on Dec. 7, 2007.

It is important to note, though, that programs which comprise the center, and many of the staff who were associated with its efforts, began long before. Centers of this nature do not appear instantly; instead, they are shaped by years of efforts and leadership from within the organization.

Julie White provided services to GLBT students through her position as the Director of RIT's first Women's Center. She initiated Safe Zone training and incorporated the training into the Career and Professional Development Office offerings. These are professional training sessions included under the Office of Human Resources.

At approximately the same time, RIT staff were working with then-President Albert Simone to institute Domestic Partner benefits. Finally, Student Government researched and initiated a voting seat for a member of the GLBT community on their senate, which was relatively progressive for the governmental organizations at that time. These kinds of initiatives led to the kind of forward momentum that raised awareness about GLBT issues on campus.

About four years ago, male students approached Student Government to discuss what they felt was the need for a more gender-neutral center, where gay men could seek programs and services. As the Advisor to Student Government at that time, and also as the Director of Campus Life, I was asked to address the need and develop a programmatic initiative. With the help of three other professional staff, a proposal was penned: The Stonewall Project.

The Stonewall Project was written from an institutional perspective, citing literature which identified the high risk nature of teens and young adults in the Gay community. The program outlined a three-year proposal of consecutive and

compounding programs which would create programs, an advisory board, a population of Safe Zone trained faculty, staff and student leaders, and finally a group of volunteers that would help with marketing and communications displays across campus.

While not all of the programs are progressing as originally planned, the emergence of the center has quickly led to new programs and initiatives that are addressing other needs. For example, the creation of the center solidified a number of "firsts": our first Mission statement; web site (still under construction: <http://campuslife.rit.edu/GLBT/>); a functional advisory board of faculty, staff and students and assessment team.

This past year, the center sponsored a three-part speaker and entertainment series including Michael DeStefano (an HIV-positive comedian who performed in celebration of World AIDS Day), Draganosi Renteria and Jennifer Mantle and WNBA star Sheryl Swoopes.

Additionally, the center re-certified more than 130 faculty and staff regarding Safe Zone Training, and trained an additional 100 new staff.

Currently, the center is initiating a formalized Gay Straight Alliance, a list of faculty, staff and student allies and GLBT members who pledge to create a more positive campus environment for the GLBT community.

The Center is located on the basement level of the Student Alumni Union, where the former Women's Center stationed. It is a two-room office; the external office houses student staff for the center and the RIT Gay Alliance Executive Board. The external office is mostly furnished, and the internal office, which houses the service staff, is still being furnished. Both are equipped with computer terminals, phones and storage.

Because the space is relatively small, the center's mission focuses on converting the campus climate to be safe. Currently, the RIT Gay Alliance (RITGA) has a membership list of approximately 40 students. As an organization, RITGA has been successful in providing social opportunities for GLBT students both at RIT and in the surrounding area. However, we believe that the population of GLBT students is much larger. Upon completion of our Gay Straight Alliance, we will be looking to identify other GLBT students who are not formally active with or members of the RIT Gay Alliance.

It is difficult to know exactly how students perceive the center and its impact. I think that there is a very real perception that they feel safer, and more valued. I think none of us know exactly what it can mean yet, as the programs, staffing and resources have not yet matured. While the emphasis of the original program proposal focused on at risk youth, the mission of the center has broadened now to address GLBT college students who "fit" the profile of the normal teen. With funding available, I expect that there will be more outreach programs for students and more educational programs that unite the broader community with GLBT needs, talents and contributions to the greater academic mission of RIT. ■

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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

(NewsFronts continued from page 5)
tion and gender expression. The alleged perpetrator, who turned 14 years old less than three weeks before the shooting, should be held accountable for his actions. But we support the principles underlying our juvenile justice system that treat children differently than adults and provide greater hope and opportunity for rehabilitation. In addition, public safety is not served by treating children as adults.

"According to research released by the Centers for Disease Control in 2006, children transferred to adult court are more likely to re-offend than those committing similar offenses who remain in the juvenile justice system. California law does not require District Attorneys to prosecute 14 year-olds as adults, even in circumstances such as these, and we oppose them doing so. We are issuing this joint statement because we believe so strongly in principles of justice that protect all our young people and know that, even in the face of strong emotions, we should not abandon them. We refuse to let our sense of outrage blind us to the fact that the suspect is only 14 years old.

"Prosecuting the alleged perpetrator as an adult will not bring Lawrence King back nor will it make schools safer for LGBT youth. We must respond to this tragedy by strengthening our resolve to change the climate in schools, eliminate bigotry based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and hold schools responsible for protecting students against discrimination and physical harm."

Zimbabwe gays hope for end to Mugabe's homophobic regime

The elections in Zimbabwe, which took place March 29 and are still not resolved, may be the only hope for gay men and lesbians in that African country to be free of the rule of Robert Mugabe.

Although the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, has unseated Mugabe supporters in parliament, their candidate Morgan Tsvangirai's victory is being disputed, while Mugabe, 81, continues to hold on to power, as he has for the past 28 years in a virtual dictatorship.

Opposition officials accused him in April of using delay, fraud and violence to intimidate opposition voters. His party has virtually conceded defeat, but Mugabe is calling for recounts, which so far have only confirmed the original tallies. On April 25, his security forces raided the opposition's offices, arresting 215 refugees from the violence, including women and small children, and removing materials related to the count.

Zimbabwean gays are hoping for an end to one of the most anti-gay regimes in the world. They say that gays are

called "worse than dogs and pigs" and are terrorized as part of official policy. Pro-gay clergy are threatened with prison and it is illegal for people of the same gender to hold hands in public.

-Pink News, AP

CDC report: HIV infections jump 48 percent nationwide

A CDC HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report that was quietly released recently shows a "catastrophic" 48 percent increase in US HIV infections between the years 2005 and 2006.

The number of infections jumped to 52,878 new reported cases in 2006, up from 35,537 reported in 2005. With the lifetime costs of one HIV-infected individual's treatment and care estimated to be \$600,000, these new CDC surveillance numbers suggest a \$36 billion aggregate cost for caring for these nearly 53,000 individuals.

"Catastrophe," said Michael Weinstein, President of AIDS Healthcare Foundation. "There is no other word to describe these CDC numbers which underscore the wholesale failure of US HIV prevention efforts."

Link to full article: <http://www.gaywired.com/article.cfm?section=124&id=18672>

PFLAG releases recording of talk with Oklahoma Rep. Kern

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has released the full 40-minute audio of a recent meeting between Oklahoma PFLAG supporters and homophobic State Representative Sally Kern.

The un-edited audio, released exclusively at www.pflag.org, was made public after Kern insisted the organization had misrepresented her statements to reporters following the sit-down.

Kern, who referred to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans as a "cancer" that "is just destroying this nation," and said gays were "the biggest threat our nation has, even more so than terrorism," met with PFLAG supporters at the state capitol on March 27. She subsequently denied that, during the meeting, she spoke out against job discrimination against gays or that she agreed to consider an ongoing dialogue with PFLAG families.

On the recording released April 9, Kern twice agrees with PFLAG supporters that gay Americans should not be fired from their jobs simply because of their sexual orientation. She goes on to say that "maybe" she would consider a follow-up meeting with PFLAG families in her district and agrees to a dinner invitation from a PFLAG supporter in the meeting. Near the end of the conversation, Kern is asked, in recapping the conversation, if she does indeed oppose anti-gay job dis-

crimination; she responds affirmatively that she does.

"Representative Kern's words speak for themselves," said Rev. Loyce Newton-Edwards, president of PFLAG's Oklahoma City chapter. "The recording, which we made with her staff's consent, is irrefutable evidence that she did agree with us on employment non-discrimination; that she did agree to consider an ongoing dialogue with us; and that she did agree on some basic principles of fairness and equality. It is beyond disappointing that she has now stepped away from those comments, and it is disheartening that she, as an elected leader, has attempted to disavow her own words."

Loyce-Edwards, along with PFLAG supporters Rev. Dr. Kathy McCallie and Rev. Jim Shields, are heard in the recording engaging Kern on issues ranging from GLBT demographics in Kern's district to issues of faith and family. Kern later tells the group that they have been "deceived" by the "homosexual agenda," but also expresses gratitude for the opportunity to talk with them.

"Sally Kern has, to our disappointment, now slammed the door shut on our families, allies and loved ones in Oklahoma and across the country," said Jody M. Huckaby, executive director of PFLAG. "As the PFLAG recording attests, we approached her with a willingness to talk and a commitment to work together for our families. In response, she has denied that she said what she did and walked away from her duty to hear from her constituents. Kern's return to shrill rhetoric is a disservice to everyone. She clearly does not intend to represent all of the families in her district."

The full audio recording of PFLAG's meeting with Kern is available online at www.pflag.org.

Arizona anti-marriage amendment proposal dies in House

A ballot measure pushed by conservatives that would ask voters to add a ban on same sex marriages to the state constitution died in the state House when opponents expanded it to include new rights for unmarried couples.

Several Republicans joined Democrats in expanding the measure, against the will of backer House Speaker Jim Weiers, who then declared he would not advance his proposed amendment to a formal House vote.

A Senate version is pending, but has

not shown signs of life since February. Arizona state law already prohibits same sex marriage, and state courts have upheld that ban. However, social conservatives claim that a ban should be included in the state constitution in order to prevent future court rulings in favor of same sex marriage.

Activists condemn media coverage wishing death for "pregnant man"

LGBT activists condemned the circus-like coverage by the mainstream and conservative media of the pregnancy of Thomas Beatie, a transgendered man who appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show.

The sensationalism included virulent hostility and even hopes for Beatie's suicide.

Fox News Channel, the supposedly "fair and balanced" media voice of conservatism, was especially vicious in its coverage on the April 5 episode of "Red Eye".

Host Greg Gutfeld said, "Twenty years ago this person would have been traveling in a carnival - I'm sorry people would be paying a dollar."

Panelist Tracy Burns added, "I hope when he pushes that baby out, it is the worst experience of his life - I hope the vessels pop in his eyes and I hope it is so painful... it's months seven, eight and nine when you want to kill yourself - and I hope that's what happens here."

Panelist Bill Schultz called Beatie "he-she", gave his personal opinions about transgender sexuality and claimed that the baby risked deformation because Beatie was previously on testosterone treatment. "This little ewok that she's about to crap out might even have a third eye," he said.

MSNBC's "Today Weekend" crew, including both Republicans and mainstream journalists, also used the Beatie story as a source of jokes, repeatedly claiming that they were about to be sick and that Beatie's pregnancy was "disgusting".

Mara Keisling of the National Center for Transgender Equality commented on the commentators. "The media are making a huge deal out of not much," she said, "but (coverage has been) sensationalistic and tabloidish. This is not the first time (a transgender man has become pregnant) and it's not like it's a major medical miracle here."

She said she was not surprised by the poor, subjective quality of Fox News coverage. ■



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From Our Readers

Keep hate out of religion

To the Editor:

Is it any wonder that the gay community, and American society at large, have become disillusioned with Christianity, when Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Rev. Fred Phelps, Jim Jones and David Koresh claim to represent God's Love?

I found myself more confused than ever after having a quasi-Christian cult, the Nation of Yahweh, run me out of Rochester. Originally based in Miami, Fla., the Nation of Yahweh grew throughout the '80s, organizing satellite temples around the country and building up a business empire that Yahweh ben Yahweh, their savior, once claimed had reached \$100 million. Quickly graduating to orchestrating gruesome murders, Yahweh ben Yahweh and 12 of his followers were eventually convicted in the early '90s of conspiracy charges relating to the murders of 14 people.

I accidentally stumbled onto this bizarre cult when a Nation of Yahweh member began volunteering for Friends Helping Friends, a nonprofit organization that I had founded. After working with the NOY cultist for a few years, oblivious to the real history of the sinister organization, the Nation of Yahweh issued a "call to action" after years of dormancy.

The NOY cultist seized the opportunity in a period of organizational instability and orchestrated a hostile takeover of dubious legality of Friends Helping Friends on behalf of the Nation of Yahweh. I fled Rochester in fear for my per-

sonal safety and contacted the Southern Poverty Law Center, where an investigative reporter verified my story. In addition to writing two stories on the topic, the Southern Poverty Law Center also highlighted my story in their 2007 "Year in Hate" report.

After all of the dust settles and the scars heal, we as a society, especially the gay community, sustain a greater damage from dealings with evil preachers. Instead of ignoring these hate-mongers and seeing them for what they are, "false prophets" who are preaching nothing more than the delusions of their own minds, we come to see these people as true representatives of Christianity and therefore shut out Christ from our lives and stop searching for the true Church.

Because of these lies, falsely prophesized in the name of the Lord, we believe that we as GBLT people have no place in the Christian Church, while it's really these deluded false prophets who have no place in the Church.

This exclusion, sometimes self-imposed, is the greatest hurt of all; instead of coming to know that the true Church, as Jesus proclaimed, loves and welcomes us, we too often come to believe that the Jerry Falwells and Yahweh ben Yahwehs are the true messengers of the Lord, instead of being the poisonous and wicked men that they are.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. - Matthew 7:15.

Andrew Stankevich



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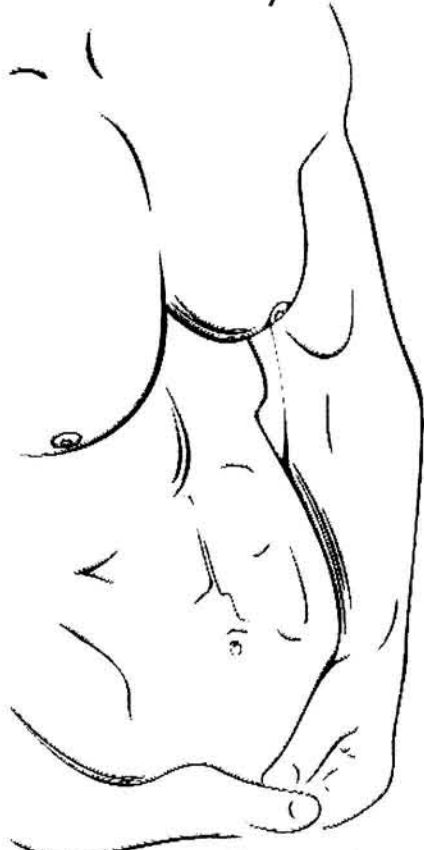
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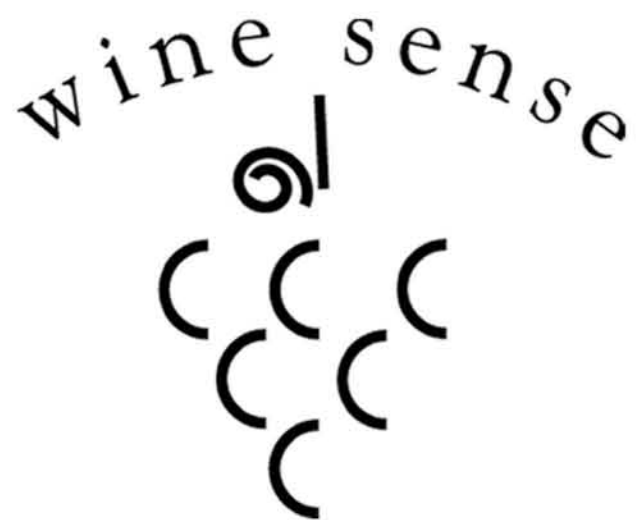
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Making the Scene



Breaking the silence

By Susan Jordan

The air was full of balloons, confetti and the cheers of over 200 youth shattering the silence about violence and abuse on April 25, the Day of Silence, at the Gay Alliance Youth Center. A national event involving thousands of students, the Day of Silence marks the loss of young voices and lives to homophobia.

Jessica Cohen, Youth Services Coordinator, said, "The Day of Silence is empowering to all youth, gay and straight alike. We must remember that tragedies like that of murdered eighth grader Lawrence King do not begin with bullets and knives. Hateful thoughts become hateful words. Teasing becomes torment. Fists become guns. Day of Silence is about students respecting each other and taking a stand against violence."

A 2005 survey by GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) revealed that four out of five LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school. In the past month, 29 percent of LGBT students missed at least one day of school due to fear for their personal safety. Many lgbt youth attempt suicide, or drop out of school when they receive no support.

After the noise subsided, Buffalo comedian Kristen Becker got the youth laughing, DJ Chuck Argento got the music going, and then it was time for activities enjoyed by all types of youth: dancing, pizza, friendship, flirting and fun.



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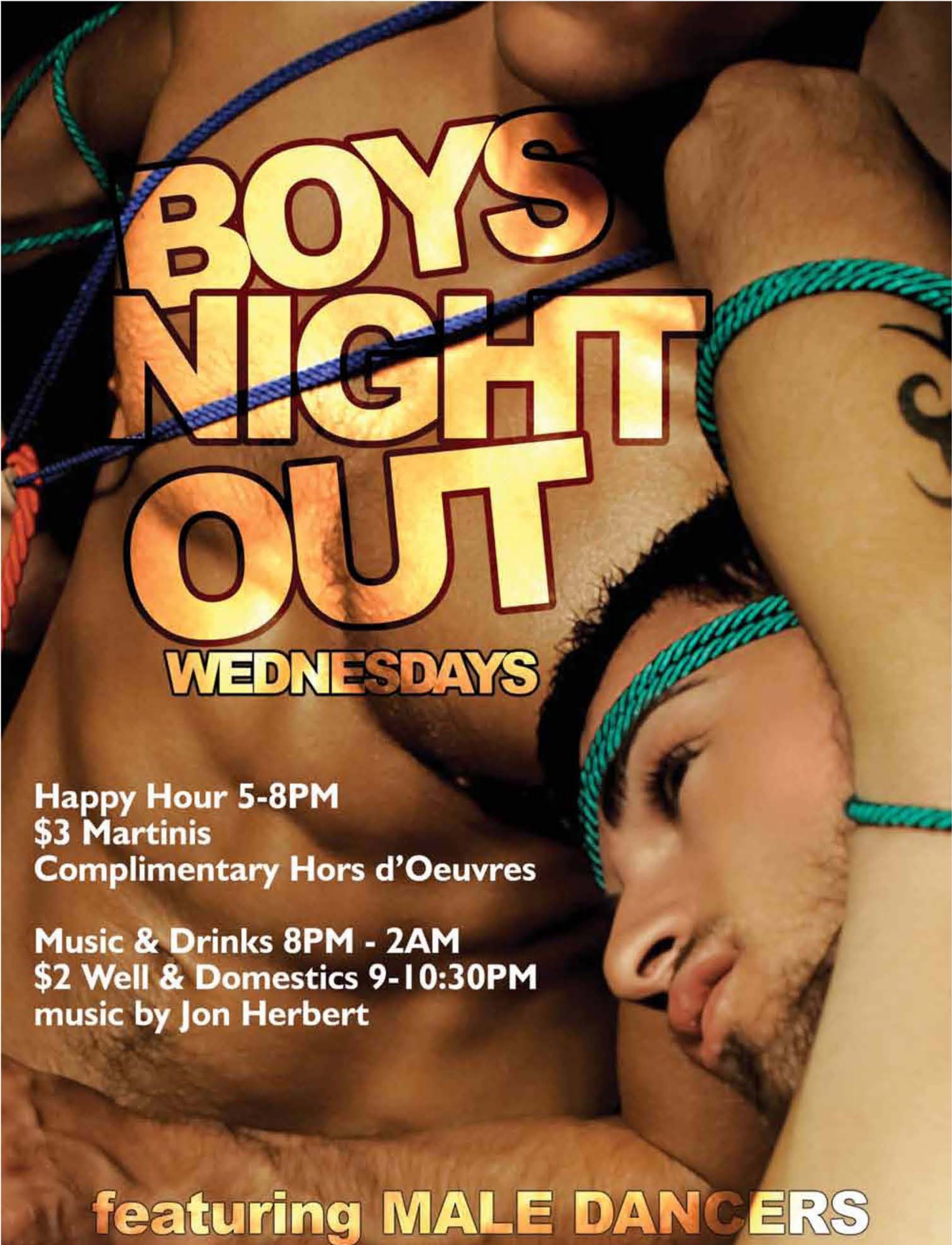
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RWCC, Bush Mango unite to benefit Water for Sudan on May 17

Each day hundreds of thousands of people in Sudan and in greater East Africa walk for hours through the dangers of the desert to collect water to drink. This water is often contaminated with parasites. To help the people of Sudan, the Rochester Women's Community Chorus and Bush Mango Drum and Dance are teaming up to support the organization founded by Salva Dut -- Water for Sudan, Inc.

Salva, 30, was one of the 17,000 Walking Boys of Sudan who fled the war-torn southern regions of the country. He has lived in the U.S. since 1996 and founded Water for Sudan in 2002 after a trip home to Sudan to visit his ill father. Water for Sudan works to drill wells throughout the region so residents can have fresh drinking water.

The RWCC's annual spring concert is scheduled for Saturday, May 17, at 7:30 p.m. at Hochstein School of Music in Rochester. The Rhythms of Freedom concert program includes I Got Rhythm, Harriet Tubman, Study War No More, The Rhythm of Life, Let the River Run, South African Suite and Yekululeko, among other songs celebrating rhythm and social change.

The Rochester Women's Community Chorus provides a creative and safe environment for women of various levels of musical expertise to sing together. The chorus embraces women of many cultural and

ethnic backgrounds, life experiences and sexual orientations. The RWCC is dedicated to using music as the vehicle for messages of peace, hope and understanding. While all singing members are women, both men and women who wish to join the RWCC family are welcomed for non-singing roles. Visit www.therwcc.org.

Bush Mango Drum and Dance is a performing ensemble that has appeared all over Rochester -- from City Hall to Hochstein, from School of the Arts to Kilbourne Hall. The group's name comes from one of the types of wood used to carve jembe drums. Bush mango, also known as "dimba," is a tightly grained hardwood.

The Bush Mango Community Center values and promotes the depth and power of traditional West African dance and drumming in a vibrant learning community. For more on Bush Mango, visit www.bushmango.com.

Learn more about Water for Sudan at <http://www.waterforsudan.org>.

Tickets for the concert are \$12/general; \$10/student and seniors and \$7/children ages 12 and younger. Hochstein School of Music is located at 50 North Plymouth Ave. in downtown Rochester.

The RWCC will team with Rochester's Raging Grannies and Heartland Concerts to bring Holly Near back to Rochester on May 31 at Hochstein; see article on this page. ■



ON A JOURNEY: (From left to right) Todd Plank, Lysah Diane Conway, Kevin Indovino, Anthony Morris and Ralph Henderson in Bread & Water Theatre's production of "The Undertaking". Photo: Laurie Dynes

Rainbow Festival ends with *The Undertaking*

The last play in Bread and Water Theatre's Rainbow Theatre Festival, Philip Osment's *The Undertaking*, directed by Mark Allan Davis, will be presented Friday and Saturday, May 2 and 3, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, May 4 at 2 p.m. at RAPA Playhouse, 727 E. Main St., between Union and University. Tickets are \$10.

The Undertaking tells the

story of five Londoners who journey to the Irish countryside to scatter the ashes of a dear friend who has died of AIDS. They discover, on this amusing and moving journey, what bewitches, bothers and bewilders them and that, although they have lost someone they hold dear, they find they still have each other, flaws and all. The play is a moving story of

friends, love, loss and discovery, featuring Kevin Indovino, Lysah Diane Conway, Darren Frazier, Ralph Henderson, Anthony Morris and Todd Plank.

Inspired by the original Rainbow Pride Flag, the Rainbow Festival presents a series of performances each year centered on one of the rainbow colors. This year's festival focus is on "green". ■

Singing for Our Lives: Holly Near to perform May 31

By Elizabeth Robinson

Recently my partner's son has been coming home from school talking about how "they" want to get rid of modern music and go back to the classics, such as Beethoven and Bach, as it seems more appropriate and suitable for our youth. (He did call me up at work the other day to let me know that earlier that morning he'd heard the Indigo Girls' "Closer to Fine" on the PA system!)

This has led to some interesting discussions between the three of us regarding the responsibility of the development of youth and the power of words. On May 31, a woman who I deeply admire for her power with words will be performing at Hochstein, with the Rochester Women's Community Chorus and Rochester Raging Grannies opening for her: Holly Near.

I saw my first Holly Near concert by complete mistake three years ago. I hadn't paid for a ticket as I was low on funds in those days and needed to pay bills instead of seeing some unknown singer who was described to me as a "lesbian who screams her music."

Oh what a distortion of the truth! My friend had an extra ticket and offered it to me at the last minute, and since we (the RWCC) had opened for her with one of her songs -- "Mountain Song/Kentucky Woman" -- I took my friend up on the offer

and enjoyed the best concert that I have ever been to. Holly Near (who is bisexual) not only sings her music beautifully and with excellent musicianship (not screaming), she conveys her messages so passionately, and so well.

When I think about her music and which lyrics to quote, it becomes too difficult and I'd just like to hand over a few CDs, namely: "And Still We Sing: the outspoken collection", "Edge" and "Show Up" and, for us ladies, "Simply Love: the women's music collection." Her work is moving and powerful -- and dangerous, in a good way. Holly says those things which need to be said but which we all may be too afraid to say. It's her words and music that higher-ups ought to be afraid of, if they're not acting peacefully and ethically.

Thinking back to my partner's son and school, it puts me in a quandary -- given the choice between modern pop music and activism music, which should the schools be more afraid of? Pop music may dumb the kids down, while music like Holly Near's may stir up their desire to take an active interest in their

communities and to make positive changes. What's scary to one is encouraging to another.

Holly is truly a diamond in the rough. If you're reading this article, I would so highly like to encourage you to see her in concert -- especially if you're unfamiliar with her music and work. And as an added bonus, Emma's Revolution will be with her!

I leave you with some of her most well known lyrics that still ring true over three decades later:

"And still we sing:
We are a gentle, angry people,
And we are singing, singing for our lives,
We are a land of many colors,
And we are singing, singing for our lives,
We are gay and straight together,
And we are singing, singing for our lives." ■

Photographer Manuel Rivera-Ortiz journeys through hope, hardship

International photographer Manuel Rivera-Ortiz, who lives part of the time in Rochester, takes us on a "journey of self-discovery," through his photographs of people living in poverty in India and through

the new book *Voices in First Person*, a collection of monologues by accomplished Latino authors, edited by Lori Marie Carlson and illustrated with Rivera Ortiz's documentary photos depicting hardship and hope throughout the Third World.

The book is published by Simon & Schuster, in a hardcover first edition (96 pages).

Rivera-Ortiz's work in India can be viewed at www.rivera-ortiz.com. The journey through crowded Indian streets culminates in anecdotes from Rivera-Ortiz's own life, which began in Guayama, Puerto Rico. ■



Kahija. Photo by Manuel Rivera-Ortiz



"Anyone and Everyone" to screen at MCC with panel discussion

The film "Anyone and Everyone," about parents' reactions when their lgbt children come out, will screen at Monroe Community College on May 2 at noon.

A panel discussion will follow the film, facilitated by Scott Fearing, Gay Alliance Program Director, and featuring Mary Ellen and Casey Lopata of Fortunate Families Inc.; MCC student Judi McDougall; Rev. Jim Mulcahy, pastor of Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church and Tom Proetti, MCC faculty member (Visual and Performing Arts).

The event will run until 2 p.m. It is free and open to all, and will take place in the Forum, 3-130, R. Thomas Flynn Campus Center, at MCC.

Filmmaker Susan Polis Schutz interviewed parents from a diverse range of nationalities and religions, including Mormon, Cherokee, Bolivian, Jewish, Catholic, Japanese, Hindu and Southern Baptist people. They all share intimate accounts of how their children came out to them, and discuss their responses.

The film will also air on WXXI in June.

WXXI to feature Gay Alliance youth, the film *Anyone and Everyone*

In October 2007, WXXI, ImageOut and the Gay Alliance of Genesee Valley launched a nine-month outreach initiative designed to generate community conversations around the issues a family faces when a child is gay.

The campaign centers on the PBS documentary *Anyone and Everyone*, a film about the journey of understanding a gay child.

The outreach initiative has included several private screenings of the film,

which will be broadcast on WXXI-TV 21 in June, and a Need to Know special, "Already Out," airing Friday, May 16 at 9 p.m. and Sunday, May 18 at 12:30 p.m. on WXXI-TV 21 (cable 11) and on Saturday, May 17 at 6:30 p.m. on AM1370/HD91.5-2.

Big Gay Prom

As part of the outreach initiative, "Need to Know" will present "Already Out," a 30-minute special that moves beyond the "coming out" stories in the documentary to the "living it" stories of area teenagers who are gay or lesbian.

What is it like to be coming of age and homosexual in Rochester? WXXI News follows several teenagers from diverse backgrounds who are part of the Big Gay Prom 2008 planning committee.

The special includes interviews with the teens, and their teachers or other mentors, friends, and family members. The program captures glimpses of these teens preparing for the big night, and ends with footage of the prom (held on May 9 at Roger Robach Community Center in Charlotte).

More about Anyone & Everyone

Anyone and Everyone, airing Tuesday, June 3 at 9 p.m. on WXXI-TV 21 (cable 11), tells the stories of families from Utah to North Carolina and Wyoming to New York, all connected by a common thread — a gay child.

This poignant and often heartbreaking documentary by first-time filmmaker Susan Polis Schutz (also the parent of a gay son) depicts families representing a wide range of religions, nationalities and political leanings.

During the film, parents of homosexual teens and young adults eloquently recall their initial reactions to their child's coming-out and their sometimes difficult journeys to acceptance.

National outreach funding is provided by Iron Zeal Films. For more information, visit wxxi.org/ntk and www.anyoneandeveryone.com.

Coming to DVD - LGTB Style: Hollywood Dreams

Compiled By Robby Morris

Mark your calendars for May's highly anticipated releases!

On May 6, look for the comedy *Hollywood Dreams*, starring Tanna Frederick as a farm girl who makes her way to Hollywood to become the next big thing with the help of a gay film producer and his lover. This film also stars Justin Kirk (from Showtime's "Weeds") and special appearances from Karen Black, Sally Kirkland, and Eric Roberts.

Musical Theatre Queens take note! The 2007 Tony Award winning revival of Stephen Sondheim's beloved musical *Company* comes to DVD on May 20. This version filmed last year for PBS starring Raul Esparza, featuring such well-known musical numbers as "The Ladies Who Lunch" and "Being Alive," explores the life of a bachelor questioning his single life and the lives of his married friends.

"Exes & Ohs," Logo's hit lesbian series created by and starring Michelle Paradise, has its first season DVD release on May 20 as well. This comedy follows the lives of documentary filmmaker Jennifer, her ex-girlfriend turned best friend Sam, domesticated couple Chris and Kris, and their young musician friend Crutch in their journeys through love, commitment, and friendship.

On May 27, check out Woody Harrelson, Lauren Bacall, and Kristen Scott Thomas in *The Walker*, a gripping drama about a gay man who escorts powerful women to high society events and finds himself wrapped up in their sordid lives and drama. This film also stars Willem Dafoe, Ned Beatty, and Lily Tomlin.

As always, release dates are subject to change.

Shipping Dock presents reading, comedy improv

Shipping Dock Theatre, on hiatus due to the health concerns of founder Barbara Bidy, will nonetheless present *Regrets Only* by Paul Rudnick in a staged reading at Visual Studies Workshop Auditorium, 31 Prince Street at University Ave. on Saturday, May 3 at 4 p.m.

The Wilmer J. Patlow Play Reading Series at the Shipping Dock Theatre closes its 2007-2008 season with *Regrets Only*, a comedy of Manhattan manners which explores the latest topics in marriage, friendships, and squandered riches.

The setting is a Park Avenue penthouse. The players are a powerhouse attorney, his deliciously social wife and their closest friend, one of the world's most staggeringly successful fashion designers.

"Hilariously witty... Rudnick's script is ripe with jokes at the expense of the upper class - taking pokes at plastic surgery, designer fashion and charity functions...." *Show Business Weekly*.

Directed by Sandi Henschel, the play features Diane Chevron, Peter Doyle, Melissa Githler, Barbara Lobb, Linda Loy, Fred Nuernberg, and Jill Rittinger. Admission is free. The reading is made possible by a grant from the Wilmer J. Patlow fund. For general or ticket information, call 585-232-2250 or visit www.shippingdocktheatre.org.

Shipping Dock will also present Unleashed! Comedy Improv Troupe at Visual Studies Workshop Auditorium, on May 4 and May 11, at 7 p.m. and on May 16, 17, 30, 31, June 20 and June 21 at 8 p.m.

Unleashed! features some of Rochester's finest and funniest local talent. All performances include long form improvisation based on audience suggestions. Shipping Dock says, "We promise: you won't go home empty-headed!"

Troupe members include David Abdoch (Rochester), Mike Curasi (Rochester), Marc D'Amico (Rochester), Bill DeMetsenaere (Rochester), Nate Haloran (Rochester), Ken Klamm (Penfield), Patricia Lewis (Genesee), S. Michael Smith (Penfield), Beth Winslow (Penfield), and Kerry Young (Ontario).

Rochester Stories seeks histories for ARTWalk

ARTWalk and the City of Rochester have teamed up with Rochester museums, historical organizations and the Neighborhood of the Arts business community to create Rochester Stories: Seeking Histories Large and Small, an effort to gather a diverse spectrum of personal stories and Rochester histories into a permanent archive.

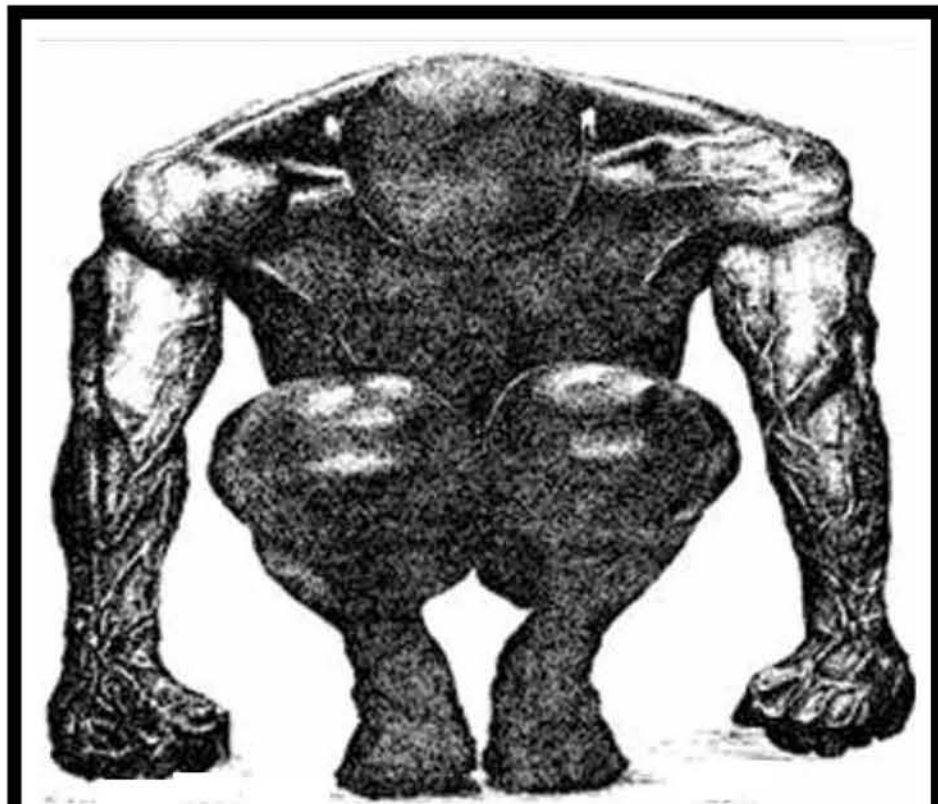
The public is invited to the Rochester Stories event at the Rochester Museum & Science Center on Tuesday, May 6, from 1 to 7 p.m. Additionally, interested individuals may participate online at www.rochesternota.org or by calling Karen McCally at Rochester Historical Society (585) 271-2705.

This collective archive will serve as a resource for the design and development of ARTWalk 2 (an extension of the popular University Avenue ARTWalk) and numerous public artwork pieces.

The May 6 event will have 2 parts, both FREE and open to the public:

Part 1

From 1-5 p.m., in the Eisenhart Auditorium at RMSC, professional and community historians will give short talks about a wide range of topics relating to Rochester's past, such as what has happened over time at Midtown, the city's struggles for race and gender equality, stories of the ARTWalk/NOTA area, and the long history of the Memorial Art Gallery campus. "People should feel free to come for 10 minutes or to settle in for the afternoon," notes organizer Marianne Kroon. "There will be new topics explored every 10 minutes!" Marjorie Searl, chief curator at the University of Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery will facilitate.



▲ ...the truth is that there is nothing noble in being superior to somebody else. The only real nobility is in being superior to your former self...
~Whitney Young Civil Rights Leader (1921-1971)

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Part 2

From 1-7 p.m., in RMSC's lobby area of the Eisenhart Auditorium Building, volunteers will be available to record oral histories. "Drop in any time during that timeframe. We are seeking stories of all kinds, from every neighborhood, and every resident is invited," says ARTWalk spokesperson Debra Jacobson. "Rochester is built out of the stories of its people. Without its people and their stories, the city is just an empty shell. We want unusual or offbeat stories as well as common, everyday ones; we want the stories overheard on the back of the bus, at church, or handed down through a family. These stories will help us preserve and honor the past as we build the future together."

Residents are encouraged to come tell their story to a volunteer, bring a photo to be copied, or bring their story in written form if they prefer. To submit a story any time before or after the event, find Rochester Stories at www.rochesternota.org or call Karen McCally at Rochester Historical Society (585) 271-2705.

All stories will be gathered into an "archive of possibilities" for use by artists as they plan public art projects for ARTWalk 2. The archive will be organized and held by the Rochester Historical Society, where they will be made available to the planners and artists for ARTWalk as well as permanently available to future generations.

ARTWalk 2 will extend the popular urban art trail past Memorial Art Gallery on University Avenue, as well as travel from Village Gate to East Avenue along Goodman Street, and end at the Rochester Museum & Science Center. It is currently in the planning stages, and as long as funding is available, construction is set to begin in Spring 2009.

"With Rochester Stories, we want to invite all of Rochester to make their mark on ARTWalk 2," notes Paul Way, Managing Engineer, Engineering Bureau, City of Rochester. "We hope to augment and extend the value that ARTWalk has brought to the NOTA community, and blend that energy with the community-wide assets of the cultural provider network closer to the loop. It seems like grounding the vision of ARTWalk 2 in history -- both the greater history and the everyday history of the people who have lived here -- is a good place to begin."

The organizations partnering to create the Rochester Stories project include the City of Rochester, George Eastman House, Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester Historical Society, and Rochester Museum & Science Center. The project is sponsored by Senator Joseph E. Robach, Neighborhood of the Arts Business Association, News 8 Now WROC TV Rochester, The Community Foundation and ARTWalk.

For more information on this event check www.rochesternota.org.

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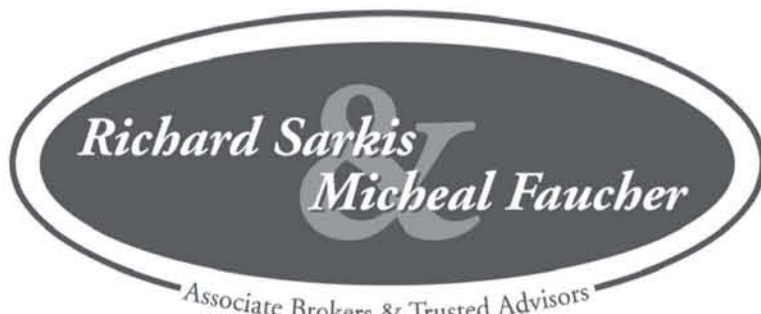
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Columnists

The opinions of columnists, editorial writers and other contributing writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the collective attitude of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley or *The Empty Closet*.

Conundrums

BUT SERIOUSLY FOLKS



By Ove Overmyer

I've noticed recently that I often take myself, my work and my life way too seriously. I schedule events every night of the week, demand perfection, and generally behave as if

everyone's life depends on it. I guess my friends and family have picked up on that too and have told me so.

I had to come to terms with the fact that I am, for the most part, just a serious person and that is something I think is part of my personal growth. I like to deal with serious issues and contemplate deep thoughts — but it dawned on me that I could do this without carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders.

Like most people, I sometimes agonize over details, worry about personal interactions and deadlines, hope the kids are safe, wrestle with each word of a simple e-mail or document, and wake up at night with a million thoughts in my head.

I was reminded that the serious work of political action, library advocacy and news reporting should be balanced with a good dose of humor every now and then. How right they are.

Just the other day, I had a friend say to me, "When was the last time you had a really good belly laugh -- when it wasn't at the expense of a Republican?" The question kind of caught me by surprise and I began to reflect. I quizzed myself for a while, and was content with the notion that I haven't gone off the deep end -- not just yet anyway.

I would like to think that people who really know me know I come from a family where comedy rules. Just like many folk, you wonder why certain goofy thoughts bubble to the surface of your conscious mind. I did spend lots of time reading comedy back in the day, especially Gary Larson and Woody Allen. People have told me I really have a strange way of interpreting the world, and I always considered that a good thing. I guess I just haven't shown that side of my personality lately. Well, now is as good as a time as any.

I will leave you with these musings:

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say will be misquoted, and then used against you.

It dawned on me that my brother Dexter, who is a passionate gambler and agnostic, should attend church more often just to hedge his bets.

My lifelong friend, Doris, was perturbed and vexed that the long and costly search for her "authentic self" led to a back alley restaurant dumpster in Toledo, Ohio.

If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.

The dearth of hair below my partner's sock line triggered a meditation on the tragedy of time.

In the midst of being profoundly moved by an exhibit of photojournalist Dorothea Lange, who was best known for Depression-era photography, I suddenly remembered I left a ton of shirts at the cleaners.

I wondered if the Taliban, weary at the outrage over the destruction of all the religious icons in the Middle East, might consider destroying all images of "Hello Kitty" instead.

Tysen, when he was three years old, understood immediately why polenta and fennel roasted beets will not become the next big culinary thing.

My friend Sophia thought that the bottle of 1976 Montrachet that was haunting her might be the antidote to the absurdity of her existence. She was right.

For every action there is an equal and opposite criticism.

An acquaintance named Phil, who is an art dealer, lamented the tyranny of his own good taste and yearned to experience pleasure through sheer mediocrity.

Finally, a conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking. Peace.

Cleaning My Closet

ALWAYS RECYCLE



By Meredith

Elizabeth Reiniger

Another spring and I am still alive. And so are the crocuses that friend Kay planted for us in the barren side garden of our house, right after

we moved here in 2004. And all along the edge of the woods, the promise of scattered daffodils, planted by the farmer's wife in 1834.

Today: I am inside, a pane away from fresh air. I sit at my desk and compose a list of column ideas. "Write about the present, not your past," urges my wife-womyn. Yes, I mumble, good idea. (1983: my aunt Betty June found this huge oak desk somewhere in Michigan and hauled this wonderful gift to Rochester for me.)

My desk has to be dismantled, screw by screw, to get it through the doorway. Last month, friend Kathy volunteered to do it when we were installing new flooring. She's an experienced Desk Dismantler, having done the same thing every time I move. This year part of her anatomy, the part that was taut in 1983, got caught under the frame. Despite the indignity of it, I had to laugh. "Get the camera," suggested wife-womyn. I took the picture. I named it "Peer Pressure."

The present: seventeen shiny blackbirds sit in our treetops and sing loudly, announcing their territory. Their red feathers puff out in splendor as each just-arrived female begins to select her beautiful mate. (1998, autumn: I happened upon an entire cornfield covered with thousands and thousands of migrating red wing blackbirds. Strangers, all along the roadside, left their cars and gazed in silence.)

My new spring: I look out my window. The backyard is still under three inches of water, yet the daylilies are poking their green through the sodden soil. I am eager to see their bright beauty, each bloom vibrant only one day. And I am eager for the day I will find the spent plants all pressed down, a soft bed prepared by our returning doe for her soon-to-arrive fawn. (Long ago: the farmhouse gardener planted this giant circle of orange flowers right next to her pump.)

Daylilies... past, present, and future. This is the way of my thoughts. I have an experience of the present, then some stuff or smells or songs open my mental scrapbook, and ideas from the days of before soar into the day at hand. And always a bit of the future tugs me to the next fleeting moment of the present.

I do try to practice mindfulness, that intense and specific awareness of the

present... I listen to the flap made by the wings of returning geese flying directly over my head... I smell the spring-damp earth... I notice the fully puffed pussy willow buds. (My old days: the annual celebration of Finally-spring, the day when Mommy/Betty would carry a handful of pussy willow stems into the kitchen.)

I rub the gray softness across my chin. (2007: wife-womyn brought a young weeping willow tree to me, shortly after she had to euthanize L.C., her beloved dog.) Today: I lean closer to "L.C. Tree" and pet the softness again.

Spring 2008: On a sunny day, my Aunt Thelma passed from this world, leaving 90 years of memories scattered through the hearts of her survivors. Those memories sprout as easily as the seeds I buy for my new garden. Today I put a pot of geraniums on our stone bench. (1964: Aunt Thelma's red geraniums sit on her kitchen windowsill, blooming between her white ruffled curtains.)

Another April day: The red flowers in my view are the roses on Craig's coffin. Only 37, wife-womyn's nephew unexpectedly died; "He was just tired," laments his loving "De-da." Inside the ornate church, the brokenhearted share the Catholic rituals celebrating Craig's release from pain.

The wafting incense from the brass censer instantly relocates me. (1954: Sunday mass, sitting at Aunt Thelma's side. Her long white gloves as fascinating to me as the crystal rosary draped over her fingers.)

Quiet sobs return me to the present. The priest invites "all faithful Catholics" to come forward to take communion. My mind lurches. (Last week: I heard different words spoken from the altar of Open Arms, my church: "This is God's table, not ours, and all are welcome.") A slight shiver, and I realize that I am praying in an institution that does not welcome me, Craig's aunt, neither Roman Catholic nor heterosexual.

The priest rings the bell. My weight presses my knees against the kneeling rail, its meager padding not quite blanketing the hard wood. The bell rings again, when suddenly my heart races. I feel an ancient scream of sorrow rising in my throat. (1982: Aunt Thelma received a phone call, revealing, in hurtful words she refused to disclose, that I had left my husband of 13 years and had "become" a lesbian. She wrote a note to me. "Dear Meredith -- frankly my dear -- I think you're out of your mind --".)

The smoke of the incense rises above the coffin, symbolizing prayers ascending to heaven. Will my prayers rise on that Catholic smoke? I rise from my knees. I walk with my wife-womyn through the opened doors and into the hugs of our loving family. Our cars form a procession to the inn where we all will break bread together.

At the edge of the pond, a gigantic willow, uprooted by autumn winds, remains stretched over the water. Two large roots remain firmly connected to the earth. This spring all the branches on the top side of the prone trunk are reaching straight for the sky, their yellow hue announcing their imminent leafing. I named the tree "Perseverance."

MeredithElizabethReiniger@frontier-net.net

Affirming Gender

DEDICATED TO HOPE



By Diana Lynn

There are not a lot of stories of successful transsexual/non-trans partner marriages. One recurring theme that I see throughout this particular thread is the need

for pacing.

Unfortunately too many trans-partners, once they have their epiphany, rush like a runaway freight train towards

transition. Like most runaway freight trains, these relationships typically end in destruction.

I'm not going to say that there is any one right way to transition. We all know that those paths are as unique as the individuals who tread them. However, if a couple is going to have any possibility of remaining intact, each partner must be willing to recognize that compromises will be an integral part of the process.

Every time I hear a story about a trans-partner who has moved forward without being open and honest before taking those first steps, the handwriting is on the wall. While the transition itself is certainly a huge issue, I venture to say that the bond of trust between two individuals is even more fundamental. When that trust is breached, there really is not much more that you can do.

One thing that I learned while transitioning with my wife is that we had to take it one day at a time. In order to take things one day at a time, we had to acknowledge that the future was uncertain. We would make the steps that we felt we were able to handle together and then sort of reassess where we were in the relationship. If things were OK, we would discuss further steps and so on.

At this juncture we decided that we would keep any information regarding my transition to ourselves. Our thinking was that this was going to be a very difficult and emotional journey for us both. To bring in children and friends would just muddy the waters and lead to people breaking off on different sides. Now remember, our children are grown. This would be an entirely different scenario if there were young children still in the home.

The whole issue of pacing is one that really calls upon our commitment to one another. For the trans-person, it's always much too slow and for the non-trans person, it's always much too fast. That being said, my transition so far has taken seven years. It took a full five years for my wife and me to conclude that we might have a chance of making it. It was at that point that I went full time. This is also when we began telling our children what was going on.

The two boys took it very easily, which was strange because I thought it would be just the opposite. Our daughter had the most difficult time and there again I thought she would have the easiest time. There really is no way to know how people will react.

For the past year our children and our grandchildren have been totally at ease with Grandma Dee. I transitioned at work in the year that I went full time (2005), so that was over two years ago. However I didn't tell them either, until it was "launch commit."

Fast-forward to today. We have several close friends, male and female, who have either not been in the area or whom we have avoided for the last two years. Quite frankly, we've never really believed that there would be any chance that we would be able to transition with them in place. Well, in August 2007 we broke the news to them. We explained what was going on and the things that led up to it and the fact that I had been full time already and successful for over two years.

Their reaction? At first they needed some time to digest the information, but within a week each and every one of them had written supportive letters and committed to our friendship regardless of my transition. In the time since, we have had them over for dinner at the house, where we talked until the wee hours of the morning... since then we have gone out with them to dinner and we are planning many autumn activities as we enter the holiday season.

Now, right up front I have to say, if it were not for my spouse and her level head this never would have been the outcome. Likewise, if I was not willing to put on the brakes and work with my spouse, while at the same time really listening to her... my world would be a vastly different place today.

So I offer all of this to all of you, not as a prescription for success, but as one anecdotal story of one couple, at one time, in one place, who managed to make it work. Others may approach it slightly differently, but whatever a couple tries to do throughout the process, there must be love, communication, compromise and a willingness not to move forward until everyone is on the same page.

Suffice to say, having a trans-partner does not necessarily mean the end of the relationship. Consider this an article dedicated to hope.

A Few Bricks Short IT'S ALL BEHIND ME



By David Hull

If you've read my column before, then you know that besides being an incredibly witty and talented columnist, I'm also a teacher.

A few months ago both of those jobs came together, in a way, when I was asked by my school to create a short presentation to read at a Parents' Night assembly in the auditorium. It was one of those events where they invite the parents and the kids perform skits on stage and all the administration shows up wearing fake smiles.

In exchange for doing the presentation, I was extended an invitation to join the members of the administration for dinner at my favorite local restaurant afterwards. Once they told me about the free meal, I couldn't refuse the offer.

My partner, Bernie, hates attending any school event that involves children, so he quickly refused my invitation to join me as my guest, even after I told him about the free meal. Instead, one of my good friends, Shirley, who is also a teacher, agreed to join me. She had to attend the Parents' Night assembly anyway, so the free meal was a bonus for her.

On the big night, Shirley and I arrived at the auditorium to find it filled with excited people milling around everywhere. We found a couple of inconspicuous seats off to one side of the auditorium.

We both rolled our eyes when we noticed that some genius had given each child a Dixie cup of M&Ms to eat while waiting for the event to begin. Apparently the kids weren't wound up enough and needed the extra sugar to push them over the edge.

The event began right on time with an introductory speech, a slide presentation and skits by the kindergarten, first- and second-grade classes.

Midway through the event, I was invited up on stage, gave my presentation, which was awarded copious amounts of applause, and I exited stage right.

Upon returning to my spot, I noticed something on my seat cushion. On closer inspection I found it to be a smeared M&M.

Actually, half of an M&M!

And if there was a piece of melted M&M on my seat, I was pretty sure I knew where the other half of the candy was.

As a group of third- and fourth-graders nosily climbed on stage, I sat down and nudged Shirley. "I need you to check my butt."

She rolled her eyes. "Now is not the time, David. I'm sure your butt looks fine."

"It's not that," I said. "I think there's something on the back of my pants. I'm going to lean over and you see if anything is there."

Shirley nodded as the lights dimmed and all attention focused on the costumed group of children singing on stage. I leaned over and heard her gasp.

"What did you do in your pants?" Shirley whispered. "Were you that nervous about your presentation?"

I shushed her, looking around to make sure no one heard us. "It's a melted

M&M," I replied. "Some little monster must have dropped it on my seat before I sat down."

"Well, it's all smeared right down the middle of your khakis. It looks like ..."

"I can imagine what it looks like," I interrupted her. "Just follow me."

As the kids climbed off the stage, Shirley and I got up and made a break through the auditorium and out the door. The lobby was empty.

"I can't believe you went on stage like that," Shirley laughed. "Oh my gosh! I wonder what people thought when they watched you go up there."

I failed to see the humor in the situation. "Maybe no one noticed. You didn't. But I can't go out to a restaurant like this. I need one of those wet wipe things. Do you have one in your purse?"

"How are you going to clean it off?" Shirley dug through her purse, pulled out the square-packaged wipe and handed it to me. "It's not a very accessible spot."

I tore the package open and handed the wipe back to her. "You're going to have to clean me." I turned around and bent over.

"Oh no, no, no," said Shirley, holding up her hands, waving the wet wipe like a flag of surrender. "You must have mistaken me for Bernie. I am not wiping your butt."

"I would do it for you," I argued.

Shirley shook her head. "No, you wouldn't."

"Okay, I wouldn't," I admitted. "But this is important. You have to help me. I have to get back in there before the assembly ends."

"What if someone sees us, David?"

"No one's going to see us," I said, still bent over, hands on my knees. "There's no one around. They're all busy watching the kids perform. Just quickly wipe my butt and we can get back to our seats!"

Shirley groaned and took a deep breath. "All I wanted was the free dinner." She began rubbing the wet wipe across the seat of my pants.

"Is it coming off?" I asked.

"It's really stuck on. Just hold still."

Shirley scrubbed a few more minutes. Then suddenly she stopped and cleared her throat.

"Is it good?" I asked as I stood up and turned around.

Apparently, while we were occupied with the cleaning process, the event inside the auditorium had ended and a crowd of parents, children and administrators stood in the doorway staring at us.

"It's not as weird as it looks," said Shirley, smiling. "We were ... he just ..."

"There was something brown and sticky on the back of my pants." As soon as the words left my mouth, I knew it was the wrong thing to say.

Anyway, Shirley and I got our free dinner at my favorite restaurant; however, we sat alone since no one from the administration or the parents committee seemed interested in sharing a table with us.

"I'm not going to worry about this," I told her. "It's all behind me."

"Actually," said Shirley. "Thanks to me, it's not on your behind at all."

You can contact David at Fewbricks-short59@cs.com

In a Family Way MOTHER AS JUGGLER



By Arlene Istar Lev

For the past four months, my partner has been away at school training to become a dog groomer. My partner is generally the househusband, the one who drives the kids to and from school and after-school activities; she does all of the cooking, half the housework and runs most of the errands. I have functioned as the primary breadwinner until her educational pursuits left me as

a full-time working mother.

"Working mother" is defined here as managing my counseling business (seeing clients, supervising staff, and office management) and teaching two graduate classes at the University, all confined to the hours the children attend school -- except for the two weeks off for school break and the six snow days where I managed those things with children in tow. I arranged during this four-month period to only do presentations I could bring the children to (because that would make it easier, right?!). I thought you would appreciate a small window into these few months.

The alarm rings at 6:15 a.m., giving me five solid hours of sleep. I wake the kids up a few times, and then line them up for their morning shower. My shower is always cold by the time I get in; sometimes I have to step into ice cold bath water since my son likes to fill the tub with water while he showers. This is an improvement, since he used to like to rub bar soap all over the floor so he could "slide" in the bathtub.

School starts at 8:20, and I seem to always be the last parent in the car line. Two mornings a week other parents have kindly offered (OK, we begged them) to drive the kids to school. The pressure on those mornings is much worse, because no matter how early we wake up and how efficient the system I develop, one child always needs to change his pants after the cereal spill, the other child can't find his shoes or winter coat, while the parent helper stands there with a frozen smile. "Oh, it's like this at our house too," they lie, nervously checking their watch. They are never the last parent in the car line.

I pick up the children from school at 3 p.m. after six hours of seeing clients or teaching college students ("I'm starving," they yell every day), run all necessary errands, and then drive them home to meet the babysitter who is with them until 8:30 at night while I go back to work. On the days I do not go back to work, I drive the kids to flute lessons, ice skating lessons, piano lessons, and Hebrew School. The flute teacher can only work Thursday, the piano teacher can only work Wednesdays. Hebrew School happens between ice skating lessons and piano lessons, which sadly happens in two cities that are a half hour away from one another.

So Wednesdays look like this: I pick the kids up, including Sophia and Max, who also need a ride to ice skating. I then have an hour to catch up on work phone calls while I stand shivering in a freezing cold skating rink smiling and yelling, "Looks great," "Be careful," and then, "No, not you," to the gentleman on the phone who clearly is not used to professionals who have to balance childcare with business needs.

We have 45 minutes (assuming there are no knots in the skate laces) to grab something to eat and then drop off Child Number One at Hebrew School. I then take Child Number Two across town to his piano lesson. We arrive home about 8 p.m. and first start homework, leaving precious little time for our evening cuddling and reading. After the kids fall asleep, I attend to the daily accumulation of about 100 e-mails; do you seriously think being able to check my e-mails from my cell phone would make my life easier?

I also try to find time to do the laundry and grocery shopping, and to unbury the mess in the house at least once a week. My younger son has gone to school wearing my socks, my older son once carried an empty lunch box to school, and one awful day I booked three clients in the same hour. Somehow we have survived with the help of a childcare worker, a house cleaner, three friends helping to chauffeur children, and a freezer full of frozen food. Unfortunately the above schedule leaves no room for things like writing deadlines, doing insurance billing, or grading papers, which is how I spend my weekends.

Did I mention that my car broke

down during this four-month period three times, and cost nearly \$1,600 to repair? Once the car broke down in a blinding snowstorm, blocking the off-ramp of the highway. The AAA driver, after burping his bacon sandwich in my face, left me on the roadside trudging in knee-high snow carrying the \$800 flute in one hand (it must've been a Thursday), and a booster seat in the other, so that child Number Two would be safe getting to school the next day.

Now, I would just like to say that I do not find comments like "Just slow down," or "Why don't you take time for yourself?" particularly helpful. When a friend asked, "Isn't there something you can give up?", I volunteered to give up the IRS audit and the furnace breaking down (four times in one 48-hour period). So, for the record, we have given up many things, but remember it is only four months, and we wanted the children's lives to remain as "normal" as possible. Please don't laugh. Consistency is good for children, and we are consistently late.

Arlene Lev is a family therapist, educator and activist. She is a lesbian mother and the author of *The Complete Lesbian and Gay Parenting Book*, and *Transgender Emergence*. She can be reached at www.choicesconsulting.com.

MOCHA News TALKING ABOUT HIV



By Avril Little

In the '80s and '90s, HIV/AIDS decimated the black gay community. When the disease first hit the scene, some believed it to be a government conspiracy; others had limited information about HIV transmission and therefore continued to engage in risky behaviors.

One thing was certain: HIV/AIDS hit black gay men by storm and few knew what to do or where to go for help. The men who were infected with HIV hid and many died silently at home with support from only a few trusted friends. To locally address this need, the MOCHA Project was formed.

I recently had lunch with a local HIV/AIDS advocate and he illustrated the phenomenon as he witnessed it years ago. He describes a time when people were "coming into their own." If you hung with a circle of gay friends, had membership in a "gay house" or frequented your local black gay club, that was your expression of community. Then, without notice, individuals from these circles, houses and clubs vanished.

"Today you would see them out and about and the next day they were gone, as if they never existed." There was nothing to be heard about them, other than "the announcement that they had died and the whispers that it was the bubble (HIV)."

S. Alex Williams, Director of Programs at the MOCHA Project, can attest to a similar occurrence. "Black gay men who contracted HIV never disclosed their status." They remained silent even when they displayed symptoms of advanced HIV infection. Moreover, when a person living with HIV passed away, "the families often times created an illusion," reporting that "he had cancer, a heart condition or some other terminal disease." There was great stigma around HIV/AIDS and "the family and the community became more important than the individual."

In recent years, there has been an increase in HIV/AIDS services and efforts to help reduce stigma around HIV/AIDS. However, when I hear firsthand accounts that chronicle the beginning of the epidemic and I compare them to the state of HIV in our country today, I am concerned about the amount of similarities that still exist.

(Columnists continue on page 8)

Say What?!

By Paul Johnson and Bonnie Reda



Come out ... come out ... now

"This is my friend..." These four words could signal the end of a relationship faster than a Britney Spears marriage. The words, spoken by your boyfriend/girlfriend to their parents, mean that you don't rate high enough to be called boyfriend/girlfriend, lover or partner in said company, let alone rating high enough to be counted among the stars.

There are a lot of issues that arise in relationships and one of the biggest ones, when two gay or lesbian people are starting out, is whether or not you are both "out" to friends, family, co-workers. Coming out is not an easy process; however, not being out and being in a committed relationship is like juggling two separate lives and it doesn't get any easier as the relationship progresses.

Someone who isn't out to their family is only fooling himself or herself if they think the family doesn't know. In my experience, most of the families, and I'm talking mainly about parents here, already know or suspect that their son or daughter is gay. They may be telling themselves that it's not true, but they suspect.

Let's face it, coming out isn't easy; I know. However, it's much more difficult to live life in the closet to friends and family, especially if one is in a committed relationship. When one lives part of their life secret from those around them, they are compartmentalizing and there is also a certain deceit; deceit doesn't mix well with love. The question becomes, if someone is deceitful in one part of their life, how many other parts of their life are covered up?

I've been in a relationship with someone who was not out to their parents and, while it didn't last long enough to meet the parents, if the relationship had continued I would have had to at some point begin attending family dinners, holiday events, outings and other gatherings with the family and I would have been loathe to have done so as "just a friend."

Besides, in today's day and age, coming out is much more accepted than it was in the past. Parents still disown their children, but, in my experience, more times than not after the initial shock, the parents are willing to embrace and still love their child. According to the HRC, over 70 percent of heterosexual adults know someone who is gay and the typical American's support for full marriage equality is raised 17 percent by having a gay or lesbian family member. That's good news for those of us working hard for same sex marriage.

Being just a friend doesn't work for me. So, unless my lover/partner/spouse is out, I don't want to journey down the road of life with them like a Paris Hilton accessory. And as for that one guy, he eventually came out and was accepted with open arms. ■



Come out ... come out ... when you're ready

It is late at night as I begin this article, my mind racing with the pros and cons of such a personal choice.

And yet, my friend Paul, who has already written his column (which I will not be reading until mine is completed) found this topic to be clear cut. I am aware that he has no doubt about it. One's partner should be out, or else really out – as in, "there's the door."

While I understand his reasoning, for myself this is a coin that when tossed will always be two-sided -- my partner deciding when to come out, and to whom, stamped on both sides.

If my partner is not out, I understand that in many ways I am forced to head "into the closet" with her, as we deny each other public displays of affection and the very endearments that are so vital to a healthy relationship. But the real question for me would be, who am I thinking of, myself, or her, were I to force her hand? If I truly love her, then isn't accepting her timetable to come out to family, friends, and co-workers her business? I say it is. And isn't that unconditional love?

I don't deny that I would feel a sadness, knowing it was an intense fear of rejection by those she loved that prevented her from accepting who she is. And I would hope that over time she would begin to come out and that our small circle of friends might grow ever larger, initiating more frequent "coming out" moments.

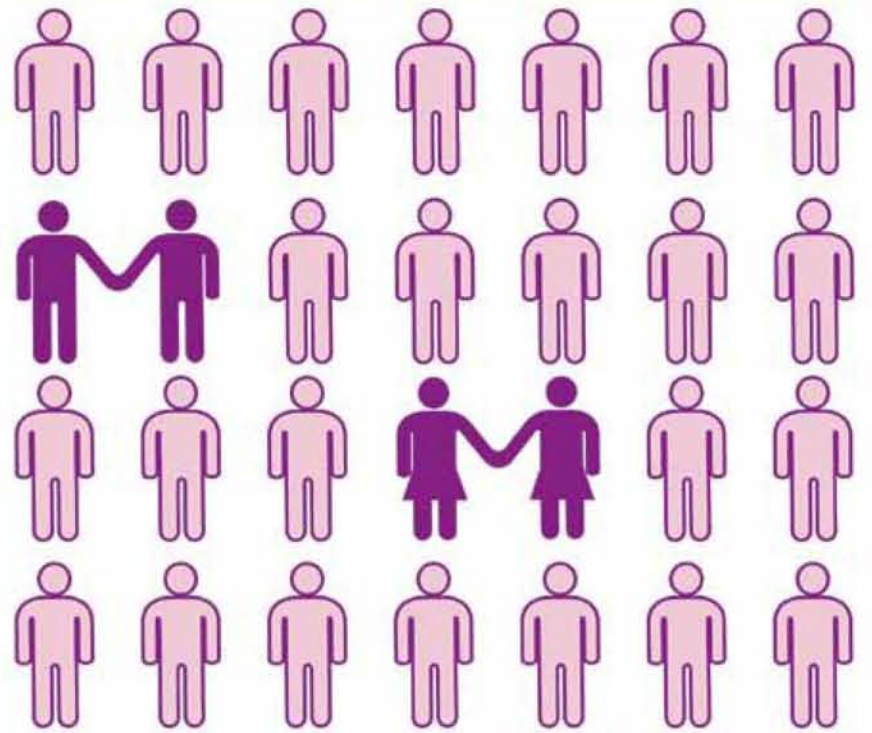
But were I to expect her to come out according to my agenda, not hers, I would surely expect her anger and hurt to come back at me like a boomerang when a "friend" turned away, or a "trustworthy co-worker" spread gossip about the "lesbo" in the office. Or worst of all, if one of her children were to reject her.

No, my timeline on when to announce her lifestyle is not my decision to make. If I love her head to toe, inside and out, faults and all, as she does me, then my role is to accept her, as she is, in this moment.

If and when she does come out, I will hope and pray that I have the strength and support she needs if someone hurts her. Just as I will be the first to raise a glass of wine in cheer when friends and family say, "It's about time," and she begins to experience the wonder of self acceptance.

In the meantime, there is only one person my love needs to be out to... me. ■

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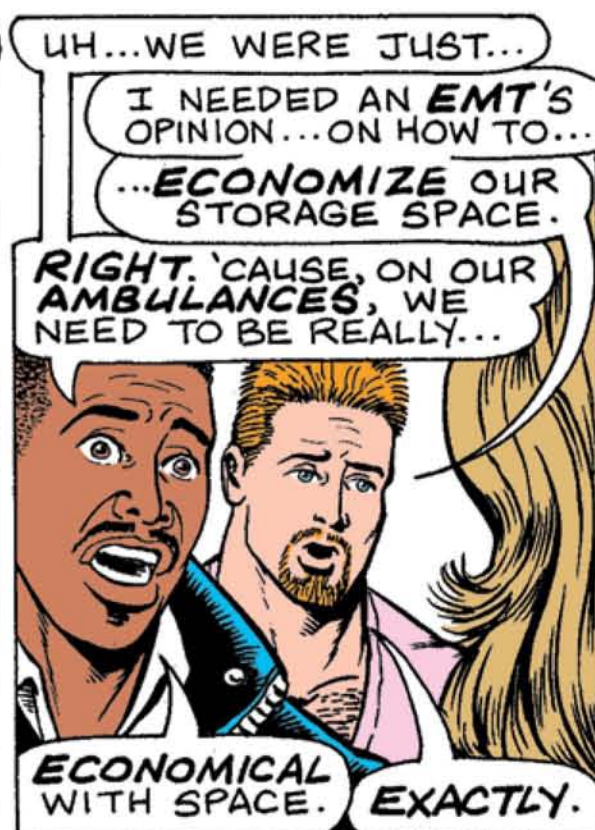
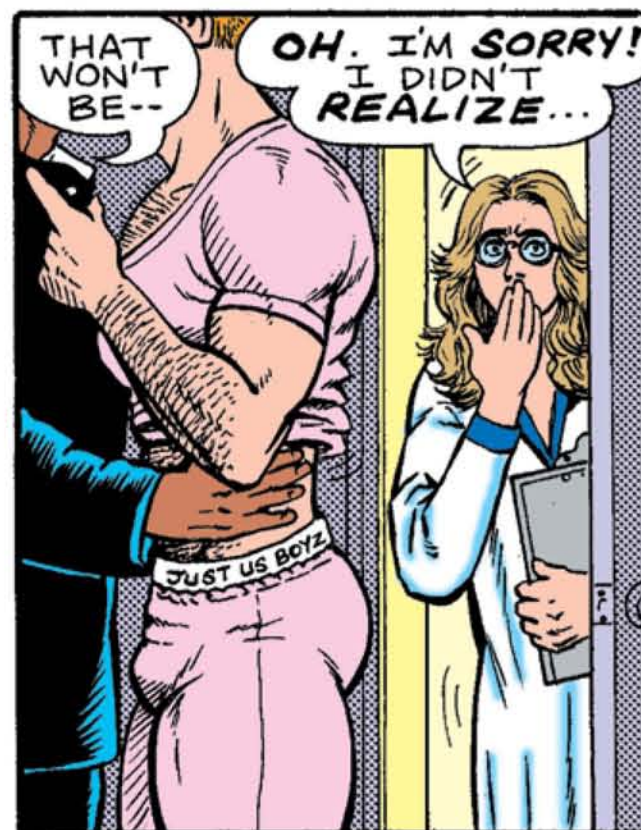
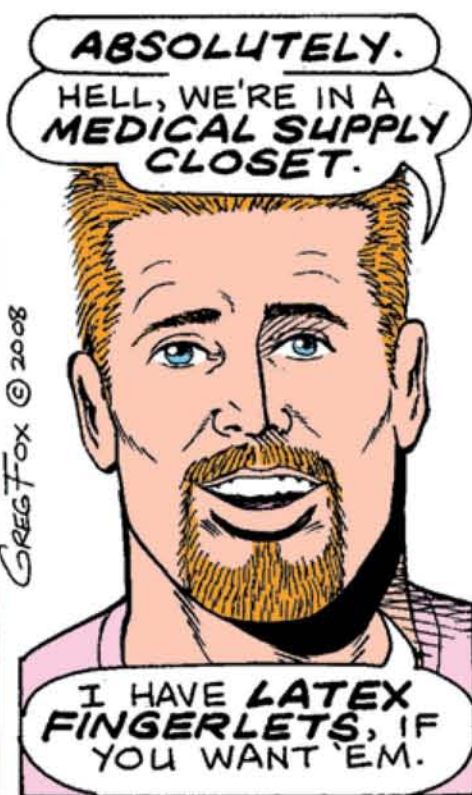
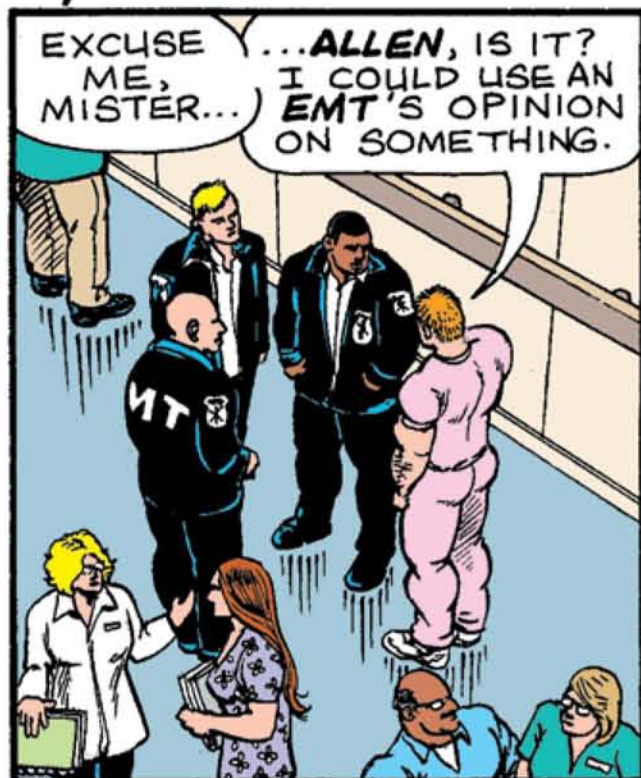
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(Columnists continued from page 5)

Williams believes that "while black gay men are now more open to disclosing their HIV status," there is still more work to be done, particularly around prevention as HIV/AIDS still disproportionately affects minorities. According to the CDC, African-Americans represent 13 percent of the national population, however, they account for a staggering 50 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases in the US (2001-2005). When we focus our attention to the black gay community, the numbers are even more disturbing. A recently CDC study, conducted in five major US cities, found that 46 percent of the black MSM surveyed were HIV positive.

It is evident that black gay men have particularly been affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and efforts to address prevention among this group have fallen short. At MOCHA, we recognize that we cannot speak about HIV prevention for black gay men without talking about homophobia, internalized sexism, heterosexism and racism as factors that influence risk-taking behaviors. And we cannot truly address the needs of HIV positive black gay men without looking at how society has marginalized and devalued their lives. As ministers continue to preach about HIV as God's punishment for sin, people will continue to suffer and die silently from the effects of HIV/AIDS.

As a community of healthcare providers, friends and allies, we must stand up and actively refuse to see another person vanish silently. Many people living with HIV/AIDS still live in isolation due to stigma, fear, distrust and hopelessness. We must begin to have honest conversations about the real issues associated with HIV/AIDS. These conversations need to take place in our homes, schools, churches and in all parts of our community. I believe only then can we become a society that nurtures and protects all of its people.

Confessions of a Serial Blonde

I'VE STILL GOT MY HEALTH



By Robby Morris

"Well hell, if I could do that, I would never leave my bedroom."

There are some things you just shouldn't say to complete strangers in a public setting,

no matter how appropriate you think the timing is.

I'm a master of this act because I don't have a very good relationship with that little voice in my head that usually begs and pleads with me to not embarrass him or make a scene. No, he's typically off somewhere sitting in a corner eating Cheetos and watching Oprah.

I begrudgingly accept this arrangement because at this stage of the game I'm in favor of anyone who can actually eat Cheetos (or who can actually get through an episode of her royal O-ness without falling into a catatonic state for that matter), because for the last four months I sure as hell haven't been able even go near them.

Let me give you a little back-story.

Serial Blonde has once again jumped on the dieting bandwagon. I actually started shortly into this New Year. There

have been great days, just OK days, and days when all I want to do is to take up permanent residence in a McDonald's drive through or camp out in a tree and throw poo at thin people, but alas, no one has been pelted, I'm Big Mac-free and after the longest 16 weeks of my life, I'm pretty committed to seeing this plan through.

This whole experience, I'm learning (or so I would like to think) isn't just about eating (or not eating more accurately); it's an emotional and spiritual journey as well. It's about managing the voice in your head that tells you, yes, do it, or, no way in hell, and you better stop. But as I mentioned before, when you're not communicating with that voice, mayhem is sure to ensue, which is exactly what happened when yours truly, feeling pumped up and good about himself (which right there should have been a red flag), decided to take his new consciousness about health and well-being and enroll in a yoga class.

I know. A yoga class? I'm pissing myself laughing too just looking back on it. Me, of considerable width and girth, doing yoga? Moi, who's naturally about as relaxed as Joan Crawford scrubbing the bathroom floor, taking a class about meditation and being peaceful amongst the things? Surely I jest.

No, I'm serious, but cut me some slack. Like I said, that voice in my head that would normally tell me that this particular idea was a little (OK, a lot) out of my league was way too busy browsing the snack aisle at Target to slap me upside my big head, so I was left to my own devices and thought it sounded interesting.

As I entered the class, held at an extremely reputable health center in the suburbs, I was like a kid at a candy store, full of excitement and wonder, albeit this candy store would be calorie, fat, and sugar free. I was delighted to see there were only a dozen or so people in attendance (I like intimate groups) but a little discouraged to see none of them looked to have eaten anything in the last month.

The instructor, a handsome man probably in his early to mid-thirties, with curly highlighted hair and abs of death (screw chocolate, I wanted to eat him!) entered, brightly greeted the participants and took a few moments to size up the crowd. His gaze stayed on me a little longer than I would have preferred. I know I exude fabulousness, but you need not stare! Have I mentioned that the absence of that critical voice of reason I've been bemoaning is often replaced by delusions of grandeur? But I digress. The class practiced their breathing, relaxed their minds, and began a series of stretches and poses that would make Madonna blush with envy.

Within 15 minutes of starting, it became painfully obvious yoga and I might not be such a perfect match after all. Not painful for me really, but for everyone else. While they were downward dogging, hokey pokey-ing, and whatever the hell else they were doing, I simply reached for the stars, touched my toes (like my P.E. teacher in school would holler: if you can't do this, for God's sake, do something) and made my usual witty asides. Apparently, my comments were a little bit too much for this particular gathering, because when the dude next to me swung both of his legs behind his head, poised to take a big bite out of his Oscar Meyer, I turned out to the entire group and made that darling exclamation that began this column,

which pretty much devastated everyone in its wake.

As Rizzo from *Grease* once said, "Some people can be so touchy."

Needless to say, that was the beginning and end of my stint as a yoga aficionado. I decided that a room full of people who don't move their faces or open their mouths is not a place for me. OK, they actually made this decision for me by going on at length about other classes at other locations that may be more my style.

But I'm not too broken up about it, though. If I'm going to live on water, fruits, vegetables, and nuts and run around like a fucking squirrel for the time being, as I continue to get my food and fitness issues under control, I need lots of humor and conversation. Preferably with someone more agreeable and supportive than that voice in my head, who as we speak is sitting on the porch eating a pint of Ben & Jerry's.

E-mail: serial-blonde@bluefrog.com.

GAY AND HEALTHY

THE ALPHABET SOUP OF HEP



By Erik Libey

May is "National Hepatitis Awareness Month"... so this month I thought we'd do a quick refresher on the "alphabet soup" of viral hepatitis.

There are numerous types of known viral hepatitis -- all of which affect the liver and most of which are identified by a different letter of the alphabet. Of the different varieties, there are three that are both common and of particular concern. These are Hepatitis A, B and C and each is very distinct from the other.

Hep A is transmitted by a virus carried in human feces. This virus must be consumed orally to infect someone. Sexual behaviors such as rimming or inserting parts of the hand into a partner's anus or touching used condoms without properly washing hands afterward can pass it. It can also be passed if an infected individual does not wash properly when handling food. In some areas of the world (generally developing countries), this virus can also be present in contaminated water supplies. Hep A infection generally results in illness, including nausea, jaundice, and fatigue. Once past the initial illness, most people get better and develop lifelong immunity to future infection.

Hep B is a decidedly more serious infection and is often likened to HIV. Both HIV and Hep B are passed in similar ways: through blood and sexual fluids. So unprotected sex and needle sharing are risk behaviors. One difference between the two, however, is that some reports indicate that Hep B is up to 100 times more infectious than HIV... meaning it is considerably easier to catch.

The virus is much sturdier than HIV and can even live outside the human body in dried body fluid for up to 14 days. A person infected with Hep B will suffer symptoms that are often very similar to Hep A. With Hep B, however, there is the chance (in approximately 10 percent of infected individuals) that a patient will not recover from the initial illness and instead progress to chronic Hep B infection, which can cause long

term complications such as liver damage, cancer, and potentially death.

Hep C is potentially the most serious of the three Hep viruses addressed here today. It can result in serious symptoms, is more difficult to prevent than A and B, is difficult to treat, and is generally not curable. While the most common means of transmitting Hep C is contaminated blood (i.e. needle sharing, donated blood/organs, etc.), there is reason to believe that in some instances it can be transmitted sexually as well.

For some, the symptoms are similar to the other Hep viruses, with over 75 percent of infected individuals becoming lifelong carriers of the virus and about 10-20 percent developing chronic infection that can lead to liver damage, cancer, and/or death.

A person who suspects they have been exposed to or are suffering from any form of Hep should see their physician immediately; there are treatments available and your physician can discuss these options with you. For uninfected individuals, all three of these varieties are preventable either medically or through some specific personal practices or both.

Hep A and B are both preventable with a vaccine available from your physician or through an STD clinic. Additionally, good hygiene practices (for Hep A) and consistent use of safer sex and drug practices such as condoms, dental dams, and using new/clean needles (for all three types) can also help prevent infection.

As always.... be gay, be proud, be healthy!

Erik Libey is the Gay Health Coordinator at AIDS Rochester, Inc. and can be reached at (585) 442-2220 x3042 or by email at elibe@aidstrochester.org. An archive of his previous articles, as well as other gay health information, can be found at AIDS Rochester's website dedicated to queer health at www.aidstrochester.org/gay-health.

The Vagina Dialogues

CHECK-UP DOWN BELOW



By Kaelyn Rich

May is here and it's time to open the windows, plant the vegetable garden, and store winter clothes away. May is about checking up, cleaning up, and preparing for

the future, so it is the perfect time to celebrate National Women's Check-Up Day on May 12.

On Check-Up Day, women are encouraged to get annual check-ups and preventative screenings. Today, I'm going to focus on one of the most important routine check-ups for women, the gynecological exam.

There is a bogus idea (among partnered lesbian women, especially) that routine gyno exams aren't a necessity for queer women. This simply isn't true. Queer women are at risk for STIs and even those in monogamous relationships benefit from cancer screening. If you have ever been sexually active or are over the age of 18, you should be seeing a gynecologist for a yearly exam to help you take control of your sexual health.

And not just queer women. Gender-queer, transgender, and intersex people that have female anatomy may also need an annual exam.

Still, many queer people are hesitant. Fear that their practitioner will not be



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queer-friendly plays a big part. And then there is simply fear of the pelvic exam itself — the stirrups, the cold hands, the specula — it sounds like a really, really bad date!

So here's the truth: getting a gynecological exam is one of the easiest, shortest medical appointments you'll ever have. No needles, no drills, no eye drops, no recovery time — just some questions and an exam that takes a few minutes.

So this month, the Vagina Dialogues is going to give you the lowdown on check-ups. We're going to go through a typical exam step-by-step so you can be empowered and prepared to make that appointment!

You should do a little homework before you get your exam. If you are comfortable, being out to your health provider makes the experience better and more relaxed. Call around and get recommendations from friends to find a gynecologist that is sensitive to your gender identity and/or sexual orientation. AIDS Rochester (www.aidsrochester.org) and the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley (www.gayalliance.org) have resources to help you find a queer-friendly provider.

You may also want to consider if you have a preference about the gender of your gynecologist. Think of any problems or questions you might have for your doctor and write them down. If birth control is a need for you, ask your practitioner about options. Unfortunately, some may not think to ask a gay transman or queer woman about birth control.

At the beginning of the appointment, your doctor will conduct a medical history. You will be asked questions about your last period, sexual activity, medications you are on, your smoking/drinking/drug use, and your family's medical history.

It's important to answer honestly. In New York, all people have the right to confidential sexual health care, including

teens, so you don't need to worry about being "outed" to your family or friends. Everything you say will be private.

The exam itself is quick and simple. You will be asked to undress, change into a gown, and cover with a drape sheet. After talking with the doctor, you will lie back on the table and the exam will begin. The clinician will check your breasts for lumps, thickening, or irregularities. You may be shown how to do a breast self-exam. If you don't know how, this is a great time to ask about it.

Next, the pelvic exam will start. You will be asked put your feet in the footrests and spread your knees for the exam. If it is your first time, it can feel really weird. So take a deep breath and relax. Nobody really likes having a bright light shined onto their private parts while a stranger pokes around their vagina, but the exam will be more comfortable — both mentally and physically — if you are calm.

You can ask the gynecologist to explain to you what they're doing before or while the exam is going on. If your gyno is a man and that makes you feel a little uncomfortable, you can ask a woman to stay with you in the room during your exam.

The entire pelvic exam will only last a few minutes. Your clinician will visually check out your vaginal area for signs of irritation or irregularities. Next, the clinician will insert a speculum to hold your vagina open to see your cervix.

Now before you panic, you should know the vagina is really stretchy so this won't hurt, but you will feel a slight pressure. The clinician will look to see if the cervix is healthy. A Pap test will be done to collect cervical cells to test for pre-cancerous growths or abnormalities. If you and your doctor feel you are at risk for certain sexually transmitted infections, a culture may be taken for testing. A small spatula or tiny brush is used to collect cells for the tests. The speculum will then be removed.

Wearing gloves, the gynecologist will put one or two lubricated fingers in your vagina and use the other hand to press lightly on your abdomen. This is to check for enlarged ovaries, cysts, or tenderness. You'll feel some pressure during this part of the exam, but if you feel tenderness or pain, say something — it could indicate infection.

Finally, your clinician may insert a finger into your rectum to test the condition of your muscles and check for tumors in this area. Again, it's normal to feel a bit of discomfort and pressure, but it should only last a few seconds.

So now you know exactly what to expect when you go in for your check-up "down there"! To be honest, the exam is uncomfortable, but a few minutes of discomfort once a year could save your life by preventing cervical, uterine, ovarian, and breast cancer, or an untreated STI infection.

I hope you will celebrate National

Women's Check-Up Day on May 12 by making an appointment for your annual gyno exam, whether you're a first-timer or an old pro! And tell your friends and family to "check-up down below," too!

Look for more healthy sexuality info in the Vagina Dialogues next month!

KaeLyn Rich is the Community Affairs Coordinator at Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region. We want to hear from you! If you have suggestions for a future Vagina Dialogues topic, contact KaeLyn at krich@ppsr.org. Friend us on MySpace at www.myspace.com/ppsr! For more information on any of the issues discussed in this article, visit www.ppsr.org, call our toll free helpline at 1-866-600-6886, or email sextalk@ppsr.org. ■

At SERENDIPITY in May...

Friday, May 2nd

FEATURING The amazingly beautiful artwork of Joy Argento.

Friday, May 9th

BIG GAY PROM! Anyone buying their Prom Dress here at Serendipity will get 20% OFF of their dress. Good All day.

Saturday, May 10th

Mary Kay Featuring the NEW Spring line & Mother's Day Sale. Sign up for a FREE facial. Also buy your Mother's Day Basket. Get 15% OFF of your Mary Kay purchase today. 11 am to 2 pm.

Friday, May 16th

TODAY ONLY! Anyone who brings this ad in to Serendipity will get 20% OFF of their purchase. Good All day.

Friday, May 30th

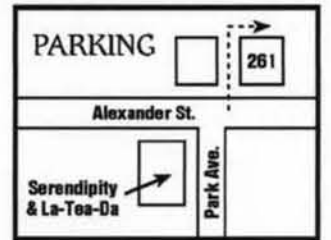
LILLY LA ROUE Featuring her new line of hats. Lilly will be at Serendipity from noon till 9 pm.

Artist of the Month

EXCLUSIVELY Featuring the artwork of Anita and Dom Palozzi. 10% of all profits go to Cancer Research. Handmade lampshades, carved walking sticks and canes, fine jewelry, cards, stationery and hand painted furniture and glass are just a few of the great things you'll find here.



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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel

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AS THE CAMPAIGN SEASON DRAGS ON, CIVILITY IS BEING STRETCHED TO A GOSSAMER FILAMENT.

ANTIWAR ACTIVISTS GROW BELUCOSE. OBAMA DOESN'T HAVE THE EXPERIENCE TO BEAT MCCAIN. AND BELIEVE ME, ONCE THE BUSHIES START A WAR IN IRAN, WE'RE GONNA NEED TO BEAT MCCAIN.

SPARROW, ARE YOU ON OXYCONTIN? RED STATES HATE HILLARY WITH THE WHITE HOT PASSION OF A BILLION BILIOUS RUSH LIMBAUGHS. THEY'LL MAKE MINCEMEAT OF HER.

LOOK, I DON'T EVEN CARE THAT HILLARY'S SUCH A HAWK. WE NEED A WOMAN PRESIDENT BECAUSE IT'LL EMPOWER GIRLS TO BE LEADERS, AND THAT'S OUR ONLY HOPE FOR EVER DISMANTLING THE PATRIARCHY.

EXES ARE GETTING EX-IER. GOD, MADELEINE, CONDOLEEZZA RICE IS A WOMAN. WOULD YOU VOTE FOR HER? I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'VE FALLEN PREY TO THE ESSENTIALIST FALLACY!

AT LEAST I HAVEN'T FALLEN PREY TO THE SAVIOR FANTASY. IF I HEAR ONE MORE PERSON WAX RHAPSODIC ABOUT HOW OBAMA INSPIRES THEM, I'LL COUGH UP A GIANT HAIRBALL OF HOPE.

CHILDREN ARE DIVIDED AGAINST THEIR PARENTS. I JUST WANT TO UNDERSTAND. IF THEIR POSITIONS ARE VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL, WHY ARE YOU SO SOLD ON OBAMA?

HE'S A MAC! SHE'S A PC! NEED WE SAY MORE?

PROFESSIONALS ARE NOT SO PROFESSIONAL. I JUST CAN'T SUPPORT HER, NOT AFTER SHE AND BILL SACRIFICED THE WELL-BEING OF MILLIONS OF KIDS AND SINGLE MOMS WITH THEIR "WELFARE REFORM" PLAN.

BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT SHE TRIED TO DO FOR HEALTH CARE? WHY DOES OBAMA GET THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT JUST BECAUSE HE'S AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY?

HOW WILL IT ALL END? GIRLIE MAN, MANLY GIRL. IT'S ALL THE SAME TO ME.

J.R., SING THE SONG I TAUGHT YOU. YES WE CAN! YES WE CA-A-N!

I NEED TO GO LOOK AT THIS BUT I THINK YOU HAVE A YEAST INFECTION.

www.DykesToWatchOutFor.com

Travel

California's Santa Clarita

By Merle Exit

The Santa Clarita Valley may be home to some of the world's best thrill rides at Six Flag's Magic Mountain, but for lovers of cowboy westerns, April 23-27 marked the dates of California's Cowboy Festival.

Melody Ranch Motion Picture Studio, where Gene Autry's western adventure came to life and the present home to the HBO's "Deadwood," is never open to the public except during Santa Clarita's annual Cowboy Festival. This year, the featured performers included singer-guitarist Don Edwards, The Quebe Sisters Band, Hot Club of Cowtown, Cowpop, Gary McMahan and Pat Richardson. Visitors were able to get a behind the scenes tour, dine, dance and just have a hootin' and a hollerin' good time. www.cowboyleftival.org (for next year).

Just as Los Angeles has a Walk of Stars, Old Town Newhall prides itself on the Walk of Western Stars. Obvious "inductees" were guys like Tex Ritter, Roy Rogers, Claude Akins, Clint Walker and John Wayne. Perhaps not so obvious are the gals: Amanda Blake, Katherine Ross, Virginia Mayo and Melissa Gilbert. The bronze and terrazzo tiles along San Fernando Road and Newhall Avenue came into play in 1981 with Tom Mix, Gene Autry, and William S. Hart, a silent cowboy movie star set the tone for the nearby William S. Hart Park and Museum.

After "walking the walk," I ventured to the first cowboy movie star's home, La Loma de los Vientos (the Hill of the Winds). The museum

houses Hart's personal effects, movie paraphernalia, Native American artifacts and Western American Art showcasing paintings and bronzes by his friend Charles Russell. I was personally shocked to see a replica of my antique dining room table there.

Tours are given Wednesday through Sunday, but you're on your own for hiking nature trails and seeing the park barnyard's goats, horses, sheep, deer, duck and geese. Keep your eyes peeled for American Bison roaming the hills. www.hartmuseum.org

I got more than a bite to eat at the

famous Egg Plantation, home to 101 omelet combinations made with four eggs! Can you imagine a Cobb Salad Omelet? www.eggplantation.com

My trip here was not just about western flair, as it centered on the Amgen Tour and Bike Race from Santa Clarita to Pasadena. With Spa Week approaching and having just checked into the downtown area's Hyatt Valencia, I was off to Glen Ivy Spa for a renewal massage. I love when spas have a "relax and we'll call you" room. They tend to have citrus waters, herbal teas and comfy seats. I must say though... there was this weird couple in there. It later turned out that they were staying just down the hall from me. It's almost as if they were following my every venue. Oh well. As for the massage, all traces of jet lag departed.

Location, location, location: the Hyatt was the perfect spot for viewing the Amgen Tour and Bike Race, as well as window shopping. Talk about a shopping center, the Westfield Valencia Town Center went on for blocks. Unless you're bringing in big bucks, "shop 'til you drop" could turn to "buy 'til you cry".

Hotel restaurants may not necessarily be good, but this one has a few great menus and appears to be tops on their weekend brunch. Not only does the Hyatt's have the usual breakfast treats, they also offered morsels of goodies such as salmon, lox, snow crab and lamb chops, which caught both my eye and taste buds. Hmm... that couple was there, too.

So what was this Amgen Tour and Bike Race all about? It's a professional bicycle race to the California coast. The world's top professional teams competed over an eight-day, 650-mile race on a route that included the California redwoods, wine country and the Pacific Coast.

"Founded in 2005, Breakaway from Cancer continues to raise awareness and funds to support valuable services and programs, provided

free of charge, that help people living with cancer. The initiative was created by Amgen as a complementary component to the company's sponsorship of the Amgen Tour of California. This year, the initiative continues to support the important programs and tools offered by the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship and The Wellness Community."

It's on to Pasadena for the end of the tour and results of the race... to be continued.

Listen to "Whirl With Merle" on www.blogtalkradio.com to hear more about Santa Clarita and Pasadena. ■



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BIG GAY PROM

Friday, May 9, 2008 • 6–10pm

Robach Community Center

Ontario Beach Park, 1 Beach Avenue

Ticket info: 585-244-8640, ext. 13

\$10 Admission, Drug & Alcohol Free

Ages 15–25, Straight allies welcome

Music by DJ - Chuck Argento





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GAGV Youth Group:
Youth Center, 1st Floor
Ages: 13-23, Sundays 2-4pm
Ages 18-25, Sundays 4:30-6pm
http://youth.gayalliance.org for after school schedule and special events.

The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley is a non-profit agency, dedicated to cultivating a healthy, inclusive environment where gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people are safe, thriving and enjoying equal rights. We are a coalition of individuals and groups working to empower GLBT people, to affirm their identities, and to create an atmosphere where the diversity of our community can thrive both collectively and separately. We educate and advocate for civil rights for all and for the eradication of homophobia.

Lessons from Labor



By Rebecca Newberry

I grew up to value solidarity. As a child, I remember sitting at the dinner table hearing union stories from my mother, who was active in her local. I have memories of my younger brother and myself cuddling together on the couch, watching documentaries on Cesar Chavez and the effects of pesticides on migrant workers, and to this day it is still difficult for me to eat grapes.

To me unity was second nature. My family stood with others' struggles out of respect for livelihood and the fight to obtain equality. My family would not shop in stores that had labor conflicts, or patronize places that were not union, and it never occurred to me that other children didn't have this type of upbringing. Solidarity was my family value.

Because I was raised by a parent who came of age in the civil rights movement, I grew up with a verbal history of social justice in this country. My early understanding of the tactics and strategies set the foundation of my ability to organize now. Knowing this history, knowing the ebbs and flows of social change, unveiled to me the intersections of social movements and uncovered many pitfalls to change.

After I came out, and found my new home in the queer community, I was awakened to a new type of solidarity, the queer
(Newberry continues page 2)

Anti Violence Project:

EDUCATING ABOUT HATE VIOLENCE



By Kelly Baumgartner

Last month my article was a plea to the LGBTQ community to report any and all anti-LGBTQ bias activity and/or violence to the Gay Alliance Anti-Violence Project. With the statistics compiled from facts provided, we have a valuable educational tool to present to local law enforcement and legal professionals -- a tool that can shed light on the reality of the violence our community faces.

We also need to be willing to educate straight friends and friendly neighbors about the bias and homophobia that we can face while interacting with the judicial system. I want to stress the term "friendly neighbor." I certainly don't want anyone putting themselves in danger by coming out to and trying to sway the opinion of someone who may react with violence.

Unfortunately, quite often our straight allies and friendly
(AVP continues page 2)



WAY OFF-BROADWAY: Several members of the Gay Alliance staff attended the Rochester Broadway Theatre League's announcement of the 2008-2009 season. (L-R: Ceridwen Troy, Susan Jordan, John Stevens, Scott Fearing, Jeanne Gainsburg.) The event was a gala lunch onstage at the Auditorium Theatre; the SOTA Singers performed and a certain amount of champagne was involved. The Alliance hopes to collaborate with RBTL for a special event connected with one of the new season's shows. Photo: Jamie Whitbeck

Fearing Nothing: READ ME A STORY



By Scott Fearing

"...And they all lived happily ever after." Seems that every fairy tale ends this way.

Great promises of unending joy, boundless happiness and two people living a life of constant blissful contentment and satisfaction.

Of course, members of the LGBT community are not in these stories, so as kids we miss out seeing our real selves with a shiny-bright future. Happy queer-couple futures are not presented in fairy tales or storybooks, or by Monroe County commissioners and rarely by our parents, families or, most sadly, each other.

In fact, most of us have
(Fearing continues page 2)

Just Me: "QPT"



By Ceridwen Troy

As I sit down to write this article, I'm being reminded that I've now officially passed my deadline. At this point, the best I can hope for in turning this in is being "not quite as terribly late as I could be".

At least I'm in good company, though. Most of the staff are just as late with their articles this month as I am. I can't explain it. Maybe April's been a particularly busy month for us. Maybe we all have spring fever.

Or maybe it's just, as that old offensive joke would suggest, a simple case of "QPT".

For those who haven't heard the phrase before, QPT, or
(Just Me continues page 2)

Youth Update: BIG GAY PROM



By Jessica Cohen

Despite an extremely busy April, there is no rest for the weary in the Youth Program! Big Gay Prom is just a few days away and it's not too late to make plans to attend or chaperone!

On Friday, May 9, we will be getting our groove on at the Roger Robach Community Center in Charlotte Beach. From 6-10 p.m., LGBTQ youth ages 15-25 can feel safe to dance the night away! The cost is only \$10 (pay at the door!) and you can wear anything from prom dresses and tuxedos to your favorite jeans! DJ Chuck Argento will be playing music and Jim Hall (yes, that's Officer Jim!)
(Youth continues page 2)

Outreach Program: A VISIT WITH THE ROCHESTER CD NETWORK



By Jeanne Gainsburg

The Rochester CD Network is a non-sexual, social support group for cross-dressers and their significant others. They have been active since 1985. The goal of the RCD Network is to give cross-dressers a safe place to meet others like themselves and to work towards building and maintaining a positive self-image of their whole being.

Regular meetings, activities, dinner parties, movie nights, ice cream socials and workshops on topics like make-up, wig styl-

ing, fashion, deportment, etc., are planned throughout the year to help members express their feminine side and enjoy themselves. Although women cross-dressers are welcome, there are no active female members at this time, so the focus of the group remains on the men.

One of the biggest fears that many cross-dressers have is being found out. New members who are concerned about confidentiality can rest assured that the RCD Network's meeting space is extremely private. The space has a large, comfortable meeting room, the building is secure and locked at all times, and there is plenty of parking in an area that does not have a lot of traffic. In addition, members do not need to enter the building dressed as their "other selves;" there are chang-
(Outreach continues page 2)

Speaking Engagements

- APRIL (not listed in April EC):**
April 3: The Harley School GSA (Youth Program)
April 3: National Technical Institute for the Deaf - Spectrum (CampusOUT)
April 22: Lollypop Farms (Gay Alliance Staff)
April 24: Lollypop Farms (Gay Alliance Staff)
April 27: Private Book Club Book Discussion (Speakers Bureau)
- MAY**
May 2: MCC: *Anyone and Everyone* Film and Discussion (Speakers Bureau)
May 3: Gay Alliance: Cross-Dressers and Their Spouses (Speakers Bureau Training)
May 16: Pittsford-Mendon High School Health Classes (Youth Program)
May TBA: Greece Olympia's GSA (Speakers Bureau)
May TBA: East House Diversity Training (Youth Program)

(Newberry from page 1)

concept of family. Our families are bound together by a sense of mutual struggle, unity and support. We come together, we pool resources, share our homes and look out for each other's safety.

And now, as the queer community finds ourselves in the throes of our civil rights movement, my fear is that we will lose our connection with each other once a few rights have been gained.

Along with the shift towards legitimate recognition, our community is divided by class. Middle and upper class gays are turning towards white/hetero-middle and upper class values, which are based on consumerism and further exploit marginalized communities.

And this trend isn't new. To quote my friend Sasha in a reference to the black civil rights movement, "Buying into American consumerism isn't the piece of the pie we wanted, the piece of the pie we wanted is equality. The black community needs to use their buying power as leverage, and keep the dollar in our community."

Talking to her makes me take a step back and look at how codifying gay culture has the potential to hurt human rights long term. The corporate usurpation of the "gay" image results in money leaving our local communities, and benefiting multinational corporations, instead of our families.

And when we finally win marriage equality, what will happen to lower class queers, transpeople and gender variant folks? What will happen to individuals in poly relationships and families who are not defined by the heterosexual norm? Because we all know that homophobia will not end when we are "granted" marriage, just as racism did not end with non-discrimination policies and affirmative action.

Human rights have never been legislated. Marriage equality is indeed a necessity, but marriage needs to be a short-term goal of the gay movement. Legislation is a step, a tool towards equality, but the real change comes from a cultural shift, a transition in education, a demand through our economic spending, and an adjustment in values.

In order for a social justice movement to survive, it needs to transition to a movement for human rights. This means the gay movement needs to connect our rights to domestic and global human rights, our issues with global issues, marriage equality and the right to health care, LGBT job discrimination and the exploitation of women and children through sweatshop labor, the class divide between heterosexual families and queer families, the class divide between white families and families of color, hate directed violence upon our community and domestic and global violence directed at communities of color, through war, hunger, and economic imperialism.

By taking a mental step backwards from our struggle, and envisioning the goals of queer struggles, we look at

issues that we as queer people have in common with all people. By learning lessons from labor, by embodying what it means to have solidarity with each other, with all disfranchised and oppressed communities, we can leverage our dollars; we can create our own institutions and structure, and not buy in to the exploitation that our social system is inherently built on. ■

(Anti-Violence continued from page 1)

neighbors have no idea how hard it can be to navigate a homophobic world. In cases where we must also navigate the unfamiliar world of the judicial system, it can seem like a daunting task.

If an incident takes place and the alleged perpetrator/s are charged and taken to court, they often face a "jury of peers." When a jury of our peers is constructed, it's not a jury made of people from the LGBTQ community, but the Rochester or Monroe County community as a whole. If our juries are constructed of people who may be homophobic, or who are unwilling to believe in the reality of hate crimes, our only hope is to make appeals to judges who we hope are more sensitive to the issues facing the LGBTQ community. Granted, the jury can only rule on evidence provided, which is why we need law enforcement and legal professionals who also believe the LGBTQ community deserves the same fair shake as the rest of our community.

An example of this is the recent ruling in the case covered by the article "Hate Crimes Update" on page A 1. Ove Overmyer writes that the jury in this case acquitted Ms. Yalidsa Ortiz of third-degree assault as a hate crime and found her not guilty of a lesser misdemeanor charge of third-degree assault. This in spite of the fact that the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court ruled that the first judge in the case "erred when he dropped the hate-crime element of an assault charge... reducing the charge to a misdemeanor of third-degree assault."

Monroe County Assistant District Attorney William Gargan stated, "It was the work of the Gay Alliance that showed us there was more to this case than a misdemeanor."

I am happy to see that in this case, as well as in the case of the beating of Lance Neve in a Spencerport bar, that some law enforcement and court officials do believe that the LGBTQ community deserves the same protection and justice as the rest of society. In Ove Overmyer's interview with Lance Neve on page A6, and in conversations I have had with Lance, he says that the Ogden Police, the detectives and Assistant District Attorney Perry Duckles have been "absolutely wonderful, and I couldn't have asked for more."

This shows that even though the LGBTQ community does run into some bias and homophobia when dealing with law enforcement and the judicial system,

it's not all bad. We are making progress and we do have support. This gives me hope that if each of us enlightens one or two of the people in our lives, and makes reports of the violence in our community, we will see more cases where the officials involved in the case really are on the side of the victim, regardless of sexuality and gender expression.

If you experience an incident of bias or violence in your life, or in the lives of family and friends in the LGBTQ community, please contact the Anti-Violence Project at the Gay Alliance at 585-244-8640 ext. 17. Be safe and take care. ■

(Fearing continued from page 1)

been given images of LGBT relationships that are the opposite of the pretty-in-chiffon-and-moonlight dreamscape. The truth is that all relationships, queer or straight, lie somewhere in-between these stereotypes: large amounts of plodding through life together, gratefully interrupted by moments of loving relationship bliss.

I pity the poor heterosexual who believes those early promises and expects to enter into a relationship that is all gauzy light, frilly happiness and sweat-free love-making. But I also pity the LGBT person who believes the tales and cannot imagine themselves in a happy, healthy relationship.

Please hear me clearly, I am not placing monogamous, two-person, life-long commitments on a pedestal, as the ideal for everyone. It works for some, but not all, no matter the sexual orientation.

But beyond intimate relationships, I believe that the inability to have a vision of happily-ever-after hurts the LGBT community in other ways. When one regularly receives messages that one is unworthy and doesn't deserve, these messages resonate through our psyches; they influence and color all of our relationships and how we view others.

My biggest frustration of doing LGBT community organizing is the reality that we are often our own worst enemies. The level of nastiness and in-fighting that manifests between various parts of our communities can be as ugly as anything created by Fred Phelps. Some of this in-fighting takes on a life of its own, and to deal with the sting, we try to joke about it.

I know we all have made comments about the gay men vs. the lesbians, the butch vs. the fem, the surgical vs. the non-surgical, the leather vs. the granola. And while I am a firm believer in humor, I am also a firm believer that such attempts at "humor" are often attempts to cover a deep pain or sense of being unwelcome, with no vision of a bright tomorrow.

This in-fighting carries into our community organizations as well. We call for strong and vibrant community leaders even as we swing the axe to cut them down. From wishing the dykes-on-bikes

would not ride in the pride parade, to being upset that the leather boys are the only ones shown on the news coverage of the pride festival. Oh how quick we are to judge our fellow queer, while we all want others to stop judging us.

As we prepare for the 2008 Pride Season (seems to be a Pride Celebration happening somewhere every day), I call upon all of us to reflect on what it means to be part of a community, or more accurately, part of a collective of communities who can come together for the benefit of all.

Transgender, Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay and Allied, we have a lot in common. We are working against the common enemies of sexism, homophobia, gender expectations and second-class treatment. Full inclusion and equal access are our common goals -- our agenda as it were. We may look and work differently -- from political activism to bowling leagues to dance clubs to GSAs -- but the agenda remains the same.

Pride is ultimately about coming together and is a good time to practice leaving behind false enemies. By celebrating and working together, we can all live happily ever after.

Join Streets of Pride, Community Business Forum and the Gay Alliance to celebrate Rochester Pride 2008, culminating in the annual Pride Parade and Pride Festival on July 19 and the Gay Alliance's Community Pride Picnic on July 20. Who knows, you may come away with a storybook ending. ■

(Just Me continued from page 1)

"Queer People's Time," is the decidedly heterosexist spin on the old racist joke about "CPT" or "Colored People's Time". The joke operates under the assumption that queer people (or people of color, in the older but still prevalent version) can never be on time for anything, and so they must operate under a different sense of time than "normal" people do. The idea is to play up aspects of minority groups that will paint them as irresponsible. I know that explaining the joke removes the humor from it, but then, I've never found jokes like this all that funny.

The stereotype is just that, a stereotype, and whether you know someone who embodies it or not (as I apparently am this month) it's malicious to then spread that behavior across an entire section of the population. Still, the idea behind it, the idea that as a community, queer people have a different sense of time, is one that makes me stop and think.

Now, when I say we have a "different sense of time," I don't mean that minutes or hours tick by any differently, or that we all live in some mystical time zone separate from the rest of society. What I'm referring to here is a broader sense of time; not minutes and hours, but years and decades and lifetimes.

Take, for example, our adolescence. The teenage years are supposed to be a

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time of self-discovery, a time for us to grow, not only into our adult bodies, but our adult dreams and responsibilities and desires. However, for many in the queer community, this wasn't a time to get to know ourselves, but to get to know what society wanted us to be.

Even with all the progress made over the decades, many queer youth never have the opportunity to be queer youth. Instead, they spend their teenage years closeted by their families and peers. Adolescence is then delayed; first kisses get pushed back by years or decades, first relationships don't happen until we're in our twenties or thirties.

We've all seen examples of this; the newly out man who goes crazy his first time in a gay bar, the trans woman at the beginning of her transition who dons the most outrageously feminine outfit before going out. So often our community is looked down upon for behavior like this, but the fact is that many of us didn't get a chance to act out in these ways when we were young enough for it to be "okay". We didn't get a chance to be that teenage boy who jumps from one girlfriend to another over summer vacation, we didn't get a chance to be that 12-year-old girl picking out her own clothes at the mall for the first time, and yet, that kind of experimentation is vital to figuring ourselves out in our society.

Our views on old age similarly differ from the "norm". The first thing that might come to mind is the obsession with youth that prevails among gay men, but I'm speaking in broader terms than that. As a community, we don't have an overarching sense of what it means to be gay and elderly. We don't have an image of what older LGBT people do to define ourselves against as we approach those "golden years". Whether that would even be a mold each individual would want to fall into, the cultural safety net of having it doesn't seem to exist for us. For some, this is because of society's bigotry that has kept the older members of our community closeted. Even today, there are many who feel they can't be out to caretakers, who, like our youth, are dependent on their families once more and can't risk the backlash of coming out. Added to this is the fact that the threat of violence and the spread of AIDS have ended far too many lives before they could reach that state of being elderly and gay. This too skews our perception of time as a community, since that vision of what's to come seems to be a vital part of so many people's experience.

I think it's valid to say that our experiences as a community have left us with an altered view of the passage of time. After all, huge chunks from the beginning and end of our adult experiences seem to be missing from the typical queer narrative. This isn't to say that all straight people line up with a typical straight narrative either, but at least that narrative exists for them to define themselves against. As a group, we're missing that, and that most certainly affects the way

we perceive our lives.

This doesn't have to be a negative thing, though. As a community, we have an opportunity to write that narrative, to define our sense of history for ourselves. We don't have to just adopt the practices of everyone around us; we can take what works and leave the rest, since in many ways, we're starting with a blank canvas. We have an opportunity to say: "This is what it means to be a queer youth. This is what it means to be old and gay." This is not to say that we should build boxes around our experiences, but rather that we should begin tracing the outline, and let each individual color it in as they may.

Of course, none of this is an excuse for not getting my article in on time. ■

(Youth continued from page 1)

will be catering our event with yummys from his restaurant, Union Hill Country Grill. There will be door prizes, decorations and lots of fun!

Big Gay Prom 2008 is a great way to celebrate the end of the school year and an amazing showing at the Day of Silence. Every year, we see more and more kids giving their voice to the fight against violence and bullying of LGBTQ youth. Many thanks to Kristen Becker for her entertainment. (Don't forget to vote for her as America's Funniest Lesbian on curvemag.com!) Also, a HUGE thanks to all the Rochester area kids and adults who came to support this important date. Your participation gives a voice to those who have not had one in the past.

Also, a big huge congrats to the 30-plus youth who participated in Equality and Justice Day in Albany on April 29. Rochester's attendance at this event brings not only power in our numbers, but also visibility to how awesome Rochester is! Great job, guys!

Finally, a big thanks to all the new volunteers at the Youth Program. We are blessed to have had such a positive response from the community in our need for drop-in volunteers. Thanks to Reggie, Rick, Beth, Dan, Jes and Greg for all your support and help! I'm looking forward to involving more of our adults in the lives of our kids. Your presence brings positive role modeling and hope to kids coming out and growing strong. ■

(OutReach continued from page 1)

ing rooms available inside.

Other steps that the RCD Network has taken to ensure confidentiality are as follows:

Members are assisted in finding a confidential address for correspondence and communication.

The membership mailing list is kept in strictest confidence and is NEVER shared outside core membership.

The group maintains a hotline (585-251-2132) for members to call for

timely updates on meetings, activities, and workshops. It is also used for confidential messages.

Recently, I was given the rare opportunity of visiting with the RCD. The evening that I attended, the meeting began around 6:15 p.m. There were about 10 members in the room at this time. The issues being discussed were, "What do we want to accomplish in 2008?", "Where do we want our group to go from here?" and "How can we get the word out about our group to help those who may not know about us?"

Members passed around the new RCD Network brochure and gave feedback. The discussion also included how to improve the RCD Network's website (www.geocities.com/rcdnet) with informational links, confidential chat rooms, photo sharing, etc.

As the discussion continued, people continued to trickle in and by the time we were sampling the non-alcoholic wine and cheese, the number of members had increased to about 20. The second half of the gathering was social time, where we could enjoy the snacks and talk to each other. For me, this was the most educational part of the evening, as I got to meet many of the members and chat about transphobia, shoe stretchers, stereotypes, spousal support and the official cross-dressers holiday, Halloween!

All the members I chatted with were wonderful and open and they made me feel very welcome. As I made my way around the room I once again got a lesson in how fluid people are and how our labels really limit our ability to understand each other. Certainly, there were similarities among members, but they were also in many ways so very different.

I especially enjoyed talking with members about myths and stereotypes of cross-dressers, of which there seem to be three biggies. The members I spoke to were passionate about trying to dispel these myths and educate people about what they are really all about. The first myth is that most cross-dressers are gay. The vast majority of the members of the RCD Network are heterosexual men, several of them happily married to women who support them and accept their whole being. In fact, several wives attended the meeting with their husbands and I was impressed by the fierce support that these women received from the other members. They clearly are invaluable members of this group.

The second big stereotype is that most cross-dressers are really transsexuals. What I learned at the RCD Network meeting is that cross-dressing is not something that most members want to do 24/7. It provides an emotional outlet for a more sensitive and gentler side of themselves and most members only feel the desire to express it some of the time.

The third myth is that cross-dressers are perverts, child molesters, and/or into bizarre sexual activities. Although the media often tries to sensationalize alternative forms of gender expression, the fact is that most people only cross-dress in the privacy of their own homes, at welcoming clubs, or at gatherings with other cross-dressers. Not on stage for entertainment purposes and certainly not in schoolyards!

The meeting wrapped up just before 9 p.m. and many members headed over to one of the local clubs to continue socializing. I went home to bed, well pleased that I had been given this unique opportunity to meet these wonderful people.

The RCD Network usually meets on the first Saturday of the month, in a safe location to dress and gather comfortably in a non-judgmental atmosphere. If you are interested in becoming a member of the RCD Network, please leave a message at 585-251-2132 or e-mail rednet@hotmail.com, with specific instructions on how and when you would like to be contacted, who the CD Network should ask for and whether or not the CD Network can say who they are if they call. Or you can write to Rochester CD Network c/o GAGV, 875 E. Main St., Suite 500 Rochester, NY 14605. ■

State of the Union: MARRIAGE DISCRIMINATION IS TAXING!



By **Todd Plank**

For many gay and lesbian couples across the nation, April 15 is an unpleasant reminder of how the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and the many state prohibitions against same-sex marriage deplete our pocketbooks and wallets.

On April 14, CNN.com/living ran the story "Gay couples face higher taxes". The article offered up these two examples highlighting the two main effects of the different treatment under federal law.

One is the tax rate. Take two couples where one partner has a taxable income of \$20K and the other makes \$40K. If they were able to file their taxes jointly their tax bill would be \$8, 217.50. Filing separately, the combined bill for the same couple would be \$9,032.50, a difference/net loss of over \$800.

This real life example highlights the other glaring disparity resulting from the federal government's treatment of employer provided health insurance. Dan Jessup is a Project Manager at JP Morgan Chase in Indiana. His partner Bob Chenoweth is self-employed and runs two businesses out of the couple's Mooresville, Indiana home. Because Chenoweth is self-employed, his partner carries him on his employer's health insurance plan. The annual additional cost in state and federal taxes for Jessup is in the neighborhood of \$1,800.

The reason for this is because the dollar value of the "additional benefit" of putting Chenoweth on his health policy is treated by the government as imputed income and taxed accordingly. If Dan and Bob were recognized as a married couple, they would not have to pay any additional taxes on their family health benefit. This would represent a significant savings over time.

In the case of those rare states that recognize same-sex marriages, civil unions or some form of domestic partnerships (at last count there were 10 states and Washington D.C.) there is an additional burden for gay and lesbian couples in preparing and filing their income taxes; in fact, filing federal income taxes can involve doing up to three sets of paperwork instead of one.

In states like Massachusetts, couples can file their state taxes jointly, and potentially save themselves some money, but it can also make tax filing more complicated for the couples. Commenting on the resulting confusion, an accountant, who is himself in a civil partnership, remarked, "I don't want to say that it's chaotic, but it's very difficult for a lot of reasons."

On April 15, a group of protesters participated in the second annual tax day protest at the post office in Henrietta. The protest was organized by Anne Tischer of Social Action for Marriage Equality (S.A.M.E). The group of approximately two dozen protesters, many of them members of Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, held up signs in support of marriage equality and tax equity for the steady stream of motorists to read as they dropped off their tax returns.

Some drivers waved or tooted their horns in support of the bold statements held up for all to see. A videographer arrived on site to interview several of the marriage equality activists and the resulting footage will be aired on local public access station RCTV-15.

Be sure to visit the Metro Justice website (www.metrojustice.org) or rctv15.org for a schedule of upcoming programming. ■

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Groups

BUTCH-FEMME CONNECTION

Join us for a great night out! The Rochester Butch-Femme Connection supper club will have two dinner night events in May 2008.

On Saturday, May 3, we will meet at the Outback Steakhouse off Jefferson Road in Henrietta (near Staples) at 7 p.m.

On Saturday, May 17, we will meet at Cordello's Italian Restaurant at 2445 Lyell Road in Gates at 7 p.m.

For further information on the Connection, email Kerry at Dressy-Femme@aol.com or call Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208. See you all there!

DIGNITY-INTEGRITY

While most chapters of Dignity/USA and Integrity Inc. are led by elected president/vice-president/secretary/treasurer, governance of our local chapter is shared by members who have discerned the Spirit's calling. On Pentecost Sunday we will be installing our new Community Council, calling upon the Holy Spirit to empower their service in the coming year.

We are renewed by that same Spirit in our worship every Sunday at 5 p.m. at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. in downtown Rochester. While our primary outreach is to LGBTIQ Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, our mission is not exclusive to either denomination; all are welcome. A coffee hour follows each of our worship services.

Our annual YARD SALE is expanding to include several venues this summer; the first is coming up at the end of June. Call Pat at 385-2609 if you have treasures to donate.

Our worship calendar begins with Sunday, May 4, as we gather for an Episcopal EUCHARISTIC with music; preaching and presiding will be the Rev. Phil Schaefer.

On May 11 we'll celebrate PENTECOST with a Roman Catholic Sunday Celebration In The Absence Of A Priest with music, tailored expressly for D-I; story teller/author/activist Gloria Ulterino joins us to preside, preach, and install our new Council.

On May 18 we'll celebrate a quiet Episcopal EUCHARISTIC; celebrant/preacher to be announced.

On Sunday, May 25, we'll begin with "Prayers to Start the Week," followed by a Memorial Day Weekend PICNIC IN THE PARK.

For further information on any of these activities, visit our website at www.di-rochester.org or call our recorded info-line at 234-5092.

EMPIRE BEARS

Woof! How'd it get to be May already? Time to get outside, hike, walk, camp, see the Bears.

Members of the Empire Bears go camping at Jones Pond, Hillside, Oneida, The Point, and other gay men's campgrounds in the northeast. Join us and find out more about joining one of our

weekend events.

At home, the Bears will be hosting a DENIM night at the Forum on May 3. There are always plenty of bears and friends on hand to have a good time at the Forum on first Saturdays. Free snacks, a raffle, and good food on the grill outside make for a great night.

We'll cook up some Mexican food for our potluck at the Gay Alliance Youth Center at 6:30 on May 10. Sunday, May 18, we will meet at the Lilac Festival and walk the grounds. Every Monday, we meet at the Coal Tower for supper at 6. Some members walk the canal trail at 5 p.m. prior to eating. Some walk after supper.

Our regular meeting continues to be held every first Wednesday in the Gay Alliance's Nopper Room on the fifth floor at 875 E. Main St.

On May 7, we'll be looking for new ideas on events and membership growth. Any friends out there who'd like to offer their opinion are welcome.

FISHING IN THE FINGER LAKES

Announcing the return of our area's womyn-only fishing social group, Fishing in the Finger Lakes! Anyone who likes to fish or wants to learn is invited. We go out to area lakes, rivers, piers and the Erie Canal every two weeks from April through October.

On May 4, we will meet at 2 p.m. on Summerville Pier (take St. Paul Street to the end, park in the lot and walk past the Coast Guard station onto the pier).

On May 18, we will meet at Vitale Park in Lakeville at 2 p.m., at the north end of Conesus Lake (take Route 15 45 minutes south of Rochester to Lakeville; turn left onto Route 20A and then make a right before Arby's into the parking lot).

Valid NYS fishing license required. Any questions, contact Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208 or email FishingFolk@sNY@aol.com. See you there!

OPEN ARMS METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH:

"O the month of May, the merry month of May, so frolic, so gay..." (Thomas Dekker, 1600). Celebrate the merry month of May with activities at Open Arms MCC, open to all but ministering to the gay community in particular.

Join us for the monthly potluck supper and games night on Saturday, May 10, at 6 p.m. at the church (740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave.). Bring a dish to pass - the food's always great - and a game to share. In April we played Skip-Bo and Scrabble, but the game choices are different every month.

Our weekly soup supper and Bible study continue each Wednesday night from 6-8 p.m. at the church. You can read and learn about the Bible passages traditionally used to "clobber" GLBT people, versus what the Bible really says about homosexuality.

Lesbian evangelists Carolyn Marshall and Pat Grant of Marshall-Grant Ministries, Inc., will lead a worship service with music and reader's theater comedy at Open Arms MCC, 740 Marshall Road, Chili, at 11 a.m. on Sunday, June 1. Admission is free; a love offering will be collected. Carolyn Marshall's clear soprano voice and Pat Grant's comedic

style offer a unique worship experience.

For more information about any of these events, please email oamcc@frontier.net or call 585-271-8478. We look forward to seeing you!

ROCHESTER GAY MEN'S CHORUS

By Michael Davy

With our Catered By The Chorus event over with, we now shift gears into our annual RGMC Gayrage Sale, once again at 38 Riverside St. in Rochester.

This will take place on the weekend of May 31, so be sure to bring your wallets and checkbooks, as this will be one yard sale that's bound to have something for everyone! If you would like to donate an item for the sale, please contact John at 585-402-0112, or you can e-mail him at jowen@rochester.rr.com. Come rain or shine, this will be one yard sale you will NOT want to miss.

Don't forget to "Hear Us Now" in our finale concert of our 25th season on June 14 at the Hochstein Performance Hall, 50 N. Plymouth Ave., in downtown Rochester. Performance time is 8 p.m., and we look forward to seeing you there!

And, as always, we can be found on the world wide web at www.thergmc.org.

ROCHESTER RAMS M.C.

The Rams are hard at work putting together Jackhammer 2008 at our new run site. We are really excited for this year's run because it is a chance to start from a clean slate and make an event that pops. Our new run date of July 4-6 means that there is a much better chance of good weather.

The new run site is located about 40 miles west of Rochester, just north of Albion, NY. While we will miss the wonderful view of Seneca Lake, this site offers privacy, a pool, kitchen, ample

parking. There is a covered dining area and three cabins on-site. Although tenting is required, there is plenty of space in the recreation hall, party cabin and cabin IV to get out of any inclement weather.

Mike and Gary are busy doing the work to feed you well and provide sandwich fixin's round-the-clock. Our infamous Cabin IV will be up and running. There will be a "Toolroom" party on Friday night, a motorcycle tour on Saturday, cocktail parties and lots of time to relax and visit by the fire. We are looking forward to enjoying the camaraderie that has always made our run special.

You can download an application on our website at www.rochesterrams.com. We hope to see you there!

Celebrate Fathers Day with the Rams on "Leather Daddies Night" on June 21 at the Forum from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Whether you are a daddy or a daddy's boy, you'll find something to like.

The Rochester Rams M.C. is Rochester New York's foremost gay motorcycle and leather club as well as being one of the oldest clubs of its type in the country. All who are interested in the leather club scene are invited to check us out. Our general meeting is open to the public and we meet the Wednesday before bar night at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are held at our home bar, the Bachelor Forum, 670 University Ave. Our next general meetings will be held on May 14, June 18 and July 16. For more info, visit our website: www.rochesterrams.com.

TWO SPIRIT GROUP

A group for American Indians who identify as Two Spirit is starting in Rochester.

An organizational meeting will take place on Sunday, May 11 at Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave., at 7 p.m.

For information, contact Marc at mstrong13@gmail.com.



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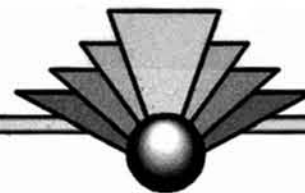
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Gay Alliance Youth

A Dark Night's Work (Part 1)

By Gordy Walsh

Stupid rain.

I grunted and re-drew my not-so-slick rain cover around my shoulders and quickened my pace; the gushing precipitation slithered down the nearby rooftops and on the paved walkways, only to gush into nearby drains. It was astounding how much water reached the ground layer, considering how the crisscrossing bridge-streets and carved granite architecture would blot out the sky any other time of the day. But that's Ver'Di-kale for ya. Wetter than an ooze monster's bladder.

An inebriated orc staggered into my shoulder as we passed each other.

"Wash ware yur goo'in!" he slobbered, his spittle competing with the rain drops for footing on my soaked leather garments. I continued on, only pausing to give ember-eyed glare at the warded gray-skinned ruffian. You meet all types down here in the Gutter.

If you care to wonder where or what that is, and you sure as Kane better be, considering you're listening to my tale and all, it's the bottom rung of the three tiered megopolis that is Ver'Di-Kale. You see, way back when some brilliant sod decided this swelled marsh would make a great spot to start what would one day become the most urbanized crap-lands this side of the Epiphanes, he and his drinking buddies got together with the local aboriginals and made it permanent law that our fair city would never extend beyond the swamp proper.

Well, time passed, and sure enough, the city quickly filled up its area quota. When negotiations with the neighbors went violently sour, some anonymous jerk came up with the best plan our dear forefathers could convolute; that instead of building out, Ver'Di-kale would be built up. Even today, this brilliant individual's identity remains unknown, lost forever when the historical society burned down a dragon's lifetime ago.

It had to have been a gnome. It's always the gnomes.

Anyway, to make a long disappointing story short, the city has been split into a trio of sectors, stacked upon each other, with all the loveliest of the lovely of the humans at the top, leading out their loveliest of the lovely existences in their glass and marble oases, collectively known as the Citadel.

Then there's the medium level, sometimes called the Middle, the Fill, or the Stepping Stone, having the elves, the gnomes, the dwarves, the races most aesthetic without being human, with out-cast aristocrats and bottom-ringers who worked their way out of poverty fleshing out the middle-class mix and the rest of us, the unwanted, monstrous, or criminal (guilty or not) at the bottom.

Yes, dear fans, yours truly is apparently unfit to inhabit none other than the decaying, tenement filled surplus of squalor that is the ground tier, lovingly referred to as the Gutter, the Undercity, or the Sole. You see, tie flings, such as myself, an infernal half breed (or "Devil Spawn" to quote a fond nickname) are apparently not so sweet on the eyes. Something about our horns and tails or some crock, in all honesty I wasn't really paying all that much attention.

Anyways, those of us undesirables fill our time with whatever work we can get, most of it illegal or illicit, all of it unsavory. I often find myself spending long nights like this one fulfilling deliveries, finding rare objects for Upper Crusters, many a time stealing them too, silencing some annoying dissenter through bribe

or blade, I've even been an attraction in some of the more duplicitous gentlemen's clubs hidden away in the Citadel's few less glowing neighborhoods, but that's a part of my past I don't wish to divulge. Not yet anyways, I save such stories for at least the third date.

Tonight was one such long night. I'd already checked all my Stepping haunts, but had had no luck. With taxes as high as ever to construct the Cloud-lovers' precious temple to the Sun God, their federal deity, hand-outs and paying tasks were getting even harder to come by. The rain didn't help matters either. The orc that had almost trampled me (bloody Grummshling) was most likely coming from one of the many bar-houses that littered this particular alley, and he was plastered from imbibing much of one of the awesomely intoxicating mulled ales, spiced with wolf's bane or ganney weed to give it the sufficient kick needed to forget the Undercity's disappointment.

But even though I would usually suffer such uncouthness without contention, lately churlish behavior would just simmer in my gut, causing me much contention. Maybe it was as my good friend Ihal'Daeron said the other day; "Malferus, are you aware of what is debilitating you? You can't maintain an adequate perspective." Which, for those of us that aren't elves, means, "Malferus, you're taking things too seriously." And when a morbid elf necromancer tells you to lighten up, maybe an attitude check is in order.

Mulling all this over, I turned into Sheria's, an acrid tavern high on my list of favorite haunts, for four reasons: 1) the atmosphere was dark and quiet, 2) jobs were still to be found here on some days, 3) the ale was top notch and non-hallucinogenic, 4) I really fancied the scullery boy.

Nodding to Sheria, the one-armed Halfling bar owner, who'd been in more knife fights than there were ridges on my horns, I skulked over to my bench table in the far corner. I say my table because I always sit there, and I earned the right to do so when I scorched off the guy who called it his before I started coming here. However, tonight there was a human sitting in my seat.

I should have known something was up right away. Humans like him were only ever in the Gutter, much less a place like Sheria's, for a few reasons, most of them being up to no amount of good. Maybe it had been the indelicate orc that had barged into me earlier, maybe it had been my tiring traverse of the city to get sopping wet and still penniless, or it just as easily could have been my general distaste for Upper Crusters, but whatever it was, I dispensed with lacey niceties and the finer points of social intercourse.

"What in the name of Mephistoph-eles do you want, you Silky son of a kobold?" I hissed through pointed teeth, lowering my cumbersome hood to free my facial ornamentation and rudely drawn back hair. The man raised his head as if to look down on me. A wry sneer twisted his liquid-like lips, his curvaceous physique at once both alluring and repulsive, his flaxen hair was tucked neatly into a ponytail, his lavender and burgundy silken accoutrements barely soiled by wear on the filth of the street, the silver and gold finishing and jewelry gleamed in the dim light. Even his pearly biters were utterly aligned. Only his jade eyes betrayed the moral decay, their deep murky black irises unable to cover the whole existence of untold debauchery had taken on his being.

"I'm told you're reliable and discreet, and in look for work, are you not?" the man murmured, his dialect as smooth

as eladrin brandy. I thought a moment. Something didn't sit well with this one, and my acidic blood was pounding in my ears, screaming for me to deny him. But my godless packet and barren belly were hard to ignore. After an arduous moment of considering, I slid into the seat like so many of the shadows that haunted the tavern's dark corners, shaking off my misgivings like the leftover water that was still affixed to my outer wear from my prolonged ambulation in the showering rain, and in a begrudging growl asked him to continue the offer. ■

To Be Continued...



Youth Stats for March 2008

New Intakes: 22

Average Daily Drop-in Attendance:

March 2007: 9

March 2008: 45.5

A Description of You and I

By Mel Ramirez

Everything I know

Everything you have seen

Changes things.

Always loving each other

And always being around each other.

WE fit together

And we stand our ground.

No matter what happens

My heart is yours.

That's a promise

From the core

Of which my beat lives.

Youth

**Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley
Youth Services for Rochester area LGBTQ
and allied youth ages 13-25**

Check out what is happening:

- www.gayalliance.org
- or contact JessC@gagv.us

Youth Center Happenings

- **Drop-in: Monday and Wednesday 2-6pm**
- **Support Groups**
 - **Sunday 2pm-4pm ages 13-23**
 - **Sunday 4:30pm-6pm ages 18-25**
- **Special Interest Programming**
 - **Transgender Youth**
 - **Arts and Crafts**
 - **Movies**
 - **Writing**
- **Special Events**
 - **Youth Dances**
 - **Day of Silence**
 - **Big Gay Prom**
- **Pool Table**
- **LGBTQ Youth Library**
- **Internet Access**

Adult

Volunteers Needed

Fun, friendly, safe adults are needed to volunteer their time and talents, providing positive role models, maybe sharing a talent or skill.

Contact Jeanne Gainsburg,
Outreach Coordinator for
an application:
JeanneG@gagv.us
585-244-8640 x14

I Want to Write a Poem*By Joshua Alexander*

Today I told myself that I want to write
a poem
So that's just what I did
But you see I didn't know what to write
So I asked myself
What Kind of poem do I want to hear
So I told myself
I want a poem that is going to
Penetrate
My mind
And take my senses for a ride
Put me into a daze
As the words enter the maze
That I call my brain
I want to hear a poem that
Is going to change the world
Make me change my stubborn ways
Just by making me think
A poem that will forever run in my
veins
Sending chills up my spine
Each syllable hitting every spot just
right
A poem that will shake my foundations
And disrupt the homeostasis
Of this so called perfect place
I want a poem that will put me in my
place
And
Take control of me
Exposing every vulnerability
I want a poem that will show up all
poems
That dare step to the plate
I want a poem to take
Them out one by one
As they all step up
I want to hear orgasmic phrases
That leads to a climax
Of my imagination
A poem to paint a picture on the page
A poem untamed
A poem without limits
Well you see the only way to get there
Is to start on this blank page

Conquer*By Lea Necheles*

Cheer up, and let these fears wash away.
Spread your wings and fly,
fly far away.
Afraid of heights?
So am I...
But that doesn't mean
I can't spread my wings and fly.

Fly over the water.
Fly over the ocean.
Feel your body be covered
with so much emotion.
Afraid of water?
Well, me too.
But this will work!
I promise you!

Cheer up and let these tears fade away.
Into the darkness.
Into the grave.
Afraid to let go?
Same with me.
But that doesn't mean
I can't open my eyes and see.

Let go of these fears.
Let go of bad emotion.
Let in peace,
and a lot less commotion.
So carefree
up in the air
let your mind wonder
and let your heart repair.

Ital Food*By Chuck Kaczmarzsky*

Ital food is derived from the word "vital food" (self-determination of the black race resulted in the Rastafarians usage of the word 'I' to replace the first letter of many words). Ital food means it is natural, pure and clean food. For a Rastafarian it means no salt, no chemicals, no flesh, no blood, no whites (called white blood), no alcohol, no cigarettes and no drugs. Rastafarians avoid salt, oil and meat. Their dietary laws are similar to the laws followed by Jews in Leviticus 11. Fish must be less than a foot long. No shell fish or fish without scales. Pork is especially condemned amongst Rastafarians. It is so important to not put the wrong thing in your body that some Rastafarians never cook in aluminum pots as it is said to leave traces of metal in the food that can get in your body. Cooking in a clay pot is popular among Rastafarians.

Rastafarians see their food as a way to be one with nature and also as medicine for the body, as it builds your "strucha" (patois or the word structure). There are also strict hygienic laws that Rastafarians follow

Below is an example of an Ital Food Recipe:

DRINKS

Sweetie Come Brush Me

- 4 ripe bananas
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 pt. evaporated milk
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 3-4 drops vanilla extract
- honey

Peel bananas, liquidize with blender, add water, evaporated milk, vanilla, and nutmeg, sweeten to taste with honey chill before serving

I Need Words*By Joshua Alexander*

I need words to
Express myself
And to test myself
And to let myself
Be heard.
And heard I will be
As I let
It the fuck on
With a pen
Listen to the words within
As they escape my lip.
I need words
To tell it like it is
Let the truth be known
And let shade be thrown.
I need words to
Express my ignorance
With the venom
I spit
As I cuss up a "mutha" storm
Saying all that shit
That a bitch wanna spit.
I need words for
You to get to know me
Get yo knowledge
Get yo lyfe.
So go
Get yo lyfe
I got mine
As my words
Are already defined.

When Worlds Collide*By K.R. Holcombe*

The times are terrible
Tethered and tarnished
Innocent adolescents see the plot of
prevention:
As God's good work
Enlightened beings attach the work to
extraterrestrial
While the truly enlightened one knows
it's all the same

The fifth planet from the Sun was
warped
When Venus entered orbit
Laugh at the absurdities of man

Freedom is much, much more
Than freedom from
It is also the freedom to...

Live
Love
Reason
Trust
A turbulent tornado
Of trying trials
I hope we learn before
It's all too far gone

Chicken Curry*By Chuck Kaczmarzsky*

Everyone loves a taste of the exotic... so this month I've decided that I was going to write about Indian cuisine. Many people prefer to go to a restaurant for this kind of food, but the dishes listed below are both DELICIOUS and simple to make. I hope all of you enjoy this traditional meal... a true exotic taste from East Asia!

Chicken Curry (Murga)
(4-6 Servings)

Ingredients

- 2-2 1/2 lb Skinned chicken
- 1 t garam masala
- 3 t Salt
- 1 c Finely chopped tomato
- 1/4 c Vegetable oil
- 1/2 c Water
- 1 1/2 c Finely chopped onion
- 1 1/2 t Fresh ginger, chopped
- 1 t Finely chopped garlic
- 1 t Vinegar
- 1 Dried chili (optional)

Directions

Cut chicken, separate legs and thighs, back and split breast.
Heat oil over high heat.
Add onions and fry until golden brown. Take care not to burn them.
Add garlic, ginger and tomatoes. Fry until a smooth paste is obtained.
Add chicken, add water, bring to a boil, and add salt. Cover pot and lower heat.
Add chili to make it hot if desired.
Stir constantly to avoid burning and coat the chicken pieces evenly.
After the chicken is done, add vinegar and cook for another 5 minutes on very low heat.
Sprinkle on garam masala and serve.

The Desolate Dissenter*By K.R. Holcombe*

I Look down
At the ground
As I drown
In a hate for my fate
You can try
But you can't relate
It's a set date
Mustn't be late
But until then...
I walk the mean streets
Aimless, fameless
Look for a way out that'd be painless
And sigh
As I trudge by
Others like me
Who can't see
I look into the faces
It's all about races
The drugs with laces
And the days, they're crazy
Sometimes I just wanna give up
Give in
But instead I gotta grin on the outside
And sin on the inside
Murder is diluted
Rape is included
And So I've concluded
We gotta change our ways
So that there's more than one
And maybe some day before it's all done
I'll be satisfied
At rest and purified
Then I'll see you
On the other side

The State I'm In*By K.R. Holcombe*

I never know
Who I'm staring at
Fearing that
Fact is cast too far
The closer I look, the clearer it is
More and more
I see myself
Live my life
For whom I am
Then I can
Slam it all down
Here I am, dealt this hand
Terrible Tales
To tell all
Of my rise and my fall
It's gonna be
Bigger and better
Than bread and butter
I will
Fill the well
Can you tell?
I got it coming
And so do you
Just don't know it yet.
If I plant the seed
It will be you
Who carries out the deed
I am the fuel in the fire
The admirer and conspirer
The ace in the hole
I come to take the full sum
And make my aim
Tried and true
Here you are
A slackin' hack without a clue
Don't you want the world anymore?
Raise Cain with the reaper, but
I wouldn't turn my back
If I were you
Make a snack of your heart attack
Stop reading this play thing
And find your own get away.

FIND THAT PERFECT PLACE



This is the perfect time to be buying real estate, interest rates are at their lowest and home values have become the best investment you can make for your future. We can guide you through the entire process and answer all your questions about your individual needs.

Buy or Sell a home with ERA and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, and a \$300 donation will be made in your name to the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, and ERA will pay for a one year membership for you as well.



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585-359-2000 ex 17



Laurie Schulman
Associate Broker

A COMPANY IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY IT KEEPS

THE EMPTY CLOSET CAN BE FOUND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MONTH AT THIS AREA'S FINEST:

AARON'S ALLEY • ABUNDANCE NATURAL FOOD STORE • ACHC
• ACTION FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY • AIDS ROCHESTER • AMF
TERRACE GARDEN LANES • ANTHONY JORDAN HEALTH CENTER • A
STEP APART • ATLANTIC BREAD • AVENUE PUB • BACHELOR FORUM
• BALSAM BAGELS • BORDERS BOOKS & MUSIC (HENRIETTA) •
BOULDER COFFEE • CANALTOWN COFFEE ROASTERS • THE CAT
DOCTOR (PENFIELD) • CINEMA THEATRE • CLOVER LANES • COFFEE
CONNECTION • DANIEL WARD SALON • DIGNITY INTEGRITY •
EASTMAN SCHOOL • EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE • EQUAL=GROUND/S/
PRIDE CONNECTION • FAMILY MEDICINE (S. CLINTON AVE.) • FIRST
UNITARIAN CHURCH • THE GENESEE CO-OP • GENESEE FEDERAL
CREDIT UNION • GREENWOOD BOOKS • HUDSON VIDEO/NEWS •
HIV/STD CLINIC (855 WEST MAIN STREET) • IMAGEOUT FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICE • INDUSTRIAL VIDEO • JAVA'S • JEWELRY OUTLET • JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTER • LITTLE THEATRE • MERCURY POSTERS •
MEX • THE MOCHA PROJECT • MONROE SHOW WORLD • MOTOR
• MOTHERS • MYSTIC MOON • NASTY D'S • OPEN ARMS MCC •
OUTLANDISH • PARK AVENUE LAUNDROMAT • PIT STOPS (WAYNE
COUNTY) • PLANNED PARENTHOOD • PLEASANT BUNZ CAFÉ •
ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY (CENTRAL) • ROCHESTER SPA AND
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COFFEE • TAWA PANO UNITY FELLOWSHIP CHURCH • THE SPOT
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8:30 and 10:45 am
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WEEKLY GLBTI AA MEETINGS IN ROCHESTER

Every week there are four regularly scheduled GLBTI AA meetings in Rochester.

What makes GLBTI recovery a bit different is that we recognize: issues surrounding our sexuality can contribute to our alcoholism and addiction; coming out and coming to terms with ourselves as alcoholics or addicts can be as traumatizing as coming out and coming to terms with our sexuality; other drugs of abuse run rampant in our community and we do not exclude those so addicted (you will not be shouted down for speaking words like pot, cocaine, crack, heroin, ecstasy, K, speed, meth, pills, etc.); the bars play a large role in socialization within our community which can present challenges even when we are fully committed to our sobriety.

After our meetings, we frequently go out for coffee, dinner, movies, whatever; while it's tempting to stay in the fold of GLBTI recovery, we live and work in a predominantly straight society, so we encourage our members to include "straight" meetings in their program.

Open meetings are open to alcoholics and addicts as well as to our partners, friends, family and anyone else interested in the AA program of recovery. Closed meetings are limited to alcoholics and addicts. We ask that partners, friends, family and curiosity seekers respect our privacy.

Wednesdays

New Freedom/New Happiness Group

7 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Rd. Bus riders: Take the last #18 University bus to 12 Corners. Use the stop just past the top of the hill at Hillside Ave. and before Highland Ave. Or take the #1 Park Ave. to the corner of East and Winton, then walk five minutes south (uphill) on Winton. This is an open discussion meeting. All issues – as they relate to our alcoholism/addiction and recovery – are fair game.

Fridays

Gay Men's

7:30 p.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 815 Park Ave.
 • Closed meeting, restricted to alcoholics and addicts
 • Men's meeting
 • Handicapped accessible

This is a round-robin discussion meeting. If you are shy about meeting people or speaking up in a group, you will find this meeting particularly warm and inviting because everyone gets their turn to speak (or pass). As a result, this meeting often runs long, so plan on more than the usual hour.

Saturdays

Saturday Night Special

7 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Rd. Bus riders: The #18 University Ave. bus does not go by the church on weekend evenings. Take the #1 Park Ave. bus to the corner of East and Winton, then walk five minutes south (uphill) on Winton.

- Open meeting, all are welcome, "straight-friendly"
- Mixed men and women
- Handicapped accessible, take the elevator to the basement

This meeting begins with a speaker who is followed by an open discussion.

Sundays

Rochester Gay Men

8 p.m. at St. Luke/St. Simon's Episcopal Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St. Bus riders use the Fitzhugh St. stop on Main St. at the County Office Building and walk south one block.

- Closed meeting, restricted to alcoholics and addicts
- Men's meeting
- NOT handicapped accessible

This meeting begins with a speaker who is followed by an open discussion.

Classifieds

Classified ads are \$5 for the first 30 words; each additional 10 words is another \$1.

We do not bill for classifieds, so please send or bring ad and payment to: The Empty Closet, 875 E. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14605. The deadline is the 15th of the month, for the following month's issue. We cannot accept ads over the phone. We publish free ads for prisoners on a space-available basis. Pay when you place your ad.

We will accept only ads accompanied by name and phone number. Neither will be published, but we must be able to confirm placement. The Empty Closet is not responsible for financial loss or physical injury that may result from any contact with an advertiser. Advertisers must use their own box number, voice mail or personal address/phone number.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Volunteer for the Empty Closet. Want to see your byline in print? Want to meet new people and make a contribution to your community? Call 244-9030 to learn how you can write or take photos for the *Empty Closet*. EC also greatly needs volunteers with cars to take bundles of the paper around town each month to distribution sites.

Softball interest? Anybody in the Rochester/Finger Lakes area interested in seeing if there is enough of us to put together a softball team this summer? Purely for fun and recreation. So maybe not you, but maybe you have a friend that has expressed interest in this to you. Maybe you don't want to play, but maybe you are interested in doing some coaching or other involvement. Let me know, and if there is enough interest we'll see what we can do to get a team together for this summer: 750-4360, or email unveiled6@yahoo.com.

585-235-6688 or e-mail me at muscloveverman@rochester.rr.com.

Housecleaning, house sitting, companion, pet care, all around handyman. Reasonable rates. 266-4582.

Clinical/medical massage therapy. LMT certified in Swedish technique, relaxation therapy and deep tissue massage. I can work with you. Call me. Angela, 766-5959.

Back pain, aching body? Then see me. One hour of total relaxation. My body rub will get you back on track! \$40. Matt, 720-1417.

Martin Ippolito, master electrician. Electrical work, phone jacks, cable TV, burglar alarm systems, paddle fans. Call 585-266-6337.

Hirsute husky men in need of stress-relieving body rub by talented masculine hands. Call 442-9677.

PERSONALS

Looking for muscular, hairy guy 50-70. Must like movies and nature walks. Non-smoker, non-drinker please. Blond or redhead preferred. Cancer, Gemini, Capricorn or Aries a plus. Call 271-6619 if interested. Please be discreet and leave message. Deaf men also welcome. Ask for Daniel when you call.

Attractive, friendly male partner wanted for 37-year-old male. Dark hair, brown eyes. Likes: science fiction, chess, fishing, miniature golf, scientific pursuits. Non-drinker, non-smoker, highly assertive. If interested, and about my age, and have some things in common, please write a clean summary of yourself, picture if possible, to: Paul, 9 Marburger St. Rochester NY 14621. I am healthy and attractive, looking for a life-long partner. Being clean-shaven and above average in weight is a plus. Serious, sincere replies only. Write – I am friendly and kind.

HELP WANTED

Ad salesperson. Earn a good commission by selling ad space for the *Empty Closet*. Experience preferred. Looking for someone reliable, an energetic self-starter who gets along well with others. Send resume and cover letter to *The Empty Closet*, 875 E. Main St., Suite 500, Rochester NY 14605. No e-mails please.

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May

FRIDAY 2

Anyone and Everyone. Film by Susan Polis Schutz about parents' reactions when their children come out. Followed by panel discussion. Noon-2 pm, the Forum, 3-130, R. Thomas Flynn Campus Center, at MCC. Part of "Dialogues on Diversity". Free.

The Undertaking by Philip Osment. Last play in Bread and Water Theatre's Rainbow Theatre Festival. 8 pm, RAPA Playhouse, 727 E. Main St. \$10. Also May 3 at 8 pm and May 4 at 2 pm.

SATURDAY 3

Butch Femme Connection Dinner Night Out. Meet at the Outback Steakhouse off Jefferson Road in Henrietta (near Staples) at 7 p.m. E-mail Kerry at DressyFemme@aol.com or call Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208.

Rainbow Seniors Cinco de Mayo dance. Robach Community Center, 1 Beach Ave., Ontario Beach Park. 5:30-10 pm, \$5 in advance for members; \$7 in advance (non-members); \$10 at door. 825-1640; tickets available at Equal=Grounds, Outlandish.

Empire Bears Denim Night at the Forum, 670 University Ave. 9 pm-2 am.

SUNDAY 4

Fishing in the Finger Lakes. Meet at 2 pm on Summerville Pier (take St. Paul Street to the end, park in the lot and walk past the Coast Guard station onto the pier). Valid NYS fishing license required. Any questions, contact Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208 or email Fishing-FolksNY@aol.com.

Dignity Integrity Episcopal Eucharistic with music; the Rev. Phil Schaefer preaching. 5 pm at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. See www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

WEDNESDAY 7

Open Arms MCC Soup supper and Bible study. 6-8 pm, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478.

FRIDAY 9

Big Gay Prom. Gay Alliance Youth Group Prom, 6-10 pm, Robach Community Center, Ontario Beach Park, 1 Beach Ave. \$10. Ages 15-25, drug and alcohol-free. Straight allies welcome. Music by DJ Chuck Argento. For tickets call 585-244-8640 ext 13.

QMeCon Women's Summit. May 9-11, NYC. For women professionals in media and entertainment. Workshops with *L Word's* Rose Troche, filmmaker Barbara Hammer. www.qmecon.com.

A Cause Fit for a Queen. Ambrosia Salad's bar revue marks HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. 11 pm, Muthers, 40 S. Union St.

SATURDAY 10

Open Arms MCC Potluck supper and games night. 6 pm, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478.

Empire Bears potluck. Mexican food. 6:30 pm, Gay Alliance Youth Center, first floor, 875 E. Main St.

SUNDAY 11

Dignity Integrity Pentecost with a Roman Catholic Sunday Celebration in the absence of a priest with music tailored expressly for D-I; story teller/author/activist Gloria Ulterino to preside, preach and install new Council. 5 p.m. at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. See www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

Rainbow Elders of Niagara (Buffalo area). Slideshow and Tour of the Galapagos with Jim and Don. 204 S. Elmwood Ave., Buffalo. For time call Danny, 716-881-7234; Madeline, 716-631-7670.

Rochester Area Two Spirit Group. A group for American Indians who identify as two spirit is starting in Rochester meeting at Equal Grounds, 750 South Ave. at 7 pm. For information, contact Marc at mstrong13@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY 14

Open Arms MCC Soup supper and Bible study. 6-8 pm, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478.

THURSDAY 15

Empty Closet deadline for June issue. 244-9030; emptycloset@gagv.us.

FRIDAY 16

"Need to Know" features "Already Out," following Gay Alliance Youth group members as they prepare for the Big Gay Prom. 9 pm, WXXI TV 21 Cable 11).

Rochester Rams CanAm weekend. Reception at Bachelor Forum, 8 pm-midnight, kicks off events. Info, applications at www.rochesterrams.com. Deadline to apply: May 5.

SATURDAY 17

"Need to Know" presents "Already Out," following members of the Gay Alliance Youth Group as they prepare for the Big Gay Prom. 6:30 pm, AM1370/HD91.5-2.

Butch Femme Connection Dinner Night Out. Meet at Cordello's Italian Restaurant at 2445 Lyell Road in Gates at 7 pm. E-mail Kerry at Dressy-Femme@aol.com or call Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208.

Rochester Women's Community Chorus, Bush Mango in concert to benefit Water for Sudan. 7:30 pm at Hochstein School of Music, 50 N. Plymouth St. Tickets \$12/general; \$10/student and

seniors and \$7/children ages 12 and younger.

Empire State Pride Agenda Spring Dinner. Riverside Convention Center, reception 5:45 pm, Dinner and program 7 pm. Emcee Caroline Rhea. Community Service Award: Keith Powell. Special Recognition: Patricia Martinez and Lisa Golden. For tickets and information see www.prideagenda.org or call 212-627-0305.

Rochester Rams CanAm weekend. Barnight at Bachelor Forum, 670 University Ave. Host club: Spearhead. 9 pm-2 am. www.rochesterrams.com

SUNDAY 18

Fishing in the Finger Lakes. Meet at Vitale Park in Lakeville at 2 pm, at the north end of Conesus Lake (take Route 15 45 minutes south of Rochester to Lakeville; turn left onto Route 20A and then make a right before Arby's into the parking lot). Valid NYS fishing license required. Any questions, contact Kerry/Max at 585-288-7208 or email Fishing-FolksNY@aol.com.

Dignity Integrity quiet Episcopal Eucharistic, 5 pm at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. See www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

AIDSWalk NYC. Benefits Gay Men's Health Crisis. 212-807-9255.

PFLAG meeting. 2-4 pm, Nopper Room at Gay Alliance, fifth floor, 875 E. Main St. Info: Scottf@gagv.us; 244-8640 x 20.

"Need to Know" features "Already Out," following Gay Alliance Youth group members as they prepare for the Big Gay Prom. 12:30 pm, WXXI TV 21 Cable 11).

Rochester Rams Art Raffle drawing. To benefit Gay Alliance Youth Group, Isaiah House. Artwork by Ziggy Zeigler. 9 pm, Bachelor Forum. www.rochester.rams.com

WEDNESDAY 21

Open Arms MCC Soup supper and Bible study. 6-8 pm, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478.

SUNDAY 25

Dignity Integrity "Prayers to Start the Week," followed by a Memorial Day Weekend Picnic In The Park. 5 p.m. at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. See www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

WEDNESDAY 28

Open Arms MCC soup supper and Bible study. 6-8 PM, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478.

FRIDAY 30

Empty Closet distribution of June issue. Volunteers needed to distribute bundles of papers to various sites. Noon-4 pm, Youth Center, first floor, 875 E. Main St. Call 244-9030 before May 30 for more information.

SATURDAY 31

Gayrage sale, sponsored by Rochester Gay Men's Chorus. 38 Riverside St. To donate or for information, call John at 402-0112.

Holly Near in concert with Rochester Women's Community Chorus and Raging Grannies. 8 pm, Hochstein School of Music, 50 N. Plymouth St.

JUNE

SUNDAY 1

Open Arms MCC Worship service with music and reader's theater comedy by lesbian evangelists Carolyn Marshall and Pat Grant of Marshall-Grant Ministries, Inc. 11 am, Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 740 Marshall Rd., Chili, off Chili Ave. 271-8478. Free (love offering will be collected).

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