

# The Empty Closet

LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS, INTERVIEWS, OPINION, ENTERTAINMENT, COLUMNISTS, EVENT CALENDARS, COMICS, & HEALTH RESOURCES  
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JUNE 2015



Scott Fearing, Sue Cowell and Evelyn Bailey at the presentation of the Triangle Award. More photos page 10. Photo: Gerry Szymanski

## Sue Cowell accepts Triangle Award; LGBTQ scholarship funding takes off

By Susan Jordan

Sue Cowell has always been someone who modestly works behind the scenes and avoids the limelight. But on May 2 she was the center of attention, as over 150 people honored her lifetime of multiple and diverse achievements at Studio 180, 180 St. Paul St.

The scholarship that will bear her name is off to a great start (see below). The Rochester Area Community Foundation will house a series of scholarships within the Rochester LGBTQ Scholarship Fund; the one bearing Sue's name is the first.

Gay Alliance Executive Director Scott Fearing started the May 2 event by saying that it was "a wonderfully happy occasion, to pay tribute to someone who has accomplished so much." Sue has been President of the Gay Alliance board three times, as well as serving as Executive Director from 2009-2012.

Referring to Evelyn Bailey's term "On the Shoulders of a Giant," Fearing said, "Sue truly is a giant – in my 20 years of doing this work, there's rarely been anyone so gracious, kind, thoughtful and wise."

Evelyn Bailey presented Sue with the Shoulders To Stand On Triangle Award. She said, "Today we recognize a 'giant' in our midst. Sue Cowell. Since coming to Rochester in 1977, Sue spent her time, energy and talent making the legacy of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass a reality.

"Many have fond memories of Wilmer and Harper St. where it all began. Sue is a champion of gay rights through her political, medical, social and economic activism. Many are unaware of her 'Softball Hall of Fame' status when her batting average on Paul's Grocery Softball Team soared to 700.

"Often in the forefront of our community's struggle for equality and justice, Sue has faced many challenges. Today she confronts the most personal challenge of all. Several years ago, Sue was diagnosed with Alzheimers, a disease that unbeknownst to her had already begun to insidiously affect her life. As with all of the other challenges in her life, Sue faces this head on.

"In our ongoing fight personally, collectively and as a community, to be healthy and free to be who we are – gay, straight, transgender, intersex, queer - the shoulders of this giant laid a strong foundation that brings us closer to a future of equality and justice for all, regardless of the arena. It is with warm heartfelt regard and deepest gratitude that I present the Shoulders To Stand On Triangle Award to Sue Cowell on behalf of the Rochester community."

Sue's diverse achievements brought people together on May 2 from many different worlds. From The MOCHA Center, serving the HIV prevention needs of communities of color, which Sue helped Gary English to found in 1997, former MOCHA staffer Barbara Turner read a message from Gary:

"Although it saddens me that I cannot be present for this well-deserved tribute, I would like to express my gratitude for the hard work and coalition building that Sue Cowell exhibited while the MOCHA Project was being founded in 1997. Sue was one of four concerned individuals who... laid the foundation for the establishment of what we today call The MOCHA Center. She provided the bridge to the

(Cowell continues page 3)



At the April 27 rally for marriage equality outside the Federal Building, the day before the Supreme Court heard arguments. Photo: Ove Overmyer

## Are our families real? SCOTUS to rule on marriage equality this month

By Susan Jordan

On April 28, plaintiffs in four same-sex marriage cases presented oral arguments before the Supreme Court of the United States. A ruling is expected at the end of June.

DeBoer et al v. Snyder, filed by Michigan couple April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, is one of four cases making up the group Obergefell vs. Hodges that is asking the Court to establish whether the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution requires states to allow same-sex couples to marry.

Mary Bonauto of Boston-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), who presented oral arguments on behalf of the DeBoer-Rowse family, spoke of marriage as the foundation of family, and said that times can blind us to what we later realize is in fact discrimination. During the opposing argument, Justice Anthony Kennedy noted that a biological relationship between parents and children is not necessary for bonding.

"From the beginning, and for the last four years, this has been about protecting our children, and providing them with the legal benefits and stability of a family united by marriage," said April DeBoer. "Today we have so much hope that the Supreme Court will allow families like ours to have the same safety and security as all other families, and we know we've now done everything possible to achieve that."

"I believe the Court gave us a fair hearing, and I look forward to the day same-sex couples are not excluded from the joy, the security and the full citizenship signified by the freedom to marry," said Bonauto. "The road that we've all traveled to get here has been built by so many people who believe that marriage is a fundamental right and I was humbled to stand up for the petitioners."



Freedom to Marry

DeBoer and Rowse are both hospital nurses and the parents of four adopted children, two with special needs. They originally challenged Michigan's adoption code so that they could adopt their children jointly rather than as "single" individuals, and provide them the security of having two legal parents. They later challenged the state's marriage ban since it keeps April and Jayne, as well as the children, from being legally recognized as a family and from the protections other families enjoy.

They argue that state laws banning marriage equality violate the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process. While 37 states currently recognize marriage equality, Michigan is one

of the few remaining states that does not.

"This journey has been emotional and life-changing," said Rowse. "We're grateful to everyone in Michigan and around the country who has kept us in their thoughts and prayers, grateful for the support of our attorneys, and most of all to our children for their patience and strength."

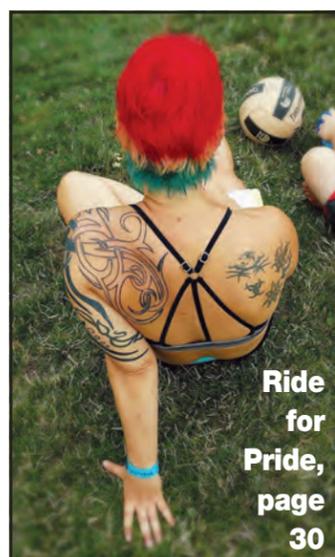
The DeBoer-Rowse family is represented by Michigan attorneys Carole M. Stanyar; Dana Nessel of Nessel and Kessel Law; Kenneth Mogill of Mogill, Posner & Cohen; Wayne State University Law Professor Robert Sedler and Bonauto.

"April, Jayne and their family never imagined they would ultimately be a part of a precedent-setting, historic case which will decide the issue of marriage equality for the entire nation," said Nessel. "It is time for our state and our country to give families like April and Jayne's the full equal protection of the law. The United States will simply be a better place when there is equality for all people."

Along with Michigan, cases from Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee also make up the group Obergefell v. Hodges argued on April 28. Jim Obergefell is asking (SCOTUS continues page 3)



Anne Tischer, Scott Fearing and Jessica Muratore with the scholarship donor list. Photo: Gerry Szymanski



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The Gay Alliance is publisher of *The Empty Closet*, New York State's oldest LGBTQ newspaper.

# Perspectives

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### The Empty Closet Editor

SUSAN JORDAN



### Closing arguments

The time may be near when LGBTQ Americans can end the struggle to have our marriages and families recognized nationally as "real".

Ahead of Supreme Court oral arguments on April 28, the national marriage-equality group Freedom to Marry released a 30-second ad spot outlining what Evan Wolfson, the group's founder, calls its "closing argument."

Freedom to Marry explained that the phrase "closing argument" is meant literally: the group will close its doors if the Supreme Court makes marriage equality the law of the land.

"With this latest ad, Freedom to Marry is summing up our closing argument, in hopes of closing our doors after getting the national win," said Evan Wolfson. "After 30-plus years of doing marriage work, I am gratified that we're in such a strong place as we head into court... The American people have resoundingly and unequivocally embraced the side of love and fairness. We hope the Supreme Court does the right thing and agrees with more than 60 federal and state courts that have held marriage discrimination unconstitutional. America is ready for the freedom to marry. It's time."

Sixty percent of Americans support the freedom to marry, according to a Gallup poll

released May 19.

But even if we win the right to marry, much work will remain before homophobia is only an eccentric, ugly prejudice reserved for the extremist minority. All Republican candidates are promising voters they will erase any progress made over the last 30 years to recognize gays as human beings and citizens with equal rights.

So even if there's a big celebration by the end of this month, we shouldn't get complacent. Women won the vote almost 100 years ago and have yet to earn the same pay for doing the same work as their male counterparts, while violence against women continues to restrict women's lives. Slavery ended in this country 150 years ago, but racism, economic injustice (amounting to de facto slavery) and white violence against African Americans have yet to end.

Recognizing our right to marry and recognizing our families as real are important for many reasons, perhaps most profoundly because such recognition makes it clear that LGBTQ people are human beings. The stereotype favored by the bigots is that gays are heartless, subhuman sexual predators incapable of love. And we know what can happen to those society sees as subhuman. Their lives don't count.

It is becoming clear to most Americans that gays are as capable of love and commitment as heterosexuals. We can no longer be stereotyped as criminals or deviant freaks, and punished by heterosexuals eager to project their own guilt feelings and neurotic obsession with sexuality onto "The Other" – the supposed sexual outlaws.

Even when marriage equality happens, there will still be issues to deal with, such as ensuring compliance with federal law, and overcoming the hate rhetoric that incites bullying, bashing and murder. And if SCOTUS rules in favor, the bigot backlash could be violent.

We can't close all our doors yet. ■

### Gay Alliance Education Director

JEANNE GAINSBURG



### What's not wrong?

Comfort is such a fantastic feeling immediately following a toothache. Why is it that we rarely appreciate or are even aware of comfort until we are in pain?

On a personal quest to find ways that I can bring more mindfulness into my life, I recently read *Peace Is Every Step* by world-renowned Zen master and spiritual leader Thich Nhat Hanh. The chapter titled "What's Not Wrong" really resonated with me.

For the past five months, I have been working towards thinking about what's not wrong at any given moment. It makes me appreciate all that I have and helps me rejoice in what is good. Newspapers, by their very nature, must report on "what's wrong," so that we are aware of the injustice and inequality in our society, but this column will take a break from all of that.

Below is a small sample of the many things that are not wrong in my little corner at the Gay Alliance.

Ride For Pride 6 is breaking all current records for both number of riders and fundraising. Scheduled to kick off at 10 a.m. on June 20 this ride and the people who help to make it work (please see my "Blood, Sweat and Beers" article in the Gay Alliance section) make it so damn easy to be mindful of

what's not wrong.

Rowan Collins, our new Education Coordinator, has hit the ground running and does not disappoint! Barely at the legal drinking age, Rowan continues to truly WOW participants with his expertise, his caring message, his maturity and his skills at taking charge of training facilitation. I love that guy!

We recently were asked to work with the Rochester City School District to offer advice on an informational letter to parents, consult on a time line and provide educational trainings to support a transitioning teacher. Our final presentation was to be an open educational forum for parents who had concerns or questions. The number of parents who attended: zero. Times they are a-changin'.

News of our quality educational programming has spread nationally and in the past year and a half, we have provided trainings in California seven times, Pennsylvania four times, New Jersey, North Carolina, Georgia, West Virginia, Massachusetts and Tennessee. In June we are scheduled to run the program again in New Jersey as well as in Virginia and Illinois.

We are thrilled to be traveling the country with our trainings, but also proud to say that the vast majority of our educational programming is done right here in our beloved Rochester community. In 2015, from January through the end of May, we have already provided 81 local trainings and presentations, up from 55 at this same time last year.

I am truly thankful for the wonderful achievements we have had both with Ride For Pride and our educational programming, and despite the added pressures and stress that come with success, I will continue to remind myself to breathe, be in the moment and revel in what's not wrong. ■

## THANK YOU

THE GAY ALLIANCE APPRECIATES THE CONTINUING PARTNERSHIP OF BUSINESSES WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY WHO SUPPORT OUR MISSION AND VISION.

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PAGE ONE

(SCOTUS from page 1)

ing that the state of Ohio (where same sex marriage is illegal) permit him to add his name to his late husband's death certificate.

Evan Wolfson, founder and president of Freedom to Marry, was in the courtroom and issued this statement: "Today's Supreme Court oral argument capped a compelling collective presentation to the court and the country on the freedom to marry and equality for gay and lesbian Americans. The case for the freedom to marry shone through at every turn in the argument, undimmed and undeniable, and it should be clear to a majority of justices, as it has been to a cascade of lower courts and a national majority for marriage, that there is simply no good reason, no just principle, no argument, no evidence to justify perpetuating marriage discrimination any longer."

"Gay and lesbian couples, their children and families, and millions of Americans now look to the Court to assure to gay people the Constitution's guarantees of the freedom to marry and equality under the law. America is ready for the freedom to marry, and the case could not be stronger that it is time to bring our country to the right side of history, leaving no state and no family behind."

Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA), one of the seven openly gay members of Congress, stated, "During oral arguments for Obergefell v. Hodges, the legal team for the plaintiffs made it clear, as it has always been, that the Constitution is intended to grant rights – not strip them away from one particular group. States that are refusing to grant same-sex couples the right to marry and the spousal benefits that come with marriage are in clear violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, which says that no state shall deny any person equal protection under the law. Plain and simple."

"Far too many same-sex couples have lost out on the benefits granted through legal marriage. But if we continue to discriminate and refuse the right to marry to all same-sex couples, no matter what state they reside in, we are doing something much worse. We are telling millions that their love is invalid. That is not what our nation is about."

"By ruling in favor of marriage equality, the Justices would confirm what millions already know -- that a person's gender or sexual orientation does not matter when it comes to marriage. All that matters is what is in one's heart. However, I encourage them to go one step further and do as Supreme Court Justices of years past have done in landmark cases, and return with a unanimous decision. Doing so would not only keep the court on the right side of history, but would help it maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the American people."

The Gay Alliance will host a celebration rally if the verdict is favorable. If not, there will be a protest rally. Check social media (www.gayalliance.org, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for time and place. ■

(Cowell from page 1)

larger white LGBT community that supported MOCHA in its infancy... Let history be written that Sue Cowell has been the Susan B. Anthony of the Black LGBT community in Rochester, New York. Long live the legacy and the great work of my friend Sue Cowell."

From the political world, where Sue managed or volunteered for many local political campaigns and served as a delegate to several national Democratic conventions, came a group of elected officials, including Matt Haag, Harry Bronson, James Sheppard, Sandra Frankel, Elaine Spaul, Bill Moehle, Tom Ferrarese and Judge Ellen Yacknin.

Rep. Louise Slaughter sent a message, which was not read on May 2 due to time concerns. It will appear in its entirety in the July Empty Closet. The letter reads in part, "I want to extend my gratitude for your years of service. Rochester has a long tradition of progressive activism and your contributions carried on this proud legacy. Your record of social activism – spanning four decades – has had a profound impact on our community... (E)veryone here truly stands on the shoulders of a giant."

Sue's longtime friend Mark Siwec commented on Sue's social activism, stating, "Sue was one of the mentors in my life." He compared their relationship to younger brother and older sister, adding, "I could go on for an hour or so bulleting all of the many campaigns and committees and events that she chaired. However, in doing so I feel that it would dilute the full impact that Sue has had. She's so much more than the sum of that which she has accomplished. In short, Sue became the voice and face of the gay community in the early '90s."

Siwec remembered an occasion when candidates for NYS Attorney General were meeting in Albany with LGBT community representatives. Sue questioned them about their support for SONDA, the bill giving basic civil rights protections to New York's LGB community. The candidates were being evasive and dodging the question. From the back of the room Sue shouted, "Answer the question!"

To Siwec, this was a revelation that changed his paradigm: "Why shouldn't we talk to candidates this way? Why should we continually prostrate ourselves to their disrespect?" He said the atmosphere in the room became electric and "in that moment, our world had shifted."

He ended, "Thank you for helping so many to more clearly find the correct response when they are confronted with the dilemma of doing right or wrong by our community. And thank you, Sue, for ensuring that a greater number of Americans are more fully prepared to answer the question."

From the world of medicine and HIV/AIDS treatment came Dr. Bill Valenti, recalling how he and Sue started out together in the HIV field at the University of Rochester, where Sue, a nurse practitioner, worked in University Health Services from 1977-1988. Dr. Valenti jokingly recalled his trepidation at being confronted with "an out lesbian activist."

Recalling Sue's work with Dr. Tom Rush in co-founding the AIDS Screening Clinic in 1982, and their authoring of the first

study on AIDS in the American College Health Association Journal in 1985, Valenti said, "The best part about this is that Sue was seeking answers before we even knew what the questions were... This study was one of the first risk behavior studies in gay men done anywhere on the planet!"

Together they co-founded AIDS Rochester in 1983, and Bill Valenti recalled "that meeting on your front porch on Wilmer Street all those years ago". Sue also co-founded the Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS in 1983.

Valenti commented on Sue's continued work at the intersection of social justice and healthcare, including helping him contact the Calamus Foundation in NYC, which invested in Trillium Health's End the Epidemic initiative in 2014 – their first investment outside NYC. "The grant to Trillium set us on a path to prevent HIV in high-risk gay men," he said. "To date we have enrolled 120 people in our modern era HIV prevention program – the highest number of people in any program in New York State, bar none."

"If you want to talk about legacy – you are a star in my book and always will be," he told Sue.

Sue has also long been involved with feminist activism, such as the issue of violence against women, and with arts projects like the Rochester Women's Community Chorus (founding member, 1978); Rising Productions (providing exhibition space for local women artists) and the Upstate New York Women's Production Network (bringing women performers and plays by women to the area). She has co-produced the documentary films "The Riverview: A Lesbian Place" and "Christa McAuliffe: Reach for the Stars".

Sue has received dozens of community service awards, including the GAGV's Vicki Cup, 1980; the American College Health Association Distinguished Service Award, 1986; the ESPA Glen Joseph Pacheco Volunteer Award for her service as retiring co-chair of the Empire State Pride Agenda board, 1998, and many more.

Duffy Palmer and Pamela Barres were the final speakers. Duffy Palmer read a message from Jeff Soref, which included this: "I don't think I've enjoyed any professional relationship more than the one you and I shared while we co-chaired the Empire State Pride Agenda. You were a mentor and role model for me... Your warmth, gentle encouragement, strong support and integrity made the difficult work not only easier, but enjoyable. The historic culmination of that work was to finally bring an end to discrimination in New York State against lesbian and gay people..."

Pam Barres continued to read: "... I am happy to announce that the Calamus Foundation of New York City, on whose board I sit, has made a \$10,000 challenge grant to help launch the Sue Cowell Scholarship Fund. The Calamus Foundation has agreed to contribute one dollar raised by Sue's friends, family and colleagues. We will match gifts of any amount up to a total grant from Calamus of \$10,000. This gift is made to honor Sue's pioneering contributions to civil rights in New York State." ■

# NewsFronts

## LOCAL AND STATE



At Buffalo Pride 2014

### Buffalo, Syracuse, NYC and Toronto Prides are coming up this month

By Susan Jordan

It's that time again – Pride Month for most places (Rochester's is of course in July).

The Buffalo Pride Parade will take place Sunday, June 7. The Dyke March is June 6.

Parade step-off this year will be at noon for the first time. Line-up begins on Buffalo State campus. For spectators, the parade begins at the corner of Elmwood and Forest Avenues and continues down Elmwood, ending at the corner of Allen Street. Participants and attendees are encouraged to take the NFTA train from either the Allen Street/Medical Campus Station or the Fountain Plaza Station district to the Pride Festival at Canalside.

Parade registration is free and open to the public.

The Pride Parade embodies 2015's Show & Tell theme. Over 100 organizations participate in the parade, competing for awards like "Best Overall", "Best Interpretation of Theme" and "Most Creative". (See the back cover of this issue.)

CNY Pride Festival is scheduled for June 20, at Syracuse Inner Harbor. The theme is "Reflections of Pride: Stonewall 45". See CNYPride.com for more information.

New York City Pride Week is June 21-28 (see HeritageofPride.com for full details). On June 28, the Pride Festival starts at 11 a.m. and the March takes place at noon; the Dance on the Pier begins at 3 p.m. Grand Marshals are openly gay British actors Sir Ian McKellan and Sir Derek Jacobi; J. Christopher Neal, artist and leader of FluidBiDesign, advocacy for fluid men of African descent, and Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, mother of the Ugandan LGBT rights movement and co-founder of the first Ugandan Pride.

Toronto Pride Week is June 19-28. The Human Rights Con-

ference is June 20 at University College of the University of Toronto. The Dyke March took place April 18. The Trans March is June 26 (see transpride@pridetoronto.com). It will honor Monica Forester, producer of Trans Pride Toronto; Dr. Alex Abramovich, advocate for homeless youth, and TransPULSE, health research project.

The Toronto Pride March, which draws over a million people, takes place June 28 at 2 p.m. Grand Marshals are David Furnish, Pussy Riot, Cyndi Lauper, John Waters and Chaz Bono. pridetoronto.com



Sen. Gillibrand.

### Gillibrand plans legislation to end anti-LGBT adoption bias nationally

U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) has announced plans to introduce legislation that aims to eliminate anti-LGBT bias in adoption.

NY1 reports the proposed "Every Child Deserves a Family Act" would "prohibit adoption organizations that receive federal funding from discriminating against adoptive or foster parents based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status."

The AP adds that Louisiana, Mississippi, and Michigan prohibit gay couples from jointly adopting, while four other states restrict same-sex couples from using the second-parent adoption process.

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3aUndKjvg> ■

# NewsFronts

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL



Angie Esteban

### Calif. trans youth overcomes bullying, is named prom queen

By Mitch Kellaway on *The Advocate*

Just a few years ago, Angie Esteban could never have imagined that one day she would wear Salinas High School's prom queen crown.

The 18-year-old senior, who received the honor in April, shared in a May interview with *The Californian* how she overcame bullying and related disengagement with her schoolwork to stand proudly as a young trans woman today.

"I kind of already knew who I was and who I wanted to be at a young age," Esteban reflected, sharing that she started using her preferred name, "Angie," as a freshman. But despite her initial confidence in who she was, Esteban tells an insightful story about becoming someone else through facing her peers' and family's rejection, and eventually emerging stronger on the other side.

"A lot of people would tease me ... and it made me really mean," she recounts of her middle school years. "I used to fight a lot and get suspended from school. I would get bullied, but I would bully back. If you started with me, I would finish it. I know how to defend myself."

By her junior year, Esteban was placed in an alternative education program at Mount Toro High School because of her behavior, which included not showing up to school and failing to pass in school-

work. "I was headed toward a bad route," Esteban tells *The Californian* now, saying she felt "lost" and only lived "in the moment." "When I finally realized it, I knew I had to get on it."

Esteban was among the numerous trans youth who, in response to feeling rejected or misunderstood at school, are two times more likely than cisgender (nontrans) to not complete high school. But ultimately finding support from her first trans friend — another girl she met at Mount Toro — and a loving teacher, Esteban says she overcame the odds.

"I ended up squashing the beefs that I had with people as I started changing my mindset to positive," she reflected. "I didn't like the way they were staring at me at lunchtime so I went up to them and told them, 'I don't have a problem with you.' ... They were relieved I felt that way."

Esteban returned this year to Salinas High determined to graduate on time, despite being behind in her class credits. "This school year it's been work, work, work," she told *The Californian*. "But I'm making up my attendance. I stay at school until 5 p.m."

And on April 18, the girl who others once rejected or feared was named "prom queen" by her peers.

Now, though Esteban admits that she still faces occasional taunts from classmates, and that her relationship with her mother and siblings is still evolving, she says she's much closer to becoming the person she wants to be. An aspiring fashion model and businesswoman, she's now

on track to stand before her peers next month and be honored one more time: crowned with a mortar board cap and holding a diploma.

### Arkansas town blocks repeal of anti-discrimination ordinance

Some great news:

People in Eureka Springs voted on May 11 to keep a measure that would prohibit the city and private businesses from discriminating against someone based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The unofficial final tally was 579 votes in favor of ratifying Ordinance 2223, approved by the city council in February. 231 people voted in favor of repealing the law.

The law is similar to an anti-discrimination ordinance passed by Springfield's city council, that was later repealed by voters.

More than 2-1!  
-JoeMyGod.com

### Oregon legislature passes ban on youth conversion therapy

On May 7, the Oregon Senate voted 21 to 8 to pass HB 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act, which would ban conversion therapy for youth under the age of 18 by licensed mental health providers in Oregon.

On March 17, the Oregon House passed the bill on a 41 to 18 vote. HB 2307 moves to Governor Brown for consideration; she signed on May 22.

Oregon will be the third state to ban conversion therapy for youth, following California and New Jersey. Washington D.C. also has a ban. President Obama called for states to ban this practice on youth after the tragic suicide of transgender teen Leelah Alcorn after she endured conversion therapy. Earlier in May, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of New Jersey's conversion therapy ban for licensed therapists.

Conversion therapy includes a range of dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing someone's sexual orientation or suppressing their gender identity or expression.

"This is an important step in protecting LGBTQ youth," said Nancy Haque, co-director of Basic Rights Oregon. "The harms caused by conversion therapy are very real and we must do everything we possibly can as a state to prevent the loss of even one child. I commend the Senate for its strong support of this bill."

Senators made strong statements in support of the bill and also for LGBTQ youth.

"Discredited, dangerous so called conversion therapy has no place in Oregon," said Senator Sara Gelsler. "Our kids deserve better. HB 2307 is a message to our LGBTQ youth that we know they are

born perfect, loved and celebrated."

"Today the Oregon Senate can send a message to our young people that they are worthy of love, and that we honor and support them," said Senator Diane Rosenbaum.

The bill is endorsed by Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Oregon, National Association of Social Workers, Oregon Counseling Association, Oregon Health & Science University, Oregon Medical Association, Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon Psychological Association, Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association, American Counseling Association, Cascade AIDS Project, CAUSA, Center for Intercultural Organizing, Children First for Oregon, Democratic Party of Oregon, Democratic Party of Oregon LGBT Caucus, LULAC of Lane County #40001, Oregon Action, Oregon Health Equity Alliance, Oregon Latino Health Coalition, Oregon Student Association, PFLAG Oregon State Council, PFLAG Portland, PFLAG Portland Black Chapter, PFLAG Oregon Central Coast, Rural Organizing Project, TransActive Gender Center, Portland Two Spirit Society, Urban League of Portland and Western States Center.

### Sociologists put "final nail in coffin" of anti-gay Regnerus study

Miranda Blue writes at *Right Wing Watch*:

In an upcoming article, a pair of sociologists are putting what they call the "final nail in the coffin" of the much-criticized study by University of Texas sociologist Mark Regnerus that purported to show that being raised by gay and lesbian parents harms children.

The Regnerus study has become a favorite tool of Religious Right activists seeking to show that households led by same-sex couples are bad for children. At the same time, the study has come under scrutiny for the funding it received from anti-gay groups and for its lack of respondents who were actually raised in same-sex parent households.

Indiana University's Brian Powell and the University of Connecticut's Simon Cheng didn't just find methodological flaws in Regnerus' research — they took the data he collected, cleaned it up, and redid the study, coming to a very different conclusion about families led by same-sex couples. Their article will be published in "Social Science Research," the same journal that published the Regnerus study.

By eliminating suspect data — for example, a 25-year-old respondent who claimed to be 7'8" tall, 88 pounds, married eight times and with eight children, and another who reported having been arrested at age one — and correcting what they view as Regnerus' methodological errors, Cheng and Powell found that Regnerus' conclusions were so "fragile" that his data could just as easily show that children raised by gay and lesbian parents don't face negative adult outcomes.

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## Gambia's president wants to slit throats of gay men

By Darren Wee on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)  
Photo via Jagga/Wikimedia

The Gambia's notoriously anti-gay President Yahya Jammeh has threatened to slit the throats of gay men in the small West African nation and said there was nothing the West could do to stop him.

The dictator, who seized power in a bloody coup in 1994, made the inflammatory comments last month during a stop on a nationwide agricultural tour.

VICE News obtained a translation of Jammeh's speech, which was about fostering a healthy atmosphere for the country's youth.

"If you do it [in the Gambia] I will slit your throat — if you are a man and want to marry another man in this country and we catch you, no one will ever set eyes on you again, and no white person can do anything about it," he said in the Wolof language to a crowd in the town of Farafeni in the country's North Bank Region.

Last year, Jammeh approved a law that punishes gay sex with life imprisonment. Since its enactment, dozens of gay men have been rounded up and thrown in jail.

The EU cut aid to the Gambia in response but that has not deterred the country's president from threatening LGBTI people.

See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/gambias-president-threatens-slit-throats-gays130515#sthash.SE9xQrjB.dpuf>

*COMMENTARY: It's ironic that Jammeh states that no white person can influence the Gambia's oppression of gays, since wealthy white evangelicals from the west have advocated for homophobia in Africa for decades. Uganda gay group SMUG is suing U.S. evangelical Scott Lively for crimes against humanity. The new colonialists have colonized the Gambia for the second time.*

## Ruth Bader Ginsburg presides over second same sex wedding

By Raffy Ermac on *The Advocate*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg presided over a same-sex wedding on May 18 in Washington, D.C., making this at least the second time the Supreme Court justice has performed a gay couple's marriage in the past two years.

At Washington's historic Anderson House, Ginsburg officiated the marriage of Shakespeare Theater Company artistic director Michael Kahn and New York architect Charles Mitchem.

Although this isn't the first time Ginsburg has officiated a gay wedding, Maureen Dowd of the New York Times notes that this ceremony was very special, especially considering last month's historic hearings at the Supreme Court regarding potential nationwide same-sex marriage.

"But the most glittering moment for the crowd came during the ceremony," Dowd

writes. "With a sly look and special emphasis on the word 'Constitution,' Justice Ginsburg said that she was pronouncing the two men married by the powers vested in her by the Constitution of the United States."

Ginsburg, who is known for being one of the Supreme Court's most progressive justices, officiated a same-sex marriage back in August of 2013, making her the first high court judge ever to do so.

## Rep. Lieu introduces federal bill to ban conversion "therapy"

Chris Geidner reports at *Buzzfeed*:

On May 19, Democratic Rep. Ted Lieu of California introduced a federal bill to ban commercial efforts to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity — often called conversion therapy.

"The public views conversion therapy as quackery, as something that harms people," Lieu told BuzzFeed News on May 18, just after landing back in D.C. from California. "Eventually, I believe Congress will catch up to that, but you do need to start somewhere, so that's why we're introducing this legislation."

He faces an uphill battle: The legislation, which would label conversion therapy an "unfair or deceptive act or practice" that would be illegal under the Federal Trade Commission Act, is being introduced with less than three dozen co-sponsors — all of whom are Democrats. Lieu does, however, have a powerful ally in his effort. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has signed on as an original co-sponsor of the bill.

While a state Senator in California, Lieu was behind his state's successful ban on the "ex-gay" torture of those under age 18. His federal bill, however, would not limit the ban to minors. Lieu tells BuzzFeed, "Fraud is fraud, whether you practice it on a 16-year-old or a 45-year-old." The SPLC is currently suing an "ex-gay" group in New Jersey on the same grounds.

## Louisiana's Jindal issues "religious liberty" executive order

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has issued an executive order intended to protect the "religious liberty" of objectors to same-sex marriage in the state of Louisiana. The anti-gay order takes the place of House Bill 707, which had been rejected two hours before by a Louisiana House panel in a 10-2 vote.

Jindal's decision to go through with the executive order, bypassing the legislature, comes just one day after Jindal announced that he formed an exploratory committee to seek the GOP's nomination for President.

BuzzFeed reports:

Jindal outlined the order in a statement: "This Executive Order will prohibit the state from denying or revoking a tax exemption, tax deduction, contract, cooperative agreement, loan, professional license, certification, accreditation, or employment on the basis the person acts in accordance with



## Ireland votes yes!

On May 22, Irish voters approved same sex marriage by a 62 percent majority, becoming the first country to pass marriage equality via a national referendum.

Twenty-two years after making homosexuality legal, Ireland will now amend its constitution. Election turnout was 60.5 percent of 3.2 million voters.

Leo Varadkar, Ireland's health minister, who came out during the marriage campaign, said, "We're the first country in the world to enshrine marriage equality in our constitution and do so by popular mandate. That makes us a beacon, a light to the rest of the world, of liberty and equality. It's a very proud day to be Irish."

a religious belief that marriage is between one man and one woman." [...]

The legislation was a priority for Jindal, he said at the beginning of the year's legislative session. He said he would "fight" to pass it amid an uproar over religious freedom bills in Indiana and Arkansas that critics said would allow LGBT discrimination. He authored an op-ed published in the New York Times in defense of his support, declaring, "As the fight for religious liberty moves to Louisiana, I have a clear message for any corporation that contemplates bullying our state: Save your breath."

Jindal defended the bill at home as well, "All this bill does is provide necessary protections for individuals to prevent adverse treatment from the state based on religious beliefs regarding marriage. This legislation does not allow a restaurant or industry to refuse service to a gay or lesbian person."

Equality Louisiana, an LGBT rights group, and Louisiana Progress Action, denounced the order and suggested that Jindal's actions are squarely to do with his intended presidential bid. Via The Times-Picayune:

"It is shameful that Gov. Jindal has decided that abusing his executive power to accomplish the goals of House Bill 707, even after it was tabled indefinitely by our

legislature today, is worth more effort than fixing our disastrous state budget. In his time in Iowa, he may have forgotten what everyday Louisianians value, but the testimony today against HB 707 should have reminded him. Discrimination is not a Louisiana value.

"Gov. Jindal is clearly trying to leave the biggest mess possible, as he readies himself to spend even less time in Louisiana and to launch his presidential campaign. In the end, his extreme ideology is only making the state a worse place for those of us who actually plan to live here past his last day in office."

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) had a similar assessment:

"This executive order falls into category of unnecessary, gratuitous and discriminatory," HRC told BuzzFeed News. "On the same day that Louisiana legislators had the good sense to turn back discrimination, Governor Jindal, who's facing one of the lowest approval ratings in state history, decided to promote his presidential fortunes by championing ignorance. He's on the wrong side of this issue and will no doubt be on the wrong side of history."

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3agUiuEun>

(Newsfronts continues page 6)

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## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

(Newsfronts from page 5)

### Trans Hawaiians can now update birth certificates more easily

By Mitch Kellaway on *The Advocate*

The island state of Hawaii, recalled with such love and angst in Janet Mock's memoir *Redefining Realness*, became more supportive of its trans citizens in May, as the legislature passed a bill making it easier for transgender people to obtain updated birth certificates that reflect their authentic gender.

The state's House and Senate approved legislation May 5 that would strike a long-standing requirement that trans people provide "proof" of gender-affirming surgery before being able to legally change the gender marker on this critical identifying document, reports the Associated Press. Instead, individuals would need to obtain a note from a doctor explaining that they are trans.

The bill now awaits approval from Hawaii Gov. David Ige. Trans advocates expect the law to be implemented, allowing Hawaii to join at least six other U.S. states in dropping barriers to trans people's legal and social recognition. "This really is the beginning for trans equality," Hawaiian trans activist Kaleo Ramos told the AP.

Removing surgical barriers to obtaining accurate legal documentation has become a worldwide issue, with parts of Canada as well as the nations of Turkey, Israel, and Taiwan recently relaxing surgery requirements for certain legal documents — though updating birth certificates has often remained more of a sticking point than everyday documents such as driver's licenses and state-issued ID cards. Many advocates have pointed out that such surgeries are often beyond the financial means of transgender people, who often do not have health insurance plans that cover gender-affirming surgeries and are, in the U.S., four to six times more likely than cisgender (nontrans) peers to be living below the poverty line.

Groups like trans model Geena Rocero's Gender Proud and Transgender Europe have taken up the fight in nations across the world, arguing that forcing trans citizens to choose between gender recognition and potential sterilization — which occurs in gender-affirming surgeries that include genital reconstruction — is a human rights violation.

Trans citizens without legal identification that reflects their affirmed gender face difficulty in securing employment and housing, and can face social harassment or violence, which may place undue pressure on them to receive surgery sooner, or receive more or different procedures than what's needed in their own gender-affirmation processes.

Supportive government policies can even help reduce the astronomically high rate of suicide attempts among trans citi-

zens, said Rebecca Copeland, a parent advocate with Equality Hawaii. The mother of a 14-year-old trans son, Copeland told the AP, "It's the lack of recognition in society that really hurts people. When people look at [their birth certificate] and it doesn't reflect who they are it can really have devastating consequences."

### Gay Luxembourg PM marries longtime partner

By Darren Wee on *gaystarnews.com*  
Photo via *Xavier-Bettel/Facebook*

Luxembourg's openly gay Prime Minister, Xavier Bettel, married his partner in May.

Bettel kept tight-lipped about his wedding plans in order to minimize press coverage in the conservative Catholic-majority duchy, which legalized gay marriage in June.

"He does not want to put his private life in the public spotlight and he has turned down requests from the celebrity magazines to cover the event," a source told AFP.

Bettel became prime minister in 2013. Luxembourg also has a gay deputy PM.

In August, Bettel said he would marry architect Gauthier Destenay, with whom he has been in a civil union since 2010.

"He asked me and I said 'yes,'" he told the *LA Times*.

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/gay-luxembourg-pm-marry-week110515#sthash.YQArngGh.dpuf>

### Laramie, Wyoming bans anti-LGBT discrimination

Laramie City Council, Wyoming has approved Laramie Order 1915 which will prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment and access to public facilities, the AP reports.

The council of the town where Matthew Shepard was murdered 17 years ago voted 7-2 in favor of the motion.

The Legislature had repeatedly rejected anti-discrimination bills, most recently early this year.

Jeran Artery, head of the group Wyoming Equality, said:

"What a day for Wyoming, and what a day for the city that became synonymous with Matthew Shepard's murder to now step up and do this right thing. And I would really encourage other communities across the state to follow Laramie's lead."

Matthew Shepard's mother Judy, who is active in a Denver foundation focusing on equality issues, said she was thrilled "that Laramie's doing it, at the same time sort of saddened that the state of Wyoming can't see fit to do that as well. Maybe the rest of Wyoming will understand this is about fellow human beings and not something that's other than what they are."

Openly gay Rep. Cathy Connolly (D-Laramie) said, "Know that, in Albany County, five of six of your senators and representatives not only supported that measure, but actively, vigorously supported that measure, and we will continue to do so. My hope is from tonight that we will do so



Matthew Shepard

using the leadership of Laramie."

Two councilors voted against the ordinance. Both Joe Vitale and Bryan Schuster said they were concerned the ordinance caused concerns about religious freedom.

Rep. Kendell Kroeker (R-Evansville), who voted against the anti-discrimination bill this year, said "the Matt Shepard case was a tragedy, but I don't see how an anti-discrimination ordinance would have stopped somebody from committing that heinous crime."

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3a7xjTx2Y>



### Bullied 12-year-old bi girl told to "toughen up" commits suicide

By Darren Wee on *gaystarnews.com*  
Photo via *Facebook*

A 12-year-old girl bullied for being bisexual has committed suicide.

Alyssa Morgan from Des Moines, Iowa hung herself in her family's garage on April 3.

"I am the one who found my daughter and the image haunts me every day," her mother Nicole Morgan told KCCI-TV.

In the three weeks leading up to her death, Alyssa had been out of school due to bullying, which exacerbated after she came out as bisexual.

"It got to the point where you know, she wasn't happy anymore and she was self-

harming herself," said Nicole.

"When you have other people telling you that you're not worthy of anything or that being bisexual is wrong or somehow disgusting, you know, they're going to take that into thought, you know, that maybe I wasn't right for this world."

Nicole remembers her daughter as "your typical 12-year-old girl," who liked drawing, taking selfies and putting make-up on.

She said Alyssa seemed fine 20 minutes before entering the garage and hanging herself.

Alyssa left a suicide note that read: "I'm sorry... for everything... I just can't anymore... I love you ALL Goodbye."

Nicole slammed officials at Southeast Polk Junior High School, who she said told Alyssa to "toughen up".

"They don't seem to want to deal with the situation," Nicole told the *Des Moines Register*.

"To me, it seems like they want to cover it up."

Two years ago, a gay student at the Southeast Polk High School, AJ Betts, committed suicide at 16.

His mother said the school did not address the anti-gay bullying he faced then and contends that Alyssa is the 15th Southeast Polk student to take their own life in 12 years.

### Illinois House rejects conversion therapy

A bipartisan Illinois House majority yesterday approved House Bill 217 which aims to protect LGBT youth from "ex-gay" therapy, reports Equality Illinois.

The bill - which was passed 68-43, with support from 61 Democrats and seven Republicans - prohibits licensed mental health care providers from engaging in "reparative therapy" with anyone under the age of 18.

Equality Illinois (EI) called on the state Senate to approve the Illinois Youth Mental Health Protection Act before the scheduled May 31 adjournment of the General Assembly.

EI CEO Bernard Cherkasov said: "Ending conversion therapy is our top priority in the legislature right now. Trying to change the unchangeable, our innate sexual orientation and gender identity, should not be attempted because it risks the health of LGBT youth."

However, although every major Illinois mental health organization supports the bill - including the Illinois Psychological Association, Illinois Psychiatric Society, American Psychoanalytic Association, Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics - the legislation does not apply to religious leaders and would not impact the ability of clergy to practice their religion.

U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu has introduced a federal bill that would explicitly prohibit therapy to change people's gender identity.

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3agULFxW0>

(Newsfronts continues page 12)



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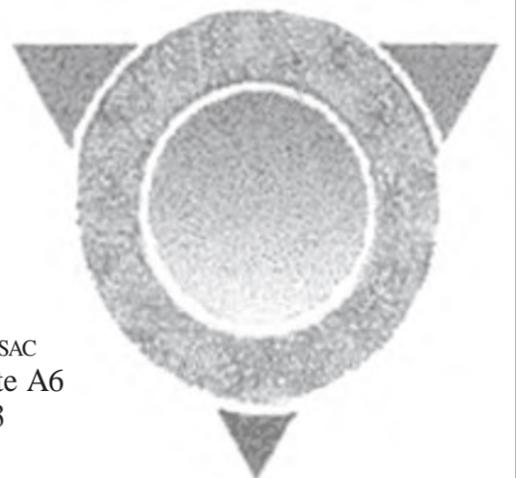
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# Interview



Scott Page. Photos: Susan Jordan

## Scott Page of Full Moon Vista Bike & Sport

By Susan Jordan

Full Moon Vista Bike & Sport, 661 South Ave., is a gay-friendly business; owner Scott Page says, “We get lots of LGBT customers.”

Page opened the store in 2005 on St. Paul and moved to South Ave. in 2011. He told The Empty Closet, “I’ve been in the industry for a while. I was a rep for a bicycle company. The Rochester area was my territory. I’m from Hilton. I just decided I wanted to do this kind of business – a city shop. Malls all look alike.

“We sell a lot of road bikes but even

bigger is hybrids – made for canals and bike paths. They’re half mountain bike, half road bike.”

There are both environmental and health benefits to biking. It has been very popular for many years in Europe, and seems to be increasingly popular here as well, especially with high gas prices. Page commented, “From everything we’ve seen, it’s growing and growing. In the city it’s growing big time and in the South Wedge we see growth everywhere. In this neighborhood people love the idea of being healthy and traveling on their own fuel. It’s more about the values than the money. You feel great and healthy.”

Like everyone who opens their own

business, Scott Page has had periods of struggle. “The biggest thing is perception vs. reality,” he said. “Most people think you’re immediately doing well, but it’s the complete opposite. You’re the last to be paid and it takes years to get going – about six years. We still have struggles, like this past winter was brutal. Nobody was thinking about bikes! The difference is, when you work for someone you get a paycheck – but when you own your own business you have to be prepared for weird times.

“It’s not the most secure environment. Many times you go without. If you pay yourself first, you’re going out of business! That’s the tough part. The fun part is, it’s nice working for yourself and knowing you and your team pulled it off and made a success.”

Scott has put together a trusted staff. “My rule is, I hire people because of per-

sonality rather than knowledge,” he said. “You can train people about knowledge, but you can’t train personality.” The shop employs five full time and five part time employees.

Half of Full Moon Vista’s customers are women, compared with the 10 percent that Scott says most other bike shops have. “We pay attention to what our women customers need and treat them with respect,” he said. “The first couple of times they come in, they are wary. By the third time they come in, they’re friends with us. It’s a very humbling experience.”

Scott loves being in the Wedge, one of the city’s fastest-growing neighborhoods. “I think the Wedge is really cool and we (merchants) all work well together. I love when people come in and say things like, ‘I’ve got to go to Hedonist and will be right back.’ They’re not just looking to buy bicycles.” ■

“I THINK THE WEDGE IS REALLY COOL AND WE (MERCHANTS) ALL WORK WELL TOGETHER. I LOVE WHEN PEOPLE COME IN AND SAY THINGS LIKE, ‘I’VE GOT TO GO TO HEDONIST AND WILL BE RIGHT BACK.’ THEY’RE NOT JUST LOOKING TO BUY BICYCLES.”



Staff member Kinna.

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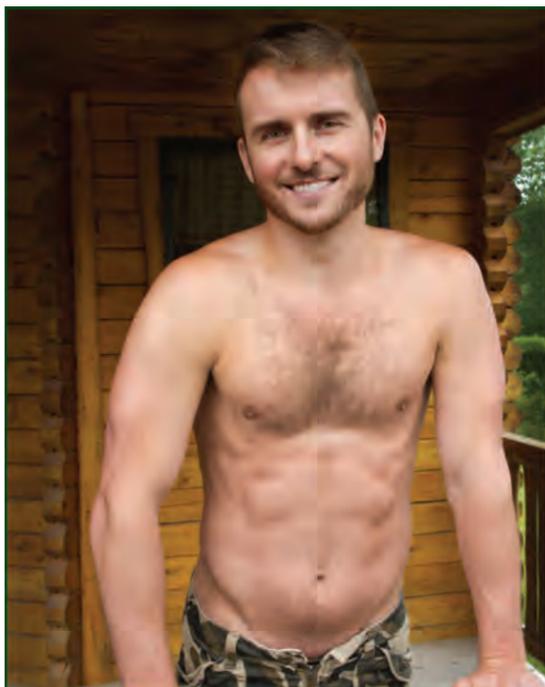
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# Making the Scene



**THANK YOU SUE COWELL:** Sue at the reception honoring her on May 2. See page 1. All photos: Gerry Szymanski



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**Dr. Bill Valenti and Paul Allen.**



**Barbara Turner and Tristan Wright.**



**Harry Bronson and Marlene Gordon.**



**The reception took place at Studio 180, at 180 St. Paul St.**

## My Own Private Rochester: Ray Pool and John Kubinieć

*By Susan Jordan*

Ray Pool and John Kubinieć are professional musicians living in Irondequoit. They met in Manhattan and have been together for 17 years, moving here from NYC two years ago.

Ray is a harpist, originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who says he is “trying to be a retired musician. I teach workshop classes around the country and in the UK.” He was about to leave for workshops in Toledo, but also teaches his private students on Skype. He plays folk songs, pop music, church music, Broadway and classical, and used to be harpist at the Waldorf Astoria.

John is an organist and pianist. He is organist at Gates Presbyterian Church and is also with Pro Musica. He said, “I’ve lived in Rochester between 1982 and 1991 and worked for the Catholic diocese. Originally I’m

from North Tonawanda.” He is also a quilter who designs and teaches.

Now upstate suburbanites, the two enjoy the comparative peace and quiet. Ray says, “We love to cook and have taken classes and we enjoy watching the birds at the feeder in the backyard.”

“And gardening,” John adds. “We have perennials – the deer would eat vegetables. We see all kinds of birds and had a wild turkey in the yard for a while.”

Their favorite Rochester things include the musical experiences the city has to offer. John said, “We enjoy the free concerts at the Eastman School.” Ray added, “We’re very interested in the RPO, and one of my friends is Grace Wong, the principal harpist. I had known all the primary people in the harp community before moving

here because I had worked with them when I lived in New York for 40 years. I have taught some day-long coaching workshops at Eastman. I also knew Eastman Professor Kathleen Bride in New York.”

John said, “We met in Manhattan. I had friends up here and family in the Buffalo area.”

Their other favorite things about Rochester include the Little Theatre, Hart’s Grocery and the organ concerts at all the local churches. Ray noted, “I like Hart’s Grocery a lot.” John said, “They have \$7 dinners to go with a different menu every day. Aladdin’s is one of our favorite restaurants.” Ray added, “And Flavors of Asia at Clinton and Meigs.”

An ideal Saturday night would be a cookout on their patio, which they built after moving into their house in August 2013.

If they were showing visitors around town, Ray said, “We’d drive along the lake and



**In the music room: Ray with one of his harps and John with one of his quilts. Photo: Susan Jordan**

walk on the jetty at Seabreeze.” John said, “We’d also take them to the George Eastman House, High Falls, the Pittsford Dairy and the Public Market.”

Ray added, “We like to drive to Canandaigua and the Finger Lakes. And we also like Palmer’s Fish Market on Jefferson Road,

and Wegmans. And we like to just drive around and look at the beautiful architecture.”

John summed up, “What I like about Rochester is all the events -- and it’s easy to get around. Rochester has a lot to offer.” ■



The Community Champions honored by The Pride Agenda. Photo: Gregg Horst/Jeff Palm



Attorney General Eric Schneiderman was keynote speaker. Photo: Gregg Horst/Jeff Palm

## ESPA celebrates 25-year history at Spring Dinner

By Ove Overmyer

On May 16, the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA) celebrated its 25-year history by hosting its 16th Annual Spring Dinner at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

The Spring Dinner is one of the signature fundraising events for the statewide civil rights advocacy organization. Featuring a cocktail reception, grazing stations, a live band, a presentation of Community Service Awards to 25 western New York honorees and live auction, the Spring Dinner raised more than \$100,000 and drew over 550 guests to celebrate and show support for the Pride Agenda's mission.

This year's event attracted many celebrities and elected officials. They included actor, singer and comedic host Lea Delaria from Netflix's hit series, "Orange is the New Black," keynote speaker NYS

Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, NYS Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle, NYS Assembly member Harry Bronson, Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren, City Council members Matt Haag and Elaine Spaul, Monroe County Legislator Carrie Andrews, Former Brighton Town Supervisor Sandy Frankel, former NYS Senator Jim Alesi and former Rochester Mayor Tom Richards. The event was co-chaired by Bruce Gorman and Julia Green Sewruk.

ESPA Executive Director Nathan M. Schaefer reflected on Rochester's role in transforming the civil rights landscape of New York State. He said, "Through it all, Rochester has been a beacon that shines on the rest of New York State and reminds us all how we can do better when it comes to LGBT inclusivity. Western New York provides a role model for leadership and caring for one another and the strongest

showing of ally support anywhere in the state."

Schaefer also remarked ESPA was extremely proud to honor 25 western New York community champions who have dedicated their hearts, time and energy to empowering friends, neighbors and complete strangers to live healthier, safer and happier lives. He added, "These champions are true inspirations. Tonight we raise a glass in tribute to all they have accomplished and will continue to do in the name of equality and justice."

The 2015 Community Champions are John Altieri, Bryan Ball, Shirley Bowen, Jessica Cohen, Larry Champoux, John Cullen, PhD, John Curtis, former Mayors Robert Duffy, William Johnson and Thomas Richards, former Brighton Supervisor Sandra Frankel, Gay Alliance Education Director Jeanne Gainsburg,



Nathan Schaefer presents the award to Sandy Frankel, who has announced her candidacy for Monroe County Executive. Photo: Garnetta Ely

ImageOut's Michael Gamilla, Maureen Kelly, Catherine Lewis, Mallory Livingston, Laine Lundquist, Laurie Mancuso, Wanda Martinez, Ove Overmyer, Samuel Antonio, Brett Sanchez, BJ Scanlon, Bill Schaefer, Dr. William Valenti, Jo Meleca-Voigt, Thomas Warfield, Dontae Williamson. ■

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## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

(Newsfronts continued from page 6)

### Gallup poll: 60 percent back marriage equality

By Greg Hernandez on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)

Support for same-sex marriage becoming legal across the US has reached an all-time high with 60 percent of Americans now in favor, according to a poll released on 19 May.

The latest Gallup poll shows an increase of five percent in support from a year ago.

It is also a stark contrast from the first year of the same poll in 1996 when only 27 percent of Americans were in favor of gay marriage and 68 percent were against it.

Support for same-sex marriage did not reach a majority until 2011 when 53 percent of respondents were in favor.

Breaking down the results in political parties: 76 percent of the Democrats polled were in support, 37 percent of the Republicans and 64 percent of Independents.

The poll also showed that those 65 and over are now the only age group that still has a majority against marriage equality.

The random sample of 1,024 adults in 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia was conducted earlier this month.

The results come as the US Supreme Court is set to rule on challenges to marriage bans in four states; a ruling that is expected to decide the issue for the nation.

### First federal monument for LGBT vets is dedicated in Illinois

The first federally approved monument honoring LGBT veterans was dedicated last month at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois, reports the *Windy City Times*.

Spearheaded by Stanley J. Jenczyk, a junior board member of the Chicago chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER), the monument was approved late last year by the Department of Veterans Affairs Acting Undersecretary of Memorial Affairs.

Jenczyk said, "I've waited for four long years to see this monument for LGBT veterans come to fruition. This ceremony will be a fulfillment of America's promise of honoring all who have served in every branch of the military."

Chicago-AVER Vice President and Secretary James Darby added, "This is the first monument for LGBT veterans created by LGBT veterans that will be dedicated at any cemetery in the National Veteran's Cemetery System. I never believed anything like this could've happened because we've been discriminated against for so long in many areas of life including the military with the now-defunct Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. This ceremony is going to be an incredibly emotional experience for all of us."

The monument is inscribed with the words, "Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have served honorably and admi-

rably in America's armed forces. In their memory and appreciation of their selfless service and sacrifice, this monument was dedicated by Chicago Chapter American Veterans for Equal Rights 'AVER' (...with liberty and justice for all)."

The ceremony took place on May 25. Last year, the design was revealed for a memorial to gay veterans in Congressional Cemetery's "gay corner" on Capitol Hill.

Openly transgender individuals continue to be banned from serving in the military.

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3a7yAbsxn>

### Thousands march in Havana for equality, marriage rights

Thousands marched in Havana on May 8 to support gay rights and to join a symbolic marriage ceremony organized by President Raul Castro's daughter Mariela.

Waving Cuban and rainbow-colored flags, the marchers called for equality and marriage rights for Cuba's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, on the eighth National Day Against Homophobia.

"(We must) ensure that Cuban society as a whole is sensitive to these issues, is educated, and understands," said Mariela Castro, a sexologist and leading LGBT rights activist. She said the march was also a showing of "spiritual support" of gay rights in the communist island nation. "We must continue to make noise and move these issues forward," she said at the rally, where several couples held symbolic wedding ceremonies. Gay marriage is illegal in Cuba, though Castro has long fought to legalize it.

RELATED: Cuba decriminalized homosexuality in 1979. Gays have served openly in the military since 1993 and anti-LGBT employment discrimination was banned in 2013. In his 2010 autobiography Fidel Castro denounced homophobia and apologized for the treatment of gay Cubans during the early years of his regime. A civil unions bill has remained stalled in the national legislature for several years.

-JoeMyGod.com

### Chelsea Manning statue unveiled in Berlin; will tour Europe

By Joe Morgan on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)

A statue made in tribute to Chelsea Manning has been erected in Berlin.

Alongside Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, the trans Wikileaks soldier's statue was revealed in May in the Alexanderplatz public square in the heart of the German capital city.

Created by Italian sculptor Davide Dormino, the life-size bronze statues are part of an art project entitled *Anything To Say*.

The three figures stand on chairs, while a fourth stays empty. This is intended to represent the viewer of the piece.

"Thanks to Assange, Snowden and Manning, you know the limits of freedom," the artist says.



"You know you are spied on every hour of every day. You know how governments kill and torture alleged enemies... We will honor their courage by erecting a monument..."

The statues will begin touring Europe from this month. They will head to Dresden in Germany, cities in Switzerland and Paris, France.

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/chelsea-manning-statue-unveiled-berlin130515#sthash.K7gVKMjh.dpuf>



### Turkish trans woman may make history, but violence continues

By Stefanie Gerdis on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)  
Photo source: Twitter / Deva Özenen

The Turkish parliament could soon be home to the country's first transgender MP.

Deva Özenen, the candidate for the recently founded progressive nationalist party, could be making history if she wins the election on 7 June; she is running as one of four LGBTI candidates standing for election in the whole of Turkey.

Her goal is to fight the growing discrimination the Turkish LGBTI community faces amidst the country's growing conservatism and wants to give her voice to the growing equal rights movement.

"If we are waiting for Turkish society to get ready for us, we'll wait a long time," she told the *Independent*.

"We are trying to get our rights and we don't care if society is ready for us or not."

Özenen said people often laugh at her when she gives speeches and she receives threats on her voice mail and email on a daily basis; she will not back down, but says she is very aware of the safety Izmir, a fairly liberal town, offers.

"In Kayseri, in eastern Turkey, I would be shot in the first week of my political career. Even walking on the street there, I would be killed," she said.

In Izmir, where a trans woman was killed last month, Özenen says she only faced threats and harassment on the street.

Turkey hosts the biggest Pride events in the Muslim world, but despite its active

and lively LGBTI community, trans people often end up working in the sex industry because there are no laws protecting them against discrimination.

Özenen, who ended up a sex worker herself when she slipped into poverty a few years ago, hopes to introduce a law banning hate crimes and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/trans-woman-could-make-history-turkey170515#sthash.sdHx1cH6.dpuf>

### Seven Turkish trans women murdered

From Mitch Kellaway on *The Advocate*:

Seven trans women in several different Turkish cities were stabbed last month, with numerous unrelated attacks happening within the space of several nights.

On May 2, trans woman Gülşen was stabbed in her Şişli home by two men with a knife and skewer, friends told LGBTI News. Gülşen, who earns income through sex work, like many of Turkey's low-income trans women, had previously encountered the men as clients. She remains in critical condition following surgery, according to Turkish news site *Bianet*.

On the same night, a second trans woman was shot and wounded, and was brought to the same hospital around 6 a.m., according to trans advocates who were at the hospital to support Gülşen.

Also that night, LGBTI News reports, a third trans woman, identified as Rüya by Turkey's *Dicle News Agency*, was stabbed in Izmir by several suspects, who have yet to be identified, while in Kocaeli, a trans female sex worker was attacked by an armed client in the house she had just moved into with two other trans women, resulting in her being hospitalized for leg injuries.

One day earlier, a trans female sex worker named Ipek was stabbed, beaten, and left to die in a Mersin orange grove. According to Ankara progressive news site *Kaos GL*, she had agreed to terms with two male clients who then forced her into their car, drove her to the isolated grove, brutally attacked her, then drove away. She was found by two farmhands who worked in the grove and rushed to Mersin Government Hospital, where she was listed in "critical condition" after being treated for several deep wounds and fractured bones in her face.

Later in May, two other trans women were attacked on the same night in two separate districts of Istanbul in crimes that may be related to their occupations as sex workers, reports LGBTI News Turkey. One victim, identified as Migel, was attacked in her Findikzade home by a group of men, sustaining injuries and deep lacerations to several parts of her body. Meanwhile in Işıl, five men attacked another trans woman walking on a street, breaking her jaw.

Following the May 2 attacks, a group of over 100 protesters gathered in Ankara



to protest Turkey's lack of national outcry over the epidemic of violence facing trans women, according to Dicle News Agency. Activists were also incensed by the April 7 attack on trans woman Bihter, in which several men nearly cut off her left hand in an alleged attempt to steal her wedding ring and money. When Bihter reported her attack to police and Turkey's Ministry of Justice, authorities were reportedly apathetic and have made no progress on her case.

"We know that hate attacks [against LGBTI people] have a political base. The state that wants to introduce transgender-only prisons should instead take necessary precautions against hate attacks," Turkish trans rights activist Dehmat Aksoy told Dicle News Agency at the May 4 rally, adding that the recent rash of violence "prove[s] that transphobic violence is everywhere."

"The heterosexual patriarchal mentality that ignores LGBTI people is being used every day by the state," she continued. "LGBTI and sex workers, who are victims of this mentality, are struggling for their lives every day."

Of all these recent attacks, LGBTI News reports that arrests have been made only in one, the attack on Migel. Multiple suspects have been arrested and charged with assault.



**Bullied Wisconsin trans teen commits suicide**

*By Mitch Kellaway on The Advocate*

Just days after Racine, Wis., teen Cameron Langrell announced to friends and classmates online that she identified as a transgender girl, switching her Facebook gender identifier to "female," the 15-year-old took her own life at home on May 1.

The artistic freshman had faced incessant bullying at Horlick High School, family and friends told Racine's Journal Times. Enamored with singing, playing piano, dancing, and cheerleading, Langrell — who had also recently started dating a male classmate — apparently faced much teasing for appearing "feminine," according to her mother Jamie Olender. "We told [Cameron] be who you are," she said of the family's response.

Olender tells the Times that in the weeks before Langrell's death, she and Langrell's stepfather, Eric Olender, had noticed their child starting to skip school to avoid being harassed; when Langrell got home, however, she reportedly continued to face taunting on social media. When the parents asked to speak with the school about addressing the bullying, they say they received no response.

Now, the Olenders are calling on officials to be more proactive about bullying to stave off the kind of harassment their child endured. "There needs to be more within the school, not just some outside resource," Jamie Olender explained to Milwaukee news station WISN. "[Bullying prevention] needs to be taught in school."

Racine School District spokesperson Stacy Tapp issued a statement, saying, "We are heartbroken over the loss of Cameron and we are doing everything we can to support our Horlick High School family. We have programs across the district, at every age level for students."

Meanwhile, Langrell's death is the tenth reported suicide of a trans youth in the U.S. this year, in an "epidemic" that trans advocates say sees far more casualties than make

headlines. Last week, gaming communities mourned the suicide of 23-year-old developer Rachel Bryk, while in April 15-year-old Michigan trans boy Sam Taub took his life. The highly publicized suicides of 18-year-old Charlotte, N.C., activist Blake Brockington, as well as that of 17-year-old trans girl Leelah Alcorn in Union Township, Ohio, last December, saw hundreds of thousands mourning worldwide.

An online fundraiser has been set up to help Langrell's family offset funeral costs.

If you are a trans or gender-nonconforming person considering suicide, Trans Lifeline can be reached at 877-565-8860. LGBT youth (ages 24 and younger) can reach the Trevor Project Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 can also be reached 24 hours a day by people of all ages and identities.



**Girl Scouts of USA welcomes trans girls; hate group protests**

*By Darren Wee on gaystarnews.com  
Photo via girlscouts/instagram*

The Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) has reaffirmed its policy of welcoming transgender girls.

The policy, which was made public four years ago, only recently came to the attention of the anti-gay American Family Association (AFA), which the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated a hate group.

The AFA said the GSA had "lost its moral compass" and started an online petition urging it to rescind the policy and restrict membership "biological girls".

"This means girls in the organization will be forced to recognize and accept transgenderism as a normal lifestyle," it reads.

"Boys in skirts, boys in make-up and boys in tents will become a part of the program. This change will put young innocent girls at risk."

The petition had 35,000 signatures as of May 20.

A day after the petition was launched, Andrea Bastiani Archibald, GSUSA's chief girl expert, responded in a blog post.

"There is not one type of girl. Every girl's sense of self, path to it, and how she is supported is unique," she wrote.

"If a girl is recognized by her family, school and community as a girl and lives culturally as a girl, Girl Scouts is an organization that can serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe.

"Inclusion of transgender girls is handled at a council level on a case by case basis, with the welfare and best interests of all members as a top priority."

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/girl-scouts-welcomes-trans-girls210515#sthash.M4fWAQGc.dpuf>

**Kenya tabloid outs gay activists; arrests, violence feared**

*From Kenya's homophobic Citizen Weekly:*

"When Kenya National Human Rights Commission and a section of non-governmental organizations came out guns blazing and demanded William Ruto apologize to the gay community for saying Kenya has no room for gays and lesbians, many were left wondering whether they were hearing right. Others won-

*(Kenya continues page 14)*

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## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

(Kenya from page 13)

dered whether they were still in Kenya or in the Godless America or Europe. Addressing a press conference, KNHRC executive director Atsango Chesoni said Ruto's remarks during a church service are homophobic and put the lives of gays and lesbians in the country in danger. [snip] Homosexuality and lesbianism are slowly taking root in Kenya. It was initially in boarding schools, prisons but now has found its way in churches and other institution including blue chip companies and even among sportsmen and women. Government institutions such as the judiciary, parliament, senate and counties have not been spared. Of late, there are thousands of homosexuals and lesbians. The list of gays has well known faces including two governors, two senators and a cabinet secretary. Two women MPs are lesbians and one principal secretary is (sic) said not to be straight. A well-known billionaire who owns a media house is also said to be a homosexual."

From Gay Star News:

"Citizen Weekly has exposed 12 LGBTI activists and leaders. Several were previously in the closet. While some are known internationally as proud spokespeople for the community, others include a senator and a gospel singer. Few Kenyans are openly LGBTI as it is illegal to be gay. Activists fear the newspaper will incite mob violence, similar to when Ugandan activist David Kato was killed after being 'named and shamed' on the front page of a tabloid in 2010. While the frontpage headline reads: 'TOP GAYS, LESBIANS LIST IN KENYA OUT', the actual article as seen by GSN does not call for violence or murder like other past tabloid lists of this nature. It references how Kenya's high court has ordered the government to allow a gay rights group to register after they initially refused it on the basis of moral and religious grounds.

"Homosexual acts in Kenya are punishable by up to 14 years in prison."



### Philly trans woman is eighth in US to be killed in 2015; arrest made

By Darren Wee on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)  
Photo via [london.k.chanel/Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/london.k.chanel/)

A 21-year-old black transgender woman was stabbed to death early on 18 May in Philadelphia.

London Chanel was stabbed twice in the back and once in the neck in an abandoned house at around 12:40 a.m.

She is the eighth trans woman of color to be killed this year in the US.

Philadelphia Police Chief Inspector Scott Small told NBC10 that an argument between Chanel and her 31-year-old alleged attacker escalated into a physical fight and she was stabbed as a result.

Her assailant and a witness carried Chanel downstairs and put her on quilts outside. They performed CPR on the victim and then called the police.

Officers rushed Chanel to hospital where she was pronounced dead just after 1 a.m.

Chanel was a native of Victoria, Texas and moved to Philadelphia several years ago.

Veronica Allen, Chanel's mother, said her daughter's transition had taken a toll on their relationship but they reconnected in March.

"She was going to go to court to change her name and then she was going to come

home," she said.

"That's what we were working towards, but that man took it away from me."

"She had a heart of gold," Chanel's "trans sister" Kione Seymore said.

"She hardly ever frowned. She always had a smile on her face. Her laughter was infectious."

A folding pocketknife was found on the alleged attacker, Small said. Both he and the witness were taken into custody for questioning. The alleged attacker has now been charged.

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/trans-woman-stabbed-death-philadelphia190515#sthash.Hc0SBaL6.dpuf>



### Vienna's traffic lights go gay for Eurovision

Ahead of May's Eurovision, Austrian capital Vienna made even the traffic lights gay. Vienna hosted this year's musical extravaganza after Conchita Wurst's victory last year.

In celebration, the city's traffic signals now feature gay and lesbian couples, some with hearts above them, reports Pink News.

A spokesperson for the city said the change came about to attract the attention of pedestrians and drivers in order to improve road safety and to "present Vienna as an open-minded city."

Read more: <http://www.towleroad.com/#ixzz3a1UtK5S2>



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### Oregon teen defends mom against haters

When high school junior Makaila Ragan noticed two men waving anti-gay signs outside her mother's Oregon workplace, she decided to do something about it.

"I was so irritated because I see them all around town and all they ever do is make people feel like crap about themselves," said Ragan, a junior at Tillamook High School.

The men were standing outside Eyes of Oregon, on 1st Street and Main Avenue, where her mother works.

"I went inside and asked her and her boss if it would be all right if I made a poster that stands up for what I believe in," she said. "They were totally all for it. So I made a sign that said, 'I love Gays.'"

The two men, said Makaila, began insulting her personally. "They were calling me names, and asking my mom questions, like, 'How many times did you have to get an abortion before you were able to have your daughter?' and saying, 'You're going to burn in hell right along with your daughter.' The things they were saying were just awful, but I didn't let them faze me."

Makaila's one-person counter-protest was soon joined by many others and eventually more than 40 supporters had shown up to stand next to her with signs of their own. After more than six hours, the haters finally went home. Over on Facebook, Makaila has vowed to return. Her mom says, "Makaila stood up. Boy, did she ever! Look what she did - wow! I'm so, so proud of her."

-JoeMyGod.com ■

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# Opinion

## The New Black and marriage equality

By Yoruba Richen, *Promised Land* Film

When I began documenting the same-sex marriage quest in Maryland which ultimately became the award-winning film *THE NEW BLACK*, I was intrigued by the many nuances explored and positions justified when people were taking a stance either for or against.

Of particular note were those against same-sex marriage in the name of their religious platforms (e.g. "I can't support this because the Bible says it's wrong."). Even now, that viewpoint resonates with me because it is laced with such innuendo, assumption and in some instances downright fiction.

Today, there are 37 states with legal same-sex marriage laws, which demonstrates a quantum leap since *THE NEW BLACK* premiered. To give you an idea of how far we've come, in February 2014 there were only 17 states with such laws. And to hopefully further progress, the U.S. Supreme Court is set to render a decision on whether states can institute a gay marriage ban. If victorious in favor of the LGBT community, it will overthrow existing bans in the remaining 13 states, declaring them unconstitutional. That would be a civil rights coup in the name of love and justice.

It brings to mind when less than 50 years ago a similar civil rights battle was presented before the U.S. Supreme Court — *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). This landmark ruling overturned Virginia's ban on interracial marriage and was subsequently applied to the remaining 15 states that outlawed matrimony between people of different ethnicities. The similarities

between today's quest and the *Loving* story are astounding:

Today, 13 states still have bans on gay marriage; during the *Loving* battle there were 16 declaring interracial unions illegal.

Today, the LGBT community simply wants the right to a legal marriage in the states where they reside; Richard and Mildred *Loving* wanted to live in wedlock in their home state of Virginia.

Both battles call into question whether bans violate human and civil rights.

While similarities are stark, today's challenge facing the LGBT population has an additional layer, which is cloaked in the Bible. Some who oppose legalizing same-sex marriage cite their belief that it is forbidden according to the "Good Book." Though we are making great strides, choosing to discriminate against the LGBT community for sacred reasons continues to create a convenient, thorny cross for us all to bear -- pun intended.

Let's take the resurgence of The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which has recently passed in Indiana and Arkansas with a potentially blaring version being contemplated in Louisiana. Even with revisions to the language in Indiana, RFRA's blatant legislation affords people legal legs to discriminate — and they can do so by applying sketchy and selective interpretation of religious doctrine.

For instance, a small business refuses to cater a wedding for a lesbian couple because Christian beliefs don't support the lifestyle. In the Old Testament it states that sex with the same gender is an abomination. It also applies this same judgement to any sexual acts other than those between husband and wife. The New

Testament condemns all forms of sexual immorality. There is no reference in the Bible admonishing gay marriage.

So I'll argue that unless this establishment inquired about the lesbian couple's sexual behavior and based its service refusal on the answer, it is unconstitutional to stand on religion. And for that matter, a heterosexual couple would also have to be polled to glean whether they've had premarital sex. Or, what if a heterosexual couple samples cake and the husband exclaims, "Oh my God, that is delicious"? Will they be escorted from the building since one of the Ten Commandments reads, "Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"?

In order to base service decisions on religious freedom, one would have to investigate each customer and determine if they've violated doctrine in any way. Anything short of this is cherry-picking, exercising selective rights-of-refusal. In other words, it is DISCRIMINATION, and enacting legislation which makes such behavior legal is the real abomination.

As we continue the quest for the LGBT population's right to legally marry in every state, we must also be vigilant about opposing legislation that allows someone to discriminate in the name of the Lord.

*THE NEW BLACK* is scheduled for Video-On-Demand and DVD release in June. ■



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# Health

## Strong Gender Clinic is back, with a website

The Division of Adolescent Medicine at Golisano Children's Hospital, University of Rochester, has services available to aid families, youth, and young adults who identify as transgender, gender fluid, or have other questions or concerns about their gender.

The Gender Clinic says, "We offer appointments to youths and young adults through age 25 and their families/care providers, to discuss these issues and to explore the options available for their care on various days and times. Patients are seen in our clinical suite at 601 Elmwood Avenue by appointment only. It is preferable that an existing primary care provider or mental health provider refer the individual to us, but we will, in certain circumstances, accept self-referrals."

Link to the site: <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/childrens-hospital/adolescent/gender-health-services.aspx?redir=golisano.urmc.edu/gender-health>

## Opinion: HIV guidebook for the newly diagnosed is long overdue



By Marvell L. Terry II on *The Advocate*

It was a cold day in August when I got the call from the Shelby County Health Department. That spring, I'd asked

my doctor to test me for HIV. I'd never been tested before and figured I should. Plus I'd been feeling tired and run-down.

A couple days after they drew my blood, the doctor's office called to set up a follow-up appointment. But the nurse wouldn't tell me anything on the phone. I was juggling college and a full-time job. And I figured they'd tell me right then and there if there was something to worry about, so I forgot about the call — until a second one came later that month.

I was at work when the nurse called. So I stepped into the break room. "Mr. Terry, do you remember what test you requested at your doctor's office a couple of months ago?" the nurse said. "Yes," I answered, "an HIV test." "Well ... the results came back positive." I responded with a simple "OK." In fact, I said OK to every question after that.

I went back to work counting money and greeting customers without missing a beat. I might've appeared OK, but I was numb to the world on the inside. On the outside, I went back into my regularly scheduled program. But on the inside, I kept asking myself, What do I do?

I desperately needed a guidebook to help me figure things out. Frankly, I needed a guidebook after that very first test. But, I had nothing.

So on the drive home I mustered up enough strength to call two friends who were my chosen family, both of whom are gay. One cried with me and immediately began to work out a plan to come stay the night with me so I wouldn't have to be alone. My other friend let me cry but startled me when he said, "Listen, this isn't going to be an everyday process." How insensitive, I thought. I know this because I'm positive. And you're going to get through this.

I didn't have a guidebook then, but I had my friends. And while I still felt lucky to have had them, none of us had any resources, let alone something that spoke to our experiences as young black gay men.

I was living in Memphis at the time of

my diagnosis. And despite the fact that we had community-based organizations that provided HIV services to black LGBT people, they often had to adapt existing HIV literature because of how inaccurate and exclusionary most of the brochures were.

Thankfully, things are changing. As an HIV fellow at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, I'm enormously proud of our new resource *What Do I Do? A Handbook to Understanding Health and HIV*. Made possible by a grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation, it's the guidebook I needed then — and it's the guidebook that's still needed, especially in the American South.

According to the Southern AIDS Coalition, the South is home to 37 percent of the U.S. population but 50 percent of new HIV diagnoses, not to mention 46 percent of new AIDS diagnoses and 43 percent of all people living with HIV. And if that's not enough, consider the fact a black gay man living in the city of Atlanta now has a 60 percent chance of becoming HIV-positive by the time he's 30.

These numbers are extraordinary. And they're part of the reason why I came to work for HRC in the first place — to draw on my experience as a person living with HIV from the South to create resources that would empower my community. Resource guides like *What Do I Do?* aren't the be-all and end-all for what needs to be done to end the HIV epidemic in U.S. But they just might give someone the answers they need to carry on — no matter who or what may be on the other end of that second phone call.

*MARVELL L. TERRY II is HIV/AIDS Project Fellow at the Human Rights Campaign. He is also the founder and executive director of the Red Door Foundation, a Memphis-based nonprofit organization that works to improve the health of black gay and bisexual men.*

## HRC, others blast FDA's new rules on blood donation by gay men

By Dawn Ennis on *The Advocate*

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today issued a recommendation signaling the first significant change to a 33-year ban on blood donations by gay and bisexual men, but it maintains restrictions that civil rights groups say make it still unacceptable.

If approved, the draft guidelines revising that controversial ban on men who have sex with men will give blood collection centers across the country the green light to accept blood donations from everyone — except for gay or bisexual men, who must affirm they have abstained from sex with other men for one year.

However, sexually active gay and bi guys will still be banned for life.

The modification of what the FDA called an "indefinite deferral," or ban, for all MSM stopped short of what other countries have done in lifting what the Human Rights Campaign calls a "medically and scientifically unwarranted" policy.

HRC slammed the draft guidance for not going far enough. "While the new policy is a step in the right direction toward an ideal policy that reflects the best scientific research, it still falls far short of a fully acceptable solution because it continues to stigmatize gay and bisexual men," said HRC government affairs director David Stacy in a statement.

"This policy prevents men from donating lifesaving blood based solely on their sexual orientation rather than actual risk to the blood supply. It simply cannot be justified in light of current scientific research and updated blood screening technology," Stacy said. "We are committed to working towards an eventual outcome that both minimizes risk to the blood supply and treats gay and bisexual men with the respect they deserve."

The HRC also noted that the American Red Cross, America's Blood Centers, and the American Association of Blood

Banks have denounced the FDA's current blood ban.

Executive Director and Founder of the National Gay Blood Drive, Ryan James Yezak, said of the proposed change: "We are pleased to see the FDA has issued the draft guidance and we look forward to organizing the National Gay Blood Drive in conjunction with the implementation of the revised policy. We will continue to encourage the FDA to move toward a deferral based upon individual risk assessment."

But to Congressman Mike Honda of San Jose, Calif., the draft guidance perpetuates what he called "an outdated and bigoted system" that only seems like an improvement. "The FDA's message is clear: 'If you can stop being gay, stop being bisexual, for one year, then you can donate blood,'" said Rep. Honda in a statement emailed to *The Advocate*.

Honda, whose granddaughter is transgender, said, "My message to the FDA is simple: We need a screening policy that focuses on behavior, not orientation."

"While I am glad the FDA finally issued new draft guidance, it falls short of what our country needs — and deserves. The Williams Institute at UCLA estimates this revised policy will continue to exclude over two million men who otherwise would be eligible to donate, depriving our hospitals of nearly 300,000 pints of blood. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress, and in my district, to get the FDA to recognize this policy for what it is: an outdated, orientation-based view of gay and bisexual men."

A reporter attending a May White House media briefing asked spokesman Josh Earnest why President Obama's outspoken opposition to discrimination wouldn't "naturally apply to the issue of blood donation from gay and bisexual men?"

Earnest said, "This will be something that is going to be guided by the science. And the President does have a very strong record when it comes to ensuring that we're not discriminating against people because of who they love, and the President feels strongly about that principle being abided by. He also feels strongly about making sure that we have an effective system that manages the reserve blood supply of the country. And we're mindful of that, and that's why we've got some of the best scientists in the world at the FDA who are looking at this issue and making sure that we can reach an agreement -- or reach a policy that is in the best interest of the country."

Ian Thompson, legislative representative for the American Civil Liberties Union, had this to say about the FDA's draft guidance: "As the ACLU made clear late last year, this inadequate proposal must be seen as part of an ongoing process and not an end point. Deferral decisions should be based on activities presenting an elevated risk, not on the identity of a person or that person's partner. The reality for the vast majority of gay and bisexual men is that this policy continues to stigmatize their intimate relationships and will indefinitely bar them from donating. In addition, this proposal leaves open the possibility that transgender individuals will continue to be needlessly barred from being able to donate."

The FDA's proposal is to rewrite the donor history questionnaire with the following 10 questions to assess risk:

### A history ever of a positive test for HIV

A history ever of exchanging sex for money or drugs

A history ever of non-prescription injection drug use

A history in the past 12 months of sex with a person with a positive test for HIV, a history of exchanging sex for money or drugs, or a history of non-prescription injection drug use,

A history in the past 12 months of receiving a transfusion of Whole Blood or blood components such as packed red blood cells, platelets, or plasma,

A history in the past 12 months of contact with blood of another individual through percutaneous inoculation such as a needle stick or through contact with a donor's open wound or mucous membranes,

A history in the past 12 months of a tattoo, ear or body piercing, viii. A history in the past 12 months of syphilis or gonorrhea, or treatment for syphilis or gonorrhea,

For male donors: a history in the past 12 months of sex with another man,

For female donors: a history in the past 12 months of sex with a man who has had sex with another man.

About those two last points: although it previously advised blood centers to consider all transgender individuals to be men who had sex with men and to consider that gender assigned at birth overrules legal and medical documentation of gender transition, this new document from the FDA says "in the context of the donor history questionnaire, male or female gender is taken to be self-identified and self-reported. In instances where a donor has asserted a change in gender identification, medical directors may exercise discretion with regard to donor eligibility."

Of this language, an FDA spokeswoman told *The Advocate* that while such discretion is allowed, medical personnel should keep in mind that "recent scientific data continue to indicate that males who have changed their gender to female are at high risk of acquiring HIV." The agency's previous view of transgender people has been denounced by Dana Beyer, MD, a retired eye surgeon, transgender advocate, and political activist in Maryland. She told *The Advocate* in February that the FDA policy is "indirectly discriminatory, as well as harmful to the proper collection of data."

The decision by the FDA to lean toward giving blood donor centers discretion is not new and reflects a growing shift by the agency away from federal control to local jurisdictional authority.

That "discretion" led to a trans woman being turned away by one for-profit blood-and-plasma bank in Kent, Wash. Jasmine Kaiser is now pursuing legal action, reports Seattle TV station KPLU. Kaiser says she attempted to give plasma in exchange for money at CSL Plasma Inc., but was told she could not donate because she was assigned "male at birth."

Not only was she turned away, Kaiser claims CSL workers informed her that her name would be placed on a "permanent deferral list," and that the plasma center would inform other blood banks of this status. CSL is facing a similar lawsuit from a transgender individual in Minnesota as well, notes KPLU.

Kaiser filed her suit with attorneys from Seattle women's rights group Legal Voice and the Keller Rohrbach law firm, who are arguing that CSL has violated a 2006 Washington law prohibiting discrimination based on a person's gender identity.

CSL has yet to respond to the suit.

The new FDA document will be submitted to the Federal Register, and that will be followed by a period of public comment, where online statements in support and opposed will be collected.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin told BuzzFeed she's encouraged to finally see this proposal but hoped it would evolve into a policy that the report said "moved toward a risk-based system for assessing blood donations, not a black-and-white policy that disqualifies donors based solely on their sexual orientation."

"I have long fought to end this discriminatory, lifetime ban on blood donations," Baldwin told BuzzFeed. "I look forward to seeing the Administration's plans to achieve this goal and one thing is for sure, I will continue to push the Administration to do the right thing by moving away from this outdated policy that is medically and scientifically unwarranted and toward our ultimate goal of risk-based policies that allow all healthy individuals to donate." ■

# LGBTQ Living



Wanda Martinez and Dawn Johncox.

## Wedding bells ring out for local couples

By Susan Jordan

Wedding bells are ringing this summer for many Rochester area LGBTQ couples. The Empty Closet talked to two of them: Wanda Martinez and Dawn Johncox (who plan a big wedding) and Mark Ellenwood and John DeHaas (who are going with the alternative option – a small family-only wedding).

Same sex marriage has been legal in New York State for four years this month, but the upcoming Supreme Court ruling, if favorable, will have an effect on these couples' families in that it will provide national rights of many kinds, from insurance to hospital visitation, and will establish once and for all that LGBTQ marriages and families are legal, valid and real.

Wanda and Dawn's wedding will be

big and traditional. It will take place on July 25 at Spiritus Christi, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. The ceremony will be a full mass with communion, performed by Reverend Mary Ramerman.

The wedding will incorporate both Puerto Rican and North American traditions. A capia or ribbon corsage inscribed with Wanda and Dawn's names and the date will be presented to each of the 200 guests – a Puerto Rican tradition.

Wanda will wear a dress designed for her by Barb Randall of Bloomfield, and Dawn will wear a white pants suit. Wanda's children will be in the wedding party – Maxwell as ringbearer and Mariadeliz as flower girl. Wanda and Dawn will each have a maid of honor and four other attendants. Wanda's mother, a florist, will



Mark Ellenwood and John DeHaas.

be doing the flowers. Organist Lee Wright will play.

A reception will follow at the Rochester Ballroom on East Ave. WDKX DJ Freddy Colon will provide the music and there will be a strawberry layer wedding cake. And the couple will be chauffeured to their wedding in a Trolley Limo from Diamond Limousines.

In reference to the upcoming Supreme Court ruling, Dawn pointed out, "The way I look at it, we're lucky to be living in New York, but if our careers were to take us out of state, we could encounter discrimination." Until a favorable SCOTUS decision comes through, a simple drive over state lines could remove LGBTQ couples' civil rights and family identity.

A big wedding is a big project and Dawn admits to being "a little stressed". But the two will be able to relax on their fabulous Caribbean honeymoon cruise on Olivia Cruise Lines.

Mark Ellenwood and John DeHaas have chosen the opposite kind of wedding. They have been together for 15 years; the wedding will be two months short of their 16th anniversary.

It will take place on July 18 at the family vacation house on Glen Lake, near Lake George. The couple goes there often in the summer, since Mark's mother stays in the area, and their wedding will be family-only, with around 15 to 20 guests. As John put it, "It will be drama-free."

Mark said, "We don't need gifts or a big wedding. John and I will wear cargo shorts and tie-dyed shirts. We're telling our families to dress casually."

Both families are accepting and Mark's brother has even gone online to get ordained so that he can perform the ceremony. Mark said, "I'm considerably older than John and I was worried the first time I met his family; he had told me his father was 'grumpy and doesn't like anyone'. But John's father took to me right away. My own family has been OK with me being gay since I came out to them when I was 17."

After the ceremony the group will go out for pizza, which amuses Mark because of the notorious Indiana pizza parlor

refusal to make pizza for gay weddings – and the subsequent online comments that no gay men would ever order pizza for their wedding reception!

Being at the lake will also be their honeymoon. "We go on a lot of trips," Mark said, "but this year we spent a lot of money on the house!" The two don't live together; Mark has a house in the North Winton Village area, while John has an apartment nearby. "At some point we'll live together," Mark said, "but we're in no hurry."

The couple has two dogs and a cat. Bobbi Sue is the newly rescued Jack Russell terrier, Daisy Mae is the rescue cat, and Taylor is the elderly basset hound – sadly, not in good health, so he will soon be leaving our world.

Mark and John have no intention of moving out of state, and the SCOTUS decision will not profoundly affect their lives, except for restricting their travels, which will NOT be to discriminatory "religious freedom" states. Mark said, "A positive ruling would be great, but if it's negative, we'll just have to avoid anti-gay states – and we travel a lot!"

"I never thought in my lifetime I'd be able to marry!" ■



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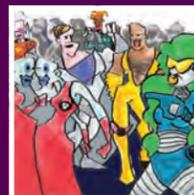
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# Shoulders to Stand On



## A Community's Response To AIDS – The Beginning Years Before 1986 in Rochester

By Evelyn Bailey

The year 1982 was a pivotal year in the identification of AIDS. Professionals and others were beginning to talk openly about the disease with as much information as was available at the time.

It would be later that the AIDS virus would be traced back to French-Canadian flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas who paid his first known visit to New York City bathhouses in October, 1981. He would later be deemed "Patient Zero" for his apparent connection to many early cases of AIDS in the United States.

In an interview with Tom Rush, MD by Sue Cowell, RN written up in the October, 1982 issue of *The Empty Closet*, Sue asked, "Why is it important to conduct this study if there have not been any cases identified in Rochester?"

Dr. Rush responded, "It is generally accepted that A.I.D.S. is related to some transmissible agent and therefore the possibility exists that it will ultimately reach Rochester where there is a substantial gay community, many of whom may travel outside of Rochester. Also, the types of abnormalities of the immune system that we will be testing for would not be as meaningful if found in people with the full blown syndrome. People who are seriously ill develop many abnormalities not necessarily the cause of their illness but rather a result of it. Finding such abnormalities in mildly ill or healthy people would be more helpful in establishing a causal relationship."

On January 15, 1981, Nick Rock becomes the first known AIDS death in New York City. In December of 1982, just a few months after Sue's interview with Dr. Rush, the Monroe County Health Department acknowledged that a Caribbean immigrant to Rochester had died as a result of Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome. It was also disclosed at that time that two other cases had been diagnosed. They were reported to the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. The Monroe County Health Department also said that 10 other suspected cases in Monroe County were under investigation.

In response to this one death, approximately 100 men attended a special clinic at Strong Memorial Hospital in early October. As you can see it did not take long for this disease to reach Rochester. Thank goodness the medical community had been aware of what was going on and had already begun to track people who might be HIV positive. Much of that early work was done by Sue Cowell at the University Health Services, where she began epidemiological studies and Educational Programs on HIV.

In Tom Rush's front page October 1982 EC article, Tom stated that researchers were working feverishly to identify

the primary abnormality in the immune system that allows development of infections that the body can usually contain on its own, as well as identify agents that might be responsible for the damage to the immune system. In Rochester, Tom and other physicians associated with the Infectious Diseases Unit at Strong Memorial Hospital of the University of Rochester worked with Dr. Roy Steigbigel at SMH who was working with organisms called *Leishmania donovani* which caused serious illness in Asia and Africa. Roy used this organism to study how cells of the immune system work.

At that time the A.I.D. Syndrome seemed to be related to a failure of the immune system to kill the organisms that had been causing these serious infections in gay males and others. This study would provide information that would lead to effective treatment of the disorder. Other physicians were involved in the research as well as Sue Cowell, nurse practitioner at the University Health Service, who had contacts in the gay community. Sue was involved with various aspects of the project, particularly with maintaining patient confidentiality. At this point in time the National Institutes of Health announced the availability of funds for research into the causes and treatment of this syndrome.

As a part of this research, an A.I.D.S. Screening Clinic at the University Health Service opened to screen gay men for symptoms of A.I.D.S. (Acquired-Immuno-deficiency Syndrome). The screening included a short history, limited physical exam, and optional lab data. Sue was already working at the University Health Service. In the same issue of the EC, Sue stated, "He (Tom Rush) came to me because he knew it would be important to have contacts to be able to make something like that work. Without a doubt, it would not have got going so fast without my help and the help of Tim Sally and Derrick Balsam. They were very instrumental in getting the ball rolling. There was research right from the beginning but you would not be aware of it unless you were reading medical journals. It takes a while for physicians to recognize immune disease. Then it must be reported to the Center for Disease Control. Then the information is communicated through the CDC's morbidity and mortality weekly report."

The Washington Blade reported, at about the same time, that Dr. Linda Pilfer, a microbiologist and assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Tennessee's Center for the Health Services, "has developed a blood test that may soon be used to diagnose a virulent form of pneumonia that has afflicted over 200 men - many of them gay - during the past three years."

In July 1982, at a meeting in Washington, D.C., the acronym AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was suggested. The CDC used the term for the first time in September 1982

Throughout much of the reporting on AIDS and its history, not much attention is paid to the African America population. Much of the problem in the early years was the American media's portrayal of AIDS as a disease of white gay men. African Americans were given few reasons to believe that AIDS could affect them, even though African American men made up a large proportion of the early cases of AIDS in the gay and bisexual community. From the outset, African American heterosexual adults and children were significantly more likely to be infected than white heterosexuals.

The first AIDS cases among black Americans were also identified in the early 1980s. In 1983 the CDC documented the first two cases of AIDS in women. Both women had acquired HIV through sex with an intravenous drug user. One of these women was Latina; the other

was African American. From this point on, the AIDS epidemic began spreading rapidly amongst the African American population. Women were particularly affected and by 1988, African Americans accounted for half of all AIDS in females in America.

Formed in San Francisco in 1980 by Mike Smith, Black and White Men Together (BWMT) originated as a consciousness-raising and support group for gay men involved in or interested in multiracial relationships. A national organization grew from the San Francisco chapter, as groups were soon established across the United States. Early chapters included Boston, Chicago, Kansas City and New York. The first national convention was held in 1981 in San Francisco.

As Shoulders To Stand On continues to present the Rochester community's response to AIDS, if you are aware of other efforts made by individuals or groups to raise awareness about AIDS in the early days of this epidemic, it would be very helpful to me if you would let me know at [evelynb@gayalliance.org](mailto:evelynb@gayalliance.org).

## History Corner

A Monthly Newspaper of  
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FOCUS

So we focus this issue on gay pride. The center four pages, an E.C. special edition, is a comprehensive statement of the gay movement in Rochester. Produced as an information flyer for the Speakers Bureau of the new GAY ALLIANCE of the GENESEE VALLEY, this centerfold is a handy parcel to mail to family or friends. And we have a lot to be proud of.

Page one chronicles some of the most recent breakthroughs for the movement: sodomy repeal in California and New York, suing the military for the right to serve as an open gay, and a report of last month's state coalition meeting in Ithaca.

Do you want to read this issue of the Empty Closet?

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On that page click on: Browse the Empty Closet issues

Go to 1975 – June

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SUN. 29 JUNE: COFFEE HOUSE

## STSO sets the record straight on Sue Cowell's contributions

It is very important to be accurate in recording the contributions of our LGBT brothers and sisters and our allies. Shoulders To Stand On recognizes the difficult task of "getting things right." It is hard work and time consuming to check and re-check facts and information.

With this in mind Shoulders corrects the following statements made in the April, 2015 EC in the front page article LGBTQ Community Honors Sue Cowell on May 2. In the article it was stated that Sue was "a delegate to the National Democratic Committee and attended several national conventions." Sue was never a member of the National Democratic Committee, nor was she ever a delegate to the National Democratic Committee. Sue was a delegate to 2 national Democratic Conventions – 1996 and 2000 - representing the LGBT community and AFSME-CSEA. Here in Rochester, Sue was the Democratic Party District leader for the 23rd LD and a committee member from 1985 – 1990.

The article also said that she organized campaigns for Louise Slaughter, Tim Mains, Bill Pritchard, and Matt Haag. Sue in fact worked as paid staff on Louise Slaughter's first campaign and most recent campaign. She did not organize the campaign. Sue was campaign manager for Tim Mains first race for City Council and Susan John for NYS Assembly. She volunteered on many other campaigns.

There is no doubt that the list of Sue's accomplishments is long, detailed and "over the top" for one person. Hopefully these clarifications will give a clearer picture of some of these. Our apologies to Sue for any misstatements. ■

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# Columnists

## Growing Up WHAT'S LEFT?



By Eric Bellmann

The first year I lived in my house, in the spring, I did not know to rake away the piles of wet leaves that remained. The next year I did and discovered to my

delight clusters of small flowers, grape hyacinths and crocuses. The second year was the first time I saw them.

Lots of firsts in owning a home. A closet doorknob comes off and I have no idea what to do. It's years before someone tells me to squirt crazy glue into the threadbare receptacle so I no longer have to leave the door ajar, or if it swings shut get a screw driver to pry it open.

First re-roof, first paint job, first over flowing toilet, an endless list of firsts, but it is mine, home, a haven, and I work my way through the tasks, worried at times about the cost but in the end happy.

I can't remember my first kiss. It must have been a girl in elementary school. Nor can I remember the first male I kissed. It wasn't in elementary school. But I can remember other firsts, sexual initiations, some welcome, some not, and all breathtaking, thrilling and scary. Unknown territory.

The first gay bar. Now that was exciting! I was 15 at best and hanging around with another kid my age. We loitered outside a bar we'd heard about, flirting with anyone who gave us a second glance, feeling we were near something significant and unsure of what to do next. Things fell into place. I can remember the first time I got into a car with a stranger.

First real jobs! What a nightmare. I was so unsure of myself as a teacher! I needed to work, needed to support myself, wanted to buy clothes, lots of wants. Drives and urges were mixed, complex. I dated a woman, fell in love with a straight man, drank, cried and never understood how badly I felt about myself, about everything.

The first therapist. Hard to believe he wouldn't remember me as well. Jingly nerves, a flood of tears, choked confessions. He didn't last, nor did the next one. Third one's the charm, as they say. Then comes the first dirty little secret. (There'll be more.)

I went to Europe at 26 for the first time. I took a plane that landed in Luxembourg, walked out of the airport and saw a bus with a sign, "Cologne" and thought, that will do.

I had no itinerary other than end up two weeks later in Munich. Was that bravery or ignorance? I can't remember. The trip was filled with wonderful firsts and it launched a passion for travel, an appreciation for things exotic. In a small German town, foreign men with mustaches stood around the square in front of the train station. One took me for a ride on his motorcycle. After sex in the woods he asked for money. Refused, he asked for the ring I was wearing. Another first. He did not get the ring but I got the message: sometimes sex is a transaction.

And nothing like the first trip to Provincetown! Sun and sing-along and motel doors slamming open and shut all night long and handsome men and old Queens and drag performers and possibly the first sensation that there was a community for me that had promise.

I used to say that at 40 the hardest thing I ever did was walk up a half dozen steps to my first AA meeting. I shook like a leaf and not just because I was five days without a drink. I thought I knew a lot but I only knew about the past, I had no idea of what a future might be like

and precious little tolerance for the present. My first anniversary sober came one August when I was in Paris and I hiked an hour to a meeting in a church basement and I remember no one asked if there were any anniversaries. On my twentieth anniversary I celebrated by learning to do a double somersault, another first.

I can remember my first car accident. There have been a few since then. I can't remember the first betrayal although Heaven knows I've kept track of plenty.

I can remember the first man I told myself I loved. I was terrified of him leaving, not being there. I can remember the first time I said no to sex. I can remember the first time I told someone I didn't want to know them anymore. I felt good about that. It was my turn.

I can remember the first time I cleaned out the room of someone who had died. My nephew. I can remember going through books in his room looking for poems my sister believed he had written. They were copies of song lyrics. I never told her.

I remember my first, and only, ambulance ride. I remember my first chest x-ray, my first CAT scan, my first MRI, my first dental implant.

So, of course, now I wonder if there are any more firsts. The cascade of early firsts is exciting; there are so many things that come along. Time slows down, not really, but it seems that way. I've been back to Provincetown and back to Europe and back to bed and some of those things are familiar and comfortable. I wonder what's next.

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## Cleaning My Closet MAGIC MARKERS



By Meredith Elizabeth Reiniger

Can airborne words suffocate a human being? Are victims able to evaporate at will?

It happened in 1956, between classes. We were in seventh grade. Will I never forget the humiliation that dropped my head in shame? The problem stemmed from a marketing icon, the two-toothed, Disney-created beaver that chanted "Brusha... brusha... brusha... new Ipana toothpaste."

The verbal attack came from a mean-spirited boy who transmuted that silly mascot into a flaming barb aimed at my self-worth. He shouted and pointed: "Here she is, Bucky Beaver." I felt his wounding words, heard "buckybeaver-buckybeaver, buckybuckybucky" reverberate down the stairwell.

And so it started for me. Tags I internalized as truths. First target was my body: too tall; flat-chested; buck-teeth; an ugly, fat ponytail. Once upon a time, voluptuous MaryAnn clarified my chances of being invited to "Moon River," the juniors' prom: "Beggars can't be choosers."

And so it was... from the start of my schooling, I was a write-off: Inadequate Female.

It seemed, in my old days, that we girls were marked for typing or teaching or mother-Hood. In addition to Traditional Role-Ness, I believe there is a TEACH gene. I (plus six of my nine cousins) became teachers, like our elders Olive and Ruth who graduated from Normal School. See? Dominant Teach genes. Actually, before my gene-compliance, I had dropped my career goals of "sexy uniform and high heels" right after a plane crash killed the stewardesses.

Furthermore, while I was growing-

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*.

up, opportunities confined women to Implied Limits, tagging them "secondary"... Mrs. SomeMan; the little lady; poetess; housewife; Lady elks or moose or other large quadrupeds. In my family of origin, cows, dogs, and adult females were called "girls". Not in spite but in habit.

Sometimes, women were virtually erased as persons. Such a time, my mother, having retrieved and sorted the mail, gasped, her hackles raised: "LOOK at this. It makes me want to spit nails." I looked. An envelope with the address label Mr. L. Cecil Horning and wf. Her feminism stirred to the surface, she greeted her husband/my father at the door: "I'm a wf [whiff]. Merely a wf. How dare they!"

I imagine that during the epoch of Dancing Dinosaurs, human cataloging was limited to "Me and Not-Me". Such a time, an unidentifiable entity hired two gardeners, one Man and his rib-off-the-old-block Woe-man. He was in charge of tagging the universe. She bought an apple pie from a traveling sales-serpent. Then Eve and Adam's family tree sprouted a great variety of fruits.

Fast forward: several Homo sapiens felt, to their very cores, that the categories of "one man" and "one woman" were dishonest reductions of humanity.

I started to reject labels that attached me to maleness: eliminated "woman" and adopted "womyn," wrote "wimmin" not "women". Refused titles that identified me as Mrs. Property-of-said male. Rejected the implied girl-ness of "Miss" and its announcement of "unmarried woman" meaning "available, apply within" or "Regretfully, Rejected."

When I finally self-identified as a lesbian, labels came crawling out of the woodwork. (Mother-talk: Betty/mommy frequently experienced things crawling, flying, and coming out of her woodwork.) Bi-sexual? wondered some of my students, "because you had twice married men." Good question. Because I get to define all labels posted on me, I say no... I am bye-sexual: the resurrection from "good-bye, they made me do it" to truth-sexual.

DYKE, always delivered loudly, was neither frightening nor insulting when adolescents of chronology and intellect self-righteously tossed their intolerance. Rather, I saw it as a Teachable Moment. The first time a student yelled DYKE as I walked to my classroom, I turned, walked up to the huddle around the shouter, "I heard you shout 'DYKE', so I know you wanted my attention." Making eye contact, "I'm Meredith Reiniger" as I shook the hands of each silent co-conspirator. "Dyke" is not a word I use to describe myself. If you would like to discuss this, come to my classroom after school."

Of course there is nothing wrong with being a dyke. I only reject that label because I don't qualify. I only wear my steel-toed work boots when I am on a Habitat building site, never on first dates or at Gay Balls.

So I never use "bi-sexual" or "dyke" on my name tag. But I did wonder, what would describe me? I could not conjure up my appropriate label. Seventeen years later, I have just looked up Lesbian Labels. I found a list of 37. There are some descriptors I might say aloud if it were anyone's business. I kinda like "Gayelle," created because... "the word 'Lesbian' is not cheerful or fun." And I am quite pleased to admit that I am a Lesbophile because indeed I do love and appreciate lesbians.

Times they are a changin'... Various inhabitants of this world have started to notice that sex is not an either/or condition. That anatomy does not dictate a person's physical, emotional, or spiritual distinctiveness. That gender is an infinite range of feminine and masculine characteristics... ways of being shaped by

societies' rules, traditions, offerings, and opportunities for self-description.

Facebook, who art in cyberspace, has a list of 58 gender options. I chose Two-Spirit. The choices: Agender; Androgyne; Androgynous; Bigender; Cis; Cis\_\_\_\_ (gender, Female, Male, Man, Woman); Cisgender\_\_\_\_ (Female, Male, Man, Woman); Female to Male; FTM; Gender\_\_\_\_ (Fluid, Nonconforming, Questioning, Variant); Genderqueer; Intersex; Male to Female; MTF; Neither; Neutrois; Non-binary; Other; Pangender; Trans; Trans\_\_\_\_ (Female, Male, Man, Person, Woman); Trans\*; Trans\*\_\_\_\_ (Female, Male, Man, Person, Woman); Transfeminine; Transgender; Transgender\_\_\_\_ (Female, Male, Man, Person, Woman); Transmasculine; Transsexual; Transsexual\_\_\_\_ (Female, Male, Man, Person, Woman); Two-Spirit.

There is another option. It came from an exchange between mother and son. When she told him that she was in love with her best girlfriend, his reaction: Whatever, mom. Love is love. That mother (Maria Bello: activist, author [Whatever... Love is Love: Questioning the labels we give ourselves], actor) was moved to look up the definition. WHATEVER: Everything and anything... without restrictions, without limitation, no matter what.

Now I know. I am a Whatever. I am a Meredith.

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## Faith Matters

### MARRIAGE EQUALITY HANGS IN THE BALANCE WITH SUPREME COURT



By Rev. Irene Monroe

"Democracy can only begin to work when those relegated to the fringes of society can begin to sample what those in society take for granted as their inalienable right."

With thirty-seven states now legal proponents of marriage equality along with our nation's capital LGBTQ Americans and our allies knew it would be just a matter of time before the issue would be brought to U.S. Supreme Court. But at the end of the long awaited April 28th Supreme Court hearing of Obergefell v. Hodge I'm worried.

Mary Bonauto, Civil Rights Project Director at Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) and one of the attorneys arguing in support of the plaintiffs faced a barrage of questions.

When Chief Justice John Roberts told Bonauto, that her position would "redefine" marriage, adding that "every definition I looked up until about a dozen years ago" defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, I wasn't counting on his vote.

"You're not seeking to join the institution, you're seeking to change the institution," Roberts stated.

For a moment during arguments, however, I thought Roberts might be on our side when he raised questions about gender discrimination with John Bursch, one of the attorneys arguing in opposition to marriage equality.

"I'm not sure it's necessary to get into sexual orientation to resolve the case," Roberts said. "I mean, if Sue loves Joe and Tom loves Joe, Sue can marry him and Tom can't. And the difference is based upon their different sex. Why isn't that a straightforward question of sexual discrimination?"

But when Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, who is usually the swing vote on tough

rulings, chimed in stating that the traditional definition of marriage has lasted for “millennia” and changing it would be difficult, my heart sunk.

Kennedy has written all recent decisions protecting gay rights, including the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down sodomy laws that targeted gay men, and the 2013 *U.S. v. Windsor*, which would recognize and provide federal benefits to same-sex married couple in states where their marriages were legal

Jim Obergefell, not an activist of any sort, never expected to be a cause célèbre. But when he sued his home state of Ohio for refusing to recognize him as the widower of his deceased spouse the lawsuit made its way to the highest court in the land. Jim Obergefell, 48, the lead plaintiff in the four marriage equality cases collectively known as *Obergefell v. Hodge*, is now one of the lives hanging in the balance.

In 2011 Obergefell’s partner of 21 years, John Arthur, was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a fatal neurological disease. In 2013, just three months before Arthur died, they married on a medical plane on a Baltimore airport tarmac following the Supreme Court ruling allowing for official recognition of same-sex marriage. A federal judge ruled allowing John and Jim’s marriage be recognized on Arthur’s death certificate, but Ohio ruled against it because the Buckeye State banned same-sex marriage in 2004.

Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., arguing for the same-sex couples on behalf of the Obama administration stated that withholding marriage from same-sex couples repeats the same discrimination the courts struck down in 1967 concerning interracial marriages.

Like Obergefell, Mildred Loving never expected to be a cause célèbre, either. But she and her husband, a white man, were indicted by a Virginia grand jury in October 1958 for violating the state’s ‘Racial Integrity Act of 1924.’

In commemorating the 40th anniversary of *Loving v. Virginia* Mrs. Mildred Loving on June 12, 2007, wrote, “When my late husband, Richard, and I got married in Washington, DC in 1958, it wasn’t to make a political statement or start a fight...I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. I am proud that Richard’s and my name are on a court case that can help reinforce the love, the commitment, the fairness, and the family that so many people, black or white, young or old, gay or straight, seek in life. I support the freedom to marry for all. That’s what Loving, and loving, are all about.”

On June 12, 1967, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the high court in the *Loving vs. Commonwealth of Virginia* stating:

“Marriage is one of the ‘basic civil rights of man,’ fundamental to our very existence and survival. To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes, classifications so directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, is surely to deprive all the State’s citizens of liberty without due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment requires that the freedom of choice to marry not be restricted by invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the State. These convictions must be reversed.”

The Supreme Court case of *Obergefell v. Hodge* presented oral arguments on two basic questions:

1. Does the Fourteenth Amendment require a state to license a marriage between two people of the same sex?
2. Does the Fourteenth Amendment require a state to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-state?

Marriage is an inalienable right. But at present, according to the Williams Institute “60,000 married same-sex couples live in states with bans on marriage for same-sex couples.” And 61 percent of Americans today support same-sex marriage compared to 64 percent who opposed it in 2004 according to a recent ABC poll.

As *Obergefell v. Hodge* was being debated, a U.S. Supreme Court rally was taking place, as a steady stream of LGBTQ speakers shared their compelling narratives of how marriage equality would give them rights, benefits, family security and full citizenship heterosexual couples and families have.

By closing arguments on April 28 the SCOTUS blog wrote “No clear answers on same-sex marriage.”

Democracy can only begin to work when those relegated to the fringes of society can begin to sample what those in society take for granted as their inalienable right. And sometimes for that to happen people, like Supreme Court Justices, have to step in to make the democratic process work for us all.

I hope before the court renders a decision all nine Supreme Court justices have attended at least one same-sex wedding, because the experience would help them see that real lives are at stake.

While we have until the end of this month before the Supreme Court renders their decisions, I also hope the Court understands that we LGBTQ Americans merely want what heterosexual Americans have always been able to take for granted -- marriage!

### A Few Bricks Short

#### HOW NOT TO GROW UP!



By David Hull

My favorite mom in the world is no longer Mrs. Brady on *The Brady Bunch*, although I’ll always love that ‘70s flip-do hairstyle. Nor is my favorite mom

June Cleaver on *Leave it Beaver*, but I still think it’s very sophisticated to wear pearls while vacuuming.

My new favorite mom is now Toya Graham who gained fame this spring when she was caught on video slapping some sense into her 16-year-old son, Michael, for participating in the Baltimore riots. Oh, that was sweet!

I’ve heard all the criticism; Ms. Graham isn’t teaching her son a lesson, she’s humiliating him.

What Ms. Graham did is child abuse. Ms. Graham is just exposing her son to more violence.

As my 14-year-old nephew would say to me: Whatever!

That boy deserved to be embarrassed – he was 16 and his mother told him to come straight home from school and he disobeyed her.

It was not child abuse – the child was bigger than the parent who was whopping him – I doubt she really injured him.

And finally, I don’t think Ms. Graham was exposing her son to more violence – she was just responding to his disrespectful behavior in a way that her child would understand.

Honestly, this kid is 16 and growing up in a low-income neighborhood – what do you expect Ms. Graham to do – tell her son to be more like ... oh, I don’t know – how about to behave more like an American politician?

Yeah, he could be more like NYS Senate majority leader, Dean Skelos who was recently charged with conspiracy, extortion and bribery. And Senator Skelos was working with his son on the deals! It’s so nice that he could share the special times with family.

Or perhaps she could encourage her son to follow in the footsteps of NYS Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver who was charged with criminal corruptions involving kickbacks and bribes.

Or Ms. Graham could urge her son

to be more like Vermont Senator, Norm McAllister who was arrested for sexual misconduct when he sought sex instead of rent payments from his female tenants. He also encouraged the female tenants to prostitute themselves with the male farmhands, but he was willing to share the profits with the girls!

Can you just hear Ms. Graham saying: “Yes, young Michael, which fine upstanding American politician would you like to emulate?”

If that won’t work, possibly Ms. Graham can hope her son will be inspired by one of those highly respectable, professional NFL athletes.

How about Tom Brady – he’s the quarterback who led the New England Patriots to their 2015 Super Bowl championship – and he is definitely no relation to the TV family in which the mom has a ‘70s flip-do hairstyle! However, Tom Brady won the Super Bowl by using slightly deflated footballs, which is frowned upon by the NFL – actually it’s cheating.

And then Mr. Brady went on national TV and clarified how he liked the texture of his balls; he also explained that some guys prefer their balls soft, some prefer them hard, some like their balls well-used. OK, that whole part of the scandal was totally hot! But now Tom Brady’s been suspended and his team was fined \$1 million dollars.

Or Ms. Graham could ask her son to model himself after the NFL team, the Atlanta Falcons who are being punished for pumping in extra crowd noise at the Georgia Dome during football games for the past couple of years. According to the rules, attempting to distract the opposing team with extra fake noise is cheating. What next, Falcons – shining bright lights in their eyes or spiking their Gatorade with vodka, like a punch bowl at a high school dance, so all the players get tipsy?

But football player Ray Rice wasn’t accused of cheating, so maybe Ms. Graham could urge her young son to be like him – Ray Rice even played for the local city’s pro football team, the Baltimore Ravens. Last year Mr. Rice was only caught on security video punching his then fiancée (now wife), Janay Palmer, unconscious in an elevator and then dragging her out by her ankles. No wonder Janay married him – he’s a keeper!

It seems to me, in the midst of that riot in Baltimore, a smack to her son’s head was a better lesson to that young man than Ms. Graham could ever find by looking around the country for someone

to “grow up to be like.”

I guess my point is that while Ms. Graham is at it, maybe she could give a few smacks to a lot of politicians and pro athletes in the country too! I think we’d all learn a lot from that.

Contact David at davidhull59@aol.com

### Transmissions

#### TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’



By Laine DeLaney

I’d like to share a positive story with you here.

A friend of mine who works for a company that contracts contractors (really) for home improvement jobs came home excited and wanting to talk. As soon as she had settled in she told me what had happened:

One of the companies that her company contracted years ago was run by a trans woman. My friend had created notes in her system to the effect that the company’s owner was transgender and had asked to be addressed with feminine titles and pronouns. She encountered a lot of resistance from her team, including dealing with one employee who deliberately called the company owner “Sir” just to upset her. Despite attempts at discipline the team continued to treat the trans woman as a joke and a punching bag.

Unsurprisingly, she stopped working with my friend’s company, although the reasons may not have been related to her treatment – she lived out and openly as a trans woman in West Virginia and may have been used to worse. However, very recently she formed a new contracting company (that apparently employs many trans people) and started accepting jobs from my friend’s company again.

A member of my friend’s team started doing the “Sir” thing to the company owner again, so my friend explained that the person in question was trans. When the rest of the team realized what was going on, they began to correct him and educate him. He ended up apologizing to the team and to the contractor in question.

Times, they are a-changin’.

This isn’t an isolated incident. From people saying things like, “Oh, I’ve got a bunch of friends who are transitioning” to a friend who is a health care

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so do you.

worker in rural Pennsylvania telling me about the expanded gender options on the forms that they use now (they're better than some of the medical forms I've seen in New York!) to the support I've seen towards myself and other trans individuals from random strangers, to the public outcry against Kimberly and Beck's transphobic remarks (where trans voices were loud and strong but in the minority), I've seen the evidence of the sea-change that I've spoken of before mounting.

The changes in the last couple of years have been huge. Because of improved communication, trans culture is becoming a real thing on a national and international scale. Education is being shared through social media (it really does help!) and personal interaction. Groups of trans folks are getting together on a larger scale than ever before, and many are working to break down the boundaries that exist within our sometimes unwieldy umbrella.

It's not all sunshine and roses. It's still hard to leave the house for a lot of us sometimes (unfortunately that too is a real thing). We still cope with depression, addiction and suicide on a scale unlike almost any other population. We still have to fight to be recognized as who we are and have to navigate the mess of red tape surrounding changing our names and gender markers legally. The threat of violence still looms large for all of us, especially trans women of color.

These things can and will change, though, as long as we keep on with what we've been doing. Being out and open and visible, cultivating strong allies who will stand up for us in the situations where we cannot, and educating, educating, educating! It's far more effective to educate and let people come to their own conclusions than to try and tell them what they should be thinking.

So, good job! To everyone who helped to educate, to everyone who has helped to humanize us in the public eye, and to everyone who has opened their minds and hearts to things that may have been difficult to hear and consider, I say: thank you, and good job! You are the ones who are making these changes a reality. Changes that mean so much to me and other trans folks – laws being passed protecting our health care, transgender children to be taken seriously and listened to, and many more. You're not just helping to improve lives – you're also saving them.

## Being Well

I'M STRESSED!



By John Aceto,  
LMHC

Who hasn't felt stressed out at some point? I was stressed trying to pick a topic for this month's column, so I figured, write what you know.

Stress is one of those ambiguous feelings because it is highly subjective. What worries you most may seem quite trivial to another. Giving a speech is a good example. Some see it as a challenge; others see it as nerve-racking and terrifying. I'm in the latter group. I'm a talker, anyone who knows me can attest to that. But when confronted with giving a presentation I freeze up, my mind goes blank, and I'm prone to rambling.

Well, I used to be that way. To combat this fear I made some changes. I now use humor as a coping skill to stave off that fear by telling a joke or relating a funny anecdote taken from a personal experience before I speak. When I see my audience relax I become relaxed as well.

Stress can make you feel anxious, overly worried or agitated. It can cause you to have a nervous laugh or verbally snap at someone. It can also give you the energy and will to pull an all-nighter while attempting to write that final paper of the semester. So it has the ability both to make your mind go blank and fill you with creativity at the last minute. Not to pick on any one politician, but Sarah

Palin's interview with Katie Couric in 2008 is a perfect example of buckling under stress. Her responses were not well thought out and she was at times incoherent. Go ahead, look it up on YouTube.

The best way to combat stress is recognizing you are stressed in the first place, and then using a coping strategy to take the edge off. There are several relaxation techniques that work well in the short-term, like meditation, exercising, taking deep breaths, and being aware of heartbeat and pulse. Eating or drinking something you enjoy helps a great deal, like chocolate, though try to stay away from caffeine. Spending time with a loved one or a pet is always helpful. Though if undue stress transitions into acute anxiety, it may be a good time to contact a mental health professional for treatment and skills building.

As always, if you have questions please contact me at [Acetocounseling@gmail.com](mailto:Acetocounseling@gmail.com).

## What's Bothering Brandon?

QUEER-BAITING IN THE SILICON PRAIRIE



By Brandon W.  
Brooks

I am not one to readily try new things – both because I usually enjoy keeping my surroundings and routines the same, but also because I

often do not see any need to change things. Knowing that change is a natural part of life, however, I can be witnessed every now and then yielding to the whims and interest of those around me.

For anyone who knows me personally, they are aware that it is difficult to convince me to watch any movie, television show, or form of visual entertainment without much protest. I am a quick (and therefore sometimes unnecessarily stringent) judge, and I often quite literally judge a movie or television show based on its reviews, its description, or even based upon its thumbnail image – I do judge the cover.

This past month a dear and close friend of mine managed to rope me into watching a relatively new Netflix original series – *Halt and Catch Fire*. The description of this show as a 1983 drama about PC design did not exactly entice me to watch it, let alone consider it as a viable form of entertainment, for me at least. But try I did, and I was most heartily surprised.

I was surprised for several reasons, one that the story and its characters were actually incredibly interesting, and I invested. Five hours went by, and I was hooked. I wanted to know how these players would blow IBM out of the technological waters of the early '80s, and catapult themselves into the homes of thousands of middle-class Americans with their revolutionary idea of the portable PC.

But around the middle of season 1, something shockingly unexpected took place with this show's main character Joe MacMillan. Joe, a somewhat manipulative but innovative computer enthusiast, is seen privately meeting another male character in an antechamber of a potential investor's home. Suddenly Joe, who had always been portrayed as heterosexual and sexually involved with his female costar, reaches out to this male character and romantically begins to kiss him. There is some minor petting that takes place, and the kiss is more than tender.

What the hell was going on? Was this show that I begrudgingly began watching and actually ended up liking truly turning down this path? Was this Joe MacMillan character really gay or bisexual, or was he simply exploiting his connection with this male character in order to secure investment in his PC company?

My initial answer to this question supported the latter – that this was just another great show that I now had to

forgo because of queer-baiting.

Queer-baiting is a term used to describe the situation when a television show, movie or really any form of visual narrative employs and incorporates same-sex and homoerotic tension, drama or intrigue into its characters' psyches or interactions in an attempt to garner more viewers from the liberal or LGBT demographic. It's widely considered somewhat of a cheap and insulting marketing ploy, by LGBT and smart-minded individuals alike, as these same-sex subplots are rarely developed into long-lasting character motifs, traits or relationships.

It's essentially a fake-out, an attempt by the show's writers to draw in gay (or queer) viewers to the show in hopes that a beloved character might actually turn out to be LGBT. This usually comes out of nowhere, or is hinted at but never truly and genuinely fulfilled. Classic examples of queer-baiting techniques include long, wistful gazes between men, or lesbian romances that end after the female character has "come to her senses" or has "grown out of a phase" etc. These oblique same-sex relationships never amount to true or committed relationships, as their homosexuality is almost always later denied in the narrative, or cast aside in a joking or humorous manner. Sometimes the character's behaviors and homoerotic actions are never adapted and indeed continue throughout the series. Instead of modifying these characters back to their original straight-laced roots, the writers of the series may simply (and perhaps infuriatingly) deny any postulation that these characters are in any way "acting gay."

This was my first thought when I saw Joe MacMillan reach over to his male business partner and romantically embrace and kiss him; that *Halt and Catch Fire* was now queer-baiting me. They were attempting to draw in my increasing interest and commitment to this show by condescendingly implying that Joe could be gay.

I learned my lesson to not invest in characters that very suddenly become gay. I had my fill of temporary gay characters that never seemed to have romantic relationships or other gay friends. I had grown tired of seeing gay characters that were entirely sexless, devoid of any characteristic (other than their homosexuality, of course) that might be deemed risqué by viewers.

I wasn't going to be fooled again.

Ushered on by my own curiosity to see where this train-wreck was headed, and perhaps forced along by my blissfully ignorant and somewhat willfully blind straight friends, I continued to watch the rest of season 1 of *Halt and Catch Fire*.

To my amazement Joe MacMillan's past sexual involvement with men was expanded upon and developed. Joe, it turns out, had a long-lasting romantic relationship with another man, Simon, an artist and designer. Simon has AIDS and returns to Joe's life "to say good-bye."

Although I would have liked this character to have returned to Joe's life for

reasons other than a last-ditch effort to reconcile, I will give the show its proper respect in that Joe's same-sex relationships are not a form of queer-baiting. Joe's sexual exploits directly drive the plot of the show, rather than act as filler on less-than-stellar episodes. Simon is not the only man with whom Joe has been romantically involved, and this relationship affects the dealings Joe has with those around him. Despite the possibility that Simon could easily be written out by the writers in the coming episodes of season 2 (let's be real, Simon has AIDS in the early 1980's), Joe's now confirmed bisexuality could allow for some great storytelling, not to mention some very creative characterization.

Up to this point in the show Joe was in general, a man hell-bent on beating IBM in the race to portable PCs, who would do just about anything short of murder to win. The vulnerability you see coming from Joe as we witness his reunion with Simon, as we learn about Joe's mysterious scars and their connection to his abusive childhood, illustrates clearly that Joe contains much more than obdurate ambition. His sexuality is not the subject of scorn or scandal, but rather showcased as a valid and genuine element of his personality that is worth showing. Viewers are encouraged to root for both his charged erotic relationship with his female coworker, and also for his more passionate and revealing past relationship with Simon.

All in all I find *Halt and Catch Fire* to be an entertaining show, if not a bit geeky. Joe's character and by extension his sexuality functions neither as a fulcrum to garner more LGBT viewers, nor as a character flaw or regret. Joe is not seen to need to explain or rationalize his sexual identity to the other characters of the series or the audience. Joe's sexuality, like all of ours, just is.

Questions, comments or critique? Feel free to e-mail the author at:

[brandonbrooks@mail.adelphi.edu](mailto:brandonbrooks@mail.adelphi.edu) ■

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# Community

Find the friends, fun, and common interests you're looking for through the various groups listed here.

## BUTCH FEMME CONNECTION

The Rochester Butch Femme Connection supper club will have two dinner events in June.

On Saturday June 6 we will meet at Keenan's Restaurant on East Ridge Road in Irondequoit (across from Sonic) at 7 p.m.

On Saturday, June 20 we will meet at The Elmwood Inn on West Henrietta Rd./Rte. 15/Mt. Hope Ave. (next to Tim Horton's) in Brighton at 7 p.m.

For further information on the Connection, contact Max at (585) 957-6627 or e-mail Kerry at DressyFemme@aol.com, or see our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/bfconnection](http://www.facebook.com/bfconnection). Hope to see you there!

## DIGNITY-INTEGRITY

Since March, 1975, Dignity-Integrity Rochester has been welcoming all who come through our doors, worshipping every week at 5 p.m. at St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh Street, at the corner of Broad St. We have the following services and activities for the month of June 2015.

1st Sunday: Episcopal Mass/Healing Service, with music.

2nd Sunday: Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music.

3rd Sunday: Episcopal Mass, quiet.

4th Sunday: Roman Catholic Prayers to start the week, followed by potluck.

The theme for the June Potluck is

"Picnic Basket Potluck". Think easy, summery foods that you might take along to a picnic. No opportunity to cook or shop? Don't worry, there is always enough to share. In fact, tradition has it that when we aren't cooking up a Potluck supper on the fourth Sunday, we're gathering for fellowship around a tasty coffee hour and going out to a local restaurant for dinner each Sunday. Join us anytime!

Our ANNUAL GARAGE SALE is Friday through Sunday, June 26-28. Donations are welcome, or just come and shop! Check the website for times and location.

SAVE THE DATE...AUGUST 15, 2015! The FABULOUS 40th REUNION PICNIC is going to be great and you won't want to miss it! It will be fantastic to get together with as many former members of DI as possible. Send us your current contact information via our email, [info@di-rochester.org](mailto:info@di-rochester.org), or write to us directly at 17 S. Fitzhugh Street, 14614, so we can be sure to send you an invitation!

You can call the Hotline at 585-234-5092 or check our website at [www.di-rochester.org/](http://www.di-rochester.org/) for updates on services and activities.

## EMPIRE BEARS

June: swimming, camping, dancing at the rec hall, grilling, walking in the woods. Life is good.

The BEARS spend weekends at Jones Pond and Hillside. Check the schedules online; there's always a party.

During the week, we have supper

every Wednesday at 6. June 3 at Peppermints on W. Hen., June 10 at Red Robin on Jefferson, June 17 at Carrabba's on W. Hen., June 24 at Winfield Grill on N. Winton, and July 1 at Don Patron on W. Hen.

The Bears like to get together for camping, movies, meals, cards, games, and trips out of town. Our favorite movie theater is the Cinema, where the price is right and the staff is great. RGMC concert is Sat., June 20. Find out about other events on Facebook. WOOF!

## GAY GAMES 2018 IN PARIS, FRANCE!

It is not too early to plan for the next Gay Games scheduled for August 2018 in Paris.

Saving only \$10 per week in the envelope in your top drawer should be enough to pay for the trip. Already the organizing committee in Paris is projecting 15,000 participants, making it one of the largest sporting events in the world. The rumor is that all events will be centered around the Eiffel Tower -- imagine a running event in the streets around the center of Paris.

Dr. Matt is looking forward to running the 10 K in sight of the Eiffel Tower. Steve F., one of Rochester's gifted language professors in French and Spanish, has already volunteered his interpretive services at these Gay Games.

Tom O. is organizing the Rochester bowling teams. Bowling has a Social (scratch) Division and a Handicapped Division. The requirements for an officially sanctioned handicap are 42 games over the next two years, specifically 21 games in each of the next two years, beginning THIS September 2015. Other sports may have similar requirements, so check your sport of the 35 sporting events.

Further information can be obtained at [www.Paris2018.com](http://www.Paris2018.com) or at [thomaso510@mac.com](mailto:thomaso510@mac.com)

## OPEN ARMS MCC

Open Arms MCC is Beyond Open and Affirming...Beyond Welcoming. We are a church for ALL.

Our 10:30 Sunday morning service is a celebration that blends traditional and contemporary worship styles. Our lay pastoral leader, Brae Adams, delivers an inspirational message that connects the scriptures with everyday life. Children are invited to participate in our Children's Moment before heading off to Rainbow Rangers (ages 5-12) or Rainbow Sprouts (newborn to 5). Following the service, all are welcome to join us for coffee and snacks in the Community Center.

Our Adult Sunday School, studying "The Living Questions", meets weekly at 9 a.m. This group explores what a meaningful faith can look like in today's world. Each week offers an individual lesson; new members or visitors are always welcome.

Friday and Saturday, June 19 and 20 we will have an OPEN ARMS GARAGE SALE at 474 Marsh Road, from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Saturday, June 27, from 5:30 p.m. to 8 pm, will be a community potluck and game night, so bring a dish to pass and your favorite board or card game and enjoy some fun fellowship!

Our Social Justice Team continues to support Dwayne's House, which provides clothing and monetary assistance to homeless LGBTQ youth in Jamaica. We also help fund the work of our pastor emeritus, Jim Mulcahy, who minis-

ters to our LGBTQ siblings in Eastern Europe. We also collect the change from our pockets during our services for the DUO fund (Do Unto Others). We use this fund to assist people in our neighborhood with urgent housing, medical, food or transportation needs.

Because we occasionally have neighbors stop in looking for emergency supplies, we have started the Open Arms Food Shelf. We keep a supply of non-perishable items in stock, including paper supplies and toiletries. We have also begun a partnership with Dimitri House to help stock their food pantry on a regular basis. We will be taking donations on an ongoing basis for our emergency food shelf and their pantry. We also some clothing available -- socks, shoes, and shirts.

We host numerous community groups in our Community Center: AFTY (Adult Families with Trans Youth) meets the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30-6:30 p.m.; SAGE Rochester (ages 50+) gets together with Tom Somerville for yoga, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. on Tuesday and Thursday mornings (except for the second Thursday of each month, when SAGE Rochester members go to Denny's for breakfast). Also on Tuesdays SAGE Rochester holds their weekly meetings starting at 11:30 a.m.

PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians, Gays, Trans, and Questioning) meets on the third Sunday of each month at 1 p.m. Our facilities are available for rental by any community groups needing a safe and flexible meeting space.

Open Arms MCC is committed to Building Bridges and Changing Lives. You are welcome, regardless of your sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, or religious beliefs. We are located at 707 East Main St., across from the Delta Sonic. There is plenty of free parking in front and to the side of our building. For updated information on coming events and to view our facilities, check our website: [openarmsmcc.org](http://openarmsmcc.org). Our lay pastoral leader, Brae Adams, has office hours on Mondays, from 12-2 p.m. You can also reach us by phone at (585) 271-8478.

## ROMANS

ROMANS (Rochester Male Naturalists) members meet every month in their birthday suits, at a member's home year-round and, in addition, we go to nude camps, attend nude swims, hold nude BBQ and, when the opportunity arises, watch an off Broadway show in the nude with members of Males Au Naturel in Manhattan.

We try to embrace the clothes-free lifestyle to the fullest. If you are interested in joining us, contact us for more information. It's never too late to do something you will enjoy but never dare to attempt by yourself. ROMANS is a friendly group of gay and bi male nudists who take pleasure in doing things together naked. Join us for the camaraderie and friendship.

For information on the club and the latest listing of our activities, please check out our website at <http://www.wnyromans.com>. We have a message line 585-281-4964 for you to talk to a member directly. You can also ask any questions by sending us an e-mail at [wnyromans@yahoo.com](mailto:wnyromans@yahoo.com) or a note via regular mail at PO Box 92293, Rochester, NY 14692. ■



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# Arts & Entertainment



"Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven" will screen on June 11 at 8 p.m.



## ImageOut partners for Fassbinder film series at Dryden Theatre

ImageOut is the Community Partner for the Rainier Werner Fassbinder film series screening at the Dryden Theatre at George Eastman House in May and June.

"Of the three major directors in Germany's New Wave (along with Herzog and Wenders), it's the late Fassbinder whose 41 features -- made from 1969 to 1982 -- convey the most obsessive interest in art and behavior.

Inspired by the French New Wave masters Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Marie Straub, Fassbinder combined form and provocation to a far greater degree than either Herzog or Wenders. The radicalism that set Fassbinder apart came, significantly, from working out his own sexual and moral ideas. As the most openly gay writer-director of his era, Fassbinder's range of interests shames the narrowness that passes for gay-identified work today. Fassbinder's personal agenda was inextricable from his fascination with how all humans interact.

Thursday, June 4, 8 p.m. The Merchant of Four Seasons.

Saturday, June 6, 8 p.m. Effi Briest.

Thursday, June 11, 8 p.m. Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven. Thursday, June 18, 8 p.m. Fear of Fear.

Thursday, June 25, 7 p.m. Satan's Brew.

### Film Festivals collaboration

On June 3-5, ImageOut is collaborating with The Rochester Jewish Film Festival, The High Falls Film Festival and The Little Theatre to bring you the Best Of The Fests -- three nights of the best in independent cinema showcasing award-winning films and audience favorites from all three festivals.

Tickets will be available at the Little Theatre box office before each screening.

June 3: [6:30 p.m.] The Dog (ImageOut LGBT Film Festival).

[9 p.m.] Brothers (Rochester Jewish Film Festival).

June 4: [6:30 p.m.] My So-Called Enemy (Rochester Jewish Film Festival).

[9 p.m.] Lies I Told My Little Sister (High Falls Film Festival).

June 5: [6:30 p.m.] The Park Bench (High Falls Film Festival).

[9 p.m.] Boy Meets Girl (ImageOut LGBT Film Festival).

## Rochester Women's Community Chorus sings "Songs in the Key of She"

The Rochester Women's Community Chorus will perform a benefit concert in support of Alternatives for Battered Women (now Willow Domestic Violence Center) on June 6.

The concert, "Songs in the Key of She," will take place at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St., at 8 p.m.

Admission is free; donations are welcome. The concert is handicapped accessible and interpreted for the Deaf and hearing impaired.

## TAGR hosts Spaghetti Western dinner dance

The Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester (TAGR) will host a dinner dance on June 5 at the Genesee Valley Park gazebo.

The dinner begins at 5 p.m. and will consist of spaghetti and meatballs, with a vegan option. Dinner will be followed by DJ dancing.

Tickets are available at rnytg.org.

## RGMC has it all wrong — or is it all right?

The Rochester Gay Men's Chorus will present *Miscast* at Blackfriars Theatre, located at 795 E. Main St., on Friday, June 5 at 7 and 9:30 p.m.

Tickets are available online at [www.thergmc.org](http://www.thergmc.org) for \$12 presale, or \$15 at the door.

Hosted by M.C. Robert Strauss, *Miscast* will feature talented members of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus performing outside casting restrictions. Each performer will be singing a piece by a character as which they could never be cast. This type of cabaret-style show has been performed from Broadway to

Los Angeles and many places between, and the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus can't wait to bring this fun concept to audiences in Rochester!

Audience members will hear songs from *Chicago*, *A Chorus Line*, *Guys & Dolls*, *My Fair Lady*, *Wicked*, and others, performed unlike they ever have been before. Some language may not be suitable for children.

Seats are limited, and audience members are encouraged to purchase tickets online for the discounted presale price.

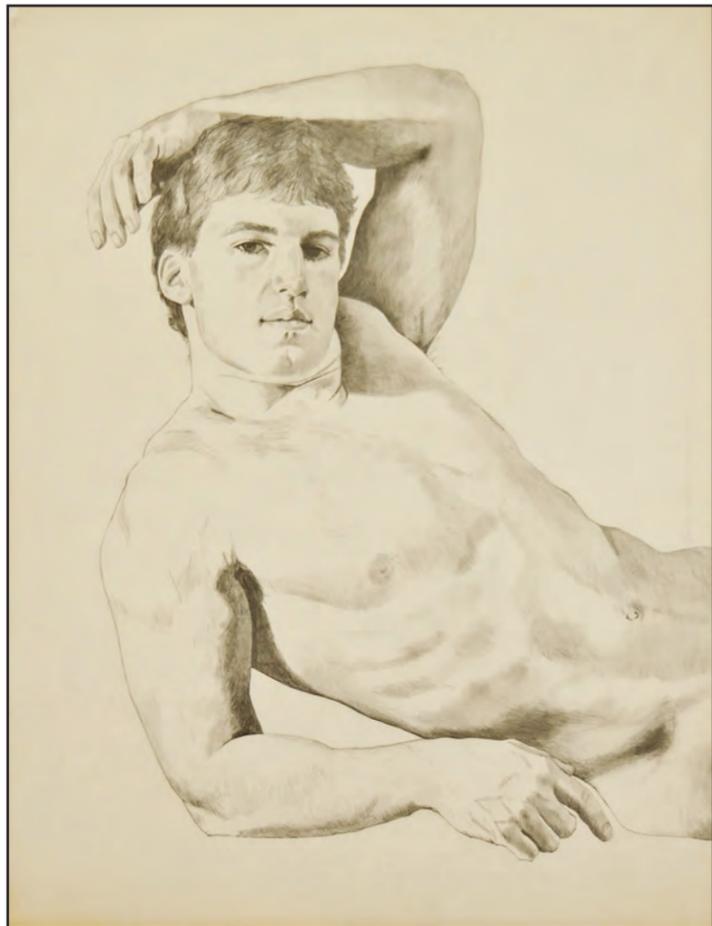
Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the RGMC's 2016 Get Us To GALA fund, allowing members of the chorus to attend the GALA Choruses Festival 2016 in Denver. At the festival, members are given the opportunity to meet and network with members of other choruses, listen to new repertoire and to experience the magic of music from other choruses from around the world.

## RGMC's story goes on at Hochstein, June 20 at 8 p.m.

It's a busy month for RGMC. In addition to "Miscast" on June 5, the Chorus will present their final concert of the season, "The Story Goes On," on June 20 at Hochstein Performance Hall, 50 Plymouth Ave.

The 8 p.m. concert, which had its origin at the RGMC's appearances at the Festivals of the GALA Choruses, will feature special guest artist Liz Callaway, Tony-nominated and Emmy-winning actress. RGMC says, "The final concert of the season tells a story: one of finding acceptance, love and the world we live in."

The Story Goes On is the story of RGMC members' lives as individuals and as a community, diverse as it is. Audience (RGMC continues page 28)



## Work by Eric Bellmann goes on display at NYC's Lohman gay art museum

The Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York City has acquired a portfolio of twenty watercolors and drawings created by Eric Bellmann.

Eric Bellmann was Chairperson of Art, Craft and Design in the Part-time studies program of the College of Continuing Education at RIT. He earned a MFA in Printmaking from RIT. He is a two time prize winner in Rochester's annual Finger Lakes Exhibition. His drawings have been published in *The Advocate* and *The James White Review*.

He is also a photographer and longtime columnist for *The Empty Closet*. ■

(Rainbow continued from page 27)



RGMC in concert

members will hear familiar songs, such as "Colors of the Wind," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out-a My Hair," and "Let the River Run," as well as brand-new favorites, "When I Knew" and "If You Only Knew." The chorus will also be performing a new song of their own, "The Silver Light Does Rise," by composer Robert Deemer and lyricist David Henderson, thanks to the support of the LGBT Giving Circle and the LGBT Giving Fund.

The chorus will also be welcoming Liz Callaway to the stage. Ms. Callaway is the Tony-nominated and Emmy-award winning singer and actress whose appearances on Broadway (*Lizzie*, *Baby*; *Ellen*, *Miss Saigon*; *Grizabella*, *Cats*) and film (singing voice of the title character in the animated film *Anastasia*) have made her a beloved performer across the country and beyond. She will sing many of her most famous tunes, including "Meadowlark" (*The Baker's Wife*) and "Memory" (*Cats*), and many more. Ms. Callaway's

performance is due in part to the support of Strathallan, Blackfriars Theatre, and generous donors to the chorus.

Ticket prices are \$6 for children under 12; \$14 for students and seniors (\$17 at the door), and \$17 for adults (\$20 at the door). Tickets are available online at [www.thergmc.org](http://www.thergmc.org), at 585-423-0650, at Outlandish, Equal=Grounds, Parkleigh, Vittorio's Menswear and Tuxedo, or from Chorus members. ■

### Nate Berkus and Jeremiah Brent introduce their baby daughter Poppy

By Greg Hernandez on [gaystarnews.com](http://gaystarnews.com)

Nate Berkus and husband Jeremiah Brent are introducing their daughter to the world.

She's Poppy Brent-Berkus who was born on 23 March but whose first photo shoot was not published until May 15).



The Berkus-Brent family.

"Our paternal instincts kicked in almost instantly," Berkus tells *People Magazine*. "She came out with her eyes open, looking around like she had been waiting for us."

"I never thought I would be so excited to be 10 inches away from a filthy diaper as I am," he adds. "I live by her diaper schedule."

Berkus, 43, married the 30-year-old Brent last year.

"I've always wanted to be a parent," Berkus says. "I had hoped that I would have this chance, but I didn't want to do it on my own."

Says Brent: "Until recently, we didn't think it was possible. But we're fortunate to be legally married and things just fell into place. We're really thankful."

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/nate-berkus-and-hubby-jeremiah-brent-introduce-baby-daughter-world160515#sthash.qLDdb9Jk.dpuf>

### Book review: "Blackmail, My Love"

By C. Todd White

*Blackmail, My Love*, the debut novel by Katie Gilmartin, should be read late at night by oil lamp or candlelight, with the world around you shifted from technical-

or to shades of gray.

The novel presents Josephine O'Conner, "Josie," who moves from home to San Francisco to learn why her brother, Jimmy, has seemingly disappeared. The intrigue begins with Josie in a gay bar, surrounded by butches and femmes propped against the brass rail, the femmes in real pearls. A high-class joint, for society's lowlifes. She asked the obvious question: does anyone here know my brother? And was quickly removed from the Dollar Bill bar.

Josie stayed at her brother's flat, in the Tenderloin district. The landlord, Mr. Wilkinson, provides shelter and hospitality, so Josie has safe landing in her brother's shady world. An ex-cop, Jimmy had become a private detective and was on multiple cases involving blackmail. Josie discovers her brother's files — and gun — hidden under a floorboard, and she begins introducing herself to his former clients. Patterns unfold, and leads take her back and forth between San Francisco's dim-lit taverns and the stark white florescence of the police department where her brother used to serve.

The love of Josie and Jimmy provides the driving force in this book. The reader is instantly curious about what happened to her charismatic big brother, and the risks and sacrifices Josie makes on his behalf reveal her vulnerabilities while making us care for her, too. Foiled against the specter of Jimmy, Joe/Josie is deftly constructed, and falls well within her genre. Gilmartin, a historian by training, uses her academic familiarity with San Francisco's first gay places — the Black Cat Cafe, Finnocchios, the Fillmore District, and the Tenderloin are all accurately situated, with fictional establishments and colorful characters blended in. The book is illustrated as well, the woodcut-style illustrations adding to the dimensionality of the text.

This is a classic noir mystery. There are tragedy, sex, and romance, all in good measure and context. Best of all are the

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The RGMC will be joined Liz Callaway known for roles including *Lizzie (Baby)*, *Ellen (Miss Saigon)*, *Grizabella (Cats)* and the singing voice of *Anastasia (Anastasia)*.

Order online at [www.thergmc.org](http://www.thergmc.org) or at (585) 423-0650. Tickets can also be purchased in person at Parkleigh, Outlandish, Equal=Grounds, Vittorio Menswear and Tuxedo, or from RGMC members.



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flowery characters, some based on history, like José Sarria and musician Ada “Brockton” Smith. Others, such as Black Pearl, Lily Wu, Madge Collins, and other regulars of the fictional Pandora’s Box are entirely made up yet nevertheless “real.”

In drawing us into this world, Gilmartin reminds us what it was like to be a “homophile” in the 1950s. It was a dark and lonely world, indeed. She uses the power of our own imagining to take us there, to walk around, smell the musty smoke-filled bars, sit surrounded by pseudonyms and spy holes, cocktails, jazz, and whispers, wondering if you’d be able to slip out that small window in the back should there be another raid. The cops were on the pay; all of them. They didn’t call it a “beat” for nothing. To be caught in the wrong place and the wrong time meant losing your job, your family, your way of life — or even your life.

Still, if you knew who your allies were, it was a powerful club to belong to. There was more than friendship here — it was a kindred that Josie tapped into, a secret sodality sexual in essence but sororal in spirit. She finds love, and she learns to sit more comfortably within her own skin (if not her brother’s boxy suit). Of course she survives in the end — the story is written from her point of view -- but the twists and turns, highs and lows are of the sort only a great writer can connive.

This is a book that deserves to be widely read. Let us hope there will be more forthcoming from Katie Gilmartin.

**Blackmail, My Love**  
by Katie Gilmartin  
Cleis Press, Berkeley CA  
ISBN#978-1-62778-064-3  
Published \$16.95



Taye Diggs

“Angry Inch” and already his successor has been found.

Producers announced May 18 that Taye Diggs will take over as the transgender punk rocker on 22 July, three days after Criss’ final performance.

In addition to Criss, others to play the role during the current Broadway run in the past year have been Tony winner Neil Patrick Harris, Andrew Rannells, Michael C. Hall and John Cameron Mitchell who originated the role Off-Broadway and played it on film.

Diggs, divorced from Idina Menzel, will play Hedwig for a 12 week run at the Belasco Theatre in New York City.

It will mark Diggs’ first New York stage role since the 2005 revival of “A Soldier’s Play”. He made his Broadway debut in 1994 in the Tony Award-winning revival of “Carousel”.

His best-known Broadway role is that of Benny in the musical “Rent”, a role he recreated in the 2005 film version.

Diggs starred for six seasons on ABC’s drama “Private Practice” and now stars in the TNT drama “Murder in the First”.

- See more at: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/taye-diggs-chosen-broadways-new-hedwig180515#sthash.flh0NUNc.dpuf>

**Taye Diggs takes over as Hedwig on July 22**

By Greg Hernandez on [gaystarnews.com](http://www.gaystarnews.com)  
Photo: Taye Diggs via Twitter

Darren Criss has just settled into the title role of Broadway’s “Hedwig and the

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From top, left to right: William Close and the Earth Harp Collective; Rythmic Circus, photo © Blake Mathew; globalFEST On the Road; Imago Theatre; The Magic of Bill Blagg

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Box Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.;  
11 a.m. until curtain time on performance days. Summer hours beginning  
May 18: 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. Friday.

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The Arts Center thanks the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature for its long-standing support.

# GAY ALLIANCE NEWS FOR JUNE 2015



PHOTO: MANUEL PERIA

**Ride For Pride Biker Pam Polashenski with Romanian flag hair.**

## Blood, Sweat and Beers

By Jeanne Gainsburg

The avid Empty Closet reader already knows that Ride For Pride (R4P) was brought to life in 2010 by two visionaries, who were seeking a good reason to bike and drink beer. R4P has continued to grow and develop and for the past two years has brought in over \$20,000, establishing it as among the largest fundraisers for the Gay Alliance.

I picked up the management of the ride in year 2, and so I often get credited with its growth and success, but I do not run this ride alone. Here is a short list of some of the many people who inspire me and help to ensure that R4P runs as smoothly as a well-lubed derailleur.

### Most Likely to Raise the Most Money

**Pam Polashenski:** This wild and crazy doctor from Rochester General Hospital is one of a small handful of riders who have ridden all six years. One of the founders of R4P, Pam has raised more money than any other rider, bringing in more than 10 percent of the total amount donated to R4P over the past six years! Last year Pam dyed her hair the colors of the Romanian flag as part of her fundraising efforts. This year she is likely to pass the \$10,000 mark for total donations!

### Most Likely to Be Awake at 3am the Day Of

**Todd Gordon:** Supporting Ride For Pride for the sixth year in a row, you can find this talented cook in his backyard in his pajamas smoking meats for the riders and support crew to enjoy at the after ride party.

**Ed Freedman, Owen Zacharias and Maya Polashenski:** These three super athletes will be up again this year in the wee hours biking the route and marking it with arrows for the other riders.

### Most Likely to Find Clothing on Their Lawn the Morning After

**Kellie and Craig Ronald:** This dynamic duo has offered up their home as R4P headquarters and party central for the past four years! At the height of the after-ride party the Ronalds are likely to have a dozen people in their hot tub, every shower occupied, a yard full of dirty, exhausted, smelly riders, a sink full of dishes and a huge smile on their faces. This year Craig will venture out on his maiden R4P voyage!

## Most Likely To Know Where Their Children Are

**The Polashenski Family:** This entire family has supported R4P since day one. This year Pam, Maya and Ana will fundraise and ride, Walter will (for the 6th year in a row!) offer up some delicious food, Tallis will rescue weary riders in the sag wagon and Sue Delp (amazing grandma-of-the-year) will be the hostess at our first rest stop.

## Most Likely to Donate After Reading This Article:

**YOU!!!** (Hopefully.) Any amount is appreciated by so many! Please help us reach our goal of \$25,000! Simply go to the Gay Alliance website and click on the Ride For Pride slide. Select the rider of your choice and make a secure and tax deductible donation. Thank you for helping us be the most likely to succeed! ■

## Volunteer of the Month: Brae Adams

In recent years a growing number of young people have come out as transgender or genderqueer, increasing the need for support services for both those young people as well as their families. Last year, in conjunction with our support group for trans youth we created a support group for their families: Adult Families of Trans



**Brae Adams.**

Youth. The group is led by our Volunteer of the Month for June, Brae Adams.

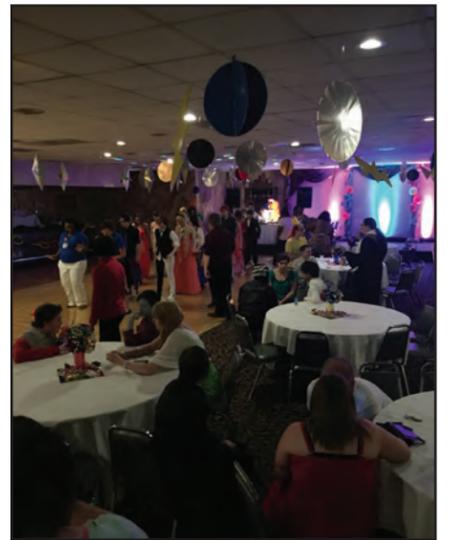
Brae has been the AFTY facilitator since its inception. The mother of a transgender child, she brings her personal experience together with her leadership skills to provide a safe and comfortable forum for the family members of transgender youth to come together. She is an active member of the Genesee Valley Gender Variants, and has spoken out publicly in support of trans rights and access to services. Brae's work with AFTY and the trans community provides a critical resource that benefits both family members and trans young people themselves.

Brae Adams grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. Her lifelong interest in issues of equality and non-discrimination began while she was working as an intern for the Women and Gender Studies department at Mississippi State University, where she helped design and implement the school's first Gay Straight

Alliance. Her work was put slightly on hold by the birth of three children, a series of moves around the south, and a career as a Montessori teacher, but her passion remained.

Upon moving to Rochester (where she saw snow for the first time) she began graduate studies at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, and became a charter member and co-convenor of the Open and Affirming Student Caucus. Currently, Brae serves as Lay Pastoral Leader at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church at 707 East Main St., Rochester.

Wonderful and dedicated volunteers like Brae Adams are essential to the community work we do at the Gay Alliance. We are deeply grateful to Brae for the work that she does with AFTY and the rest of the trans community. Congratulations to Brae Adams for being selected Volunteer of the Month for June! ■



**PROM-I-CON:** 60 youth from 22 schools attended the Gay Alliance's Big Gay Prom on May 9 at the Diplomat. Photo: Scott Fearing



**MUCHAS GRACIAS:** The Cinco de Mayo party at John's Tex-Mex on South Ave. was a fundraiser for the GAGV. Thank you to John Roth and Jeana Bonacciroth, above, from John's Tex-Mex, who were generous with their time and funds! Photo: Gerry Szymanski

**140 Alex presents**

## The Pride Golf Tournament

SAVE
DATE

**Victor Hills Golf Club**  
**Sunday July 12, 2015, 10am start**

**\$85/person • \$340/foursome**  
 Registration includes lunch, dinner and show

**Register at 140 Alex or contact Mike 585-734-9860**  
 Proceeds will benefit the Gay Alliance - Roc Pride

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**Hours:** Every Monday & Wednesday: 6-8 pm • 875 E. Main St. (1st floor off Prince St. lobby) • Rochester 14605 • 585 244-8640 • GayAlliance.org

**The Gay Alliance** is a non-profit agency, dedicated to cultivating a healthy, inclusive environment where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) people are safe, thriving, and enjoying equal rights. We are a coalition of individuals and groups working to empower LGBTQ people to affirm their identities and create an atmosphere where the diversity can thrive both collectively and separately. We educate and advocate for civil rights for all and for the eradication of homophobia.

**The Gay Alliance, 875 East Main Street, Rochester, New York 14605 • Phone:** (585) 244-8640 **Fax:** (585) 244-8246  
**Website:** www.gayalliance.org **E-mail:** Info@gayalliance.org **Hours:** Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm • **Board President:** David Zona  
**Board Vice President:** Jessica Muratore **Executive Director:** Scott Fearing **Education Director:** Jeanne Gainsburg  
**Education Coordinator:** Rowan Collins **Database:** Kat Wiggall **Bookkeeper:** Christopher Hennelly **Office Administrator:** Tristan Wright  
**The Empty Closet:** **Editor:** Susan Jordan **E-mail:** susanj@gayalliance.org **Phone:** (585) 244-9030 **Designer:** Jim Anderson  
**Fax:** (585) 244-8246 **Advertising:** (585) 244-9030; jennieb@gayalliance.org; chrisd@gayalliance.org



# GAY ALLIANCE NEWS FOR JUNE 2015

## YOUTH

**Our program** empowers today's teens to meet today's challenges! It provides a safe space to explore their identity, make friends, build community, gain life skills, become a leader and have fun!

**Fabulous Fridays:** 7-9pm. (Ages 13-20)

**Gender Identity Support Group:**

Tuesdays: 5:30-6:30pm. (Ages 13-18)

More info: [youth@gayalliance.org](mailto:youth@gayalliance.org)

**The Gay Alliance**

875 E. Main Street, (5th Floor)

Auditorium Center, Rochester, NY 14605

Phone: 585-244-8640 • Web: [gayalliance.org](http://gayalliance.org)



SAGE members played bingo on May 16. Photo: Brian Hurlburt

## Speaking Engagements April 2015

- LGBTQ Issues in Social Work at SUNY Brockport
- LGBTQ Issues in Social Work at Greater Rochester Collaborative MSW Program
- LGBTQ 101 at Penfield High School GS
- LGBTQ 101 at Rochester AmeriCorp
- SafeZone Training at Henrietta Public Librar
- SafeZone Training at Nazareth College
- Creating Inclusive Workplaces at CooperVision
- LGBTQ Identities and the Equality Movement at Highlands at Pittsford
- Who's Who Panel at Nazareth College
- Creating Inclusive Workplaces at Progressive Machine and Design
- SafeZone Train-The-Trainer Certification Program at Utica College
- Health and Wellness Fair at SUNY Brockport (Metro Center)
- Straight Talk at SUNY Geneseo
- Understanding Transgender Identities at Barker Road Middle School
- SafeZone Training at the New England Transfer Association Annual Conference in Massachusetts
- Transgender Healthcare Panel Presentation at the University of Rochester LGBTQ Healthcare Conference
- Creating Inclusive Faith Communities at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
- Creating Inclusive Schools at Brighton Central School District
- Transgender Inclusive Healthcare at Highland Hospital

### Feedback from Presentations and Trainings in April:

"Enlightening, encouraging and supportive. Loved it! The respect and honesty in the room. We could not have had an excellent experience if the presenters did not create this space. I can appreciate how hard it is to stay 'on' all day - you nailed it!"

"I had previously had Safe Zone training at my institution and it was not very helpful. I would not have attended this session if there had not been a schedule change. Much to my surprise, this was incredibly informative and extremely useful. The presenter did a great job and should be commended for his efforts."

"Overwhelming in the best possible way. This evaluation is not just me being agreeable. It is an honest opinion. The presenters were amazing! I so eagerly want to share with others what I've gleaned."

## ON GARD

Gay Alliance  
on-line Resource Directory

The online community tool - providing local, state and national resources... twenty-four, seven!

[www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org)

## SAGE JUNE CALENDAR

**Tuesday June 2** 10:30-11:30 Yoga with Tom. 11:30am-12:30pm Brown bag & beverage. 12:30-3pm Games & conversation. Hosts Anne & Jessica.

**Thursday June 4** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. No program after yoga

**Saturday June 6** 11am-3pm Pride float building party. Bring a snack or beverage to share. All are welcome to participate; all skills welcome. Please call Gay Alliance for information and location: 585-244-8640 ask for Anne Tischer.

**Tuesday June 9** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. 11:30am-12:30pm Brown bag & beverage. 12:30-1:30pm Presentation on safety in the community by Officer Scott Mckinny. What to do if someone tries to rob you! 1:30-3pm Birthday celebration & games. Hosts Anne & Jessica.

**Thursday June 11** No yoga. 10:30am-12pm Breakfast at Dennys, 911 Jefferson Rd. Please RSVP by 6/9 to 585-287-2958. Host Audet.

**Tuesday June 16** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. 11:30am-12:30pm Brown bag & beverage. 12:30-3pm Euchre, games & conversation. Hosts Anne & Jessica.

**Thursday June 18** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. 11:30am-12:30pm Brown bag & Beverage. 12:30-3pm Movie day at the center. "Imitation Games" drama film/thriller, 1hr, 54min. Hosts Gerry & Audet. 7pm Sage Coffee Social, Equal Grounds 750 South Ave. 14620. Your host David.

**Saturday June 20** 5-8pm Sage & Community Potluck and Bingo game. Please bring a dish to pass and go for the big win of token prizes! \$3. fee for Bingo; held at OAMCC, 707 East Main St. Hosts Anne & Jessie. Call Anne Tischer at Gay Alliance with any questions, 585-244-8640.

**Tuesday June 23** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. 11:30am-3pm Low salt cooking demo. Bring in your favorite recipe to share. \*Bring a friend or family day\* games. Hosts Anne & Jessica.

**Thursday June 25** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. No Sage program.

**Friday June 26** 5:30PM Fish Fry Nite: Towpath Café, 6 N. Main Street, Fairport. Call restaurant for driving instructions, 585-377-0410. Please feel free to bring a chair or sit on the restaurant patio and listen to the bluegrass band at 7pm. Please RSVP to 585-287-2958 by 6/21.

**Tuesday JUNE 30** 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom. 11:30-3pm Brown bag & beverage. Making PRIDE float arts and crafts with Sandra, conversation.

### SAVE THE DATE

August 30, 4-8pm: SUMMER SAGE ROCHESTER BBQ BASH.

DANCING AND BONFIRE. \$5 PER PERSON.

More details to come.

**SAGE ROCHESTER.** For LBGTQ People, 50 and over, meets at Open Arms Community Center, 707 East Main Street, Rochester New York 14605. Yoga is from 10:30 to 11:30am, \$5 per person. Tuesday & Thursday unless specified in calendar. All programs are subject to change and SAGE members are responsible for setting up their own transportation and meal to and from any program. All programs are open to the community and public; all are welcome. Please become a SAGE member today and update membership info by calling the Gay Alliance at 585-244-8640.

# Resources

Check our monthly and ongoing calendar as well as the community section for more groups and events. For further information, call the Gay Alliance at 244-8640 or visit: [www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org). More SAGE and Gay Alliance Youth Group info: pages 30-31.

## BISEXUALITY RESOURCES

AMBI Los Angeles; American Institute of Bisexuality (Journal of Bisexuality); Bay Area Bisexual Network; ; BiNet USA; Bisexual Organizing Project (BOP); Biversity Boston; Boston Bisexual Women's Network; ComBlne - Columbus, Ohio; Fenway Health's Bi Health Program; Los Angeles Bi Task Force; New York Area Bisexual Network; Robyn Ochs's site; The Bi Writers Association; The Bisexual Resource Center (email [brc@bire-source.net](mailto:brc@bire-source.net))

## CULTURAL

**Rochester Women's Community Chorus**  
234-4441. (See Ongoing calendar).

**Rochester Gay Men's Chorus**  
[www.thergmc.org](http://www.thergmc.org)

**Open Arms Community Center**  
Available for parties, events, meetings. 707 E. Main St. Parking. Accepting and welcoming of all. 271-8478.

## DEAF SERVICES

**Deaf Rainbow Network of Rochester**  
See Facebook.

**Spectrum LGBTIQ & Straight Alliance**  
RIT/NTID student group. <[SpectrumComment@groups.facebook.com](mailto:SpectrumComment@groups.facebook.com)

## ELDERS

**Gay Alliance SAGE Rochester**  
Many monthly get together, some at Open Arms MCC 707 E. Main St. 244-8640; [SAGE@gayalliance.org](mailto:SAGE@gayalliance.org)

## FAMILY

**Open Arms Community Center**  
Open Arms Community Center available for parties, events and meetings; 707 East Main St. Plenty of parking. We are inclusive, actively accepting, welcoming of all people. 271-8478 [openarmsmcc.org](http://openarmsmcc.org)

**CNY Fertility Center**  
Integrative Fertility Care. Support meetings, webinars, workshops. Information: [cbriel@cnyfertility.com](mailto:cbriel@cnyfertility.com); [www.cnyhealingarts.com](http://www.cnyhealingarts.com)

**Rochester Gay Moms' Group**  
Support group for lesbian mommies and wannabe mommies in Rochester and surrounding areas. Subscribe: [RochesterGayMoms-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:RochesterGayMoms-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

**Catholic Charities Community Services**  
1099 Jay Street, Building J (585) 339-9800, [www.ccsrochester.org](http://www.ccsrochester.org). Offers: Families in Transition services for HIV positive parents with small children, short term/long term housing assistance, employment services, supportive case management, health education and behavioral health education and peer navigation for substance abuse linkages.

**Lesbian & Gay Family Building Project**  
Headquartered in Binghamton and with a presence throughout Upstate NY, the Project is dedicated to helping LGBTQ people achieve their goals of building and sustaining healthy families. Claudia Stallman, Project Director, 124 Front St., Binghamton, NY 13905; 607-724-4308; e-mail: [LesGayFamBldg@aol.com](mailto:LesGayFamBldg@aol.com). Web: [www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org](http://www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org).

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**  
PFLAG's threefold mission: supporting parents and family members in coming out process; educating the community; advocating on behalf of LGBT family members. [rochesterepflag@gmail.com](mailto:rochesterepflag@gmail.com); 585-993-3297.

**Adoptive Parent Support Group**  
Monthly potluck lunches. For information, location, call Shari, 350-2529.

**Angel Food Ministry**  
Box of fresh/frozen food for \$30 in advance. Menu changes monthly. For information and distribution sites, call 585 861-4815.

## HIV/AIDS

**Free testing for HIV exposure**  
is available from New York State Department of Health: call Rochester Area Regional Hotline at (585) 423-8081, or 1 800 962-5063. Deaf or hearing impaired people should call (585) 423-8021 (TDD.) Available from NY Dept. of Health: HIV and STD resource testing site. Rapid testing in only 10 minutes. STD testing provided by Bulls-head Clinic, 855 W. Main St., Rochester. Contact: [Narissa@Rochester.hotline](mailto:Narissa@Rochester.hotline).

**Volunteer Legal Services Project**  
(585) 232-3051; [www.vlsprochester.org](http://www.vlsprochester.org). 1 West Main St., Suite 500 Rochester, NY 14614. Free legal services for low-income HIV positive clients.

No criminal cases. Appointments are scheduled at area medical provider locations or by calling 295-5708.

**Trillium Health**  
Trillium Health is the leading provider of HIV/AIDS services in Rochester and the Finger Lakes. On-site services include HIV testing and limited STD screenings, Primary and HIV Specialty Medical Care, Pharmacy, and many more. Satellite offices in Geneva and Bath. Trillium Health is also a leader in providing services and education to members of the LGBT community. Contact Information: Website: [www.trilliumhealthny.org](http://www.trilliumhealthny.org). Main Office: 259 Monroe Ave., Rochester, NY 14607; Main Phone: 585-545-7200, Health Services After Hours: 585-258-3363; Case Management After Hours (Lifeline): 585-275-5151; Fax: 585-244-6456. Finger Lakes Office: 605 W. Washington St., Geneva, NY 14456, 315-781-6303. Southern Tier Office: 122 Liberty St. Box 624, Bath, NY 14810 607-776-9166. The Health Outreach Project: 416 Central Ave., Rochester, NY 14605; 585-454-5556.

**Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley**  
Referrals to physicians and service agencies. (585) 244-8640; [www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org).

**Victory Alliance**  
University of Rochester Medical Center. One of several research sites worldwide that comprise the HIV Vaccine Trials Network. Rochester site conducts research vaccine studies sponsored by National Institutes of Health (NIH). 585-756-2329; [www.vaccineunit.org](http://www.vaccineunit.org).

**Threshold**  
At The Community Place, 145 Parsells Ave., third floor, 585-454-7530. Provides confidential HIV, STD testing and General Health Care, ages 12-25. Sliding fee scale, no one denied, most insurances accepted. Mon., Wed., Fri. 9am-5pm; Tues., Thurs., 9am-7pm; Sat. 10am-2pm. [www.ThresholdCenter.org](http://www.ThresholdCenter.org)

**Center for Health and Behavioral Training of Monroe County**  
853 W. Main St., Rochester 14611. Collaboration of Monroe County Health Department and U.R. Provides year-round training in prevention and management of STDs, HIV, TB and related issues, such as domestic violence and case management. (585)753-5382 v/tty.

**Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region**  
114 University Ave., Rochester, NY 14605; Toll-free Helpline: 1 866 600-6886. Offers confidential HIV testing and information. When you make your appointment, be sure to ask about our sliding scale fees. No one is turned away for lack of ability to pay.

**Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS**  
A collection of agencies providing a multiplicity of resources and services to the upstate New York community. Their offices are located through the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency, which also provides medical literature and newspaper clippings, as well as demographic and statistical data for use in developing health care services. (585) 461-3520.

**The MOCHA Center of Rochester**  
Our mission is to improve health and wellness in communities of color. Youth drop-in center, HIV testing, peer education, support groups, computer lab, referral services and more. 189 N. Water St. (585) 420-1400.

**Monroe County Health Department**  
at 855 W. Main St., offers testing and counseling for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. (585) 753-5481. Hours: M-W 8:30-5:30; R: 8:30-11 am; F 7:30-2:30.

**Strong Memorial Hospital**  
provides a complete range of HIV medical care, including access to experimental treatment protocols, and HIV testing. Also provides individual and group psychotherapy. Training of health care professionals also available. Infectious Disease Clinic, (585) 275-0526. Department of Psychiatry, (585) 275-3379. AIDS Training Project, (585) 275-5693.

**Planned Parenthood of Rochester and Genesee Valley**  
Offers testing and information (585) 546 2595.

**Rural HIV testing**  
Anonymous and confidential, in Allegany, Livingston, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne or Yates Counties, call 1 800 962-5063.

**Action Front Center**  
(Action for a Better Community.) Provides HIV, STD, viral hepatitis prevention counseling, risk reduction counseling. Tailored programs available to incarcerated, ex-offender individuals. Services for people living with HIV; case management, peer support groups, United Colors support group for MSM of color, educational groups, peer educator training and leadership development, multi-

cultural, bilingual staff. 33 Chestnut St., 2nd floor, Rochester 14604. Office hours M-F 8:30 am-5 pm. 585-262-4330.

**Anthony L. Jordan Health Center, Prevention and Primary Care.**  
HIV walk-in testing Tues. & Fri.; Hep C walk-in treating Weds. & Fri; Meet clinician by appointment. 82 Holland St., Rochester 14605. 585-423-2879; fax 585-423-2876. [www.jordanhealth.org](http://www.jordanhealth.org)

**CDC National STD and AIDS Hotline**  
1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) 24 hours a day. TTY service: 1-888-232-6348. E-mail address: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov).

**Fair Housing Enforcement Project**  
of Monroe County  
585-325-2500; 1-800-669-9777. Deals with housing discrimination on basis of race, orientation, HIV status, etc.

**Public Interest Law Office of Rochester**  
1 W. Main St., Suites 200 & 300. Free legal services to HIV positive persons, families. Spanish bilingual advocates available. All civil cases except divorce; no criminal cases. Ask to speak to someone in PILOR. 454-4060.

**Westside Health Services**  
Brown Square Health Center, 175 Lyell Ave. (254-6480); Woodward health center, 480 Genesee St. (436-3040). HIV/AIDS services, support, more.

**McCree McCuller Wellness Center at Unity Health's Connection Clinic**  
(585) 368-3506, 89 Genesee St., Bishop Kearney Bldg., 3rd floor. Full range of services, regardless of ability to pay. Caring, confidential and convenient.

**Geneva Community Health**  
601 W. Washington St., Geneva. Provides HIV testing, HIV specialty and primary care for residents of Ontario and surrounding counties. M, W, R, F 8am-8pm. 315-781-8448.

## LGBT HEALTH

**Trillium Health**  
See [www.trilliumhealthny.org](http://www.trilliumhealthny.org), [www.everybodys-good.com](http://www.everybodys-good.com)

**LGBT Healthy Living: Veterans**  
Canandaigua VA, second and fourth Tuesdays, 10-11am, Building One, 2nd floor, room 245. Matt Cokely 585-393-7115; Wanda Martinez 585-393-8265 or 585-205-3360.

**HCR Home Care**  
We provide a full multidisciplinary team consisting of nursing, social work, physical, occupational, and speech therapies as well as home health aides who have completed the eight-hour cultural competency program provided by the Gay Alliance. For more information, contact us at 585-272-1930 or visit us online at [HCRhealth.com](http://HCRhealth.com).

**Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley**  
See [www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org) Resource Directory under "Health" for Gay Alliance referrals to physicians and service agencies.

**CNY Youth Group Bi-Polar Support.**  
Second Monday of every month. 315-428-9366.

## TRANSGENDER

**Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester (TAGR)**  
Support/educational group for gender variant people and allies. Last Saturday, 3-5:30pm, Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

**Adult Families of Trans Youth (AFTY)**  
First Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30pm, Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

**Families and Friends of Trans Adults (F2TA)**  
Support group for non-transgender people who are struggling with the transition of a transgender friend or loved one. Meets on second and fourth Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm, at Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. 244-8640; [www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org); [info@gayalliance.org](mailto:info@gayalliance.org).

**Trans Lifeline**  
Hotline for transgender people experiencing crisis. Staffed by transgender people for transgender people. Trans Lifeline volunteers are ready to respond to whatever support needs callers might have. The Trans Lifeline number is (877) 565-8860. Additional info is available at [www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org).

**Empire Justice Center**  
Julia A. Sáenz, Esq. Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellow, Empire Justice Center, LGBT Rights Project, Telesca Center for Justice, 1 West Main Street, Suite 200, Rochester, NY 14614. (585) 295-5721 Fax (585) 454-2518, [jsaenz@empirejustice.org](mailto:jsaenz@empirejustice.org), [www.empirejustice.org](http://www.empirejustice.org).

**Volunteer Legal Services Project**  
(585) 232-3051; [www.vlsprochester.org](http://www.vlsprochester.org). 1 West Main St. Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14614. Free legal services for low-income clients seeking a name change. Other legal services for low-income clients include family law issues, bank-

ruptcy, unemployment insurance hearings, wills and advance directive documents for clients with serious illnesses.

**Gay Alliance Youth Gender Identity Support Group**  
Tuesdays 5:30-6:30 Gay Alliance office, 5th floor. 875 E. Main St., Ages 13-18. 244-8640

**Genesee Valley Gender Variants**  
Thurs. 7-9pm, Equal Grounds, 750 South Ave. [GVGenderVariants@yahoogroups.com](mailto:GVGenderVariants@yahoogroups.com)

**Guys' Night Out**  
Trans\* group, 1pm second Saturdays at Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. Transmen and those identifying with trans-masculine experience (including questioning individuals) welcome. Conversations range from topics regarding family life, personal experiences with regard to medically/socially transitioning and how life is going in general. Contact Adrian at [abarholomeo@gmail.com](mailto:abarholomeo@gmail.com).

## WOMEN

**L.O.R.A Late Bloomers Group**  
Address: Rochester, NY; E-mail [info@loragroup.org](mailto:info@loragroup.org). Website: [www.loragroup.org](http://www.loragroup.org); L.O.R.A Late Bloomers Group is a support group offered through L.O.R.A. (Lesbians of Rochester & Allies). It is a coming out group for women of all ages and backgrounds! The group meets once a month in a safe private location! Come share your story and listen to others share. We will have a variety of topics to discuss about coming out and special guest speakers from time to time. Group Facilitator: Cathie Timian email: [ctimian@loragroup.org](mailto:ctimian@loragroup.org) or call 585.313.3037

**Highland Hospital Breast Imaging Center**  
500 Red Creek Drive, Rochester 14623; 585-487-3341. Specializing in breast health, diagnostic breast imaging and treatment and mammography outreach and education.

**Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester**  
840 University Ave.; 585-473-8177; [www.bccr.org](http://www.bccr.org); email: [info@bccr.org](mailto:info@bccr.org). Breast Cancer Coalition provides support services that include programs designed to help those coping with a recent breast cancer diagnosis and those coping with an advanced breast cancer diagnosis, such as the Advanced Breast Cancer Support Group to support women living with metastatic breast cancer. Information about breast cancer, lending library, a monthly educational program. All BCCR programs, support services free.

**Center for Community Health**  
(585) 224-3050. Comprehensive breast cancer screening services for uninsured and underinsured women.

**Elizabeth Wende Breast Clinic**  
170 Sawgrass Drive. 442-8432. Mammograms.

**Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer (SHARE)**  
Breast: 866-891-2392; Ovarian: 866-537-4273.

**Willow Domestic Violence Center**  
232-7353; TTY 232-1741. Shelter (women only), counseling. Lesbians, gay men welcome.

**Victim Resource Center of Wayne County**  
Newark N.Y. Hotline 800-456-1172; office (315)331-1171; fax (315)331-1189.

**Mary Magdalene House**  
Women's outreach center for HIV positive women and women at risk. 291 Lyell Ave. Open Mon-Fri. 6:30-9:30pm.

**Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region**  
114 University Ave., Rochester, NY 14605; Toll-free Helpline: 1-866-600-6886. Planned Parenthood has led the way in providing high quality, affordable reproductive health care since 1916. All services are confidential. Accept most insurances; including Medicaid. You may qualify for low- to no-cost family planning services. When you make your appointment, ask about our sliding scale fees. No one turned away for lack of ability to pay.

**Women's Shelter**  
YWCA, 175 N. Clinton Ave. 546-5820.

## YOUTH

**Gay Alliance Youth Group**  
Fridays, 7-9 pm. Gay Alliance office, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640; Ages 13-20. [www.gayalliance.org](http://www.gayalliance.org)

**Gay Alliance Youth Gender Identity Support Group**  
Tuesdays 5:30-6:30 Gay Alliance office, 5th floor. 875 E. Main St., Ages 13-20. 244-8640

**Trevor Project**  
The Trevor Project offers 24/7 Lifeline with trained counselors, 1-866-488-7386; Trevor Chat, instant messaging; TrevorSpace online where youth can talk to each other, and Trevor Text, now in development, with text trained counselors for support and crisis intervention. ■

# Ongoing Calendar

## DAILY

**Free confidential walk-in HIV testing**  
M/W 9am-5pm, T/Th 9am-7pm, F 9am-12:30pm  
Trillium Health 259 Monroe Ave. 585-545-7200

**David Bohnett Cyber Center**  
Gay Alliance 5th floor lounge, Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3pm, Fri. 11am-1pm, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640;  
www.gayalliance.org

## MONDAYS

**L.O.R.A. Coffee Social**  
Weekly on Monday Nights, 7 pm. Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. Rochester. Family, Friends & Allies Welcome! Contact Person: Cathie Timian. More info: www.loragroup.org. Events: https://www.facebook.com/groups/L.O.R.A.14464/. Email: info@loragroup.org

**Rochester Historical Bowling Society**  
7pm. Clover Lanes

**Gay Alliance Library & Archives,**  
Every Mon./Wed. 6-8pm. David Bohnett Cyber Center, 5:30-7:30pm, First floor, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640

**Born That Way**  
Formerly 3rd Presbyterian LGBT Support Group. First, 3rd Mondays, 7:30-9:30pm, 34 Meigs St. Carol, 482-3832 or Kaara, 654-7516.

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
Mondays, 6pm, George Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.

**Steps Beyond Stems**  
Crack Support Group, Mondays, 7-8pm, 289 Monroe Ave.

## TUESDAYS

**The Social Grind**  
10am-12noon and again 7:30-9pm at Equal Grounds, 750 South Ave. Email: DHutch457@aol.com for information

**Adult Families of Trans Youth (AFTY)**  
First Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30, Open Arms MCC Community Center, 707 E. Main St.

**Families and Friends of TransAdults (F2TA)**  
Support group for non-transgender people who are struggling with the transition of a transgender friend or loved one. Meets on second and fourth Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm, at Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. 244-8640; www.gayalliance.org; info@gayalliance.org

**LGBT Healthy Living**  
Veterans support. Second, fourth Tuesdays, 10-11am Canandaigua VA, bldg. 9, room 8, Library conference room. 585 463-2731, 585 205-3360.

**Testing Tuesdays at Trillium Health**  
FREE HIV Testing for everyone, STI/STD testing FREE for women and MSM. Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave, 5-8 pm. 585-545-7200

**Women's Community Chorus**  
Rehearsals each Tuesday, 6:30-9pm, Downtown United Pres. Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh Street. 234-4441, www.therwcc.org

**Gay Alliance Trans\* Youth Support Group**  
5:30-6:30 pm, GAGV office, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St. Ages 13-20. 244-8640. Gay Alliance

**SAGE Rochester**  
50+ Tuesdays and Thursdays, usually 10:30am at venues including Open Arms Community Center, 707 E. Main St. 244-8640. (See page 31)

## WEDNESDAYS

**Identity Group**  
The Identity Group is for LGBT identified individuals who have a developmental disability diagnosis. The group meets Wednesdays 3-4 pm at ARC Health Services (2060 Brighton-Henrietta Townline Rd. 14623). The goal of the group is to provide a safe space to discuss identity issues, share personal experiences and increase self-esteem. The group is facilitated by Delaina Fico. LMSW. For more information, please contact Delaina Fico at dfico@arcmonroe.org or 585-271-0661 ext. 1552.

**LORA Knitting Group**  
1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month, Equal Grounds Coffee House, 750 South Ave., Rochester. 6-8pm. Contact Person: Kerry Cater. Email: dressyfemme@aol.com

**Gay Alliance Board of Directors**  
Meets Third Wednesdays, 6pm, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640

**New Freedom New Happiness**  
AA Gay meeting, 7pm, Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd. Men and women. Open.

**Support Group for Parents who have lost Children**

First, 3rd Wednesdays, 11am-12:30pm, Third Presbyterian Church, 4 Meigs St. Genesee Region Home Care. Free. 325-1880

**COAP**  
Come Out and Play. Wednesday game nights. 8-11 pm. Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. 7pm, woody14619@yahoo.com.

**Rochester Rams General Meeting**  
2nd Wednesdays, 7:30pm, Bachelor Forum, 670 University Ave. www.rochesterrams.com

**Positive Warriors**  
Wednesdays, 11:30am-12:30pm. Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave.

**Positive Divas**  
Wednesdays, 11:30am-12:30pm. Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave.

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
6pm, Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.

**Gay Alliance Library & Archives,**  
Every Mon./Wed. 6-8pm. David Bohnett Cyber Center, 5:30-7:30pm, First floor, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640

**Empire Bears**  
Every Wednesday. 6pm dinner at various venues. www.empirebears.com

## THURSDAYS

**Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns**  
6:30pm, first Thursday. Ralph, 271-7649

**Pride at Work & AFL CIO**  
First Thursdays, 5:30pm. 1354 Buffalo Road, Rochester 14624, 426-0862.

**GLOB&L (Gays & Lesbians of Bausch & Lomb)**  
Meets every third Thursday in Area 67 conference room at the Optic Center. Voice mail: 338-8977

**Rochester Gay Men's Chorus**  
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. 6:30-9pm. 423-0650

**Out & Equal Second Thursdays**  
Social/business networking, 5:30-7:30pm. Changing venues. E-mail: fingerlakes@outand-equal.org

**Genesee Valley Gender Variants**  
7-9pm, Equal=Grounds, 750 South Ave. GV GenderVariants@yahoo.com

**SAGE Rochester**  
50+ Tuesdays and Thursdays, usually 10:30am at venues including Open Arms Community Center, 707 E. Main St. 244-8640. (See page 31)

## FRIDAYS

**Gay Men's AA meeting**  
Fridays, 7:30-8:30pm. Closed meeting. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 815 Park Ave.

**Gay Alliance Youth**  
Fridays, 7-9pm, Gay Alliance, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St., 244-8640; Ages 13-20. youth@gayalliance.org

**GLBTQI Motorcycle Group**  
Second Fridays, 5:30pm, Various locations. RochesterGLBTQbikers@yahoo.com; 467-6456; bmdaniels@frontiernet.net.

**LORA GaYmes Night**  
Meets 4th Friday of the Month, 7-10pm, Equal Grounds Coffee House, 750 South Ave. Rochester. Contact Person: Christine O'Reilly. Email: irishfemmerochester@yahoo.com. Phone: 585.943.1320. More Info: www.loragroup.org. Events: https://www.facebook.com/groups/L.O.R.A.14464/

**Monthly LBTQ Womyns Bingo Night**  
Third Fridays, 7 pm, at Empire Bingo. Contact: Christine, IrishFemmeRochester@yahoo.com; 585-943-1320 text/talk.

## SATURDAYS

**Rochester Rams Bar Night**  
Third Saturdays, 8pm-2am, Bachelor Forum, 670 University Ave. 271-6930

**Sapphic Singles - Professional Women's Group**  
http://www.meetup.com/Sapphic-Singles-Rochester/. Contact: Patty. Email: pattyrdn11@gmail.com. Phone: 585.223.6743. 3rd Saturday of each month. Monthly Dinner Socials for single professional women at various locations in and around Rochester NY area! Join us!

**Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester**  
Support/educational group for gender-variant people, allies. Last Saturdays, 3-5:30pm, Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
9am, George Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.

**Guys Night Out**  
GNO, social group for transmen, now meets on the second Saturday of the month, @ 1pm @ Equal Grounds, 750 South Ave.

**Saturday Night Special Gay AA**  
7pm, Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd., S. Men and women. Open meeting.

**Sophia's Supper Club**  
First, third Saturdays, 25 Bernie Lane, 6:30 pm.

**Men's Cooking Group**  
Third, fourth Saturdays. 585-355-7664; mcgo-rochester@aol.com.

## SUNDAYS

**PFLAG (Parents Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays)**  
585 993-3297; rochesterpflag@gmail.com.

**Dignity-Integrity**  
1st Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist with music; 2nd Sunday: 5pm Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word with music; 3rd Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist (quiet); 4th Sunday: 5pm Prayers to start the week, followed by potluck supper.

**Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church**  
707 E. Main St. Rochester, Services at: 10:30 am and 5:30 pm. 271-8478.

**Gay Men's Alcoholics Anonymous**  
St. Luke's/St. Simon Cyrene Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St. 8pm, 232-6720, Weekly. Closed meeting ■

## ROCHESTER AA/NA MEETINGS

Every week there are four regularly scheduled GLBTI AA and two inclusive NA meetings in Rochester.

## TUESDAYS

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
6-7:30pm. AIDS and Recovery 1124 Culver Road (Covenant United Methodist Church) This is an NA meeting that is open to all addicts who have a desire to stop using. Although it is not specifically a gay-oriented meeting, it is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as to anyone who is affected by HIV and AIDS.

## WEDNESDAYS

**New Freedom/New Happiness Group**  
7pm. 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**  
7:30pm. Immanuel 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**  
7pm. 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 elevator to basement  
Meeting begins with a speaker, followed by open discussion.

## SUNDAYS

**Step in the Right Direction**  
7:30-9pm. 1275 Spencerport Road (Trinity Alliance Church) This is an NA meeting that is open to all addicts who have a desire to stop using. Although it is not specifically a gay-oriented meeting, it is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Each week features a reading from NA literature, followed by discussion.

**Rochester Gay Men**  
8pm. St. Luke/St. Simon's Episcopal Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh Street. Bus riders use the Fitzhugh Street stop on Main Street at the County Office Building and walk south one block.  
• Closed meeting, restricted to alcoholics and addicts  
• Men's meeting  
• NOT handicapped accessible  
Meeting begins with a speaker, followed by open discussion. ■

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Sunday: 7:30am  
9:30am (at Hochstein, 50 Plymouth Avenue)

# June

## WEDNESDAY 3

**Best of the Fests.** Little Theatre, 6:30 pm. "The Dog". (ImageOut Film Festival.) "Brothers," 9 pm (Jewish Film Festival.)

## THURSDAY 4

**ImageOut partners to host Fassbinder film series** at Dryden Theatre of Eastman House. "The Merchant of Four Seasons," 8 pm.

**Best of the Fests.** Little Theatre. "My So-Called Enemy". 6:30 pm (Jewish Film Festival). "Lies I Told My Little Sister" (High Falls Film Festival), 9 pm.

## FRIDAY 5

**Philadelphia Trans Health Conference.** Through June 6, Pennsylvania Convention Center, NW corner of 13th St., Philadelphia. Free.

**Spaghetti Western dinner dance.** Hosted by Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester. 5 pm, Genesee Valley Park Gazebo. Vegan option; DJ dancing. Tickets at rnytg.org.

**Best of the Fests.** Little Theatre. "The Park Bench," 6:30 pm (High Falls Film Festival); "Boy Meets Girl," 9 pm, (ImageOut Film Festival).

**Rochester Gay Men's Chorus.** "Miscast," Blackfriars Theatre, 795 E. Main St. 7 and 9:30 pm. Tickets \$12 pre sale at thegmc.org, or \$15 at door.

## SATURDAY 6

**Pride float building party.** Bring snack or beverage to share. 10 am-2 pm, 3 Rossmore St.

**Buffalo Dyke March.** buffalo-pride-festival.com

**Butch Femme Connection.** Dinner at Keenan's Restaurant, E. Ridge Rd. in Irondequoit, 7 pm. [www.facebook.com/bfconnection](http://www.facebook.com/bfconnection).

**Rochester Women's Community Chorus concert,** "Songs in the Key of She". 8 pm, Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. Free, donations welcome. Benefitting Alternatives for Battered Women (Willow Domestic Violence Center).

**Fassbinder film series,** "Effi Briest," 8 pm, Dryden Theatre of George Eastman House.

## SUNDAY 7

**Buffalo Pride Parade.** "Show and Tell". Step off noon, Buffalo State campus. Down Elmwood to Allen St. Festival at Canalside.

**Dignity Integrity.** Episcopal Mass/Healing Service, with music. 5 pm at St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

## TUESDAY 9

**Shoulders To Stand On Screening.** Brighton Memorial Library, 2300 Elmwood Ave., Brighton. 6-8:30 pm.

## WEDNESDAY 10

**Shoulders to Stand On screening.** Chili Public Library, 3333 Chili Ave. 6-8pm.

## THURSDAY 11

**Fassbinder film series,** "Mother Kusters Goes To Heaven," 8 pm, Dryden Theatre of George Eastman House.

## SATURDAY 13

**Trillium White Party.** 7 pm-midnight. Century Club, East Ave. Tickets online at [www.whitepartyrochester.com](http://www.whitepartyrochester.com).

## SUNDAY 14

**Dignity Integrity.** Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music. 5 pm at St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

## MONDAY 15

**Empty Closet deadline for July issue,** 244-9030; [susanj@gayalliance.org](mailto:susanj@gayalliance.org).

## TUESDAY 16

**Shoulders to Stand On screening.** Pittsford Community Library, 24 State St., Pittsford. 6:30-8:30pm.

## THURSDAY 18

**Fassbinder film series,** "Fear Of Fear," 8 pm, Dryden Theatre of George Eastman House.

## FRIDAY 19

**Open Arms MCC garage sale,** 474 Marsh Rd., 8 am-4 pm. Also June 20.

**Toronto Pride Week,** through June 28. Human Rights Conference June 20, Trans March June 26, Pride Parade June 28. [Pridetoronto.com](http://Pridetoronto.com).

## SATURDAY 20

**Ride for Pride.** 50 K bike ride benefiting Gay Alliance. 10 am. See page 30.

**Butch Femme Connection.** Dinner at The Elmwood Inn, W. Henrietta Rd./Mt Hope Ave. 7 pm. [www.facebook.com/bfconnection](http://www.facebook.com/bfconnection)

**Rochester Gay Men's Chorus.** "The Story Goes On." 8 pm, Hochstein Performance Hall, 50 Plymouth Ave. Special guest Liz Callaway. Tickets available at [www.thergmc.org](http://www.thergmc.org), 423-0650, Outlandish, Parkleigh, Equal=Grounds, Vittorio's Menswear and Tuxedo, or from Chorus members.

**CNY Pride Festival.** Syracuse Inner Harbor. [CNYPride.com](http://CNYPride.com).

## SUNDAY 21

**Summer Solstice.** Ancient Celtic Fire Feast celebrating the sun. Sacred tree: oak.

**NYC Pride Week begins.** Pride Festival and March June 28. [HeritageofPride.com](http://HeritageofPride.com).

**Dignity Integrity.** Episcopal Mass, quiet. 5 pm at St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

## THURSDAY 25

**Fassbinder film series,** "Satan's Brew," 7 pm, Dryden Theatre of George Eastman House.

**Shoulders to Stand On screening.** Henrietta Public Library, 455 Calkins Rd. 6-8:30 pm.

## FRIDAY 26

**Dignity Integrity garage sale.** Through June 28. Details at [www.dirochester.org/](http://www.dirochester.org/)

**SAGE fish fry** at Towpath Café, 6 N. Main St., Fairport. 5:30 pm; blue grass band 7 pm. RSVP to 585-287-2958 by June 21.

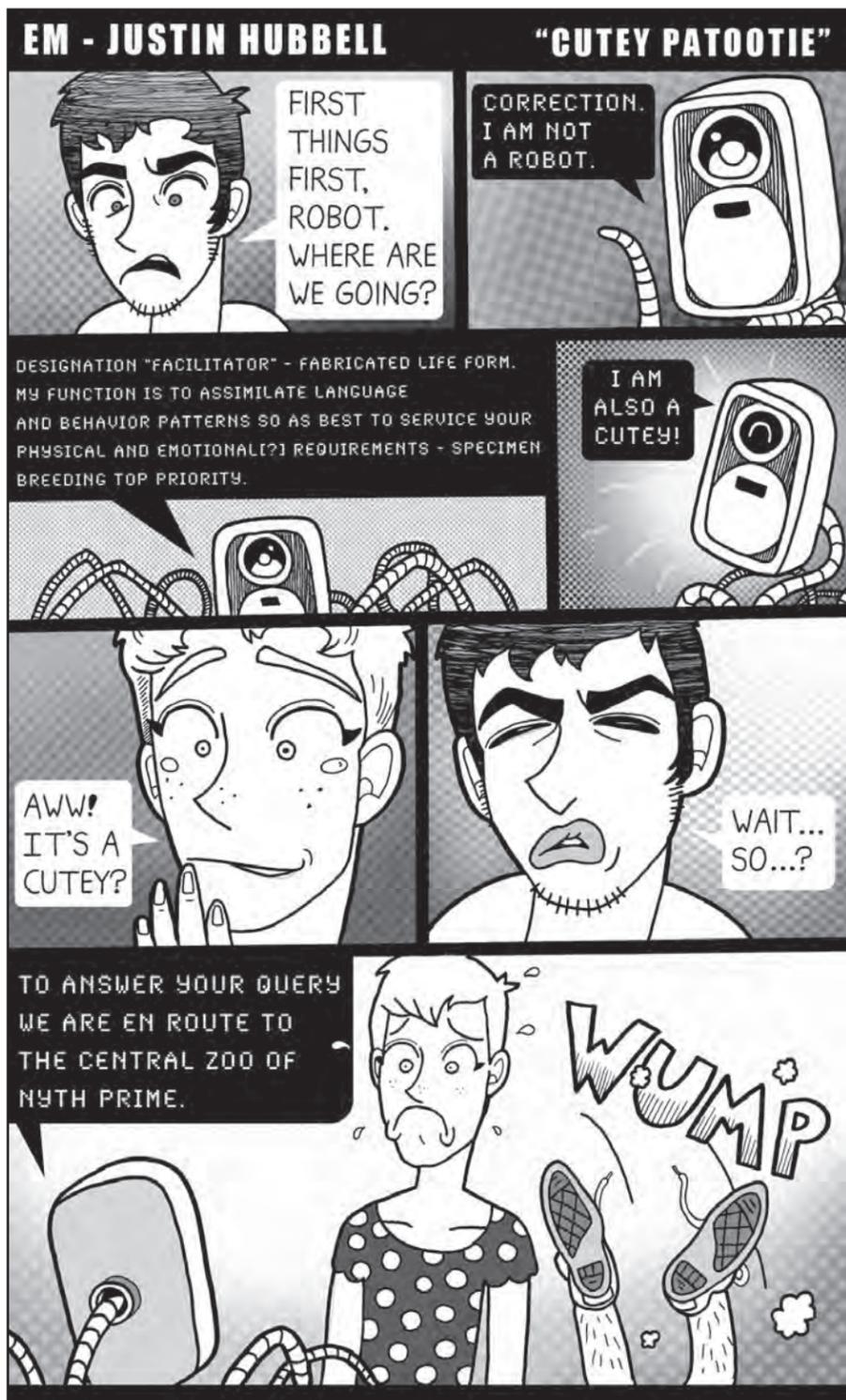
## SATURDAY 27

**Open Arms MCC community potluck and game night.** 5:30-8 pm., 707 E. Main St. Bring dish to pass, favorite card or board game.

## SUNDAY 28

**Dignity Integrity.** Roman Catholic Prayers to start the week, followed by potluck. 5 pm at St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

**NYC, Toronto Pride parades.**



## APROPOS

### Financial Planning

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# Classified Ads

**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, Suite 500, Rochester, New York 14605.

**Paying by check:** checks must be made out to Gay Alliance. The deadline is the 15th of the month, for the following month's issue. We cannot accept ads over the phone. 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, e-mail or phone number. No personal home addresses or names allowed. Classified ads are not published on *The Empty Closet* page of our website. However, each issue of the paper is reproduced online in its entirety.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Children's Ministry thriving** at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church for toddlers to 'twens. Join us for vibrant, inclusive, progressive worship on Sundays at 10:30 am, 707 E. Main St. [info@openarmsmcc.org](mailto:info@openarmsmcc.org); (585) 271-8478.

**Rochester Gay Men's Chorus** - did you (or a friend) ever sing with the Chorus? RGMC is launching an Alumni Organization! Are you interested in helping keep the RGMC vibrant for the next 33 years? Help us keep "Empowering Social Change through Choral Excellence". Please email Past President John Owen - [jowen1@rochester.rr.com](mailto:jowen1@rochester.rr.com) or call at (585) 402 0112.

## SERVICES

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**Martin Ippolito master electrician.** Electrical work, telephone jacks, cable TV, burglar alarm systems, paddle fans. 585-266-6337.

**Wedding Space and clergy services** available. Celebrate your special day at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 707 E. Main St. [info@openarmsmcc.org](mailto:info@openarmsmcc.org) (585) 271-8478.



# Bed & Breakfast

**The Empty Closet** is published by the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley 875 E. Main Street, Suite 500 Rochester, New York 14605 © 2015, All rights reserved.

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 Chris DelConte (chrisd@gayalliance.org)

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The Empty Closet does not print advertisements that contain nude drawings or photographs, nor does it print advertising that states that the person pictured in the ad is for sale, or that you will "get" that particular person if you patronize the establishment advertised. Advertisements that are explicitly racist, sexist, ageist, ableist or homophobic will be refused; advertisements from organizations that are sexist, racist, ageist, ableist or anti-gay will also be refused. All political advertisements must contain information about who placed them and a method of contact. Additionally, The Empty Closet does not print negative or "attack" advertisements, whether they relate to a product or politics and no matter in whose interest the ad is being produced. A negative advertisement is defined as one that focuses upon a rival product, or in the political area, a rival election candidate or party, in order to point out supposed flaws and to persuade the public not to buy it (or vote for him or her). The Empty Closet maintains, within legal boundaries, neutrality regarding products, political candidates and parties. However, "attack" ads that fail to provide undisputable evidence that the information in the ad is true do not further in any way the objectives and policies of the Gay Alliance or The Empty Closet, including the primary tenet that The Empty Closet's purpose is to inform the Rochester gay community and to provide an impartial forum for ideas.

**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. 244-9030, susanj@gayalliance.org

**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. The online edition of EC is available at www.gayalliance.org.

## Kyle's Bed & Breakfast by Greg Fox

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**Panel 1:** BRAD, I WAS EXTREMELY... TOUCHED BY THE WAY YOU REACHED OUT TO ME RECENTLY. WHEN I NEEDED A FRIEND. (Brad, shirtless, looking at Kyle in a suit)

**Panel 2:** PRICE?! WHAT THE... HELL IS ALL THIS STUFF DOIN' IN MY ROOM?!! (Brad, looking at a wardrobe full of clothes)

**Panel 3:** SURPRISE! (Kyle, in a suit, standing by the wardrobe)

**Panel 4:** I WANTED TO RETURN THE FAVOR. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 5:** SO YOU BOUGHT ME CLOTHES? (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 6:** NOT JUST CLOTHES. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 7:** THIS IS AN ENTIRELY NEW WARDROBE FOR YOU... (Kyle, smiling)

**Panel 8:** ...OF ONLY THE FINEST NAMES IN FASHION. BROOKS BROTHERS... ARMANI... LACOSTE. (Brad, looking at the clothes)

**Panel 9:** LUCKILY, WE'RE THE SAME SIZE... SO I KNOW THESE WILL ALL FIT YOU. (Kyle, looking at Brad)

**Panel 10:** BUT...THIS IS TOO MUCH. I CAN'T-- (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 11:** NONSENSE. YOU DESERVE TO BE WEARING ADAGIO SILK BOXERS... (Kyle, looking at Brad)

**Panel 12:** ...INSTEAD OF THOSE DISCOUNT-STORE BRIEFS YOU FAVOR. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 13:** I LIKE THE BRIEFS. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 14:** I LIKE KEEPIN' MY PACKAGE HIGH N' TIGHT. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 15:** WAIT'LL YOU SEE HOW YOUR "PACKAGE" FEELS WHEN IT'S WRAPPED IN 100% IMPORTED ITALIAN SILK, BRAD. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 16:** PRICE, LOOK...THIS WAS REALLY NICE OF YOU, BUT ...I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 17:** I SEE. I'VE UPSET YOU. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 18:** I'VE OVERSTEPPED MY BOUNDS AND NOW...YOU HATE ME. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 19:** PRICE...I DON'T HATE YOU. YOU JUST DON'T GOTTA' SPEND ALL THIS MONEY ON ME TO BE MY FRIEND. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 20:** YOU MEAN...WE CAN STILL BE FRIENDS? (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 21:** YES, YOU IDIOT. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 22:** ALL RIGHT, I... I'LL RETURN ALL THESE CLOTHES. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 23:** LIM...MAYBE I'LL TRY OUT A PAIR OF THOSE SILK BOXERS. (Brad, looking at Kyle)

**Panel 24:** HEHE...YOUR PACKAGE WILL THANK YOU FOR IT... (Brad, looking at Kyle)

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Facebook - www.facebook.com/kylecomics

## PFLAG MEETS 3RD SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

Meetings are at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church 707 E. Main Street, Rochester, New York 14605 from 1 to 3pm. Questions? Call: 585-993-3297 or Email: RochesterPFLAG@gmail.com Join us!

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# BUFFALO & WNY PRIDE WEEK

## SHOW & TELL



# JUNE 1-7, 2015

**MON 6/1**  
FLAG RAISING  
CEREMONY

**WED 6/3**  
BIG GAY SING

**THU 6/4**  
GAY 5K

**FRI 6/5**  
CHROMA: LGBTQ  
ART EXHIBITION

**FRI 6/5**  
FLEX

**SAT 6/6**  
DYKE MARCH

**SAT 6/6**  
MOMENTUM

**SUN 6/7**  
PRIDE PARADE

**SUN 6/7**  
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