Local lawmakers, activists weigh in on election results; warn of tough economic times ahead in 2009

By Ove Overmyer

Barack Obama’s historic presidential election victory comes with a booby prize—an economy reeling under a stubborn housing slump, two wars and the worst financial crisis in 70 years.

Consumers and businesses are sharply reducing their spending and the government is awash in red ink as we enter into the retail holiday season.

"Obama will inherit an economy that is in recession and...is likely to get worse before it gets better," said Harry H. Bronson, Monroe County Legislature Minority Leader and legal advisor for the New York State Assembly Labor Committee. Bronson is also an attorney at law and a small business owner in Rochester. He added, “It is going to take bold and creative thinking to rebuild our standing as a world leader and partner in international affairs.”

Leading economic advisers project the federal government will need to borrow an additional $368 billion in the first quarter of 2009.

A manufacturing report (page continues page 7)

Prop 8 rallies on Nov. 15 spur new wave of activism

By Ove Overmyer

Thousands of marriage rights supporters waved rainbow-colored, chanted and danced in cities coast to coast on Nov. 15 to protest the vote that overturned gay marriage in California and to urge supporters not to quit the fight for the right to wed.

Massive crowds gathered near public buildings in cities across the nation, including Boston, San Francisco, Chicago and (Prop 8 continues page 8)

170 attend Gay Alliance Equality Conference, Luncheon on Oct. 30

By Susan Jordan

Matt Foreman says that just asking for equal rights legislation is not enough; society needs to understand that light people are human beings too.

The nationally-known activist gave the keynote speech to a standing ovation at the Gay Alliance Equality Luncheon on Oct. 30 at the Rivieras Convention Center. Around 170 people took part in the day of workshops and institutes, as well as the Luncheon, where awards were presented to those who, in the Alliance’s estimation, have most greatly helped the local LGBT community in the past year.

Elected officials present included Harry Bronson, Minority Leader of the Monroe County Legislature; City Council member Elaine Spall and City Court Judge Ellen Vuckich.

Denise-Marie Santiago of The Democrat & Chronicle, the Humane Society at Lollypop Farm and community organizer Bess Watts and Anne Tischer received awards.

Award recipients

The Outshine Media Award recognizes individuals in the news and entertainment field who have demonstrated extraordinary effort to ensure fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the LGBT community and the issues that affect gay people’s lives. Columnist Denise-Marie Santiago received the OutShine Award for 2008 for her continuing thoughtful commentary in support of marriage equality for light people.

Santiago said he is grateful to have "a great editor" and to work for an organization that allows her to express her opinions. She thanked her family and the people she loves for their support.

The Community Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to advancing gay rights (Conference continues page 7)

Hate crime defendant mouths off at sentencing; judge drops plea deal

By Ove Overmyer

In a stunning turn of events, defendant Joe Parsons, who was in court on Nov. 20 to plea guilty to a charge of second degree assault in the beating of Lance Neve in a Spencerport bar last March, will now face a trial after all.

Neve spent several days in Strong Hospital with a fractured skull, nose, upper jaw and eye socket after the attack.

Under the advice of Monroe County Assistant District Attorney Perry Dukakis, Neve agreed to let Parsons take a plea bargain to a lesser charge at his sentencing in Monroe County Court, only to witness more verbal abuse from (Hate Crime continues page 8)

Happy holidays!

Holiday closings: Offices of the Gay Alliance will be closed December 25 & 26 and January 1 & 2. Happy holidays!

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Matthew, Saska and change

Matthew Shepard has been gone for 10 years now. The anniversary of his murder last Octo­ber brought some interesting comments in the media. One of the most interesting came from Dave O'Malley, a member of the Laramie town council, who was police chief there when Matthew was killed.

O'Malley told Ryan Lee and DYana Bagby of The Wash­ington Blade, "Up until the time that Matt was killed, I was hor­ribly mean-spirited when it came to gay or lesbian, I was going, 'Jesus love you' to my kids. When I understood that as easily as 'I love you' to my kids. When I understood that as easily as 'I love you' to my kids. When I understood that as easily as 'I love you' to my kids. When I understood that as easily as 'I love you.'"

However, President elect Obama has been speaking out in support of the Matthew Shepard hate crimes law, and a Democratic-led Congress could pass it in 2009. In any case, though, a unique human being and his unfulfilled potential are gone forever. This is also true of thousands who have been killed by hate in the past 10 years, including Lanisha Green of Syracuse, on Nov. 14.

Another issue that remem­bering Matthew brings up is mentioned in the documentary "Saska Gunn Story," about the 15-year-old African American kid­sen who was killed in New­ark, N.J. in 2003 by a straight­ man for rejecting his sexual advances. The film, without asking anyone to disrespect or devalue, Matthew Shepard in any way, asks why the cruel killing of an attractive, middle class young white man touched so many hearts, got so much media atten­tion and is still remembered, while even younger black girl cruelly put to death for the same reasons was quickly forgotten by almost everyone but those who knew her.

Matthew's death inspired 507 news stories within two months and 537 within a year of his death. Two months after Saska's death there were 11 sto­ries and a year later, 22 in all. What does this tell us about our society? Which life is seen as less valuable?

White queers must never for­get that, just as homophbic straights like Dave O'Malley need to question bigotry and ase­xes, those from various¬ity, they need to ques­tions that respect black or female lives also need to change and stop letting a racist, sexist, homophbic society "fo­mulate their belief systems" and their values. III

Executive Director search

We at the Gay Alliance are enjoying the holiday season this year with friends, families and colleagues as a welcome distraction from the grim news of the day. As we look ahead to the challenges of 2009, we are paying attention to the news out of Albany and looking for possible effects on our grant revenue. This is also a time to assess our program priorities for the new year.

Recently we were able to host a wonderful reception for donors, due to the generous sponsorship of Merrill Lynch. This gave us the opportunity to thank people who have been supportive of the agency in the past and, hopefully, will be able to continue that support in the future. We under­stand the importance of main­taining good connections to our community and of providing, the kind of services that all of you expect from the Gay Alliance. It is our hope and our intention to make this a focus of our work in 2009, so you can expect to hear from us more frequently. We hope to provide added opportu­nities to engage you in topics of mutual interest.

A major project for the Gay Alliance is the recruitment and selection of a new Executive Director. Advertisement efforts are underway in a variety of venues, including the local Democrat & Chronicle (Nov. 16 classified ads), a variety of on-line sources such as Career Builder, Center Link and Smart Brief, and personal networking by staff and board members. Potential candidates can locate a job description and instructions to apply on the Gay Alliance web page. The dead­line to apply is Dec. 12, 2008 with the goal of having a new Executive Director in place by early March.

The Board has appointed an interview commit­tee consisting of Board members and community representatives. They will meet to conduct one or two rounds of structured interviews with questions pre­pared in advance. I will be facil­i­tating their work as the search consultant by coordinating the interviews and by conducting reference checks on the final candidates. Finalists will also be invited to meet with a group of Board members and a group of staff members before the Board is asked to vote on the final choice.

We are committed to making this process fair and thorough in order to ensure the best possible result for the agency.

Meanwhile, please accept my best wishes for a warm and happy holiday season and pro­ductive new year ahead. My New Year's resolution for the Gay Alliance is the culmination of a successful Executive Direc­tor search, so that we can con­tinue to be a strong and stable voice for the lgbt community in western New York. III
Finger Lakes Regional Affiliate joins Out & Equal national workplace network

On Oct. 1, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates announced that the Finger Lakes LGBT Workplace Alliance (FLWLA) was accepted as the organization’s newest affiliate, known as the New York Finger Lakes Regional Affiliate.

The New York Finger Lakes affiliate will leverage the resources of Out & Equal—which include partnering with other regional affiliates—to share workplace knowledge and best practices to a larger audience. Currently, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates has 14 regional affiliates nationwide.

“Our & Equal welcomes New York Finger Lales as the newest regional affiliate,” said Sellee Berry, executive director of Out & Equal. “The New York Finger Lakes affiliate will help regional business leaders understand that companies who embrace diversity and equality attract and retain qualified talent, which helps bolster the bottom line.”

“I represent our council in stating that we are very excited about joining the Out & Equal family,” says Teresa Mayer, co-leader of the New York Finger Lakes affiliate. “By receiving greater national recognition, we will be able to emphasize the importance of LGBT equality in the workplace. We will benefit by sharing best practices with other Out & Equal Regional Affiliates and by having access to leading programs and resources. This is a win-win for all involved!”

The American workplace is more LGBT-friendly than at any time in history. Statistics show that more than 500 major companies today provide protections for employees from discrimination in hiring and firing on the basis of sexual orientation; 463 businesses offer domestic partner benefits to their same-sex employees and 300 companies prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and/or expression.

Yet the reality remains that there is still no federal law that provides employment nondiscrimination. Because there is no federal law in place, LGBT people can still be legally fired in 30 states.

To review key findings from the 2008 Out & Equal Workplace Survey, visit http://www.outandequal.org/news/

A three-year-old boy was4 shot and killed on Nov. 14 in the town of Pompey, officials said. The alleged shooter, Dwight R. DeLee, 20, has been charged with second-degree murder. Sage Upstate of Syracuse is the official coroner and the family and friends of the victim would like to see a hate crime charge.

Syracuse Police Chief Gary Miguel (who referred to the victim as a man) said the suspect had no prior knowledge of the victim before this incident. At a press conference on Monday, the suspect led to the victim sharing her sexual orientation and the fact that she was biologically female was a revelation to Miguel. It was at this time the suspect retrieved a rifle and shot the victim, according to police. The case is under investigation by the hands of the district attorney’s office.

(Quilts from page 4)

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It’s the Community Safety Program changing attitudes.

It’s the Equality Luncheon & Conference changing business.

It’s CampusOUT changing higher education.

It’s the Empty Closet changing perspectives.

It’s the Youth Program changing the future.

It’s the Gay Alliance changing society.

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Thank you.
California Supreme Court agrees to hear challenges to Prop 8

On Nov. 19, the California Supreme Court granted review in the legal challenges to Proposition 8, which passed by a narrow margin of 52 percent on November 4. The Court decided to hear the case and set an expedited briefing schedule. The Court also denied an immediate stay.

On Nov. 5, 2008, five organizations for Lesbian Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit challenging the validity of Proposition 8 in the California Supreme Court on behalf of six individuals and Equalities California. The City of San Francisco, joined by the City of Los Angeles and Santa Clara County, filed a similar challenge, as did religious groups in Los Angeles County.

The lawsuits allege that, on its face, Proposition 8 is an improper revision rather than an amendment of the California Constitution because, in its very title, which was “Eliminates the right to marry for same-sex couples,” the initiative eliminated an existing right only for a targeted minority.

If permitted to stand, Proposition 8 would be the first time an initiative has successfully been used to change the California Constitution on so broad a scale. The Court will hold that barring same-sex couples from marriage violates the equal protection clause of the California Constitution and violates the fundamental right to marry. Proposition 8 would completely eliminate the right to marry only for same-sex couples. No other initiative has ever successfully changed the California Constitution to take away a right only from a targeted minority group.

Over the past 100 years, the California Supreme Court has heard nine cases challenging either legislative enactments or initiatives as invalid revisions of the California Constitution. In three of those cases, the Court invalidated those measures.

For more information on this case, go to: http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/high/prof/prop8.htm

Ballot measures trash lgbt rights, families

Four LGBT-specific ballot initiatives passed on Nov. 4. In Florida and Arizona, voters approved constitutional amendments barring recognition of same-sex couples, including, in Florida, civil unions and domestic partnerships. And in Arkansas, voters approved a measure prohibiting the placement of foster children in homes with unmarried couples.

The Arkansas measure was specifically aimed at LGBT foster parents, but will also impact unmarried heterosexual foster parents.

In California, Proposition 8 was passed, eliminating legal marriage for same-sex couples in the state. The Mormon and Catholic churches and wealthy right-wing streets, including many from outside the state, poured over $60 million into the effort to suppress the rights of a minority group.

Florida ACLU statement
Howard L. Simon, PhD, Executive Director, The American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, released the following statement on Nov. 5:

“The backers of Amendment 2 claimed that the amendment was only intended to protect marriage, and not to attack domestic partner registries and health benefits. If that is indeed what they wanted, they should have used that language, but the broad language they used may carry with it further consequences.

“Proposers of Amendment 2 also claimed that the Florida Supreme Court has already ruled that the amendment does not affect domestic partnerships or domestic partner benefits. If true, then they have no basis for challenging these arrangements in court. We will take the opposition at their word that this was not their intentions but should they try to topple these rights for so many Floridians, we will meet them at the courthouse steps. It could take courts years to sort out the implications of the dangerously vague language ‘treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof.’

“I fear that Floridians were misled by the distinguishable ballot language. Regardless of their views on marriage, Floridians do not want to punish gay people or deny them health benefits. The discrimination language that will now be written into our state’s guiding document may go far beyond limiting marriage to threaten and deny other benefits for all Floridians — gay and straight.

“Proposers supported domestic partner benefit guarantees for unmarried couples. We, as a state have come so far since the dark days of Anita Bryant, but we are in danger of the vocal minority taking us back to a darker period in Florida’s history.”

PFLAG statement
Following disappointing votes rolling back or denying full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens in Florida, Arkansas and Arizona, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) vowed to continue working with partners to involve new initiatives to build support for full, fundamental rights for the LGBT community.

“PFLAG’s core mission of support, education and advocacy for our LGBT loved ones is more critical than ever,” said M. Haskell, PFLAG’s executive director. “In California, PFLAG parents and allies shared their stories, talked about their loved ones, and worked with personal appeals to voters in three states, making a significant difference. As we move forward and continue that work, we can build a critical mass of support that will be invincible in future fights, too. “Despite setbacks, millions of people voted with us, and against discrimination, and we will work to grow that coalition of allies and move equality forward.”

(For more information, see A 1, “Local lawmakers weigh on an election” and “Task Force notes election gains, losses.”)

Task Force notes election gains, losses

Openly gay candidate Jared Polis (D-Colo.) won election to the U.S. House of Representatives and will join U.S. Reps. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) and Barney Frank (D-Mass.), bringing to three the number of openly lesbian and gay members of Congress. Both Baldwin and Frank were re-elected to the House.

Democrats defeated Republican Scott Starns. The sexual orientations of all three openly gay and lesbian candidates reflect that voters, from very different parts of the country, support LGBT candidates for higher offices.

These victories could have a tremendous impact on a broad range of issues, including National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Like Frank and Baldwin before, Polis will represent the interests of LGBT people of color, and will have the opportunity to be a leader on LGBT issues and on other issues as well, such as energy, health care and tax reform. Polis has been an outspoken advocate for a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Although supporters of the war in Iraq, an issue of great concern to many LGBT people, Polis and Baldwin have changed the hearts and minds of their congressional colleagues by building strong working relationships with them. Baldwin and Polis had been hesitant to support LGBT issues, helping to advance the rights of LGBT people.

Strong allies of LGBT people also scored important victories on Election Day. Across the country, voters are sup­porting and electing pro-LGBT candidates. The message is clear that LGBT...
people are neighbors and colleagues, friends and friends whose lives are valued and whose equality is defended. In Colorado’s District 4, Beny Markley defeated incumbent Mamith Mesgrue. Markley is an accomplished organizer of LGBT bills, including a fully inclusive ENDA. Mesgrue, the author of the Federal Marriage Amendments Act, championed an anti-LGBT member of the House. The people of Colorado’s District 4 spoke with their votes and chose equality over bigotry.

Gains in state legislatures
In New York, Democrats have reclaimed the New York Senate, after 45 years of Republican dominance. GOP leadership in the Senate has blocked action on key pro-LGBT bills, including the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), Equity for All Students Act and a marriage equality bill. Each of these bills has already passed the state Senate. The legislative session that ended on June 10th passed legislation related to relationship recognition and gender identity and expression. The state Senate is currently controlled by Democrats and Gov. Jim Doyle is a Democrat.

Anti-gay ballot initiatives
California voters approved a ban on same-sex marriage that could put the state, as well as the Mormon and Catholic churches, under scrutiny from the courts and the nation. The measure was approved by a margin of 71 percent to 29 percent. The amendment’s authors say they will continue to work to overturn it. The Human Rights Campaign launched its Above the Line campaign in California, Arizona, Florida and Texas to educate voters about the impact of the ban on marriage equality. The campaign estimates that the ban will cost California $3 billion in lost economic activity and could cause the state to lose $1 billion in annual economic output. The campaign also estimates that the ban will cost California $15 billion in lost tax revenue over the next 10 years.

In Wisconsin, Democrats have gained control of the state Assembly, raising hopes for passage of a gay rights protection bill. In Wisconsin, where the legislature is controlled by Republicans, a bipartisan compromise was reached on a bill that would protect gay and lesbian workers from discrimination. The bill passed the state Assembly to Democrats so that the State of Wisconsin could provide equal protections to all its citizens.

The latest celebrity to join a tax protest is singer Melissa Etheridge, who railed against the passage of the marriage ban in California — and she won’t be paying the state a dime.

Etheridge stated on http://thedailybeast.com: “Okay. So Prop 8 passed. All right. I get it. 51 percent of you think that I am a second-class citizen. All right, I get it. So my wife, ah I mean, roommate? Girlfriend? Special lady friend? You are gonna have to help me here because I am not sure what to call her now. Anyway, she and I are not allowed the same rights under the state constitution as any other citizens. Okay so I am taking that to mean I do not have to pay my state taxes because I am not a full citizen. I mean that would just be wrong, to make someone pay taxes and not give them the same rights, sounds sort of like that taxsystem without representation thing from the history books.”

She added at the end of her statement, “Come to think of it, I should have a federal tax break too.”

Merrill said, “During this time of economic strife, shouldn’t it make sense that our state and local governments recognize our marriages? We want to pay taxes, but we don’t like being treated as second-class citizens because of our bigotry. President-elect Obama promised to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, which prohibits us from getting federal benefits, 1,338 of them. We must hold him to his promise.”

National LGBT groups salute Barack Obama
The Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and other LGBT organizations celebrated the election of Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) as the 44th President of the United States. The election of pro-equality candidates across the country, while simultaneously lamenting results from three states (California, Arizona, Florida) regarding discriminatory anti-marriage amendments.

This election represents a paradigm shift. The pendulum has swung away from the anti-gay forces that dominated the political landscape for too long and toward new leadership that acknowledges our equality, said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. “For the past eight years, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue was a dead end for our community. Now the LGBT community and the entire nation will have a voice at the highest level of government. Our years in the wilderness are over and this really is a change we can all truly believe in.”

During this historic election cycle, the Human Rights Campaign launched its nationwide $7 million “Year to Win” electoral initiative to mobilize 5 million LGBT voters.

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Duffy Palmer becomes NYS deputy secretary for education

By Suora Jordan

Governor David Paterson has named Duffy Palmer of Rochester deputy secretary of education for New York State. Palmer will become the head of the state’s education department, and will be in Paterson’s nine-member cabinet. He was appointed as interim deputy secretary on Aug 19. In the past, he was assistant deputy secretary for education and director of education policy under former Governor Eliot Spitzer.

A former Batavia City School District teacher, Palmer has trained students to work with students with special needs through the Genesee-Wyoming BOCES, and has worked on local initiatives with the Rochester City School District. He has also worked for Rochester Mayor Robert Duffy.

Duffy Palmer served for many years as chair and on the board of the Empire State Pride Agenda. Recently he talked with The Empty Closet about his work and about the needs of schools and students in our state.

Empty Closet: Congratulations on your appointment as deputy secretary of education. Although the title says “deputy,” this means you will be the secretary for education for the state and in person and thousands of others across the state via live television (and webcast) broadcast by WXXI.

Thousands of people will be working in seven regions of the state throughout the coming year to inform the Governor of best practices and policies to help stem this terrible tide. The Governor has enlisted the support of educators (pre-school to college), policy makers, professionals, corporate leaders, parents and students in this state-wide effort.

EC: What are your first priorities and what are your ultimate goals?

DP: My first priority, of course, is to serve the Governor responsibly and to follow through with his education initiatives. Secondly, I need to serve the citizens and, in my position, the students of the state responsibly as well. I represent the Governor in dealing with the State Education Department, SUNY and CUNY. It is an important that I keep an open and honest dialogue with all of our stakeholders, especially in this difficult economic time, to ensure that we are working in unison to provide the best possible education services to all children and young adults.

EC: What experiences in your career will be valuable to you now?

DP: Although I taught in one school district for 33 years, my experience spans from Kindergarten to college. I’ve taught in a variety of special needs situations, elementary, remedial reading, social studies and gifted and talented. I’ve worked with colleges developing student teaching programs and have mentored classroom teachers dealing with students with special needs. I’ve developed curriculum, worked closely with parents, administrators, boards of education and teachers unions.

It is the combination of these experiences that uniquely qualifies me to understand the problems and concerns of all stakeholders and to develop the relationship necessary to make the Governor’s agenda successful.

EC: Given years of work with students, especially those with special needs, what do you believe New York schools and students need most?

DP: I think that we need to look at the needs of students and families in these trying times differently than we have in the past. First, we need to recognize that we are not an agrarian society. Even rural communities have more needs than the farming communities of the past.

We need to look at a school day and the school year as they don’t relate to the real needs of today’s students. We need to work with the Regents and State Education Department as well as SUNY and CUNY.

For example, Governor Paterson is concerned about the rate of high school drop-outs in New York State. We recently convened the Governor’s Summit on Student Engagement and Drop Out Prevention at Nazareth College. The Governor’s “Call to Action” was delivered to over 500 NY citizens (including 100 students)

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equality in the greatest Rochester community. Anne Tisch and Bess Koon have accomplished a great deal to pass Tax Day and Equality Day in Albany last spring, they showed up with Rochester Gay Pride to make history and to demand our rights.

Tina Foreman, a Rochester staff member transitioned last spring, has made my living sucking money out of the gay community for years, and now am working for a straight organization... they just really believe in equality, I can tell you that giving money away is much more fun than raising it.

Foreman said, "The equality framework work we've built our movement around for the past 15 years is now going out of gas. We need to back off from rights and demand our fundamental humanity and goodness be recognized, before we start talking about rights."

He said that the gay rights movement has made more progress more rapidly than any social justice movement in history, and that this didn't happen because of "people like you — all in the face of incredibly well-funded and organized opposition."

"However," he said, "in spite of all we've accomplished, we've only taken a few steps toward real equality... Yet again the public is invited to vote on whether we should have the right to marry and express our selves as activists.

"Instead, we ask gays to talk openly to the straight people in their lives... The goal of these campaigns is to bring gay and straight people together and finally come out to "come out" to themselves as activists.

Anne said, "We're not real smart, but we can feel justly focused. We do have a passion for justice. We don't give in, and we don't go away because social justice is our campaign."

Bess Koon knew the Rochester Gay Pride and has been active par-tic-ipated in the Gay Pride, Burchel Rochester Parents, Friends, and many others.

Anne Tischer responded that she and Bess Koon were marvelous people, and asked that they had had to go through the "TASS model" of the situations in the community... and the "TASS model" is to "come out" to themselves as activists.

Anne said, "We are just ordinary people and don't have any special skills. At Bess says, "We aren't real smart, but we can feel justly focused. We do have a passion for justice. We don't give in, and we don't go away because social justice is our campaign."

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A close vote is heartbreakingly. Casey said, “Opponents of Prop. 8 — the Equality for All coalition — built an impressive and unprecedented campaign to defeat the measure. In the end, the scare tactics and lies of the other side won this out.

The Constitutional amendment — widely seen as the most momentous of the nation’s 153 ballot measures — will also limit marriage to heterosexual couples; the first time such a vote has taken place in a state where gay unions are legal.

The vote created uncertainty about the legal status of same-sex couples who tied the knot during a four-month window of opportunity opened by the state’s highest court.

LGBT families have a rough election elsewhere as well. Ban-gay-marriage amendments were approved in Arizona and Florida. Also, Arkansans approved a measure banning unmarried same-sex couples from adopting or fostering children. Supporters made clear that gays and lesbians were their main target.

With 95 percent of precincts reporting the day after the election, the ban had 51,725,702, or 52 percent, while 47,235,133, or 48 percent, voted against. NLGBT and HRC respond.

Rex Carney, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, says that although Barack Obama has been elected president of the United States, marriage bans that passed in California, Arizona and Florida and an adoption ban passed in Arkansas are “devastating.”

“The program included speeches from local government leaders, activists, labor unions and clergy. The Rainging Grannies, a group of local feminist activists who sing songs of social significance, were favorites of the hundreds in the audience.

This rally, like the others, grew out of a grassroots, online effort, mainly using the social networking site Facebook. Perinton resident Neil Houghton, the local organizer for the Rochester rally, said he was totally surprised by how quickly the word spread online.

Join the Impact, the grassroots organization which initiated the simultaneous 50-state demonstrations, asked supporters to be respectful and refrain from attack­ ing other groups during the protests.

“`If we can meet people who are past anger and have a respectful conversation — then you can plant the seed of change,” said Searlly Amy Baillot, who started the website three days after Election Day.

“We need to show the world when one thing happens to one of us, it happens to all of us,” she said.

Houghton said the Rochester protest brought together a broad range of people who were outraged by the stripping of civil rights in California. He told The Empty Closet, “This wave of righteous indignation swept the country in over 300 cities. It can and should become a catalyst for real change.”

He called this action a Stonewall moment for the new millennium.

The protests nationwide were widely reported to be peaceful, and the mood in Rochester was spirited. Protesters carried signs and marched along West Main Street, to the delight of passersby. Signs cast the fight for gay marriage as the new civil rights movement of the 21st century, including one placed that read “just 8t right!”

Anne Tucker, activist and community organizer, said she was so impressed by the number of people who were willing to come downtown and stand in the rain to fight for equality. She said, “It renewal my faith in grassroot democracy to see all these new faces that are committed to the cause.”

“This narrow loss in California has awakened us,” said a wheel-boarded pro­ tester who did not want to be identified.

Proponents of same-sex marriage say passage of the anti-gay amendment has only galvanized the community. Activists are now using a grassroots net­ work of new websites, e-mails and text messages to coordinate future protests and organize structured events. Tucker says meeting these new contacts and fol­ lowing up with them is a critical aspect of any organizing effort, if it is going to be successful.

“After this rally, I am very optimistic now,” she says.

Connecticut, which ironically began performing same-sex weddings on Nov. 12, and Massachusetts are the only two states that allow gay marriage. National groups are attempting to overthrow the Prop 8 amendment for more information on these challenges, see Newsfronts, page A4.

(Mike Siwek)

"Our store has been the talk of the town since opening up! Very clean, very trendy, and our staff is always on point! We offer many new items as well as a wide selection of unique and special pieces. We have a large selection of fine jewelry, clothing, and accessories. We are open 7 days a week, and we are always happy to help clients find the perfect gift. Our knowledgeable staff is always ready to answer any questions you may have. If you are looking for a unique gift or just want to treat yourself to something special, we have you covered. We carry a wide variety of items, from classic pieces to statement pieces, and we are always adding new items to our collection. We pride ourselves on offering the best quality and service, and we are always looking for ways to improve. Thank you for choosing us and we look forward to serving you in the future. "

Now Open In Perinton!
Come Explore Yourself! Aja Noodle Co. has brought their unique urban contemporary asian cuisine to Perinton!
The Follies of 2008

By Susan Jordan

As 2008 draws to a close, The Empty Closet records some of the past year’s political follies of the left, the center and the ever-reliable right.

February
Eliot Spitzer meets the Bad Ideas Bears from “Avenue Q” and the Bears do their thing.
B.L. Bears: Oooh, Eliot, why don’t you call Emperor VIP and get a hooker to meet you at your hotel in Washington? Spitzer: I think I will... Bears: Yaayy!!! Spitzer (think): They’re so cute.

March
Maggie Brooks doesn’t get it. The Monroe County Executive announces that the County will appeal the Appellate Court ruling on the Martinez case, which states that NYS must recognize legal same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, and therefore the County must give health benefits to married LGBT employees’ partners. She states that these legal and valid marriages are not real.
Her own three (or was it four) marriages have all been real, of course — including the alleged one to the Elvis impersonator. As Siefkow would say, “Not that there’s anything wrong with that.”

April
The Pentagon wavers. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee releases data showing a big increase in Pentagon “morale” waivers for those convicted of rape, manslaughter, kidnapping and making terrorist threats, who may now join the military — while the ban on gay men and lesbians remains in force. We wouldn’t want our soldiers to be homosexual!

May
Maggie still doesn’t get it. May 14: Gov. Paterson sends a memo to state agencies, ordering them to be in compliance with the 50-50 high court decision affirming the appellate court ruling that NYS must recognize legal same-sex marriages performed out of state. Violations of the state’s human rights law could result in sanctions, the governor says.
Maggie Brooks tells the media that Monroe County doesn’t have to obey the state agency memo and says she doesn’t understand the ruling, which “is unclear to those of us tasked with enforcing the law.”

Gary Pudup of the NYCLU tells the media, “It was a 5-0 verdict. What is it about a 5-0 verdict that the County Executive doesn’t understand?”
It was not until Nov. 21 that the County said it would not pursue the appeal.

June
Blob Loonsberry, Rochester’s pathetic Limbaugh wannabe, gets in trouble again for shameful racist putdowns of African American students and young unwed mothers, who are struggling to make lives for themselves in a society that devalues black youth and simultaneously scores and exploits young women.
Loonsberry says black students who get Bs should not be publicly congratulated for their efforts, since white students who get As are superior. These thoughtful comments come on the heels of Loonsberry’s infamous “monkey” slur against Rochester’s former African American mayor Bill Johnson, which got The Blob removed from the air, but just temporarily — because hatred (including Loonsberry’s chronic homophobia) makes money for his irresponsible bosses at WHAM/Clear Channel.
Loonsberry also informed the world that he wants young women to keep their legs shut; female objects aren’t allowed to have sex without his permission, apparently. If you come from a wealthy, rightwing Christian family, you don’t have to keep your legs shut (just your mind).
In the EC’s opinion, the body part that should be kept firmly shut is Loonsberry’s mouth.

July
What was Dole thinking? The late Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), who died last July, never missed a chance to harm, dehumanize and demonize LGBT Americans, who were blamed for the AIDS epidemic. He repeatedly blocked government funding for HIV education and care. Kevin Naff wrote in The Windygown Bride for July 11, “Helms will be remembered as a racist homophobe who hastened the death of untold thousands through his xenophobic opposition to federal AIDS legislation and hateful anti-gay rhetoric.”

Outrage erupted on July 14 when Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) proposed to rename the “Tom Leons and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008” after Jesse Helms, removing “Henry J. Hyde.”

Unbelievable folly! To name the global AIDS funding act after the man who blocked AIDS funding and actually helped spread the epidemic! Even the Senate didn’t go for this one.

August
God isn’t in the mix. Barack Obama, at anti-gay pastor Rick Warren’s televised “forum” for the presidential candidates, said he doesn’t support marriage equality because “God is in the mix.”
Oh really? Civil marriage is a state-sponsored contract conferring rights and responsibilities and God has absolutely nothing to do with it. Even a heterosexual religious marriage ceremony (whether regarded as a sacrament or not) is not valid unless it is also a legal contract; that’s what a marriage license is for.

How strange that Obama, Harvard Law graduate, seems ignorant of such a basic fact. Or maybe, in his eagerness to win the massive Ignorant Bigot vote, he preferred to affirm the widespread mis-conception that civil marriage is a “sacrament.” It isn’t.

The implication once again is that, while heterosexual love and families are sacred, gay love and families are not sacred or even legal.

Or maybe Obama was thinking of Meow Mix. Cars would certainly agree with that.

September
As the GOP Turns... Conservatives, apolitical housewives and blue-collar voters all over the country go gaga for Sarah Palin, or so the sensation-seeking media would have us believe. This was the story they chose over the police-state suppression of dissent at the GOP convention.

And it’s true that no opera writer could have created a better script: perky, bitchy, moose-killing, book-burn­ing, rightwing Christian beauty queen hockey mom governor diva has a pregnant teen daughter (abstinence education didn’t work, as usual), a special needs baby and an evil brother-in-law in law and now may become second (or even first) in command of the free world... You couldn’t invent this shit.

Although the Palin soap was canceled, Tina Fey may get a soap opera series.

Ooops... Regulators, bankers, lenders, Wall Street, the media, the whole world had to do that. But the Bush administration suddenly, finally realize that all is not well with capitalism, as “artificially inflated assets” go into meltdown (to quote David Cap Johnson in City).

How ironic that rich conservatives wasted decades being paranoid about the threat of socialism and those dreaded have-nots, while, in the end, capitalists brought their institutions into nationalization all by themselves, out of sheer folly, greed, dishonesty, irresponsibility and incompetence. And while the bailing out CEOs get their golden parachutes, everyone else, including the have-nots, will go on paying the price for their folly.

November
Brave new world. The historic election moment has come and now Barack Obama will have to deal with the Bush legacy of follies -- multiple wars, a humon­gous national debt and a crumbling econ­omy -- as well as the small side task of healing racists and other forms of hatred and injustice in the U.S.A., replacing prejudice with respect, exploitation with cooperation and divisiveness with unity. As he acknowledged, it won’t be easy.

Good luck to him and to all of us!!
A Village Halloween

Photos by Eric Bellmann
Check out ebellmann.com

More photos on page 19

Rochester Gay Men’s Chorus
Holiday Concert 2008

Naughty and Nice!

December 5th and 6th

From holiday to hilarious...

8:00 pm
at Hochstein
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Purchase tickets at Parkleigh, Outlandish, The Creator’s Hands, and Equal Grounds.
Or online at www.theRGMC.org.
The Miss Gay Rochester pageant was held Nov. 9. L-R: Samantha Vega, Naiomy Kane, Karen Covergirl. (More photos, page 18)

L-R: Kitty Pride as the Little Mermaid; Keke Valasquez Lord, Miss Gay Rochester 2009; Darienne Lake celebrates her 10th anniversary. (More on Keke, page B 1)
The American Gay Rights Movement

By Evelyn Bailey

As we turn the calendar to a new year, I thought a list of new beginnings—firsts—in the American Gay Rights Movement would help us bring to the New Year with renewed pride and hope. Happy holidays and a Gay New Year to all.

1951: First National Gay Rights Organization is founded.

1961: Illinois Sodomy Law is Repealed

1969: The Stonewall Riots

1980: Democratic National Convention supports gay rights.

1984: City of Berkeley adopts first Same-Sex Domestic Partnerships Ordinance.

1984: Church of the Transfiguration advocates for the right of homosexual and heterosexual couples to enter into civil unions.

1985: First National Gay Rights March is held in Los Angeles.

1986: Illinois Supreme Court rules in the case of Debo v. Florida that the state's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.

1990: Vermont becomes the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.

1993: Hawaii Supreme Court rules in the case of Zablan v. Hawaii that the state's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.

1996: The Defense of Marriage Act is signed into law.

1997: American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from list of mental disorders.

1998: President Clinton Signs Executive Order 13087 banning the federal government from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation in employment.

1999: California adopts a statewide Domestic Partnerships Ordinance.

2000: Vermont adopts nation's first Civil Unions Policy.

2001: U.S. Supreme Court strikes down all remaining sodomy laws.

2004: Massachusetts legalizes same-sex marriage.


2008: Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rules in the case of Goodridge v. Department of Public Health that the state's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.

2009: U.S. Supreme Court rules in the case of Obergefell v. Hodges that the Constitutional right to marry is a fundamental right that is inherent to the essence of personal liberty, and that the right to marry includes the right to marry persons of the same sex.

2010: Federal Court of Appeals rules in the case of Perry v. Schwarzenegger that California's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.

2012: U.S. Supreme Court rules in the case of United States v. Windsor that the federal government must recognize same-sex marriages.

2015: Federal Court of Appeals rules in the case of In re Marriage Licenses and Recognition that same-sex couples have a fundamental right to marry.

2016: California legalizes same-sex marriage.

We have had incredible strides in Domestic Partnership legislation, and in anti-discrimination legislation. With the repeal of the sodomy laws in all 50 states by the end of 2010, the gay community's right to privacy in their own homes was guaranteed.

Today, homosexuality is no longer identified by the American Psychiatric Association as a mental disorder.

But what happens when we want equal rights for a committed relationship with a life partner, or when we want to adopt or have children, or when we are a child's teacher?

All of a sudden we are reduced to men who have sex with men, and women who have sex with women, identified as immoral, abnormal and unequal in the most fundamental sense of our humanity. These differences create irrational fears that are acted out between individuals and in the social, legal, economic, and political arenas of our lives.

So after all of these incredible successes, how far have we really come? How free, equal and accepted are we? Or is "freedom just another word for nothing left to lose"—as Janis Joplin sang—"nothing, nothing honey if it ain't free!"

So why is Shoulders to Stand On: A Gay History of the Rochester Region so vital to us? And why should you contribute to it?

Shoulders to Stand On will provide you and other gay men and women with a sense of rootedness, strength and pride through the stories, struggles and achievements of our gay pioneers. Those who have come before us often made important sacrifices to make Rochester a better place for us to live. Shoulders To Stand On will show the many faces that put the gay liberation movement into motion and have continued the struggle.

Documenting our history gives us credibility as a community with economic, social, and political power. By safeguarding Rochester’s gay history so that it will be available to teach and inspire future generations, Shoulders To Stand On will demonstrate our continued faithfulness to our struggle to be free and equal.

The Shoulders To Stand On Committee meets on the second Friday of the month. Check our website for more details. If you are interested in coming to a meeting, e-mail us at shouldersstostand.on@gmail.com.

We need volunteers and also your financial support. Go to our website, www.shouldersstostandon.com, to learn more about how you can help.

You can send donations to “Shoulders to Stand On” c/o the GAGV, 675 E. Main St, Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605.

Dining Out With Friends wraps up; you can help plan 2009 event

By Evelyn Bailey

Picture the scene: a fire in the fireplace, beer with raisin sauce, jumbo shrimp, the best in wines, a main course of roast beef with gravy, mashed potatoes, asparagus, and the warmth of friends—old friends and new friends—enjoying each other's company with laughter and heart to heart conversations in a spirit of fun and celebration. This is just a glimpse of what a Dining Out With Friends dinner can be.

Incredible desserts, coffee, wine and beer followed at City Hall Atrium. Over 130 people gathered to support the Spinal Touch Bakery and to hear Rooted in Love, an all-volunteer, Hypnosis, a local, non-profit organization.

The hairyestimate was $3,500, which will go to support the GAGV’s anti-discrimination legislation work. With the help of our friends at the Spinal Touch Bakery, the estimate was met.

In the midst of this “gay” crowd came the appreciation and thank-yous, given by Tom Ferrarese, GAGV Board President, and Joanne Guffrida, the GAGV’s new Interim Executive Director. Joanne also talked about the GAGV programs that Dining Out With Friends supports.

This year Dining Out With Friends gained a new venue, the Opera House, located at 633 East Main Street. A huge thank you to Dick Connell and his team, Sam Colosi, Ed Schell and Shirley Bowden (and myself). The group has already begun planning for Dining Out With Friends 2009, so save the date—Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009—for the Dessert Reception.

The entire month of September will be the Dining Out With Friends Dinner month. The Dessert Reception will be open to the public for a separate donation.

We are looking for many more people interested in being hosts and volunteers with new ideas to make Dining Out With Friends 2009 bigger and better. Please contact the fund contact Dick Connell at 244-8640 Ext 24 or e-mail diningoutwithfriends@gagv.us.

Bon Appetit!
SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, March 15th
The Western New York LGBT Expo

Confirmed Performance
by
Kate Clinton
(with a new show for 2009)

Exhibitor tables available. Talent desired.
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while Barack Obama was ranked the second most successful flexed its political muscle in unprecedented era of hope and engagement in the life of administration that treated us with contempt, Olympic, affordable housing, access to quality/affordable health care, equal pay, reproductive freedom, and racial and gender justice sanctioned marriage initiatives among the critical issues the Task Force Action Fund tracks in federal policy.

Partial Equal Rights Pledge statement

The election of President-Elect Barack Obama is a defining moment in American history. In a time of great crisis and uncertainty here at home and abroad, the American people have overwhelmingly elected a candidate for change: President-Elect Obama's victory is particularly meaningful for the millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who have been raising children in this country and their extended family and friends.

In July, the Council wrote to Sens. Obama and McCain asking them to explain how their policies would recognize, protect, and celebrate the contributions of the families they seek to represent, including LGBT-headed families. Within days of the candidates' response, the Council said that we have to do more to support and strengthen LGBT families, including the legal relationships families and communities

"He has consistently included LGBT Americans in his campaign. As the LGBT community awaits the results of numerous propositions to strip us of equal rights and responsibilities in marriage, we want to take this opportunity to look back and remind ourselves that history will remember the day that we have a friend in President-Elect Obama, who, if he is presidential, will be the first in a space of equality in our community and our country's past history.

The Family Equality Council has created a resource to help LGBT parents discuss the results of Election 08 — from the presidential race to the anti-equality propositions on the ballot in California, Arizona, Florida, and Arkansas. That resource, "Talking to Your Children About Election 08," can be found at www.familyequality.org/blog.

Researchers find biological cause for MTF transsexuality

In the largest genetic study of transsexuals to date, published in the journal Biological Psychiatry in October, Australian researchers have discovered a DNA variation linked to male-to-female transsexualism.

The finding suggests that there is a biological reason why people may feel that their bodies' gender is not their true gender identity.

Vincen Harley, of Prince Henry's Institute in Melbourne, said his team's study of 112 Australian and American male-to-female transsexuals found they were more likely to have a genetic variation in a gene that could lead to a feminization of the brain during early development.

"We haven't found anything that transgender is not a lifestyle decision, but rather a biological condition. The research should reduce misunderstandings and the stigma against transgender people.

The Australian and American team examined three sex hormone genes. They found male-to-female transsexuals tended to have a longer version of the androgen receptor gene, which could reduce testosterone action. Researchers said that it was highly likely that other genetic factors were also involved.

Soulforce Equality Riders barred from Tennessee church

On Nov. 11, members of the Soulforce Equality Riders, a ride that travels to faith based colleges with a message of inclusion for gay and transgender students, were barred from entering a public concert at First Baptist Church.

The concert was a showcase by several Union University choirs and bands, and Riders planned simply to attend and listen. Upon arriving, Riders were met by Union security, and the pastor of First Baptist Church, told them they were unwelcome and had to get back on the bus. When asked why they could not attend the concert, they were told they were unwarned and that the church had
the right to prevent them from attending.

"I was shocked that a church would prevent us from coming to a concert, especially when we had been invited by some of the performers. It was painful and disheartening to see that a Christ-centered community would not even allow us to enter its doors," said Nicci Savelle, an Equality Rider from Tampa, Fla.

After being turned away from the church, Riders decided to stand vigil on the public right of way adjacent to the church. However, as they gathered, Jackson police officers approached them once again, telling them that they would not be allowed to stand there and that if they persisted they could face arrest. Equality Ride co-directors spoke to the officers about their right to assemble on the strip of land that was public. Nevertheless, the officers told them that the church did not want them there and they would be arrested if they did not comply.

"The fact that we were being denied the right to stand on a public property because First Baptist didn’t want us there was a clear breach of our right to assemble. We wanted to stand and sing songs and reflect upon their experience, but the church didn’t want them there and they would be arrested if they didn’t comply.

"As people went into the concert and we knew that we were being denied entrance, yet even when we stood out in the cold on the roadside we were turned away and lied to by Jackson police," explains Katie Higgins, Soulforce Q Equality Ride Co-director. Once more the Riders relocated to a grassy plot next to one of the entrances and were finally told they could remain there.

Riders held a candlelight vigil, chanting, dancing and waving rainbow flags and signs with messages like "Don’t spread hate!". Major demonstrations took place, which overturns the California Supreme Court decision making same sex marriage legal.

One million across country protest Prop 8

Hundreds of thousands, and possibly one million gay Americans, angry at being treated as second-class citizens, protested alongside their straight allies in California and all over the country. After voters approved Proposition 8, a homophobia constitutional amendment which overturns the California Supreme Court decision making same sex marriage legal.

A massive nationwide protest took place on Nov. 15. An estimated one million people rallied in over 500 cities, chanting, dancing and waving rainbow flags and signs with messages like "Don’t spread hate!". Major demonstrations took place.

(Newsfronts continues on page 16)
showed 19 blacks people of any kind, except for entirely peaceful, as requested by Join the group or individual.

In fact, none of theners. Organizers admitted it had been a harmful) were sent to Mormon temples, packets of an unknown white substance lies. In fact, none of the

A majority of African Americans voted for Prop 8, which some blamed on the light organizers, who did not run ads depicting black light couples or families. In fact, none of the anti-Prop 8 ads showed light people of any kind, except for an ad taken and paid for by Ellen DeGe­ennes. Organizers admitted it had been a mistake to ignore the black community. In Sacramento, the capital of Califor­nia, speakers lead a large crowd in chants expressing the anger felt by the light community at heterosexual claims to have the right to decide whether light relationships are "real" or not. Thirty states now have constitutional amendments banning same sex marriage, which is legal only in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Local and State

Syracuse continued from page 3

Mothers Against Gun Violence, along with Green's family, held a vigil on Nov. 18 on the city's southwest side. In Rochester, a vigil was held on Nov. 20.

There remains no federal hate crimes law protecting people on the basis either of sexual orientation or gender identity. In October, the Federal Bureau of Investigation released its annual report, which showed the incidence of bias-motivated crimes based on sexual orient­ation increased by six percent in 2007. Hate crimes based on sexual orientation remain the third most common type of hate crimes, behind race and religion.

Federal legislation is crucial to ensuring local law enforcement is given the tools they need to combat hate violence. If signed into law, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act/Matthew Shepard Act would provide the federal government expanded jurisdic­tion to investigate and prosecute hate crimes, behind race and religion. If signed into law, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act/Matthew Shepard Act would give hate crimes law covers only certain hate crimes that are based on a victim's race, color, religion or national origin as well as their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, and disability. The Act also provides assistance to local law enforce­ment to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violence. Existing federal hate crimes law covers only certain hate crimes that are based on a victim's race, color, religion and national origin.

AIDS

There is hardly anyone who knows the history behind today's safer-sex revolution better than activist/author Richard Berkowitz. He has been living with HIV for 23 years.

At an AIDS Rochester-sponsored event at Spot Coffee, held during the ImageOut film festival in mid-October, Berkowitz reminded a small audience, "Men didn't bear the burden of conse­quences from sex to the degree women always had until AIDS came along."

He said, "I was living in Chelsea in NYC where half of all the AIDS cases in the U.S. were showing up. In many ways, this was the aftermath of the sexual revolution, the epidemic rise of all sexually transmitted diseases and what happens when sex becomes detached from affection."

The gay liberation movement, to which Berkowitz refers, spawned a rebellion against conservative news agencies, gay-bashing churches, and political pundits. Although it was an unpopular argu­ment within the gay community at the time, Berkowitz (along with activists Michael Callen and their physi­cian Joseph Sonnabend) advocated that high-risk behaviors including certain recreational drug-use, promiscuity, and unsafe sexual practices were primary causes of the spread of HIV.

"Everyone knows about safe sex, but few really know how it began. I helped to get this message going in our community," he said.

"Since then, safe sex has become one of the most important interventions in the history of the epidemic, in addition to the AIDS cocktail," Berkowitz added.

Sex Positive, a documentary directed by Daryl Wein and featured during ImageOut, pays tribute to Berkowitz and his daily struggle living with HIV/AIDS. Since March, the film has been featured at 16 festivals, including Prom­inentown International, Boston Inte­national, and Outfest.

For more information about Rich­ard Berkowitz, feel free to email him at richeberkowitzay@gmail.com.
New York tells all insurance companies to recognize legal same-sex marriages; treat same sex couples equally or face disciplinary action, state regulator says

On Nov. 21, the state’s top insurance regulator said that gay couples who have legally wed outside New York must be treated the same way by insurers in the state as other married couples.

“We expect insurance companies to provide the same rights and benefits to all legally married couples, regardless of the sex of the spouses,” Superintendent Eric Dinallo said.

The decision follows a May 14 announcement by Governor David Paterson that state law requires agencies to honor legal out-of-state same-gender marriages. A state Supreme Court judge in September dismissed a suit filed on behalf of state lawmakers who challenged Paterson’s authority to issue the directive.

The insurance department’s decision covers “virtually all” types of insurance, including life, health, disability and long-term care coverage, the statement said. An insurer’s refusal to extend coverage equally to all couples may prompt disciplinary action from the regulator, said Insurance Department spokesperson Andy Mais.

“Any insurer’s refusal to comply with this decision may result in disciplinary action,” Mais said.

In that case, only Connecticut and Massachusetts marriages would be legal and valid, although Canadian marriages should also be recognized by New York State.


Remembrance event honors transgender deaths — and lives

By Susan Jordan

“I don’t want to talk about death,” said the poem by Ceridwen Troy, which she read at the Transgender Day of Remembrance event at the Gay Alliance Youth Center on Nov. 20.

Ceridwen’s poem went on to celebrate the lives of those lost to bigotry and hatred in 2008, as well as the lives of living transgender people, such as those – male and female, young and old, black and white and Hispanic – assembled at the Youth Center that snowy evening.

Around 20 people heard Ceridwen, and Anya, Kiki, Sela, Ronnie and Pam, talk about their personal struggles and the political struggle to pass GENDA, the NYS anti-discrimination bill which, it is hoped, will become law in 2009.

Ceridwen read the litany of transgender people murdered in the past year: day after day, each marked with the name of another person killed for being who they were:

Katie Telsford, Brian McLaughlin, Gabriela Alejandra Albornoz, Patrick Murphy, Adolphus Simmons, Phaedra, Ashley Swincer, Sanaisha Stewart, Lawrence King, Simmie Williams Jr., Luna, Lloyd Nixon, Felicia Melson-Smith, Silvana Berisha, Ebony Whitaker, Rosa Pazos, Angie Zapata, Jaylinn Namaste, Ruby Molina, Samanthia Rangel Brand, Nikki Williams and the most recent name, that of Lateisha Green, killed Nov. 14 in Syracuse.
MORE MISS GAY ROCHESTER: Olympia LaPaige. (More photos, page 11)

Samantha Vega. Photos: Jim Hanselman

Above: Mistress of ceremonies Aggy Dune. Below: Kasha Davis.

Harry Bronson and Tom Ferrarese. ELC Photos: Ove Overmyer

CORNING EVENT: The film "No Dumb Questions" was screened on Nov. 1 at the Corning Museum of Glass, sponsored by SPECTRA. The film was followed by a presentation and discussion on issues of transgender experience. Left to right: Brad Smith, Melissa Regan (film maker), Corkdwen Troy, Sean Johnston, Phong Diep, Sue Schiefelbein, Scott Fearing and Angela Radka.

EQUALITY LEADERSHIP: Gay Alliance Interim Executive Director Joanne Giuffrida presents the Community Business Award to Kim Calabrese of Lollypop Farm at the Equality Leadership Luncheon on Oct. 30 at the Riverside Convention Center.

D&C columnist Denise Marie Santiago receives the Outshine Media Award from Joanne Giuffrida.
Rochester’s Prop 8 rally on Nov. 15

PHOTOS: billi jo wolf
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The Empty Closet • The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley • Number 419 • December-January 2009
**ImageOut overview:**

**TURNING Women’s Community Chorus**

By Michael Ganella, *ImageOut programming co-chair*

With 10 glorious October days of amazing films that entertained and enlightened, of exciting guest filmmakers and artists who dazzled, of fabulous parties, dedicated volunteers and some of the best film festival audiences in the world, ImageOut closed its 2008 season with a bang!

It was a fitting conclusion to a year that began with the Festival’s biggest special event to date, the hugely successful, sold-out fundraiser comedy concert by the incomparable Kate Clinton, on a wintery evening in February. What a great year it has been!

At the tender age of 16, ImageOut shows a lot of poise and maturity, proving once again to be the premier LGBT cultural event in the region. Its continued success stems not from rehashing a dependable formula, but from focusing on current issues facing the community, expanding beyond perceived boundaries.

This year’s Festival featured a record-breaking 48 programs of 82 feature, documentary and short films from 21 different countries. ImageOut 2008 also featured a complete introduction to the groundbreaking *ImageOut There* Series that sparked educated, entertained and enlightened, of audience singalong of holiday standards and the traditional audience participation from Chorus members; group co-chair P.D.Q. Tannenbaum took home an award certificate and $500 from the MEX Award fund.

A special youth event was held with the screening of “It’s STILL Elementary: The Movie and the Movement.” Community partner GLESEN arranged a panel discussion with educators following the film, providing a forum for discussion of the continuing struggles of LGBT youth against bullying and homophobia in schools. This new documentary, alongside a screening of the original film, reminded us of how far we have come and have yet to go.

Beyond the 10 days of entertainment and enrichment, what makes ImageOut a truly unique experience is its commitment to include as many people from the community as possible. For this reason, the Festival partnered with a record 44 not-for-profit organizations, including PeaceWorks, the Rochester Humane Society and GLSEN, to arrange educational programs, which are included with the screening of the Festival’s biggest special event to date, the hugely successful, sold-out fundraiser comedy concert by the incomparable Kate Clinton, on a wintery evening in February.

The concert will take place at Hochstein Performance Hall, 50 N. Plymouth St., downtown Rochester. Tickets are available at Roberts Outletlandish, The Creator’s Hands, Equal-Grounds and online at www.tapec.com. The Women’s Chorus concert, “Let Nature Sing,” will be Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Hochstein Performance Hall. A silent auction will start at 7. Advance tickets are available at The Parkleigh and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rochester. Group discounts are available for groups of 15 or more. For more information, visit www.tapec.com or call 234-4444.

Even with an increased capacity, three programs still sold out, including the two Opening Night films.

While the film choices proved to be very exciting, the audiences really appreciated the increased number of talk-back sessions this year. Fourteen international actors and filmmakers traveled to Rochester and were available for Q&A for eight film programs, enhancing the Festival experience for those in attendance.

In its fifth year, audience favorite Flower City Flicks, a program of nine local short films, offered its best selection ever. Winning the first ever Mary Elizabeth Knight Award for the Best Local Short was Gerry Szymanski for his bio doc “In-Sight-Out: Mark Gowning.” Szymanski took home an award certificate and $500 from the MEX Award fund.

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One cold and snowy night, Pandora Boxx sets out to buy gifts for her loved ones. Her first stop is Edgerton Floral (151 Park Ave.), where she is recruited to act as Christmas Faery on top of the tree. (Photos: Jim Anderson) PANDORA CONTINUES ON PAGE 8

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**Choruses offer holiday concerts**

The holidays are with us again and the Rochester Gay Men’s Chorus and Rochester Women’s Community Chorus will be providing music and good cheer.

The RMGC will present two concerts, on Dec. 5 and 6. “Naughty and Nice” will be a playful look at the season, featuring a “Boogie Woogie Hanukkah,” a “Co Tannenbaum” turned into “Oh! Christmas Tree!”; some P.D.Q. Bach, a mix of jazz arrangements of familiar tunes and the traditional audience participation singalong of holiday standards with a twist.

The concert will take place at City Auditorium Performance Hall, 50 N. Plymouth St., downtown Rochester. Tickets are available at Roberts Outletlandish, The Creator’s Hands, Equal-Grounds and online at www.tapec.com. The Women’s Chorus concert, “Let Nature Sing,” will be Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Hochstein Performance Hall. A silent auction will start at 7. Advance tickets are available at The Parkleigh and from Chorus members; group discounts are available for groups of 15 or more. For more information, visit www.tapec.com or call 234-4444.

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**The Seen:**

**KEKE VALASQUEZ LORD**

By Michael Stock

www.michaelstock.com

“The Seen” is a series of articles about the people we see in our GLBT community all the time. We may know them by name or may know them by face but however we know them, our scene would not be the same without them. These articles are a tribute to those seen in our scene, in a small attempt to put the unity back into the word “community.” This month’s featured person is the newly crowned Miss Gay Rochester 2009: Keke Valasquez-Lord.

For 36 years, queens have been sashaying and flaunting their bejeweled ensembles and exquisitely coiffured wigs across the stage at the Miss Gay Rochester pageant. Though the days of flaming evening gowns in the toilet and keeping razors in your wig in case someone tried to snatch it off your head are gone, the competition still remains fierce (albeit in a much more keep your enemies closer way).

The 37th year proved to be quite a heated battle, with those high-heeled lady visons bringing their A-game, trying to achieve what is to some is the pinnacle of Rochester drag. One queen triumphed in her goal of wearing the sparkling victory tiara on top of her head and that divine queen was Buddha native the spectacular Keke Valasquez-Lord.

Keke Valasquez-Lord: What does being crowned this year’s Miss Rochester mean to you? Keke Valasquez-Lord: Being crowned Miss Gay Rochester means being a part of history among the best female impersonators in New York State.

MS: There is so much time, effort and money that go into entering a pageant. How did you prepare for this year’s pageant?

KVL: I began to prepare for Miss Gay Rochester 2009 immediately after last year’s pageant. I took the time out to save money and strategize a package that could win the title. I took each individual category from Interview to Crowning and challenged myself to be better than last year.

(THE MISS GAY ROCHESTER pageant is certainly not the only title Keke has won. Since 1999, she has won over 20 pageants (including Miss Gay Buffalo, Miss Canada World Plus, Miss Muthers, Miss Gay Tompkins County) and shows no signs of slowing down her desire to continue winning.)

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**Mocha to host Ball on Dec. 21**

Mocha Project will host a Disturbia Ball, “The House That Stole Christmas,” on Dec. 21 at 289 Alexander St.

Doors open at 8:30 p.m. and the Ball will run from 10 p.m. to midnight. $20 admission for those 13 and up. No alcohol; security on premises.

For information on discounts, call Bernadine Casseus at 620-1400 ext 18.
MS: What motivates you to enter as many pageants as you do? Should I call Pageants Anonymous?
KVL: Well, my close friends do say that it is a sickness. I feel as though I have a genuine interest in the LGBT communities of Rochester, Buffalo, and even more. It is a sense of female impersonation and business sense through pageantry.

MS: So there something you hope to bring to the title of Miss Rochester during your reign?
KVL: Accountability. I want to be known and remembered as a Miss Gay Rochester that made a difference in our community. I have six objectives that I have set out to complete during my reign.

MS: Do you feel that living outside Rochester affects being Miss Rochester at all?
KVL: Absolutely! In Buffalo, the Miss Gay Rochester pageant is looked at as the paramount of drag/female impersonation. In Rochester, people may feel as though “What happens in Rochester stays in Rochester.” So not only do I have to be a symbol of excellence to the LGBTQ communities of Rochester, I have to first prove myself to them to show that this is not a fly-by-night thing, but this is a community that I love and that I am a part of.

MS: Is there a difference at all between the drag scene in Rochester and Buffalo?
KVL: Yes! I feel that each city has its own distinct style of drag/female impersonation. I love working in both Buffalo and in Rochester. This allows me to be creative and continue to reinvent myself.

MS: Do you feel you are treated any differently by other performers because you live your life as a woman? When did you first prove yourself to them that this is not a fly-by-night thing, but this is a community that I love and that I am a part of?
KVL: I have always felt like a woman as long as I could remember. I remember being three years old, putting on my mother’s heels! But I don’t feel like I am being treated differently by other performers. I know that female impersonation isn’t just about physically looking like a woman, but also about being talented, diverse and well rounded.

MS: What makes you feel like a natural teabogger?
KVL: Now that you’ve been embarrassed, I’ll let you redeem yourself. Proudest moment?
MS: I can honestly say that my proudest female impersonation moment was winning the title of Miss Gay Rochester. A lot of my peers told me that it would take five years to win, or that my face will be cracked this year, meaning that the pageant will be rigged. I believed in myself through prayer and by focusing most of my energy on preparing for the title.

MS: You are so nervous during the last week of the pageant, I couldn’t sleep or eat. I prayed to God to guide me and make the victory of “MGR 2009” the victory of Keke Valaquez-Loe.

KVL: And then I walked up the stairs, in the balcony of the Harro East, to interview with the judges, something took me over. With a confidence that I have never experienced in my life, to see that confidence in action, you can check Miss Gay Rochester 2009, Keke Valaquez-Loe guest performing at Mombers (clubmasters.com) on Fridays and performing regularly at Club Marcella in Buffalo (clubmarcella.com). For more information on Keke and to find out where she’ll be, log on to myspace page: mys­pace.com/kekevalaquezloei.

Every Now & Then: Ten Question for Keke Valaquez-Loe

What is your favorite food: Any type of chicken.

What is your favorite swear/cuss word: “Bitch...Your hair is so cute.”

What would you do or say to Paris Hilton if you were in a room alone with her: Gimme some money!

What do you think of George W. Bush: No comment.

What do you think of the latest celebrity trend of going pants less and showing of their butts: I think that there is a time and place for everything.

If you could get it on with one celebrity, who would it be and would you want the tape to get out: A girl never kisses and tells.

Is Paula Abdul drunk on American Idol: No, she’s on some good painkillers!

Sarah Palin or Tina Fey, who would make the better President: Tina.

What would be your dream date: A man that accepts me just for me!

What makes you feel like a natural woman: Living life to the fullest. Doing the simple things that women do in their everyday lives.

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Rochester Pride
Town Hall Meetings for LGBT community and Straight Allies for Rochester Pride 2009

Anyone who would like to be a part of Rochester Pride 2009 is encouraged to attend. (Non-profits, for-profits, fossils, vendors, volunteers, attendees) Your attendance is welcomed and appreciated.

The Community Business Forum will facilitate these town hall meetings where the following will be discussed:
• Dates of Pride Weekend
• Kickoff, Parade, Festival, Picnic
• Location of Pride 2009
• Theme for Pride 2009
• Participation / eligibility
• Deadline for participation

Mark your calendars:
• Sunday, January 25, 2009: 3:45-3:30pm
• Monday, January 26, 2009: 7:8-30pm
• Thursday, January 29, 2009: 5:30-7pm
• Saturday, January 31, 2009: 11:30am-12:30pm

Meeting location:
Gay Alliance Youth Center
870 East Main Street, Suite 500
Rochester, New York 14605

Light refreshments will be served. For more information, please e-mail Oscar Pedroso at Oscar.oscar@gmail.com

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2009

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Another Gay Sequel – release date Dec. 9
Followed with gratuitous male nudity, adorable boys and fart jokes. Another Gay Sequel takes the fake boy comedy and turns it gay-ways.

Their trigger fingers thirst to go after each hero by way to Las Vegas on spring break and compete in a contest to see who can build the most rocking coffin. laser-sensored, completely disgusting and totally female cast as a woman contemplating the ships and relationships. Also stars Annette Bening, Eva Mendes, Debra Messing, Jada Pinkett Smith, Carrie Fisher, Cloris Leachman, Marcia Gay Harden, Bette Midler and the original 1939 film adaptation starred by Olivia De Haviland.

World AIDS Day concert is Dec. 1 at Govea to raise funds for children affected by HIV/AIDS
The annual World AIDS Day benefit performance, “Circle of Life,” directed by Mike Post, features an all-star cast of torch singers. The proceeds will benefit and area children whose lives are affected by HIV/AIDS. It is hoped that enough funds will be raised to enable a summer camp program for them to be re-established.

Out & Equal Winter Cabin Party set for Feb. 7
Save the date! The Annual Winter Cabin Party is back! It will be held at the White House in Webster Park on Saturday, Feb. 7.

Blackfriars Theatre Box Office is located at 248 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604.

Tawa Pano presents holiday show, party on Dec. 18 at Muthers
Tawa Pano Unity Fellowship Church will host a holiday party and show, “Deck the Halls,” at Muthers, 40 S. Union St., on Dec. 18.

The event will run from 7 to 9 p.m. and will feature songs including joyous, rousing, and cool, seasonally inspired music. Tickets are $5 and can be purchased in the building before the event, or by calling 585-588-8591. For more information, email tawapanouf@gmail.com.
Restaurant Review:
BACCO’S RISTORANTE

By Paul Hoffman

Bacco’s Ristorante on Park Avenue seems as if it could be in the European countryside. The converted house, near the Parkleigh, a few doors east of Goodman Street, has been at its present location for 13 years. George Vindigni and Lisa Herrick operate the restaurant about a dozen tables with a small staff including George’s daughter, Stephanie.

George was born in Morocco, moved to France and came to the United States at age 17. He has worked in the restaurant and hotel industry his whole life. George, green patina from behind a small bar that serves as the central hub of the restaurant and Lisa oversees the dining room. A small wait staff handles the dining room, which bustles with activity during the evening hours. Much of the produce, including most of the tomatoes in season, comes from George and Lisa’s organic garden at their Canandaigua home.

The service is attentive and the staff seems to work together seamlessly to create a pleasant casual dining experience. Complimentary bruschetta and small loaf of Italian bread are delivered to the table upon your arrival. A lovely delicate appetizer of fresh mozzarella with firm tannins. At another visit, we had DaVinci Chianti from Leo­nardo DaVinci’s home town of Vinci in Tuscany. That wine is full of fruit, with peppery overtones and a soft finish, a worthy ending to a pleasant meal.

One of the menu’s strengths is a large selection of regional Italian wines. We chose Shingleback McLaren Vale Shiraz, 2005 $30 on one occasion. It’s full bodied, bright, and balanced, with firm tannins. At another visit, we had DaVinci Chianti 2006 from Leonardo DaVinci’s home town of Vinci in Tuscany. That wine is full of fruit, with peppery overtones and a soft finish, a good food wine and a bargain at $24.

Pasty chef Todd Murphy makes most of the desserts. A dessert tray arrives as the dishes are cleared to tempt the diners one more time. We chose the Triple Berry Custard Pie with Crumb Topping. It was good, but our other choice, White Chocolate Cherry Cream Cake, made us really take notice. A slice of this delicious cake was served over a spoonful of vanilla yogurt. The yogurt, sweet cherries in the cake and lemon zest in the butter cream icing all played gleefully on our taste buds. Delicious!

All too often the coffee served in fine restaurants is disappointing. Frequently there seems to be a disconnect between the quality of the food and the coffee that follows it. That’s not the case here. The coffee has a dark, sweet and rich quality, typical of fine European roasts and a worthy ending to a pleasant meal. I’ve noticed that we’ve grown progressively more food of dining at Bacco’s over the time we’ve been going there. I think the allure of this restaurant is related to its small size and its attentive staff, who are warm, welcoming and committed to providing a first rate dining experience. It’s also surely related to Bacco’s attention to numerous small details that many of their larger competitors think are not important.

Bacco’s has stood the test of time and seems only to get better. It remains a prominent member of the Park Avenue neighborhood and an outstanding dining choice in our Rochester community.

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Growing Up

OUR BETTER SELVES

By Eric Bellmann

I was 4 years old, or so I'm told, when a friend called me a racist. Clearly I'd been far too glib with my language. Her accusation offend­ed me.

At the time, I tossed out a couple of snapshots of me and a black chem as evidence of my true nature. But on reflection, to be very hon­est, I had to concede that there were messages in the faces of those who would be familiar: an older white male. He was my choice for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as portrayed by Bradley Cooper. The Bradley effect that white people would express approval and then vote otherwise in an election ballot was apparent to me that this event I'd been following all night on TV wasn't over. It wasn't until the door to my room opened and the driver who'd arrived to take me out to my after-school activity was greeted with her hugs, stories of her amazing life, and a whole lot of advice. Clearly I'd been hearing her voice in my head.

I wonder if there's a gift card for a page marker for my cookbooks. Each time I see her handwriting, I feel her love. And every time I see her at the airport when I'm in the middle of my 48-hour trip and she de­tends to me and she knew, I replay the happy laugh my Gramma gave me 46 years ago.

When grief has smothered my heart, melodies have given the gift of com­pas­sion. When I was 16, I stood in the library with­ing Alice Walker, I rode home with my eyes closed to block out the world that would not mourn with me. My heart could not accept the concept that Walker was "only a cat." I was not of no ritual to go to ease into my altered reality. Then my dear friend handed me a book. Cat Heaven. Looking at this picture started the last great fantasy that my Walker was joyfully, running through celestial meadows. For a moment I dead the idea that this couldn't help me. While I was taping the gift in my hands was calming. It reminded me that love from my furry and non-human friends is as important. When my mother died and I became a 48-year-old orphan, my Aunt Lynne was gripped with her hugs, stories of her amazing life, and a whole lot of advice. And on my table there would be a lemon merigue pie she had baked just for me. I always left with jars of her homemade preserves. Every day I feel her loving attention lingering well beyond the last tasted memory.

I still carry a watch on my wrist that was given to me in my sister's car. She listened patiently as I poured the tears out of my broken heart. My les­bians had left, but it stifely 24-hour watch hours from our relationship, decisively carrying small parts of self out our broken world. Eventual­ly, disconsolate that I was there in my car. She turned away from my plea­ing glance and carried my toolbox out of the house.

When my sobs had subsided, sister­woman gently asked, "She left you for someone else, didn't she? And you thought it would be different with a woman, didn't you?" Sadly that was the first and only such conversation to my finding my first, true, lesbian love would keep me sheltered forever. Afterward I had released that words of pain, I felt unfettered. Peacefulness released the tension in my shoulders. My truth had been heard by my sister. And she had given her unconditional love as a balm, a present Gift.

Therefore the then is the awe­some gift we receive by giving. Since 1990, Claudius and I have celebrated "for Christ­mas" for "We Adopt". We receive our children through the YWCA's Adopt-a-Fam­ily program. Often the wish list includes need - winter coats, books, and mittens. Always we fill festive stockings for the kids with little toys and art supplies. And always we fill one elegant stocking for the mother of our way giving her a virt­ual hug. And always the wish lists are anonymous.

We don't have the money to have. This month, in the shadow of Proposi­tion 8, it is even more important for us to make her feel the love she deserves. We are making our presents to her for 2008.

I am a lesbian; at this moment I live in the shadow of Proposition 8. So I must modify traditions. This year I will come out of the santa disguise. I will sign the gift cards with more than our first name. I will "add with love from two loving lesbians." This year we will give our adopted family a precious gift that cannot be bought in a store. We will give them the gift of the national gay rights move­ment.

The NVT article, titled, "Gay Groups Launch NYS Adoption 'Elections,'" by Jeremy W. Peters, men­tions the many philanthropists and activ­ists that have been part of the war on hate that has caused in our town and throughout the country.

In the past, we have poured tens of thousands of dollars into the State Senate campaign to successfully flip the majority to a pro­GAY activism. We have made sure that pro­GAY NYS assembly members won re-election. We are a community that has a rich, proud tradition of civil rights advocacy — a legacy we take very seri­ously.

Additionally, we should all be very thankful to have one of the top LGBT service organizations (GAVG) anywhere in the United States. I have been told that if you would argue that was not, the Roches­ter LGBT community is just as commit­ted and worked as hard as any other local in the nation — bar none.

To recap some of the more significant events of this season, I was back from February, when we heard the roar of the NYS Appellate Court loud and clear. The landmark decision Martinez v. County of Monroe, giving out-of-state same-sex marriages the same recognition as those within the county.

This garnered the attention of national media syndicates and CBS Logo TV, who interviewed me on May about Pat Martinez and Lisa Ann Gold­en on May 26. The buzz was all about two things: it was so incredibly supportive commentary and some downright vile hate speech about all things equal.
When Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks decided to appeal the March 17 pro-LGBT Ellen Donoghue ruling, our community showed its strength by mobilizing a massive protest on the steps of the Monroe County Building on Feb. 25. Maggie had to answer the tough questions from the media and failed miserably, but that didn’t stop her from continuing to support discrimination against same-sex couples. The good fight rages on.

On April 24, Ellen Donoghue ruled, a political action group called LGBT Friends of Good Government (LGBT FOGG) sued Ellen Donoghue in a federal trial court, bringing the issue to the forefront of the political agenda. This is leveraging their political muscle and making news along the way.

In March, we had the eyes of the world on Rochester when we found a defendant not guilty in a hate crime hearing that originally took place in Rochester in 2006. If the defendant had been found guilty, it would have been the first time in New York State history that someone would have been prosecuted for the sexual orientation hate crime statute that was passed back in 2000. While the DA’s office was prosecuting this case, yet another hate crimes incident that happened in a Spencerport bar on March 8 was ignored.

In that case, Rochester resident Lane Neve, 26, was allegedly punched by an all-ego drunk, hat-fisted knucklehead, head-named Jesse D. Parsons, Parsons, 24 years old at the time, faced a designated second degree assault charge. (See article, page A 1)

It has also made a public activist out of Neve, who doesn’t want to be perceived as a victim. Neve and members of Pride At Work, a local chapter of the AFL-CIO, protested outside the Spencerport Post Office in late March to bring awareness of and into the damaging effects hate crimes can have on our community.

On April 29, ESPA rallied 1,301 supporters of justice and equality in Albany in support of the LGBT rights movement in New York State history. Rochester sent four buses full of activists, largely due to the organizing efforts of David Hull. Television news and syndicated print media companies were everywhere, haranguing every word from leaders in the faith, transgender and labor coalitions.

Chester PBS affiliate WXXI-TV produced a television documentary the lives of three local teens that aired on a national PBS broadcast titled "A Few Bricks Short: All in a Family’s Way". This is a story of a gay teen that people in the community didn’t already know this story. We have known for a long time that kids are coming out at younger and younger ages, but it wasn’t until recently that they reached the news cycles. Their lifework and testimonies and what WXXI’s documentary can change is that this group, make schools safer and open public discussion about justice and equality for all families.

The 2008 election cycle was a mixed bag of optimism and downright sadness.
Confessions of a Serial Blonde
I’VE BEEN THIS WAY BY Robby Morris

I really detest cold weather. It, like the caroling Hills, does nothing for me except put me in a bad mood.

On one particularly nasty day out, I was forced to forgo my usual habit and skip my daily jog. I was in such a bad mood that most of you probably think I use walk in the park as some sort of dirty euphemism for something that’s only good on that cold day. I’m not slavery little but still far up, and through the window I could see the continuing journey of hope that when the end of the day is near I won’t be so large. I’ll have to be buried in a piano case.

Your version is probably more exciting.

Out of sheer desperation to keep to my daily routine, I decided to put my mind clear of it. The next day, I would be my mother’s. I had her Meyers, and I think you might think I used walk in the park as some sort of dirty euphemism for something that’s only good on that cold day. I’m not slavery little but still far up, and through the window I could see the continuing journey of hope that when the end of the day is near I won’t be so large. I’ll have to be buried in a piano case.

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Your version is probably more exciting.
She decides that orchids (proffered by owner Jimmy Catalano) are back in fashion and would look nice in her atrium...

Her second stop is Naughty & Nice (662 Monroe Ave. at the back of Aar-on’s Alley), where she examines the latest in “entertainment wear”. Naughty & Nice’s Cindy says, “If you’re sleeping, you’ve wasted your money.” “Well, I wouldn’t wear it,” Pandora murmurs, as she looks at a virginal, white, frilly bustier. “Do you have anything in black lace?”

After splurging on black lace items for herself, Pandora dashes to Lotus Salon (154 Fitzhugh St. in Corn Hill.) As she waits for her stylist, she catches up on the latest celebrity gossip.

Feeling in need of refreshment, Pandora stops by Nasty D’s (140 Alexander St.) for a pomegranate Cosmopolitan.

A re-energized Pandora now heads for Outlandish (Village Gate). “These ornaments would be perfect for my tree -- and as earrings too!” she exclaims. Robby Morris agrees.

Suddenly, Pandora realizes that it’s almost time for her show at Muther’s (40 S. Union St.). The shopping spree ends before our heroine has purchased gifts for anyone except herself. She sighs, calling to mind the immortal words of Zippy the Pinhead: “Frivolity is a stern taskmaster!”

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...not a circuit party! Would you turn that down?

What, Lance? I can’t hear you!

We should all go out Christmas caroling after this!

A drunken pack of gays roaming the streets! What do you think this is, Mark? Halloween?

Daddy! Brad says Santa’s sleigh is armed with M-16’s and laser rifles to shoot down terrorists!

I’m gonna’ stay up all night, watch for it!

Thanks a lot, Brad.

DADDY! BRAD SAYS SANTA’S SLEIGH IS ARMED WITH M-16’S AND LASER RIFLES TO SHOOT DOWN TERRORISTS!

What the hell are you supposed to be, Jeff? Santa the stripper?

It’s just my way of bringing a little Southern cheer to the festivities!

What? How’d you know?

IT’S JUST MY WAY OF BRINGING A LITTLE SOUTHERN CHEER TO THE FESTIVITIES!

Sorry, Andrew, I was just tryin’ to... y’know... get him into the Christmas spirit.

Right. Maybe you should stick to baseball.

Thank you, Andrew. I was just tryin’ to... y’know... get him into the Christmas spirit.

盯

Yeah, Kyle... that, and stuffing your face.

Kyle... Frosty’s eating the Christmas tree!

Frosty!!!

...make the yuletide gay...

I notice you’ve PLANTED yourself underneath the mistletoe, Jean-Pierre.

Oui, and zee people cannot seem to stay away from here!

That’s because you’re right next to the eggnog.

Looks like you’ve thrown another successful holiday party, Kyle.

I’m just glad we could all be together like this...

With our friends, that’s what I love most about the holidays!

One must... how do you say... work all of zee angles, no?

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Rochester Institute of Technology Student Health Services
Phone: (585) 475-2255 (RTI Students only)
Threshold Center for Alternative Youth Services
Phone: (585) 292-2500/2555, FAX: (585) 292-2500
Women's Gynecology and Childbirth Associates, P.C.
Phone: (585) 294-3430 (Main Office)

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GAY HEALTH
Sti. Prevention is the best way to keep things healthy down there. If you use sex toys with a partner, you should always pur­chase condoms together. This will not just dildos and phal­lalus-shaped toys, but small vibrators, anal plugs or beads, and any toy that comes in contact with the genitals. Change the condom if you use the same toy on more than one person and if you switch the same toy to the anus from the vagina (or vice versa).

If using fingers to please a partner, use latex or poly­urethane gloves or finger cots. Finger cots can be bought at adult shops or online at www.condomania.com. Gloves can be bought pret­ty much anywhere, including the local drug store. Many people prefer the feel of gloves for finger play. Here is a great way to make your own! You can make your own plastic wrap as a dental dam.

As you can see, my watching cowboy shows is like being shaken awake and forced to do some critical think­ing and they came to some conclusions which were much more in step with masculinity that I believe that many can be educated.

We want to hear from you! If you have suggestions for a future Vagina Dialogues topic, contact KaeLyn at krich@pprsr.org. For more information on the issues discussed in this article, visit www.pprsr. org, call our toll free hotline at 1-866- 690-0896, or read our blog, Sexual Justice, at sexualjustice.blogspot.com.

Affirming Gender

LATE NIGHT MUSINGS: THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF THE TRANSEXUALITY GENE

By Diana Lynn

Recently, a group of research­ers funded jointly by Australian and American scientists report that they have discovered a gene thought to be responsible for male to female transsexualism. (See page 15 Newsfronts)

This was the largest study of a pos­sible biological basis for transsexual­ity ever conducted. The results of their study were recently published in the journal, Biological Psychiatry. When we read the research articles that have been published published in the popular press regarding the discovery of a male to female trans­sexual gene, we see that this is but one piece of the puzzle but certainly not all of it... nature and nurture have their say as well... not to mention many other pos­sible biological/psychological influ­ences.

Someone asked me, why even ask the question of why I am like this... who will it help?

I have been trying to think of a way to characterize why I think I should explain that my transsexual­ity was not a choice, even if acting on it could arguably be considered a choice. Many have rightly pointed out that whether or not we know why, civil rights are important for all of us. I do not discount this in the least! What I was trying to find in my own life was something that would shake the so-called “norms” in my life out of any potential naiveté regarding this condi­tion, which has been so mischaracterized for so long. Then I watched Gunsmoke.

As we can see, the Par¶k’s main­stream media show is in clear disregard for the stereo­typical interests of the average female. Of course, we shall see that this side. What I discovered while watching Gun­smoke made me so much aware of the miseducation in matters such as this. To make a long story short, an individual was falsely accused of attempting to kill Doc Adams. In real mob fashion, a group of the righteous began chasing him in order to hang him high.

You see, they were sure that he was guilty. After all, everyone knew that the suspect’s neck. After a simple, irrespon­sible act, the man is saved and all is well in Dodge City! So that’s what’s happened with me. Is there anywhere it will work for oth­ers? Of course not! But I don’t think that the people in my life are all that special or unique and if it can happen for me, it can probably happen for others.

That’s all... but for me it’s enough.

Soul and Inspiration

FAITH

By Rev. Bob Arrington

A sat down, I was certain of the commentary I was about to write about, but the topic quickly left me. Turning to my higher author­ity, she said write on the things called faith. Why? I asked.

She answered, because for eight years many of you have been surviving hard­ships and setbacks, enduring these dilem­mas, due to faith.

Walking with faith, we’ve witnessed the last year of high gas prices, coupled with a weakened economy that’s remi­niscent of the crisis of the late Depression era. Wall Street has finally gotten in Day of Judgment right in front of our very eyes. Through all of these, we have one thing in common, faith.

Yes, many of you who will read this commentary, coming from very differ­ent faith based assemblies, or even no faith based assemblies, can celebrate the authority of faith in your lives. Many may call faith by another name and live out your faith differently from each other, but there is a common belief in the authority and action of faith. Because of faith, we’re about to endure and allow faith to develop us out of the most diff­icult periods of our life.

Many faith based ideology is the foundation of their faith, which helps

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them endure in their life passage. Faith helps many to see through a spiritual lens of the world or to see through a dilemma, which sometimes may appear as disarrayed and bleak. Faith helps one to see beyond their issues in hope. Hindus have faith in the Vedas, Muslims have faith in the Qur'an, Judaism in the Tanakh and I. as a Christian, have faith in the Holy Word called the Bible. All of these faith based assemblies and many other faith institutions are built on and out of our sources of living a wholesome life.

Where am I going with this ideology on faith? We all might not agree and sometimes do not understand everyone's faith, but faith has authority to empower us to distinguish, deal and endure in our daily living. I like to use my own faith ideology and practices in which faith is the thing we hope for, but do not see.

Here is where I am going with this ideology on faith. We as people of color and LGBTQ people need now more than any time to join those such as Todd Blank of the Empire State Pride Agenda, Ralph Carter and the Gay Alliance to help in this fight for our legal rights as citizens of this country.

Yes, the position of this fight might be build on marriage and other issues that might not address our immediate issues, but at the end of the day it affects the dreams of all of us in the LGBTQ Community of being treated and honored as equal.

Now is the time when, whatever faith based assembly you come from or are currently practicing, we need to use our faith to bring about change. Although we have seen a man of color enter into the highest office of the land, we people of color have a long way to go. As LGBTQ people, we see the things we hope for can happen, through this word called faith, yet we have not seen it all come to pass. People of the LGBTQ community will get there one day.

The late Reverend Dr. King quoted, "As justice rolls like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream," in other words, until all the issues of what I am treated and identified as equal, I will be this river and a never-failing stream in the fight for justice of my LGBTQ Community. As an activist of humanity, I also fight for justice for all of humanity. Even as we join together as one, not only from our varied faith based assemblies or self-faith, but also from our culture, ethnic and sexual orientation. With all of these, they sometimes present themselves as barriers to coming to the table of justice and equality for all. We can achieve a united front to win our rights as the last exile cluster of people of this country. Then we can use the authority of our faith as Reverend Dr. King, who used Mahatma Gandhi's ideology to help his action that we witnessed called the civil rights movement. He achieved the signing of the civil rights bills for black people of this country. If we can use the authority of our faith and ideology, we can see one day a signing of an equal marriage rights bill for the LGBTQ community and then we can see the signing of a bill that removes all barriers and allows us as LGBTQ people to have the same full rights as all other U.S. citizens.

So use your faith to help bring in change now to a changing world. Use the authority of your faith and believe that you can change things, or do away with anything that is not for the betterment of humankind.

**Acting on Faith**

**Two ImageOut Films REVEAL THE THINGS WE DO FOR LOVE**

By Todd Plank

This regular column is organized by Interfaith Advocates for LGBT People, formed in 1991 to seek increased awareness, understanding and inclusion of LGBT people by our individual congregations and by the larger community. For more information, call 585-271-7649, write to interfaithadvocates@interfaithadvocates.org, or visit www.interfaithadvocates.org to find resources, events, welcoming congregations, and to sign the Interfaith Statement in Support of Equal Marriage for All.

Two films at ImageOut's 16th Rochester Gay & Lesbian Film & Video Festival last October explored the interplay of the dynamics of family, religion, society and homophobia and the overwhelming impact that these influences can play on an individual's life.

Having been raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I understand all too well how the powerful interplay of these social dynamics can suppress the human spirit and force individuals and families into making choices that result in devastating and sometimes irreversible outcomes.

The film _Saw Me_ starring the openly gay actors Chad Allen and Robert Gant (from Queer as Folk), is a moving portrayal of a group of gay men of varying ages and life experiences who seek refuge at Genesis Houses.

Mark, played by Allen, has been spiraling out of control in a vicious cycle of drug-induced sex that provides immediate gratification and a welcome escape from an intolerable and insupportable environment that leads to an unsuccessful suicide attempt, Scott, who has zealously sought to be "cured" of his homosexuality and desperately seeks the forgiveness, approval and unconditional love of his dying dad, receives only further condemnation from his father when, on his deathbed, he quotes scripture condemning his son's past gay lifestyle.

Each of the house "guests" have arrived at Genesis Houses in search of a better life and as the viewer is given a window into their lives, it becomes apparent that they are all seeking solace, healing and a life with meaning and lasting purpose.

Each of them is trying to find his place in a society that has punished them for their failure to conform to heterosexual expectations that they are all seeking solace, healing and a life with meaning and lasting purpose. Each of them is trying to find his place in a society that has punished them for their failure to conform to heterosexual expectations that they are all seeking solace, healing and a life with meaning and lasting purpose.

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Say What!

By Paul Johnstone and Bonnie Reda

On the rebound

Bounce, bump... Bounce, bump... Bounce, bump... Bonnie (not her real name) of Bonnie trying her hand at shooting from the three-point line. That’s the sound of someone rebounding from one relationship to the next.

My big as Bonnie will tell you that rebound relationships are alive and well, but I just say that’s a cop-out. Starting a relationship with one person while still holding on to someone else is not a rebound relationship; it’s called hedging one’s bets. That’s much worse than any supposedly rebound relationship, believe me I know of what I speak.

Let’s face it, we just don’t hook up with every Tom, Dick and Harry (or Deb, Carol and Pat for my lesbian friends). We hook up with someone who fits our criteria; those criteria usually start with looks because we have to start somewhere. The rest of the criteria will hopefully follow.

Once the relationship does get past the initial stages, the two people either continue to move forward or not. But it’s not a rebound relationship if one chooses not to move forward; it’s called being a downer. Either way, even if someone finds someone new up again to this new person, one realizes that looks aren’t everything (I cannot believe I just said that once out since you’ve found someone you have real chemistry with, you’ve gotten past half the battle.

People who use the rebound excuse are the people who refuse to experience new things, adventures and lives and who compare the new relationship to the old relationship. You can’t compare it because it’s like comparing elephants and human beings. It’s a cop-out to say you met someone on the rebound; that’s ensuring you have an outlet for not trying to make it past the rebound stage. What they should really say is, “This person is really not what I’m looking for, I want someone else” or “I want to try someone I used to be with. In fact, I wish I was still with the other person.”

Well, sweetheart, you aren’t going to find someone who exactly like the person you were with, because it’s not possible. Even if you look like your past beau, but they won’t match up 100 percent.

People who use the rebound excuse are looking for “the perfect relationship.” Instead of trying to grasp the impossible or make something that wants something they are never going to be, just either enjoy the relationship you’ve been blessed with or enter a monastery (or a nunnery depending on your gender).

Giving up is a quick way to ensure a relationship will die and using someone else as an excuse to give up is simply avoiding the real issue. Being afraid of getting hurt again. One shouldn’t give up because it’s hard; instead, change tactics. Just open your heart to new possibilities and one of the past you cannot recapture it, you can only capture new memories.

Stop bouncing the ball and ease into your relationship... experience if fully and give it the best you’ve got. You need nowhere to go. Need to be surrounded by love. That we can only truly receive love when we are authentic human beings and thus can finally trust that we are being loved.

On the rebound

He-lo-ho, happy holidays, my lesbian and gay friends.

Gather round and you shall hear the story of a rebound relationship. An especially holiday oriented type “relationship.” For this during this time of year, when loved ones gather near, that the fear of being single gives way to honest emotions, for some.

Exiting the elevator to the lobby she was greeted by the smiling face of a woman she’d had several dates with in the preceding two weeks. In the woman’s cute little hands was a gorgeous flower arrangement and Bonnie was deeply touched.

With that one gesture, Bonnie’s heart began to tap in her direction she wasn’t prepared to hear. “Hanging come one” at 39, Bonnie had stumbled, tripped and fallen her way down the bumpy road of relationships and she decided it was time to slow down. Had there been a Lesbian 101 manual, Bonnie would have doused well, as those were the days she would agree, to have read it cover to cover.

However, Bonnie’s instincts washed away the Christmas beach, as endless telephone calls and text messages, emails, noon time lunches, and visits to each other’s homes became the spice of life.

As the holiday season began, Bonnie and her now gal pal were beginning to look like a couple. And that is when Bonnie first heard about the “ex.”

As yes, boys and girls, we all know a story or two. Jennifer, 30, a documentary photographer in Iran who are placed in an incomprehensible predicament.

The documentary Be Like Others follows the lives of several biological men in a country where you cannot express your gender. Both male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals at varying stages of their gender dysphoria, is filmed interviewing extended family on religious grounds that I had built up over decades (I’m now 45), I couldn’t help but ask. How did it end you ask? Well, Bonnie is the cure to their human differences.

Bonnie became a sounding board for the most minute details of flower girl’s ex relationship and she decided it was time to slow down. Had there been a Lesbian 101 manual, Bonnie would have doused well, as those were the days she would agree, to have read it cover to cover.

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While Obama spoke the words "gay and straight," I thought. We won this presidential battle, but Carl Rowe and his Rovean wanna-bes will not surrender the war. Denouncing queers and keeping them from the rights and privileges of straight Americans energizes the right wing of the Republican Party. Unfortunately, we would also soon be reminded that haterism is nonpartisan. The four anti-gay ballot initiatives passed.

The day after the election, I felt like Scrooge at Christmas time. Finally, I emailed friends, expressing my bitter-sweet feelings over the election results. The response was overwhelming: queers and straight friends, black and white, and Latino, replied with expressions of their own joy and disappointment. One black straight friend even offered me airtime on his radio show.

But this sense of solidarity, the joy that the victory over Obama's win was soon tempered. Post-election polling suggested that a disproportionate percentage of African Americans as compared to European American and Latino voters voted yes on Proposition 8 in California, and fallout in the LGBT community has been disastrous—potentially having a long-term impact as damaging as the proposition itself.

Some white LGBT bloggers and demonstrators channeled their anger against blacks over the passing of Cali­fornia's Proposition 8, even to the point of shouting racist verbal attacks at black anti-Proposition 8 demonstrators. These attacks were as ridiculous as they were ugly, given that those who were being attacked were also queers.

Did the white demonstrators think that black LGBT folks would benefit from anti-gay initiatives? Probably not, but their racism reared its ugly head, given that homophobia and racism are still alive and strong in America, well, there's always 2012. It's tragically ironic that at a time when Obama brings so many Americans together, some queers draw lines in the sand. If we can't stop over these lines out of human decency, then we'd better stop over them for our survival.

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- Pam Barres: 4
- Deb Oppenheimer: 4
- Patrick Pizano: 3
- Denise Fennerty: 3
- Kirby Morrant: 3
- Annie Tuscher: 2
- Tess Watts: 2
- Brad Smith: 2
- Lisa Brown: 2
- Michael Hardy: 2
- Deb Hentsch: 1
- Steve Lovi: 1
- Ally Howell: 1
- Lima: 1
- Debra Mayer: 1
- Darla Ritzlaw: 1
- Tony Petti: 1

Community Safety

The Burden of Unforgiveness

By Kelly Clark

Recently, the Gay Alliance was invited to become a partner with the Finger Lakes Regional Center for the Arts’ national campaign for love and forgiveness. The project is being spearheaded here in Rochester by WXXI and The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). Upon my arrival at GAGV after last month, this project was given to me as part of the Community Safety Program portfolio.

I am super excited about this project and, in fact, it is the perfect way to introduce our new Community Safety Program to the community. You might ask, “What do love and forgiveness have to do with community safety?”

“Evening!” is my answer. (Safety continues page 2)

Youth Update

Kids Today

By Jess Fearing

It always surprises me to hear adults in our community say “I wish kids today have it so much easier.” They speak with anger that gives me shivers. Because if you ask most of the 400-plus youth who access services through the Gay Alliance, they will tell you just the opposite.

What does it mean to be an LGBTQI+ teenager today? Does it mean the same thing for everyone? Do queer youth today truly have it “easier” than previous generations?

Each year, the youth program is privileged to take part in the Intergenerational Panel, hosted by the Rainbow Seniors. And each year, I bring a pochette of tissues to dry my eyes after each story. Each and every story. Because while many things have changed, many things have remained so much the same.

At last Sunday’s youth group, a 15-year-old kid literally has hands up into fists when talking about his father. With the bitter tone and the tale in the middle of the story, this kid, he stated, “My dad doesn’t care. He gets in my face and I just give it right back to him. I hate him.”

Another young girl, so quiet you can barely hear her, says, “I can’t talk to my爸爸 at all.”

Outreach Program:
RESOLUTIONS YOU CAN KEEP

By Joanne Gatsbourn

It’s right around the corner. Thinking about your New Year’s resolutions? Gonna give up doughnuts forever? Gonna join a fitness club and work out three times a week? Gonna clean out the basement? Boring! Only you’ll just end up getting angry to yourself if you don’t follow through. Besides, life is too short to give up getting angry with yourself.

What about this year’s New Year’s advice:

Work out an hour a day when you’d rather be home. Don’t make yourself crazy, and don’t overwork yourself if you have to skip a day.

Take the stairs.

(Safety continues page 2)

Fearing Nothing

SILENCE BECOMES SHAME

By Scott Fearing

In her book, The Family History: A Memoir of Our Son’s Coming Out, author Robb Forman Dow recounts her own and her family’s reactions to her son’s coming out.

The book is a little dated, the references to a gay and muscle decorating schemes are old, frightening and enjoying equal rights. We need the addition of individuals and groups working to empower LGBTQI+ people, to affirm their identity, and to create an atmosphere where the rights of our community can thrive both collectively and individually. We need to be advocates for civil rights for all and for the eradication of homophobia.
SUNY students/Safe Space Training at University of Rochester (staff)

**Outreach continued from page 1**

Walk places where you can. Gay or straight or queer, our families come in so many different shapes and sizes. Some families are polyamorous groups make their families together, older friends become caretakers for children, and uncles and grandparents fill the gap when a parent is lost, networks of friends and family members, friends, neighbors and teachers, members of faith communities, etc. Our dialogue series is free and open to members of the LGBT community, friends and allies. We will meet during February and March (specific dates to be determined.) Dinner will be included. Participants must make a commitment to attend all four dialogue sessions.

For more information or to register, please contact me at Gay Alliance at 244-8560, ext 19.

**The number of incidents reported decreased during some months but not in others. There certainly has been an interesting roll-screen like flow of reporting. There have been many heavy events: mine news for instance in early March, eight in July, and 10 in September.

In May I shared with you a list of 10 reasons why people don't report and 10 reasons why they do report. And again I would like to encourage people to call us to report any incidents of harassment or violence. I am sure these numbers don't realistically reflect the violence and hate crimes directed at our community members and within our community at each other.

With the creation of our new Community Safety Program, I hope we can help increase the reports called in, as well as increase the overall safety and security of our community.

Former Executive Director Christopher Hinesley and I had a meeting with Chief Moore to discuss more about this report in July that he "agreed to work closely with the Gay Alliance to enhance the community's ability to train to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender information. This curriculum development is in its early stages, and will be the next round of training.

I have had reports of people's landlord being supportive and concerned enough about their LGBT tenants to a family of shared and press charges. Once again, GREAT NEWS!!

I have had calls for help and referrals from counselors, health care providers, LGBT-friendly and supportive communities of faith and services for LGBT youth.

These folks from out of town found us on the web, at www.gayalliance.org, to talk about LGBT issues in their own communities and things happening around town.

On Friday night, Jan. 9, from 6-9 p.m. and all Saturday, Jan. 10, from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., the amazing Scott Janssen of Scott Janssen Consulting will be offering his Successful LGBT Educator Training to anyone who would like to learn how to effectively educate people about LGBT issues.

There will also be an optional practice session on Wednesday, Jan. 14, from 6-9 p.m. The training will take place in the Gay Alliance Youth Center (61-2 E. Main St., first floor), and talk with family members, friends, neighbors and communities about issues in the area. This is an important conversation for LGBT people.

"Why did you choose to be gay?"

"Doesn't the bible say that homosexuality is a sin?"

"Do you really think that gay men should be allowed to teach children?"

"I heard thatOK, that one doesn't usually come up, but it's best to be prepared. None of your damn business, of course, but, in fact, the best way to respond to this is simply to say, "I'm gay."

You can attend this training just to broaden your knowledge about LGBT issues, or you can act as a potential volunteer for the Gay Alliance for any school or organization that is made up of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and straight allies and are always looking for new volunteers.

Speakers Bureau members go out in groups to speak to universities, colleges, organizations, churches, to share our stories and answer questions openly and honestly.

You don't have to be an expert on LGBT issues, you just need to answer the questions. You don't have to be patient with the answers, you don't even have to be gay! This training, along with our speaking engagements and partners throughout the year, will help to provide the skills that you need.

"Thank you for the Successful LGBT Educator Training, please contact Jeanne (Outreach continues page 4)"
Pride at Work: What's BEER about DO IT WITH IT?

By Ben Watten, President, Pride at Work Rochester/Flager Rochester

LGBT rights in the workplace – what’s the significance of this long overdue piece of legislation?

It turns out, a lot.

Maybe not the beer so much as the social connections that happen when you share a beer with other union members, like bricklayers, communication workers and teamsters, who usually are straight and clueless about LGBT issues. It turns out that creating social change is about making relationships, changing people’s minds one person at a time.

Fortunately for me, I like beer and so enthusiastically, effortlessly, I sit with the union guys and gripe about the company and joke about life at home with the spouse. Once in a while I seamlessly drop in a consciousness-raising statistic or fact that reveals how vulnerable LGBT workers are in the workplace. Maybe what the lack of benefit equity or family healthcare access means to LGBT workers and their families. Maybe what happens financially to same sex couples, denied legal marriage, if their partner has a heart attack.

You can see it in their faces when these union guys finally get it – that LGBT people are not just working for a living, they are wanting a decent living, wanting to protect their homes and families. Suddenly they realize that LGBT rights are workers rights, not special rights.

From the top levels, unions support LGBT equality issues, including marriage. But what the votes-approved Proposition 8 mess in California taught us is that real social equality starts with the people who sit at the bottom up. Legislators and organization leaders may be on board, but if your co-workers, neighbors or baristas don’t see the light, you are not equal. This is the future. We need to come together and make the past in the order to affect the future.

Locally, we had several candidates who made LGBT equality a top priority. Several candidates came forward without any hesitation to their constituents. At least for LGBT equality. Several candidates came forward with no hesitation to their constituents. At least for LGBT equality.

Since Nov. 4, I didn’t think that a gay President was possible, but now I have a dream of a day when my children are not judged by the gender of who they love, but by the content of their character.

GLSEN Update: THAT’S SO GAY!

By Courtney Michie

Did you know that over three-quarters of LGBT teens hear slurs such as “faggot” or “dyke” on a regular basis at school or after school? GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) has an exciting opportunity this year to partner with the Ad Council in the first national multimedia campaign to combat the phrase “that’s so gay” in schools.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of the harm caused by the word “that’s so gay” and encourages them to “knock it off!” With supportive celebrities like Wanda Sykes and Hill Harper, a variety of public service announcements, the campaign has attracted national attention. It is scheduled to run for 10 weeks beginning in October and continue for 18-24 months. The campaign includes public service announcements (PSAs), radio clips and posters. Check it out www.thinkb4yspeak.com to learn more.

GLSEN Rochester is thrilled to take part in the campaign by reaching out to our own local media outlets. Audiences at various ImageOut films were able to enjoy GLSEN public service announcements at this year’s film festival, with special thanks to Michael Gamilla for creating space for GLSEN’s new PSA. We received great feedback from plenty of satisfied festival-goers, and we’re eager to find additional venues for these amusing yet thought-provoking PSAs and radio clips. We’re hoping to get the campaign out to local schools, movie theaters, television stations and radio stations. If you would like to run a PSA, radio clip or poster, please let us know!

Another big event for GLSEN this year is the No. 1 PSA, an entry into the AIDS Walk. We are proud to be partnering with The Baobab Cultural Center and the Anti-Bullying project for their upcoming Expression events for students, Grades K-12, in the Monroe County area. Artwork displaying that “Toleration is the key to peace” will be exhibited throughout the week of Jan. 26-30 at The Baobab. Our walk will be held with an entertaining discussion of proposition ban marriage between same-sex couples and Arkansas passing an archaic initiative to not allow gay people to adopt children.

We are a strong community. When we were about to throw in the towel, we gave our own families. When AIDS ravaged our community in the 1980s and 90s, we rose up and made people listen and figure it out. And now that we are fighting for our equality, we have for years, we are making great headway by working together, yet we have so far to go. Just as it took many years of concentrated action and time and effort, so will ours. The key is in the future. We need to come together and make the past in the order to affect the future.

Locally, we had several candidates who made LGBT equality a top priority. Several candidates came forward without any hesitation to their constituents. At least for LGBT equality. Several candidates came forward with no hesitation to their constituents. At least for LGBT equality.

Since Nov. 4, I didn’t think that a gay President was possible, but now I have a dream of a day when my children are not judged by the gender of who they love, but by the content of their character.

State of the Union: PATIENCE & PERSISTENCE YIELD RESULTS

By Todd Plank

One passionate Rochester activist who helped organize Rochester’s local protest in front of City Hall on Saturday, Nov. 15 declared this day of nationwide protest against California’s Proposition 8 as our “Pettis Bridge.”

This reference prompted me to do some research about this historic bridge and reflect on its relevance to the civil rights struggle of LGBTIQ people in the 21st century. This is what I learned:

In late February 1965, Jimmie Lee Jackson, a teenager in Perry County, Alabama, was shot and killed by a state trooper during a peaceful demonstration. The black community came together in outrage and dedication they decided to take their grievances over segregation and police violence to the courthouse in Montgomery.

When Gov. George Wallace for­bade demonstrators from marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to Washington, D.C., appealing to President Lyndon Johnson to permit the march. The marchers began their march out of Selma. “When the marchers reached the city limits, they found a crowd of troopers waiting for them. As the demonstrators crossed the bridge leading out of Selma, Alabama, they were ordered to cease. However, the troopers did not wait for their warning to be heeded. They immediately attacked the crowd of people who had boused their heads in prayer. Using tear gas, batons and police dogs the troopers chased the demonstrators to a%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%
(Outreach continued from page 2) at 585-244-8640 ext. 14 or jeanneg@ gayalliance.org.
Registration is $30, which includes refreshments. Scholarships are available. Ask for details when you register. Registration is mandatory and cannot be processed through the phone, only by email.

Registration is closed at request before Monday, Dec. 29, 2008. Please come if you can!

* The Gay Alliance Speakers Bureau: It's a mind-opening experience.

(Youth continued from page 2) My parents didn't have a gay role model. One accepted me. But the other, not at all.
Later, when she smiles and laughs out loud, you can see her confidence, but as an outsider you still see vulnerability in her happy moments.

Another young self-identified lesbian comes to group and announces she has a girlfriend. This is her first and joy leaks out of her as she tells everyone about it. This is spreading to anyone near her. This same girl has had to defend herself daily at school. Educate not only herself, but her teachers and peers. Her school has no Gay-Strait Alliance. Because even though it is right, the Gay-Straight Alliance administration doesn't have to make it easy. And passing math class is hard enough.

Even the kids with PFLAG parents are not exempt from homophobia, transphobia, discrimination and bullying at school. It comes in all forms — from teachers telling a girl to stop talking to her ("boyfriend", she really is just a boy and a friend) to peers shouting gay slurs in the hallway. Even if a high school has a Gay-Strait Alliance, several kids have said they are scared to go because of being seen at the "gay clubs." In Biology, when every other grad is learning about sex-education, the LGBTQ students wonder which safe sex rules they should follow. And later, when the cafeteria worker tells you that you are "going to hell" for wearing a rainbow bracelet, who will listen? Who will do something about it?

When I come out, not that long ago, my barriers were limited. Newly independent, I didn't have to worry about parents kicking me out, financial resources being denied, or similar matters. Still, I cried for weeks in preparation and imagined the worst. The worst didn't happen. So, but for many of these kids, it does. They are scared to come out, yet are bullied and physically abused, spiritually threatened. They are alone. Until they find the Gay Alliance Youth Center.

When I was a participant in the Young Adult Program, I called the GAGY my "second home." When kids today repeat those sentiments, I get all warm and fuzzy and feel inside. Because for many kids, their "second home" is better than their first. Here, they have a voice and a handful of adults who will listen to it. They have books and videos that are about kids like them. They have information and access to resources they didn't know existed. For the first time, they may have a safe place to be themselves. They are lucky to have LGBTQ Youth Centers and GSAs. They are lucky to grow up with Will & Grace and Ellen and have more role models than they ever could have had. They aren't always lucky. The Youth Center doesn't protect them from being bullied. Government doesn't make their school a safe a place. Ellen DeGeneres dancing on television may make their mom laugh, but it doesn't make her okay with having a lesbian daughter. Luck has very little to do with their journey. And for each adult, each person who comes out will face challenges that can be overcome with support.

Blessings are mixed for LGBTQ teens. The opportunity to come out is not always a safe option. While the Gay Alliance continues to support gay teens, there are many closeted teens who feel safe from closing their closet door closed, while pressure from our peers may cause us to myi fear coming out. We need to be open without preparation for what is on the other side.

(Plank continued from page 3) inform us on how to best proceed in our fight for full citizenship in our state and in our nation. In 2008, on the cusp of 2009, we found ourselves looking out on a very different political and cultural landscape than that of the 1960s. We still have to address the federal and numerous DOMAs and anti-equality constitutional amendments that have to be reversed. And while many of us feel a great sense of optimism as we eagerly anticipate "A New Day Dawning" under the leadership of President-Elect Barack Obama and a Democratic administration, as well as a Democratic-controlled Congress, I suspect that we will need to have very realistic expectations for the early years of his term (hopefully term3) in the White House as he deals with priorities like the economy and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, any doubt that Obama intends to stand behind his words and personal convictions on LGBT rights issues has been put to rest, as his transition website now lists his civil rights agenda for the LGBT community, including expanding hate crimes statutes, fighting workplace discrimination, supporting civil unions and federal rights for same-sex couples, opposing a federal DOMA repeal, and expanding adoption rights.

The Pride Agenda will continue to play its role and exercise its political insight and muscle to win marriage for LGBT New Yorkers. I am already exploring the possibility of organizing a town hall meeting to do what the Pride Agenda does best — to offer our community and allies a window into the dynamics in play in Albany and a statewide strategy for passing a Marriage Equality Bill. GENDA and DASA for All Students (DASSA).

The Pride Agenda will be offering lobbying training workshops early in the New Year. We will be expanding the training to include our other two legislative priorities, GENDA and DASA.

Anne Tischer and Bess Watts, who recently received the Gay Alliance's Community Leadership Award, have both been through this program and have repeatedly told me how this was a catalyst to their becoming activists and leaders in the LGBT civil rights movement.

The Pride Agenda's next statewide lobby day, Equality & Justice Day, falls on Tuesday, April 28, 2009. Save the date now!

And in the meantime, connect with like-minded activists at the Pride Agenda's monthly IMPACT team meetings at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. Contact me at 585-271-2420 or email tanksplunk@prideagenda.org.

And remember, our civil rights struggle, like those proceeding us, is not a moment, it's a MOVEMENT!

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Happy Holidays from the Rainbow Seniors of Western New York

Events & Programs

- Luche
- Coffee Talk
- Potlucks
- Walking Group
- Workshops
- and Fun, Fun, Fun

www.rainbowseniorswny.org

Check out our website for a complete list of all our events and for more information on our organization.

rainbow Seniors of Western New York

121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, New York 14614
Phone: 585 325-1640
ROCHESTER GAY MEN'S CHORUS
By Michael Davey
We've been quite busy this month, preparing for our holiday concert, as well as planning for our annual PrimalDonor event, this year held at Lorraine's Food Fair on Calverton Rd.
A heartfelt thanks goes out to Lorraine and her staff for making us feel welcomed, as we sang a couple musical selections during the event.
As soon as our holiday concert is over, it will be time to prepare for our upcoming concert in March, "Women Of Song," with special vocal guests, Rochester's very own "Women Of Note." A thank you goes out to all in attendance, at it's each and every one of you that helps keep the holiday spirit alive and strong through our music.
And, as always, we're looking for volunteer assistance to help out, whether it's helping to usher at our concerts, or just helping in the office...be a part of RGMC. Give us a call to find out more, or visit our website at www.rgmc.org.
We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season!

ROCHESTER GLBTQI MOTORCYCLE GROUP
We had some great times this year; it's about time to put the bikes to bed for a couple of months of rest. Some new members, great rides, fun meets and great company. What more could you ask for?
It has been a lot of fun riding in a group and meeting people. We meet and frequent places around the area that support Gays and Lesbians. We have had short and long rides all over the area for both people just starting to ride, and experienced riders. The feedback has been very positive to our group ride meets and rides.

For more information, look at our Yahoo group profile: RochesterGLBTQ!
You can also call Bob at 678-1956, or e-mail bmdaniel6@frontiernet.net. Let's ride with pride!

ROCHESTER RAMS M.C.
We'll kick off the Rochester winter season with Long Johns Barnyard on Dec. 20 at the Bachelor Forum, from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Put on your snuggles and join the crew for hot times on a cold night. Just don't forget to button the back flap.
We're bringing back the hard core look with "Leather and Chains" barnight, which will be held on Jan. 17 at the Bachelor Forum from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. All leather and chrome gear, like chains, har­nesses, chains, is encouraged.

The Rochester Rams M.C. is Rochester New York's foremost gay motorcycle and leather club as well as being one of the oldest clubs of its type in the country. All who are interested in the leather club scene are invited to check us out.
Our general meeting is open to the public and we meet the Wednesday before bar night at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are held at our house bar, the Bachelor Forum, 670 University Ave. Our next general meetings will be held on Dec. 17, Jan. 14 and Feb. 18.
For more info, visit our website: www.rochestermc.com.

TRANSMEN GROUP
A social activity group for transmen meets on the third Saturday of the month.
Questioning individuals and SOPA's welcome.
For information on time and place, contact Jeanne Gainsburg, Gay Alliance Outreach Coordinator, at 244-8640, ext 14; or e-mail Sean at scanryan_jeffe@frontiernet.net.

Worshiping In The Roman Catholic & Episcopal Traditions Since 1975
Dignity-Integrity/Rochester Christmas HYMN SING with Tim Schramm
Sunday, Dec. 28 at 5 p.m.
St. Luke & St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church
17 South Fitzhugh St. at Broad St. in downtown Rochester
Free info: Info in the EC Groups section C 234-5092 info-line info@adel-rochester.org or www.di-rochester.org
Youth Stats
October 2008
New Intakes: 18
Avg. Drop-in Attendance:
• October 2007: ....... 22.
• October 2008: ....... 30.14

Peer Support Group
Facilitated
By Jess & Kevin Coffey
Support Group
Ages 16-23
Second and Fourth
Tuesday of the month
6-7 PM
Got the blues? LONELY?
Been There?

Gay Alliance Youth
Art by Lamontie Thurman

Youth
Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley
Youth Services for Rochester area LGBTQ and allied youth ages 13-25
Check out what is happening:
• www.gayalliance.org
• or contact JessC@gagv.us

Youth Center Happenings
• Drop-in: Monday and Wednesday 2-6pm
• Support Groups
  • Sunday 2pm-4pm ages 13-23
  • Sunday 4:30pm-6pm ages 18-25
• Special Interest Programming
  • Transgender Youth
  • Arts and Crafts
  • Movies
  • Writing
• Special Events
  • Youth Dances
  • Day of Silence
  • Big Gay Prom
• Pool Table
• LGBTQ Youth Library
• Internet Access

Adult Volunteers Needed
Fun, friendly, safe adults are needed to volunteer their time and talents, providing positive role models, maybe sharing a talent or skill.

Contact Jeanne Gainsburg, Outreach Coordinator for an application:
JeanneG@gagv.us
585-244-8640 x14
The more people you have unprotected sex with the more likely you are to get Syphilis.

Free testing Monday/Thursday 5-8pm 1350 University Avenue, AIDS Rochester, Inc.

For more information Call 585-442-2220 or www.aidsrochester.org
HUTHER-DOYLE
HELPING YOU PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER

NOW OFFERING SPECIALIZED CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY TREATMENT TO THE GAY - LESBIAN - BISEXUAL COMMUNITY
SAFE AND CARING ENVIRONMENT
EXCLUSIVE GLB TREATMENT GROUP
SENSITIVE TO GLB ISSUES
GLB EXPERIENCED CLINICIAN
(585)-325-5100
360 East Avenue
Rochester, New York 14604

Rochester Women's Community Chorus
presents
Let Nature Sing
a musical evening celebrating life
Saturday, December 13 · 7:30pm
Silent Auction starts at 7
Hochstein Performance Hall
50 N Plymouth Ave., Rochester
Advance tickets available from Chorus members at Parkleigh Pharmacy.
Group discounts available to groups of 15 or more.
More information:
www.theRWCC.org · 585.234.4441

New Dinner Hours
Monday · Tuesday · Wednesday
11am to 3pm
Thursday · Friday · Saturday
11am to 9pm
Sunday Breakfast
8am to 2pm
Private Parties
Bar Mitzvah Parties
Bridal Showers
Baby Showers
Graduations

ON & OFF-SITE CATERING AVAILABLE
**Every week there are four regularly scheduled GLBTI AA meetings in Rochester.**

What makes GLBTI recovery a bit different is that we recognize: issues surrounding our sexuality can contribute to our alcoholism and addiction; coming out and coming to terms with ourselves as alcoholics or addicts can be as traumatizing as coming out and coming to terms with our sexuality; other drugs of abuse run rampant in our community and we do not exclude those so addicted (you will not be shouted down for speaking words like pot, cocaine, crack, heroin, ecstasy, f, speed, meth, pills, etc.,); the bars play a large role in socialization within our community which can present challenges even when we are fully committed to our sobriety.

After our meetings, we frequently go out for coffee, dinner, movies, whatever, while it's tempting to stay in the fold of GLBTI recovery, we live and work in a predominantly straight society, so we encourage our members to include "straight" meetings in their program.

Open meetings are open to alcoholics and addicts as well as to our partners, friends, family and anyone else interested in the AA program of recovery. Closed meetings are limited to alcoholics and addicts. We ask that partners, friends, family and curiosity seekers respect our privacy.

### Wednesdays

**New Freedom/New Happiness Group**
7 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Rd. Bus riders: Take the last #18 University bus to 12 Corners. Use the stop just past the top of the hill at Hillside Ave. and before Highland Ave. Or take the #1 Park Ave. to the corner of East and Winton, then walk five minutes south (uphill) on Winton. This is an open discussion meeting. All issues – as they relate to our alcoholism/addiction and recovery – are fair game.

### Fridays

**Gay Men’s**
7:30 p.m. at Emmanuel Baptist Church, 815 Park Ave.
- Closed meeting, restricted to alcoholics and addicts
- Men’s meeting
- Handicapped accessible

This is a round-robin discussion meeting. If you are shy about meeting people or speaking up in a group, you will find this meeting particularly warm and inviting because everyone gets their turn to speak for peak. As a result, this meeting often runs long, so plan on more than the usual hour.

### Saturdays

**Saturday Night Special**
7 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Rd. Bus riders: The #18 University Ave. bus does not go by the church on weekend evenings. Take the #1 Park Ave. bus to the corner of East and Winton, then walk five minutes south (uphill) on Winton.
- Open meeting, all are welcome, “straight-friendly”
- Mixed men and women
- Handicapped accessible, take the elevator to the basement

This meeting begins with a speaker who is followed by an open discussion.

### Sundays

**Rochester Gay Men**
8 p.m. at St. Luke/St. Simon’s Episcopal Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St. Bus riders use the Fitzhugh St. stop on Main St. at the Country Office Building and walk south one block.
- Closed meeting, restricted to alcoholics and addicts
- Men’s meeting
- NOT handicapped accessible

This meeting begins with a speaker who is followed by an open discussion.

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**Classifieds**

Classified ads are $5 for the first 30 words; each additional 10 words is another $1.

We do not bill for classifieds, so please send or bring ad and payment to The Empty Closet, 875 E. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14605. The deadline is the 15th of the month, for the following month’s issue. We cannot accept ads over the phone. We publish free ads for prisoners on a space-available basis. Pay when you place your ad.

We will accept only ads accompanied by name and phone number. Neither will be published, but we must be able to confirm placement. The Empty Closet is not responsible for financial loss or physical injury that may result from any contact with an advertiser. Advertisers must use their own box number, voice mail or personal address/phone number.
MONDAY 1
World AIDS Day
An annual World AIDS Day benefit performance directed by Thomas Warfield. PeaceArt International Inc. 7:30 pm. GEVA Theatre. Tickets $15; to benefit area children whose lives are affected by AIDS; hopefully a summer camp program for them can be re-established. Sponsored in part by HIV Vaccine Trials Unit at U. of Rochester. Open to the public. Additional information. Contact Thomas at 585-482-6778 or by e-mail: peaceart@rocp.org.

TUESDAY 2
Free and Confidential Rapid HIV Testing
Every Tuesday in December and January 3-5 pm, MOCHA Project, 107 Liberty Pole Plaza. 585-440-2410.

IMPaCT (In Pride on Coalition)
Team meetings at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. at 6-9 pm, Todd Pike 585-271-2420. www.impactrictions.org. Open to the public. Additional information. Contact Todd at 585-508-6391 or by e-mail: tpike@di-rochester.org.

LGBT Survivors of Violence
Hosted by GAGV Community Violence/Art Violence Project. 7:15-8:30 pm, Nopper Room at Gay Alliance, 875 E. Main St., 8th floor. For information call 585-442-2220. E-mail: syroos@ di-rochester.org or contact Rev. Robert Arrington, 585-568-8391 or e-mail: rob syroos@di-rochester.org.

THURSDAY 4
Community Violence/Art Violence Project
2-5 pm, Bachelor Forum, 175 South Fitzhugh St., 7th floor. For information about the panelists, visit gayalliance.org/coalitions and watch panel number 2328, 74892, #5135. For information about being a sponsor, or to about every year. The event is sponsored by the community in conjunction with the exhibit, contact John White at 585-242-7849 or by e-mail: john_white23@gmail.com.

International AIDS Post Update Conference
The AIDS Leadership Commission on AIDS (BMLMHC) and the Rochester Affiliate in collaboration with Black Mountain Men Health Crisis, Inc. 585-475-3614. and in association with the Black AIDS Institute of Los Angeles will convene this event 6 pm at 1400 Bay St. First floor, Church. 275 Sycamore St. Contact John White at 585-242-7849 or by e-mail: john_white23@gmail.com.

SUNDAY 7
Dignity Integrity celebrates Episcopal Eucharist with music. 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 11
Dignity Integrity Pastoral Care 2009
The church will provide pastoral care to all who seek it. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 14
Dignity Integrity Roman Catholic Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest with music. 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 21
Dignity Integrity Prayers To Start The Week, followed by a "Your story, your right, with a good breakfast" potluck, 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 24
Dignity Integrity Prayers To Start The Week, followed by a "Your story, your right, with a good breakfast" potluck, 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

WEDNESDAY 3
World AIDS Day Service of Healing
St. Marys Cluny's 15 St. Marys Place. 7 pm.

LIVING BETTER AND STRONGER: World AIDS Day for persons living with HIV/AIDS.
Rochester, Inc. 1350 University Ave. "Finalizing and Legalizing Your Wishes". "Empowering YOU to Advocate" and "The Working and Power of Faith in HIV/AIDS". Workshops begin 10 am, conclusion 5 pm. HIV prevention, testing, treatment and HIV vaccine research information available. FREE lunch provided. Advance registration required. Call Steven Price at AIDS Rochester Inc., 585-442-2220. E-mail: syroos@di- rochester.org or contact Rev. Robert Arrington, 585-568-8391 or e-mail: rob syroos@di-rochester.org.

THURSDAY 5
Rochester Gay Men's Chorus concert, "Naughty & Nice". Hochstein, 500 First St. at 8 pm. Tickets: $12. "2-Saints". 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SATURDAY 13
Empire Bears post-Christmas 6:30 pm, GAGV Youth Center, first floor, 875 E. Main St. Theme: "Holiday favorites."
Rochester Women's Community Chorus concert, "Let Nature Sing" 7:30 pm, Hochstein, 500 N. Plymouth St. Silent auction starts at 7. Tickets: Plank Road, Chorus members; www.RWCGC.org. 585-234-4441.

SUNDAY 14
Dignity Integrity Roman Catholic Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest with music. 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

THURSDAY 18
Towa Pane "Deck the Halls" holiday party. 7 pm, Munger's $5 in advance, $7 at door. 586-8391.

SATURDAY 20
Winter Solstice

SUNDAY 21
Dignity Integrity quiet Episcopalian Eucharist. Christmas potluck follows. 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 24
Dignity Integrity Prayers To Start The Week, followed by a "Your story, your right, with a good breakfast" potluck, 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 27
Dignity Integrity Prayers To Start The Week, followed by a "Your story, your right, with a good breakfast" potluck, 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

WEDNESDAY 31
Empire Bears New Years Eve Party. For information see www.empirebears.org.

JANUARY 2009
SATURDAY 3
Empire Bears Beanfeast at the Forum. Theme: "Bibs!" See www.empire­bears.org.

SUNDAY 4
Dignity Integrity celebrating the feast of Epiphany with an Episcopal Eucharist and a "Long Hooded Coat" service at St-Simons-Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

TUESDAY 6
GAGV Picnic 2009 planning meeting, 6-8 pm, Nopper Room at Gay Alliance, 875 E. Main St.

FRIDAY 9
Successful LGBT Educator Training
With Scott Fearing. 8:30 am-5 pm. Gay Alliance Youth Center, first floor, 875 E. Main St., 8th floor. Scholarships available 244-8640 ext 14; jeanne@gagvs.org.

SATURDAY 10
Successful LGBT Educator Training
Empowering LGBT Training, practice session. Optional. 6-9 pm. Gay Alliance Youth Center, first floor, 875 E. Main St. PFLAG screening of Anyone and Everyone, open discussion. "Webster Library, 6:30-8:30 pm.

THURSDAY 15
Empty Closet deadline for February issue. 9-10 pm, rochesterrams@gmail.com.

SATURDAY 17

SUNDAY 18
Dignity Integrity quiet Episcopalian Eucharist. 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

SUNDAY 25
Dignity Integrity Prayers To Start The Week, followed by a "Your story, your right, with a good breakfast" potluck, 5 pm, St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church ("2-Saints"), 17 South Fitzhugh St. www.di-rochester.org or recorded info-line at 234-5092.

Community Business Forum 2009 planning meeting, 3-4:30 pm. GAGV Youth Center, 875 E. Main St., first floor. Light refreshments served at all meetings in January.

MONDAY 26
No Name Calling Week. Through Jan. 30. GLSEN event to end bullying in schools. www.no-namecallingweek.org.

Pride 2009 planning meeting, 8:30 pm, GAGV Youth Center, 875 E. Main St., first floor. Contact Wynn Williams at 585-244-9030 for information before Jan. 29.

THURSDAY 29
Pride 2009 planning meeting, 3:30-4:30 pm, GAGV Youth Center, 875 E. Main St., first floor. Contact Wynn Williams at 585-244-9030 for information before Jan. 29.
Dining Out With Friends

The Dining Out With Friends Committee and The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley would like to thank our hosts and attendees for a most successful event. Your contributions support the following programs.

The Youth Program which provides comprehensive advocacy and support services to LGBT and questioning youth and their families. Currently serving 300+ youth.

The Anti-Violence Program which works exclusively for LGBT victims and survivors of domestic violence, hate crimes, rape and sexual assault. Recently experienced on Park Ave.

The Community Education Program which educates the community about the damaging effects of homophobia and heterosexism through its professionally trained Speakers' Bureau.

Next year's date is Saturday, September 26, 2009.

We welcome suggestions and comments on this year's event and we invite you to volunteer as a committee member or a host for Dining Out With Friends 2009.

Watch the Empty Closet for more information on Dining Out With Friends 2009.

You can contact us at 244-8640 ext 26 or email at diningout@gayv.us.