Light-years, the first Take Back the Power 72 percent of Americans live on May 2 Sue Cowell will be presented with a Shouders To Stand On Lifetime Achievement award at a reception on Saturday, May 2 at Studio 180, 180 St. Paul St. The reception runs from 3-6 p.m.

GAY ALLIANCE: A local, state and national news, interviews, opinion, entertainment, columnists, event calendars, comics, & health resources

LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL NEWS, INTERVIEWS, OPINION, ENTERTAINMENT, COLUMNISTS, EVENT CALENDARS, COMICS, & HEALTH RESOURCES

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April 27 rally will ask SCOTUS to establish marriage equality in USA

By Susan Jordan

The Gay Alliance will host a rally at the Federal Building, from 5 to 6:30 p.m., on April 27, the day before the Supreme Court is set to hear arguments on marriage equality.

Organizer Anne Tischer told The Empty Closet, “Now that 72 percent of Americans live in states where same-sex couples can marry, many conservatives who oppose gay rights have given up on that issue, and are now promoting roll-backs of LGBTQ anti-discrimination protections across the country, based on ‘religious freedom’ laws.”

In Alabama, Texas, Indiana, Georgia, North Carolina and elsewhere, in frustration at losing the marriage battle, they are erasing LGBTQ protections on the state level, thus wiping out locally legislated protections. This mean-spirited, petty spitefulness is losing the Right a lot of support, and increasing the possibility of getting a national omnibus LGBTQ civil rights act.

“For one thing, they’re educating heterosexuals that gays are not fully protected in the workplace and elsewhere. Right now, 51 percent of Americans believe that gays have full workplace protections, which of course is not true. Even in New York State, many people assume that transgender people are protected on the job, in public accommodations, etc. Not so.”

Anne Tischer said that activists nationwide are now working on forming a coalition for an omnibus civil rights act, like the one which overturned DOMA.

She said, “The purpose of the April 27 rally is to send a message to SCOTUS that across the nation people are united in their determination to see equality.”

Intersections workshops update

There have been now two Intersections workshops for the LGBTQ communities, based on the issues of race, sexual orientation and gender identity. Around 20 people attended the February workshop and 15 took part in the workshop on March 7, both held at The MOCHA Center.

Tischer said, “The most impressive thing to me about the workshops was the vulnerability. When we’re at a place where support, and increasing the possibility of getting a national omnibus LGBTQ civil rights act.

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Taking responsibility

In her Faith Matters column last month, The Reverend Irene Montone wrote, “On one hand we have the dominant culture’s continued indelicate dance of white privilege and single-issue platforms which thwart coalition building with communities of color. On the other we have some people of color dismissing the notion that white marginalization and struggling groups (white women, LGBTQ, the poor) may have something to offer communities of color in terms of advice and shared (not same) experiences.

“Both hands are right. And both hands are wrong. The only way forward is to keep talking about race. But how do we make our way through the current tangle of misguided good intentions and valid suspicions? “My answer: past harms need to be redressed.

“For example, the killing of unarmed black males has awakened us to be present the movement. ‘Black Lives Matter’ has taken to the streets.”

The Intersections workshops are attempting to encourage discussion about race, sexual orientation or gender – for white people, that’s economic privilege, not having to fear every day that you or your child will be shot down, etc. Facilitators encouraged participants to become allies to each other, and find ways to connect. Everyone agreed that assumptions about identity of any kind keep us down, either by denying things like jobs, respect, space, power to set agendas and make decisions – or else giving those things without reflection.

Oppressions are not identical, but they are connected, not least because the same group – wealthy upperclass white male heterosexuals – tends to benefit from all of them. Many LGBTQ people are multiply oppressed, especially lesbian and trans women of color. How do we become allies to each other? Maybe white folks like myself need to LISTEN... and take responsibility.

This isn’t about white guilt. Focusing only on guilt about the past is counter-productive, para-myzes people and blocks change.

This is about the present, the future and RESPONSIBILITY. White folks can take responsibility for questioning our actions, thoughts and words, and for how we confront society’s racism. No one who has grown up white in this culture can ever imagine that they don’t need to think about racism anymore! Nor should hetero-ssexuals, males and the cagniedden the lethal realities of homophobia, sexism and trans-phobia. Then there’s the final taboo – discussion of class privi-lege. Whatever our identities, LGBTQ folks must reject all forms of prejudice, if we really want to move forward together toward equality.

We will all benefit by keep- ing in mind the words of Kwame Ture: ‘Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.”

Perspectives

Gay Alliance Education Coordinator

ROWAN COLLINS

Learning outside the box

As the newest staff member at the Gay Alliance, many people have asked if it’s been difficult getting used to a new job and falling in to my responsibilities and tasks as the Education Coordinator. I almost have to laugh because I have been doing so much of this work for over three years now.

Having run our Speak-OUT training in January 2012, and launching into a pretty jam-packed career on the Speaker’s Bureau immediately thereafter, I’ve been entrenched myself in the Gay Alliance Education pro- gram since day one, so to speak.

The material we present in our trainings and workshops is constantly shifting and evolving to better represent our diverse, beautiful communities, but our message remains the same. We believe in creating safe, inclusive spaces for all identities to grow and succeed and it starts with meeting people where they are.

It starts with a simple conversa-
tion.

With three years of Speaker’s Bureau presentations and pan- els, as well as a year-plus of co-facilitating trainings, under my belt, I have learned three beautiful things:

The wisdom is in the room Gay Alliance, 878 E. Main St., Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605.

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THANK YOU
Intersections facilitators Sady Fischer, Christopher Goodwin-Downs and Ally W. Howell at the March 7 workshop. Photo: Anne Tischer

where we’re vulnerable, we’re at a heightened place.

Rightly now, a date hasn’t been set, but we’re making an effort to connect — to think of it as a component of identity — how people’s religious beliefs inter- sect with racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and gender. We’d like to have an event with religious leaders, the like Only Rochester Crozer Divinity School and other faiths. Other future workshops will address feminism, aging and poverty, classism and privilege around gender.

[Image 35x984 to 167x1098]

<From page 1>

[Image 330x917 to 462x1047]

[Image 332x314 to 462x431]
Mugisha concludes
Go to court
The Anti-Homosexuality Act was struck down by the Constitutional Court last year. Is this possible for new legislation?

Maybe not, Mugisha says the new law has been written more clearly. The court ruled against the last law not because judges disagreed with it, but only because parliamentarians hadn’t followed procedure when passing it.

The Anti-Homosexuality Act was struck down by the Constitutional Court last year. Is this possible for new legislation?

Get allies
NGOs were previously unwilling to involve themselves in LGBTI issues. A big success for campaigners has been building a coalition of civil society groups to fight the AHA.

Problems bring about strategies. They bring on board sympathetic people.

Diplomacy and sanctions
We are trying to get friends of Ugandan people, who know President Museveni, to tell him even if you change the language this law is still going to be a problem for Uganda.

Mugisha adds that the US strategy of "imposing sanctions that are salient on any person promoting hatred or any person violating rights of people in Uganda, saying you won't travel to the US" has helped.

It has even led some politicians to suggest they should debate any new law behind closed doors "Because they are afraid. Some of them trade with the US, they get donations from the US."

Change the public focus
"If you chose 100 Ugandans and ask them what the biggest problem is in the country, no one would mention homosexuality. We have much bigger problems. If you ask them what they think about homosexuality, they say it's our biggest problem."

Politicians and religious leaders use LGBTI issues to shore up their support - moving the agenda on could silence them.

Come out
"We have even met with members of parliament who are very homophobic in public but after having a meeting with you their minds have changed a little bit. Because they understand this is a human being like me who is Ugandan and the only difference we have is our different sexual orientation.

If someone came out in every family, that would change a lot, but that is impossible."

By discussing the issue, politicians and religious leaders have broken a taboo and it has backfired on them.

Before all this debate and media, people didn't feel the need to come out. Now, we are seeing people feel they need to come out and express themselves. I know very many gay people (laughs). Ten years back we are struggling to find friends, we know three or five people. Now I know hundreds and thousands. I can walk in every corner of the city and I can find gay people who live there or work there. I receive messages constantly saying I want to appreciate your work and I am thinking of coming out.

Even media watch hunts, publishing lists of "homes", are encouraging people to come out.

They are saying I had better start telling my friends and my parents, just in case."

Celeb support
Celebrity supporters are gold dust. Media commentators, actors and musicians - particularly young women - are starting to support gay people in Uganda.

They "let people know we are normal, we are human," says Mugisha.

Support other causes
"We get involved in charities. There is a charity in Uganda that supports children. We have raised money on Twitter and support building a dormitory or helping orphans. When we meet the young they say, 'you are a different gay'. So we say, 'we are the same'."

Not special, just equal
"People say you are just trying to promote your immorality but I say I am just promoting human rights."

Tackling the church
When just one religious leader speaks for LGBTIs, people can dismiss them.

"Ugandans will say you are gay, yes, you have been paid or you are so much into the western world," Mugisha says. "We need many different Ugandan church leaders to start speaking love. The problem will not end soon but the young generation is getting indifferent. They go to church and they preach to them about homosexuality and the young people say 'whatever..."

"These are issues I don’t believe in, you are lying about that."

Mugisha tells the story of a pastor who preached to science students about homosexuality and claimed there was "a skin disease caused by fancying" only for people to tell him he was making it up.

"They are talking to a young bright community who can check things out for themselves. You talk about something and they go on their phone and check on the internet and if it's not there, and they will say you are lying."

Get supporters to speak
"The challenge we have is that progressive, liberal voices are very modest. When they have partners in Africa they are very careful about annoying them. You will find a church in the UK providing huge donations to a church in Africa. But when you talk to them and ask them to raise diversity and LGBT, they say 'we cannot bring up this topic because we will lose that partner'. The truth is they won't lose them."

We need those liberal voices to be strong - they can't be scared forever. They say if they speak they create problems for us, but I don’t see any problems for us. I can't imagine a situation can be worse than when we had the AHA in place as a law.

Back from business
Many of the large companies operating in the country are not Ugandan at all but from the UK or elsewhere in Europe. This is vital for campaigners.

"If I was talking to the CEO of a company, I say look, first of all I would tell them to talk to the Ugandan government. It is simple - the laws they are passing are affecting their businesses. This is why I say this, the Ugandan government will care."

Global public support
The public support from outside Uganda has delivered huge impact. Mugisha says.

"Last year we had massive demonstrations outside embassies, people have signed statements, we have had someone write something about Uganda and it's had so many hits. I've been on TV shows and the anchor has said 'we have got the most traffic since that'. It makes politicians want to get involved."

"It is people asking, what are our values? We don’t support discrimination, we don’t support prejudice. And if you continue working with Uganda the way you are, you are not representing this country."

Winning the media war
"What we need is that the media narratives are carried through the media. So we are trying to get pro-gay media."

That’s not easy. The Ugandan government hasn’t been told not to write anything pro-homosexuality.

We have done a lot on social media and also engaged a lot of bloggers. Recent-
ly one of the main newspapers phoned me for an interview, which they rarely do and I gave them an interview and they published it properly - normally they just write what they want.
"Most of the reason we are seeing some positive media in Uganda is because of western media and the good news is that some bad media, but the western media has been so open to the fact that the Ugandans cannot ignore it forever."

See more at: http://www.gaystarnews.com/uganda-can-break-free-homopho- bia-ever110315/#nshah.22zwhdb.dp

Calif. school elects trans homecoming queen, gay king; students applaud
By Mitch Kellaney on The Adelante
Another homecoming season is fast approaching, and with it comes the uplifting stories of the tiny group who, in a recent millennial poll concluded to the Bee. "Having these students to Enochs High School's homecoming court last week.

It's partly why LGBT rights supporters in California's Modesto County, a generally conservative area in the state's central valley valley, are cheering the election of two gay transgenders who were selected as "princess" on homecoming court for the past two years.

Although female students have been selected as princesses in the school's gay-straight alliance (GSA) over the past two years, it's still a personal thing. Some students to Enochs High School's homecoming court this year.

They've been selected for the past two years.

"If they can vote for me as princess, anything is possible," said Hailey Keever, a senior at Enochs High who was selected to be a homecoming princess. "I think it's more about the idea of acceptance and diversity."

It's a sign of the times and the fact that racial division is inherent to America. It's partly why LGBT rights supporters here are some bad media, but the western media has been so open to the fact that the Ugandans cannot ignore it forever.

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LOCAL AND STATE

(Poverty from page 3)

Poverty is a reality. This is about creating equal opportunity.

“We have the community will to create a new system that will be child-and-family-centered and informed. It will be flexible, data-driven, and barrier-free. There will be no ‘wrong door’ to access services. Full family assessments will be able to be completed online by any agency and services will be integrated and individualized for those requesting services. The restrictions and restraints of funding silos will be eased so needs will be met and opportunities created.

“A fully integrated, coordinated, person-focused, and data-driven system will move people in poverty from dependence to independence, from being enabled to being supported and encouraged, and from receiving entitlements to being worthy of investments. Given the right tools and resources, the poor will be able to assume more responsibility for their own futures.”

Gay Alliance Executive Director Scott Fearing said, “The Gay Alliance understands that poverty is a reality for members of the LGBTQ communities, and we want to make certain that our voices are included in these discussions by State, County and City leaders. We want to ensure that proposals and solutions are inclusive of our community members.

“In recent decades a myth has developed about the enormous wealth of the LGBTQ communities; the reality is that our community members cover the spectrum of class, from wealthy to poor. Most frightening is the new research that shows segments of our communities with some of the highest poverty rates. The Gay Alliance wants our political leaders to know this so that we can be part of developing inclusive solutions.”

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Christian from page 5

and indemnified by the state against any and all liability.

The initiative needs signatures from five percent of the electorate, about 350,000 people, for it to move forward.

Read the Sodomy Suppression Act in full below:

a) The abominable crime against nature known as buggery, called also sodomy, is a monstrous evil that Almighty God, giver of freedom and liberty, commands us to suppress on pain of our utter destruction even as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

b) Seeing that it is better that offenders should die rather than that all of us should be killed by God’s just wrath against us for the folly of tolerating wickedness in our midst, the People of California wisely command, in the fear of God, that any person who willingly touches another person of the same gender for purposes of sexual gratification be put to death by bullets to the head or by any other convenient means.

c) No person shall distribute, perform, or transmit sodomistic propaganda directly or indirectly by any means to any person under the age of majority. Sodomistic propaganda is defined as anything aimed at creating an interest in or an acceptance of human sexual relations other than between a man and a woman. Every offender shall be fined $1 million per occurrence, and forfeit the proceeds from the sale to state education.”

d) No person shall serve in any public office, nor serve in public employment, nor enjoy any public benefit, who is a sodomit or who exposes sodomistic propaganda or who belongs to any group that does.

This law is effective immediately and shall not be rendered ineffective nor invalidated by any court, state or federal, until heard by a quorum of the Supreme Court of California consisting only of judges who are neither sodomitis nor subject to disqualification hereunder.

f) The state has an affirmative duty to defend and enforce this law within, and every member of the public has standing to seek its enforcement and obtain reimbursement for all costs and attorney’s fees in so doing, and further, should the state persist in inaction over 1 year after due notice, the general public is empowered and deputized to execute all the provisions hereunder extra-judicially, immune from any charge and indemnified by the state against any and all liability.

g) This law shall be known as “The Sodomy Suppression Act” and be numbered as section 99 in Title 3 of the Penal Code, pertaining to offences [sic] against the sovereignty of the state. The text shall be prominently posted in every public school classroom. All laws in conflict with this law are to that extent invalid.

- See more at: http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/california-lawyer-likes-bal- loc-initiative-execute-all-gays-bullets-head030315#sthash.1qX1wdmm.dpuf

A Gay Star News reader supplies this information: Matthew Gregory McLaughlin is an attorney who lives in Huntington Beach, California. He lists his phone number at 949-285-7902.

UCLA report: law enforcement routinely harasses LGBT people

A new report released March 2 by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law documents ongoing and pervasive discrimination and harassment by law enforcement in the LGBT community, especially among LGBT people of color and transgender individuals.

To address such discrimination and to improve effective policing more generally in the United States, President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing issued recommendations to build stronger and more collaborative relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Key findings from the Williams Institute report, based on several national surveys include:

More than one-fifth (21 percent) of LGBT people who interacted with police reported encountering hostile attitudes from officers and 14 percent reported verbal or physical assault by the police.

Nearly half (48 percent) of the LGBT violence survivors who interacted with police reported that they had experienced police misconduct, including unjustified arrest, use of excessive force and entrapment.

Two-thirds of Latina transgender women in Los Angeles County who interacted with police reported that they were verbally harassed by law enforcement, 21 percent report that they were physically assaulted by law enforcement, and 24 percent report that they were sexually assaulted by law enforcement.

Nearly half (46 percent) of transgender respondents in a national survey reported being uncomfortable seeking police assistance, 22 percent reported that they had been harassed by law enforcement because of bias, and six percent reported having been physically assaulted by an officer.

Williams Institute researchers also documented widespread and frequent incidents of misconduct toward LGBT people by law enforcement in all regions of the country, including many instances of severe physical and sexual abuse.

Such discrimination, harassment and abuse undermine effective policing by weakening community trust, reducing reporting of crimes by victims in the LGBT community, and challenging law enforcement’s ability to effectively meet the needs of members of their communi-
On the topic of the school-to-prison pipeline for inner city youth, Sheppard said, “It starts even earlier than high school – living in poverty… kids don’t learn social interaction and eventually it becomes a police problem.”

With the advent of privatized prisons, the funneling of youth into prison, where they are de facto slave workers, is profitable for corporations. Nonetheless, Sheppard says, “I have hope!”

He does not necessarily oppose charter schools, he says. “We’ve had Catholic schools, which offered a choice to parents. If you couldn’t afford that, or had objections on religious grounds to sending your child to Catholic schools, you could send them to public schools. Then Catholic schools started closing because they weren’t making enough of a profit. Most definitely we should fund public schools. In terms of education, everyone knows the fix – a unified school district in Monroe County. But some people don’t want that changed. There are other things to be done, like magnet schools and neighborhood schools.”

Another major issue for Sheppard is ethics in government. “This needs to be addressed and instilled in how we do government,” he said. “The city has an Office of Public Integrity – the county needs an independent Office of Public Integrity.”

Sheppard would like to see Monroe County invest in education for city youth and in youth services. He noted, “In terms not of looking at Democrats and Republicans, but to do the people’s business, good conversations could be had to move the agenda forward. A large factor is where the county saves by cutting services, they pay more at the other end, to educate, the county saves by cutting services, they want to jump in and give it my all!”

He has volunteered with School 50 and was a mentor for high school youth at the Center for Youth’s New Beginnings program. Even before becoming a police officer he had worked with the Division for Youth in Rochester. He now works with youth at Dale Carnegie.

Sheppard said, “Four or five months ago a number of people said I should go into politics, since Paul Haney can’t run again (to represent the 23rd District). I took some time to think about it, having never been involved in politics. I wasn’t just going to stick my toe in – I was going to jump in and give it my all!”

Sheppard plans to be at the minimum wage march on April 15. “I’m 60 years old,” he said, “and when I worked for minimum wage it was $2.25 an hour, 40 years ago. But you could survive on that then if you were a single person. Nowadays no one can survive, much less raise a family, on $8.25 an hour. I favor the $15 minimum wage. Seattle and Portland have done this.

“You need someone to do the grunt work – mop the floor and flip the burgers. And they and their families need to survive.”

He concluded, “Regardless of what the issue is, politicians need to stand up and speak out, whether it’s on minimum wage, social services, or whatever. The easy solution is ‘don’t spend money or raise taxes’. “To me, it’s all about service.”

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Making the Scene

MKD AT THE FORUM: Mrs. Kasha Davis (MKD) was hostess with the mostest at the Bachelor Forum on March 2, the first RuPaul's Drag Race show of the 2015 season. Above: Jeff Lambert, Peter Mohr, Mrs. Kasha Davis, Kim McEachern and Jared C Kane. The Intergalactic Celebrity Housewife will headline at next July’s Sci-Fi-themed Rochester Pride Festival. Photo: Bachelor Forum

DONORS AT THE MAG: Gay Alliance Board President David Zona (left) with Board member Peter Mohr and Staff member Rowan Collins at the donor thank-you event held at the Memorial Art Gallery on Feb. 19. Photos: Susan Jordan

My Own Private Rochester: Donna Johnson Demhler & B.J. Demhler
By Susan Jordan
Donna Johnson Demhler and B.J. Demhler got married on Valentine's Day, after being together for 23 years.

Donna is bisexual and cisgender, while B.J. identifies with both genders. They live in Pittsford with their three cats, Fluffy, Ben and Jerry (“they like ice cream”). Donna is a member of the women’s band “Unbound” which performs at Pride as well as at many other venues. She plays bass and says, “Our sound is blues/rock/country.” Songs that make people feel good.”

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She was in the Air Force from age 18 to 22, and has studied psychology at Geneseo and computer information at MCC. Since her job as secretary at U. of Rochester School of Engineering was eliminated, she says, “I’m evaluating my options.”

B.J. is retired and says she spends her time being a housewife/husband, mother of the three cats, and homemaker/snow removal technician/lawn mower, etc. She says Donna is “a people person with a wonderful heart.”

B.J. loves the outdoors while Donna loves her computer – but the two have accepted their differences!

Their favorite Rochester organizations include Open Arms MCC, where they met and are still members of the congregation; Rochester Women’s Community Chorus, Rochester Gay Men’s Chorus, L.O.R.A. breakfasts and Bitch Femme Connection dinners. As trans allies they attend meetings of TAGR and Genesee Valley Gender Variants whenever they can.

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The individuals they most admire include Anne Tischer and Bess Watts (“who helped make it possible for us to get married”), Laine and Maur DeLaney, Ramona Santorelli, and Pamela Barres.

Their favorite Rochester places include Equal=Grounds, Red Wings games, and Dime Store BBQ downtown, where they enjoy the river view. They also like walking or biking from Pittsford to Fairport.

As far as local events go, they say, “Pride is number one.” B.J. likes the Clothesline and Corn Hill Festivals and Donna prefers the Park Avenue Festival, but both love Fairport’s Canal Days.

Donna said, “I’m happy about the direction Rochester is heading in with trans rights. In general this city has much to offer. I love the diversity and the LGBTQ community, which is strong.”

“Donna commented, “Most impressive about Rochester is its people!”
US civil rights groups oppose Georgia’s “religious freedom to discriminate” bill

The Georgia Senate is considering SB 129, a so-called “Religious Freedom Restoration Act” (RFRA) that would make it legal for any individual or business in the state to discriminate against others—including LGBT people—and claim they can do so because of their religious beliefs. The GOP-led Senate is not allowing amendments to be offered—amendments which could have allowed for keeping the religious freedom component of the bill in place while carving out commonsense protections to ensure the bill couldn’t be used to discriminate.

Nearly 30 of the nation’s leading civil rights and LGBT organizations strongly oppose the bill, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Family Equality Council, GLAAD, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Black Justice Coalition, and the National LGBTQ Task Force. These groups recently sent a letter to Georgia’s Governor and legislative leaders, condemning the SB 129 and its House counterpart, HB 218.

Dee Dee Dillard, President Pro Tempore Shafer, and SpeakerRalston: As leaders of organizations committed to advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, we are writing to express our serious concern about Georgia House Bill 218 and Senate Bill 129, the “Protecting Government Employees from Religious Discrimination Act” and the “Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act.” As drafted, both pieces of legislation invite and legitimize further discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Last year, legislation similar to HB 218 and SB 129 passed the Arizona legislature but was vetoed by former Governor Jan Brewer following an outcry from businesses, sports organizations, and LGBT advocates. At the heart of this outcry was a simple message: Arizona should be open and welcoming to all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

The passage of HB 218, SB 129, or a similar measure will send a loud message across the country that Georgia is an unwelcoming place for LGBT Americans. Such a message threatens the state’s ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest workers, secure critical relocations that spur the economy, support innovative entrepreneurship, and further develop its thriving travel and tourism industry.

All of us have organizational members in Georgia; like them, we want Georgia’s brand to remain welcoming to all. Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights as Americans. That’s why it’s protected in the state and federal constitution. But that freedom does not give any of us the right to harm or discriminate against others.

One of the very real consequences of HB 218 and SB 129, as they are currently written, is that both open the door to increased discrimination against LGBT Georgians—by both individuals and corporations.

If enacted, government employees could refuse to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. A homeles shelter that receives government funding to provide social services could refuse shelter to same-sex couple by saying it goes against its religious beliefs. A guidance counselor could refuse to help a transgender teenager by saying it goes against her religious beliefs. Government officials who have sworn an oath to serve the public shouldn’t be able to pick and choose who they’re going to serve based on their religious beliefs—but HB 218 and SB 129 could allow them to do just that.

HB 218 and SB 129 could also allow businesses and corporations to discriminate; unless the bill explicitly states that it does not apply to for-profit entities, O.C.G.A. § 1-3-1 and decisions of the Georgia Supreme Court—which define a “person” to include corporations and businesses—will apply. Thus, a hotel owner could point to HB 218 and SB 129 as justification for refusing to provide a room to a same-sex couple. A restaurant could deny service to a group of LGBT patrons. A hospital could refuse to provide medical care or information to a transgender patient. Businesses that are open to the public should be open to everyone on the same terms, including to customers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender—but HB 218 and SB 129 could open the door to businesses refusing service to someone simply because of who they are or who they love.

This law would allow individuals and corporations to claim that their religious beliefs allow them to refuse to obey laws that prohibit discrimination in employment and public services. Georgia does not want a broad, ill-defined law that could allow some people to use one set of religious beliefs to harm or discriminate against others.

The Family Research Council and the Faith and Freedom Coalition have been the two most vocal organizations calling for legislation like HB 218 and SB 129 to be enacted in Georgia and other states. Both organizations have a long history of extreme intolerance toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Their interest in advancing legislation of this nature has risen only recently, just as marriage for same-sex couples is sweeping across the country. We do not believe this to be a coincidence. We believe they’re seeking to create a “license to discriminate” against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Although they haven’t been able to clearly articulate any immediate or urgent need for this legislation, Family Research Council and the Faith and Freedom Coalition have pointed to the firing of former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran as the key reason why this bill is needed. The City of Atlanta terminated Chief Cochran for distributing material to his subordinates at work without permission. In these materials, Cochran described LGBT people as “vile” and “vulgar.” He described being gay as a “perversion,” in addition to other out-of-touch and harmful remarks about women and Jewish people. He gave these materials to his employees unauthorised.

Supporters of HB 218 and SB 129 hope that this legislation will protect others who, like Chief Cochran, force their religious beliefs on their employees. As Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed said at the time, there needs to be “an environment in government where everyone, no matter who they love, can come to work from 8 to 5:30, do their job, and go home without fear of being discriminated against.” This isn’t just about the LGBT community, this is about how we treat each other. Any legislation that could allow discrimination against anyone isn’t following one of our most important values—treating others the way we want to be treated.

We urge you to reject HB 218 and SB 129—to ensure that Georgia’s brand remains welcoming, that discrimination (Georgia continues page 12)
Trans people fight back against right-wing “bathroom bills”

Around the country, conservatives have tried (and succeeded in many cases) to use the specter of a transgender person in the bathroom as a scare tactic intended to kill the passage of gender identity-inclusive anti-discrimination laws for bathrooms. In recent weeks, heinous “bathroom bills” have sprung up intended to reward students who report that their trans peers are using the “wrong” bathroom at school.

Now, trans people are fighting back with a bathroom selfie campaigns intended to reveal how ridiculous the legislation is.

The #TransPutMeHere campaign was started by 23-year-old Canadian Brx Carnes in response to Senator Don Plett, who introduced legislation in Canada “exempting public washrooms from a bill that would fight hate crimes against trans individuals by adding gender identity provisions to the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act.”

Plett said that “the major issue raised with us is the safety of women’s facilities. This is what we all want to see.”

Both trans men aren’t trying to access bathrooms to creep on other people. They posted selfies in social media to reveal the real picture. Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/#sthash.x323BUfawX

Extremists behead three gay men in Iraq

By Joe Morgan on gaystarnews.com

Islamic extremists have beheaded three gay men in Iraq. (Photo: Image posted on social media (show) men blindfolded and (kneeling) in front of a huge crowd in an unidentified province in the north of the city, Iraq)

A masked executioner, dressed in black, wielded a long, rusty and bloody sword.

While the bodies were not shown, it is claimed that the three men were killed for “blasphemy.” Under Islamic Sharia law, homosexuality is punishable by death.

A recent study revealed that the number of executions for homosexuality was not shown, it is almost uncountable.

“Until the silence is broken, people will continue to die as a result of anti-gay laws. People need to rise up and call for a full investigation into this video.

“We must have conclusive evidence, because the fact that someone can be beaten to death by several people, and nothing happens because of it, is devastating, and we want our rights to be referred to as ‘he’.

Quick said she supported her son’s decision to change his pronoun to the proper one.

“Please be WHO YOU ARE… Do it for yourself. Do it for your happiness. That’s what’s matters in YOUR life. You don’t need approval on who you are. Don’t let people or society change you who you are just because they’re not satisfied with your image.

A memorial was held outside Porter Ridge High School, where Haffner was a student and was shot to death.

The #WeJustNeedToPee hashtag has been used around the country to get mainstream media attention.

Do I look like I belong in women’s facilities? Republicans are trying to get legislation passed that would put me there, based on my gender at birth. Trans people aren’t going into the bathroom to spy on you, or otherwise cause you harm, #wejustneedtopeepic Trans lives matter! @michaelhughes1

Trans youth commits suicide after years of bullying; 4th in 2015

By Darren Wee on gaystarnews.com

The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Milwaukee archdiocese on hiding money for clergy sexual abuse victims.

In 2013 it was revealed that the Archdiocese of Milwaukee had been paying a clergy sexual abuse victim $50,000 a year to keep him from filing claims against the archdiocese. The archdiocese had been paying the clergy sexual abuse victim since 2011. Hundreds of victims have since filed claims against the archdiocese. The archdiocese had been paying the clergy sexual abuse victim since 2011.

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“You can see the fear in that boy’s eyes, he is the human rights of LGBT people isn’t invited, and his death will not be forgotten.

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Thank you for supporting of the LGBTQ community.

Your financial support to help us recognize our major donors is appreciated.

Legal, has issued a statement condemning the bill’s passage: “We are extremely disappointed that Indiana’s Senate voted to allow religious discrimination in many areas of life for Indiana’s families, workers and others.

“We have seen this over and over -- bills that say they are about protecting one thing when the real goal is to target and discriminate against LGBT people, with vast implications for everyone else. As written, this bill will upset the balance between religious freedom and freedom from imposition of others’ religious beliefs.”

Presbyterian Church USA approves same sex marriage

The largest denomination of the Presbyterian Church voted on March 17 to amend its constitution to approve of same-sex marriage.

Via the New York Times:

The final approval by a majority of the church’s 171 regional bodies, known as presbyteries, enshrines a change recommended last year by the church’s General Assembly. The vote amends the church’s constitution to broaden marriage from being between “a man and a woman” to “two people, traditionally a man and a woman.” The Presbytery of the Palisades, meeting in Fair Lawn, N.J., put the ratification count over the top on a voice vote.

“Finally, the church in its constitutional documents fully recognizes that the love of gays and lesbian couples is worth celebrating in the faith community,” said the Rev. Brian D. Ellison, executive director of the Covenant Network of Presbyterian Churches. “There is still disagreement, and I don’t mean to minimize that, but I think we are learning that we can disagree and still be church together.”

Trans woman of color shot in Louisville, Ky.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) has learned of the homicide of Papi Edwards, a transgender woman of color, in Louisville, Kentucky, who was shot to death at the Fern Valley Motel on Jan. 9.

Early police and media accounts consistently misnamed and misgendered the victim, and only now are we learning that, according to BuzzFeed LGBTQ, her name was Papi Edwards and that she identified as a transgender woman. An alleged suspect, Henry Richard Gleaves, has been arrested and charged with her murder.

“At least seven transgender and gender non-conforming people of color have lost their lives to violence already in 2015, and this tragedy is compounded by police and media consistently misgendering and misnaming victims.” said Osman Ahmed, NCAVP Research and Education Coordinator at the New York City Anti Violence Project. “We all must take immediate action to end this epidemic by supporting the leadership of transgender women of color, public awareness and respect campaigns, speaking out against this violence, and protecting transgender people from harassment and discrimination.”

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs’ (NCAVP) most recent report, Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities in the United States in 2013, documented 18 anti-LGBTQ homicides in 2013. Of those homicide victims, almost 90 percent were people of color. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of homicide victims were transgender women, and more than two-thirds (67 percent) were transgender women of color.

NCAVP has been working with the Fairness Campaign in Louisville, Kentucky to support the local communities affected by this violence.
Porn vs. pornography
To The Editor:
Thank you for interviewing me for your March issue and keeping Topfree and certain women's issues in discussion. I wanted to clarify the use of the word “porn” in my interview. Language is not only interesting to me, it is paramount as a teaching tool. Topfree was a word created by me because I believe the abbreviated word contributes to the mass disassociation we seem to be experiencing as a culture around sexual violence against women and girls. We all agreed in the end to some extent on this point. It's interesting to note that a recent issue of Ms Magazine featured an article on sexual violence against women and repeatedly used the term porn. To be fair, I have never let Ms. Magazine guide my feminism. We all strongly believed that the distinction between top free and topless was very important. Quite simply, top free expressed a freedom that individual women were asserting. The right to be without a shirt in society, for no one's pleasure but the woman asserting that right. (not for the first time) and taken in for women's right to live free from sexual violence without a shirt in society, for no one's pleasure but the woman asserting that right. This in stark contrast to the word topless which brings to mind nasty rape culture "topless" bars, existing only for the male pleasure of having access to and control of women's naked bodies for money.

Many issues arose and I want to share some in the spirit of feminist consciousness raising. First off, none of us were happy that the word pornography was shortened to porn, but we all had different reasons. I believe that saying porn instead of pornography was abbreviated word contributes to the mass disassociation we seem to be experiencing as a culture around sexual violence against women and girls. We all agreed in the end to some extent on this point. It's interesting to note that a recent issue of Ms Magazine featured an article on sexual violence against women and repeatedly used the term porn. To be fair, I have never let Ms. Magazine guide my feminism. We all strongly believed that the distinction between top free and topless was very important. Quite simply, top free expressed a freedom that individual women were asserting. The right to be without a shirt in society, for no one's pleasure but the woman asserting that right. This in stark contrast to the word topless which brings to mind nasty rape culture "topless" bars, existing only for the male pleasure of having access to and control of women's naked bodies for money.

The situation of activist and performance artist Holly van Voast needs clarification.

Obviously, the name published was an error, and she was an absolutely wild feminist woman. She did win a federal lawsuit against the NYPD because she was arrested (not for the first time) and taken in for a psychiatric evaluation after an action in front of Hooters, all for being top free .

We all agreed that it was not anger provoking, so much as truly sad, that the very same issues are present today as were twenty three years ago, with seemingly no growth in the way that mainstream culture views women's breasts and also women's right to live free from sexual violence. In the court case, New York State vs. Ramona Santorelli, it was for legal purposes that experts testified that the purpose of women's breasts was to feed children. We hammered this out too, and we all agreed that in reality breasts are a part of a woman's body. It's our body. It's our body, it's our right to be free as women.

Lori Heretil

On Topfree issues
To The Editor:
It was great to see an interview featuring lesbian feminist activist, Ramona Santorelli, in the March Issue. What was even better was that it brought three of us old school lesbian feminist activists together again for an evening of wine, pizza - analysis, criticize and rebuild. It's our favorite activity; we are committed to the process.

Many issues arose and I want to share some in the spirit of feminist consciousness raising. First off, none of us were happy that the word pornography was shortened to porn, but we all had different reasons. Another one of us believed that the abbreviated word contributes to the mass disassociation we seem to be experiencing as a culture around sexual violence against women and girls. We all agreed in the end to some extent on this point. It's interesting to note that a recent issue of Ms Magazine featured an article on sexual violence against women and repeatedly used the term porn. To be fair, I have never let Ms. Magazine guide my feminism. We all strongly believed that the distinction between top free and topless was very important. Quite simply, top free expressed a freedom that individual women were asserting. The right to be without a shirt in society, for no one's pleasure but the woman asserting that right. This in stark contrast to the word topless which brings to mind nasty rape culture "topless" bars, existing only for the male pleasure of having access to and control of women's naked bodies for money.

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From our readers

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Your Service to this community has been unparalleled. It is time to honor and celebrate her many achievements.
LGBT Seniors in the Workplace

By Brian McNaught

When we think about the issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and gender variant (transgender) people in the workplace, we work with the assumption that there is a war for talent in the workplace that somewhat even the playing field. In theory, companies cannot afford to lose the best and brightest workers because their workplace is unwelcoming. To attract and retain highly-qualified people, and to maintain a competitive edge, most companies seek to create conditions in which the diversity of their workforce is celebrated and fully tapped. That should mean that older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are seen as having the potential to be among the company’s best and brightest employees, increasing the odds of profitability.

That said, the working conditions for LGBT employees of all ages can vary in the same company, depending upon the mentality of middle management. If the middle manager is influenced by any number of variables, such as religious beliefs, familiarity with gay and transgender people, race, and gender, and does not ascribe to his or her company’s values, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender worker is vulnerable to increased risk of harassment.

When considering hostile working conditions, we’re encouraged to allow for the possibility of the worst behavior in the workplace, such as physical and emotional abuse, but also to focus on the problems created by unconscious incompetence. Excluding examples of termination, hiring discrimination, and overt hostility, the majority of LGBT people in the workplace complain about feeling isolated because of their sexual orientation or gender variance. Fear of isolation is what keeps many LGBT people in the closet. The isolation is created by the lack of social interactions with colleagues, especially conversations on personal life.

One of the challenges in creating a clear picture of workplace issues for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender variant seniors is that the culture is changing so quickly that the picture will never be complete or reliable. For instance, marriage equality is not at this moment the law of the land, but it may be in a few months. While progress is being made in state by state passage of non-discrimination ordinances, there are now efforts to pass statewide legislation that grants religious liberty to employers and employees to discriminate on the basis of their personal beliefs.

Eventually, the Federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) will be passed, but probably not for many years. The current fear of gender variance on the part of many members of Congress keeps the legislation locked up. That will change, or the legislation will change, and it will be passed. It will still not cover housing and public accommodation, which might have an impact on a discussion of LGBT workplace issues. If a gay senior faces discrimination in housing, is it practical for him or her to live near the workplace?

We are aware of the quickly-changing culture, which in the Western world is becoming more comfortable with the full range of sexual orientation and gender expression, and we are aware of the increase in protective legislation. But understanding the challenges faced by senior lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers means being aware of the rapidly-paced changes in language and attitudes in those communities. When I first began work as an educator on these issues, it was about gay people. It then became about lesbian and gay people. Bisexuality was soon added to the topic. Then, transgender issues became part of the discussion.

Not long ago, the organization that was originally called the National Gay Task Force changed its name to include letters in the acronym to accommodate the issues of people who identify as queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual. Further, the new preferred term for transgender people is gender variant, and the new preferred term for transitioning (the process of physically becoming one’s true self) is realignment. Sex reassignment surgery is now called sex confirmation surgery. I need to constantly update my educational resources on the topic because of these changes.

What began as a workplace concern in the United States, with my introduction of the topic as a business issue in 1985, is now being discussed throughout the world because of the multi-national identity of most major corporations. Creating an office culture that is welcoming to LGBTQQIA people is not just important in New York, but in Mumbai too. Wall Street banks brought me to India, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore to train their senior managers on gay and transgender issues. That work has rapidly expanded throughout those countries, and many others.

Understanding LGBT senior workplace issues requires familiarity with the cultures of those individual countries, especially as they relate to age, sexual orientation, and gender variance. Gay and transgender discrimination has become an issue of importance to the United Nations. The Roman Catholic Church is said to be softening its approach because of the view expressed by Pope Francis: “Who am I to judge?” Gay issues are now part of the discussion on where the Olympics will be held. Economic sanctions are being imposed on countries that discriminate against gay people. The words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” and “transgender” were all used by President Obama in his State of the Union address in 2015.

Another component of the discussion is the very important shift in approaching the transgender topic. The number of people in a society who identify as transgender is huge. Feminine men who are considered effeminate, and heterosexual women who are considered masculine, can experience more discrimination on the job than a masculine gay man or a feminine lesbian. And what is considered acceptable behavior or expression for males and females varies from culture to culture. Hand holding by heterosexual men is common in India but not in Great Britain.

One more thing to consider when analyzing workplace concerns for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people is the differences between the individuals. Some LGBT people are highly-qualified, and are likely to be accommodated easily. People who bring in money are highly valued despite their age. If the senior gay person in question is black, Latino, female, foreign, Muslim, economically-challenged or has a disability, he or she will generally fare less well than a gay white Christian male, at least in the United States.

If the transgender person in question is transsexual, and passes easily because he or she fits neatly in the male or female box, and is physically attractive, that person will likely fare much better. The person who after realignment does not look attractive and easily identifiable as a man or woman. Cross-dressing men have a much more difficult time than cross-dressing women, partly because of sexism, and partly because they sometimes don’t pass easily as a female. If the person’s appearance is considered other than “peculiar,” it is more likely he or she will suffer discrimination in the workplace.

Ross tell us that the primary factor in selling a house is location, location, location. My message to companies is that the only reliable way to create a workplace that feels safe to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender variant people of all ages is inclusion, education, and communication. Most people want to be supportive but don’t know how. They don’t start conversations with gay or transgender people because they fear making a mistake, so they keep quiet. The silence is interpreted as hostility or at least disapproval. Education through diversity training creates more competent and confident allies, and lowers the chances of unwelcoming behaviors. In addition to continuing education, a company that wants to diminish the chances of discriminating against LGBT seniors needs to nurture an LGBT employee resource group that will help the company stay current in responding to the changes in the culture, the laws, and the issues.

According to the State of Georgia Department of Labor, 4.7 percent of the workforce in Georgia identifies as gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). Pew Research speculates that by 2022, 33.9 percent of people 65 to 74 will still be working. In the private sector, 6.48 percent of the workforce is comprised of LGBT seniors, according to the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy. For the foreseeable future, more people will need to work past the traditional retirement age of 65 in order to make ends meet. A significant percentage of those people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender variant.
New York State, Monroe Co. see spike in syphilis infections

The AIDS Institute, The New York State Department of Health and Monroe County Department of Health have identified an increase in syphilis infections in the Upstate New York region. Health officials are alarmed because syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI), which can have significant health outcomes if undiagnosed and untreated.

Early results from Monroe County indicate a 42 percent increase in 2014 from the previous year. Males account for 94 percent of total cases; 67 percent of total male cases did not have any risk factors, testing and treatment contact. A person can contract and spread syphilis through oral sex; anal sex; vaginal sex; or through other intimate contact including kissing (when a syphilis sore is present in the mouth).

Symptoms of syphilis include a painless, solitary, hard lump, called a chancre, during the early stages of the infection, which can be on or in the penis, or inside the vagina or mouth. The red skin lesions may form tiny sores with spots on palms of hands and bottoms of feet or on the torso; rashes; swollen lymph glands; or recurrent mouth ulcers.

Left untreated, syphilis can cause damage to major organs, including the brain and blood vessels and also cause serious birth defects or infant death.

"Early detection and treatment can cure syphilis," said Dr. James Vasilenko, medical director for Trillium Health and the Monroe County STD clinic.

The study of 18 patients is the first to show that the drug does not require the presence of herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV-2) to suppress HIV in patients. The researchers hope to confirm their results in a larger study.

The study, published online in Clinical Infectious Diseases, was supported by NIH’s Bench to Bedside Program, which funds research teams seeking to translate basic scientific findings into clinical practice. The first author of this paper is Christophe Vanpouille and Andrea Laucelot.

"These results follow a 2008 study by the same research team, who showed that acyclovir suppresses HIV in laboratory cultures of human tissues that were infected with various kinds of herpes viruses. Valacyclovir is referred to as a prodrug for acyclovir because it is structurally similar to acyclovir, and is converted to acyclovir in the body. For the current study, the researchers used valacyclovir because it remains in the blood longer and acyclovir and so would not need to be taken as often.

Further studies have shown that acyclovir reduces HIV levels in patients connected with HIV and HSV-2, the virus that causes genital herpes. This effect has been attributed to the drug’s anti-HSV-2 activity. The decrease in integrated viral activity results in active immune cells for HIV to infect.

In contrast, the laboratory results of researchers who evaluated that the drug likely reduced HIV levels by interfering directly with HIV’s reproductive machinery did not report any suppression of HSV-2. HSV-2 chemically alters acyclovir, by attaching chemical groups known as phosphates to it. It is this modified form of the drug that suppresses HSV-2. The researchers believe this form also interferes with HIV’s ability to reproduce. In their earlier study, the researchers found that many other kinds of herpes viruses can also attach phosphate groups to acyclovir, Dr. Margolis noted that these other herpes viruses are widespread and that most people harbor at least one of them.

“We wanted to find out whether such a mechanism could operate in the cells of patients with HIV,” Dr. Margolis said.

The researchers enrolled 38 HIV-infected patients in their study, none of whom had received any antiviral drugs before and treated them with valacyclovir. For 12 weeks, half of the enrolled patients took valacyclovir twice a day, while the other half received a placebo. After two weeks, the placebo group received valacyclovir while the group originally treated with the drug switched to the placebo.

The researchers found that when the patients took valacyclovir, their blood HIV levels declined significantly. Typically, HIV patients take a cocktail of several anti-HIV drugs because a single drug is not enough to suppress the virus. Multiple HIV medications also hinder the virus’ ability to develop resistance to the drugs.

The researchers conducted a genetic analysis and found that the HIV in the study volunteers did not develop resistance to valacyclovir. But because HIV has a history of becoming resistant to the drugs used to treat related infections, the researchers do not discount the possibility that the virus could develop resistance to valacyclovir with longer treatment. Given the ability of the drug to lower HIV levels, however, the researchers believe that valacyclovir could one day be added to the cocktail of drugs given to HIV-infected people.

“Larger randomized trials and cost-effectiveness analyses could be conducted to further explore the potential of [valacyclovir] in the context of HIV-1 infection, in particular in combination with other antivirals,” the study authors wrote. 

TRILLIUM HEALTH AT (585) 545-7200 OR VISIT THE WEBSITE www.trilliumhealth.org FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SYphilis.

The people most at-risk for Syphilis are the people most at-risk for other STIs. Reducing the number of sex partners, using condoms, and early diagnoses are vital to prevent serious health problems and increased transmission, or continued spreading of syphilis. Screening is particularly important since many STIs often have no signs or symptoms, Vasilenko emphasized.

For information about prevention, risk factors, testing and treatment contact Trillium Health at (585) 545-7200. Or visit the website www.trilliumhealth.org.

For more information about syphilis and other STIs, visit the CDC’s website www.cdc.gov.

Supporting information courtesy the AIDS Institute Syphilis Surveillance

Rhode Island’s HIV/AIDS epidemic has continued to grow, and our clinics’ ability to provide care, treatment, and prevention services has been threatened by a funding crisis. This funding crisis is a direct result of the lack of increased federal funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment programs.

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RDH) and the Rhode Island AIDS Foundation (RIAF) are working to ensure that Rhode Island’s HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to be controlled. The RHDAF is working to ensure that the RHDAF continues to be the most effective agency for providing care, treatment, and prevention services to those living with HIV/AIDS in Rhode Island.

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Two Spirit people gather in San Francisco

By Kelly Baumgartner

On Feb. 8, an estimated 2,000 people attended the 4th Annual Bay Area American Indian Two Spirit (BAAITS) Powwow at Cow Palace in Daly City, just south of San Francisco, Calif.

This is the only Two Spirit host-ed powwow open to the general public, in the world. Yep, that’s what I said, the only one. I was one of those in attendance, and it was really something special.

What is BAAITS and what does the organization do? From one of their informational pamphlets: “BAAITS exists to restore and recover the role of Two-Spirit people within the American Indian/First Nations community by creating forums for the cultural and artistic expression of Two-Spirit people. BAAITS is a community-based volunteer organization offering culturally relevant activities for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Two-Spirit Native Americans, their families, and their friends. Two-Spirit refers to the commonly shared understanding among many Native American Tribes that some individuals manifest both masculine and feminine spiritual qualities. Modern American society identifies Two-Spirit people as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Inter-sex.”

If you are wondering why other Two Spirit powwows and Gatherings are not open to the public, it’s because those are events created to be safe spaces for those who identify as Two-Spirit, their families, and their friends. Two-Spirit refers to the commonly shared understanding among many Native American Tribes that some individuals manifest both masculine and feminine spiritual qualities. Modern American society identifies Two-Spirit people as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Inter-sex.

Why is this significant? When I go to public socials and powwows in my urban community, I don’t wear my regalia. Why? Because I do not wear traditional woman’s regalia, and I am female bodied. Instead I wear men’s style regalia when I dance at Two Spirit powwows. For the first time, I felt safe dancing in my men’s style Cherokee regalia, in front of the general public. Oh what a feeling! For some people who are Two Spirit, the private powwows are the only times they can dance honoring every part of who they really are, and feel safe.

Some Two Spirit people are not accepted by the dance circles in their community, once they come out, so they lose something that is a very valuable part of who they are. Being able to dance again in public, free of fear, is a blessing and a gift to so many of us. I have never danced in front of so many people and I was truly honored to have the opportunity.

Many people were in attendance to reconnect with old family and friends. Others to watch, or participate in exhibition and contest dancing. We can’t forget the food, vendor booths and info tables showcasing a variety of community health and services organizations. This year they had enough room to spread out, and then some.

The event had to be moved after out-growing the previous location by doubling in size from the year before. A food truck offered hot food, including fry bread served up a variety of ways – battered with sugar and cinnamon, with fruit jams and in the form of the much loved Indian Taco. That would be chili, cheese, onions, tomatoes, and lettuce piled high atop a piece of hot fry bread.

The exhibition dancing included Maori dancers, Aztec dancers who go by the name of Queer Danzantes, a special presentation of the Gourd Dance and an exhibition of the Southeastern Stomp dance by Head Female Dancer Jenny Davis. The East Coast Two Spirit Society dancers were not only there to celebrate and dance, but also to present a special performance of the story of “Rainbow Crow.”

“Rainbow Crow” is a story which stresses that we each have glorious gifts that were given only to us, so that we may give them to the world, in service of the People. There were Intertribal dances for all to participate in as well as contest dancing from the tiny tots to the Golden Agers, and everyone in between.

Like so many others, I am looking forward to next February! I will be joining other Two Spirit identified folks, and their families, old friends and new in celebrating the fifth year of the Bay Area American Indian Two Spirit’s Annual Powwow. In the meantime, there will be other gatherings for the Two Spirit community, their families, friends and allies. One takes place in July in Montana, and one in September here in New York State. I will share information on those events and other topics in later articles.

East Coast Two Spirit Society Dancers after the debut of their production “Rainbow Crow”. L to R Sheldon Raymore, Everic J. Dupuy, Janis Stacy, OmiSade Yemaya, Kelly Baumgartner.

Kelly Baumgartner
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Meet one of our own - Dr. Ann Griepp.

As Chief Medical Officer of Behavioral Health for Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Dr. Griepp recently reflected on a time when the family of a dying HIV patient shut the partner out of the private room. “I can remember sitting with him in a waiting room, crying, as his partner was dying, but he was not allowed in because he didn’t have spousal rights,” she said.

Dr. Griepp developed the University of Rochester’s HIV Psychiatry Program and became involved in political protests, worked fundraisers and met LGBTQ friends and their families. In the mid-1980s, she founded the first treatment group for HIV-positive women, led groups for HIV-positive men, co-authored and participated in an AIDS Train the Trainer Grant. Dr. Griepp has worked with organizations such as the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, AIDS Rochester and Trillium Health to further spread knowledge, and diminish social stigmas and sensitivities about HIV/AIDS in the public.

Dr. Griepp continues to be engaged in LGBTQ efforts through her work at Excellus BCBS; collaborating on medical policy development, including transgender policies.

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Shoulders to Stand On: A community’s response to AIDS – the beginning years before 1986

By Evelyn Bailey

Last month we took a detailed look at the discovery and identification of AIDS by Dr. Michael B. Gottlieb of Rochester trained physician, who was at the UCLA School of Medicine in Los Angeles.

It is difficult at best to say how many people had AIDS in the years before 1981 in the 50s and 70s. Dr. Jonathan Mann who received the degree of M.P.H. from the Harvard School of Public Health in 1980, was a key figure in the early fight against HIV/AIDS and a pioneer in advocating combining the synergistic forces of public health, ethics and human rights. In 1980 Dr. Mann (AIDS: A worldwide pandemic), in current topics in AIDS, volume 2, edited by Gottlieb M.S., Jefts D.J., Mlikowsi D., Pinching, A.J., Quinn T.C., John Wiley & Sons summarized the early development of AIDS:

The documentation of this first period was silence, for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was unknown and transmission was not accompanied by signs or symptoms salient enough to be noticed. While rare, sporadic case reports of AIDS and some-archaeological studies have documented human infections with HIV prior to 1970, available data suggest that the current pandemic started in the mid- to late 1970s. By 1980, HIV had spread to at least five continents (North America, South America, Europe, Africa and Australia). During this period of silence, spread was undetected by public health, ethics and human rights. It is difficult at best to say how many people had AIDS in the years before 1981 in the 50s and 70s.

Shake in their pants.

By March 1981, at least eight cases of a rare pneumonia had occurred amongst young gay men in New York. About the same time there was an increase, in both California and New York, in the number of cases of a rare lung infection Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP). In April this increase in PCP was noticed at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta. According to an Article in Newsweek, a drug technician, Sandra Ford, observed a high number of requests for the drug pentamine, used in the treatment of PCP: “A doctor was treating a gay man in his 20s who had pneumonia. Two weeks later, he called to ask for a refill of a rare drug that I handled. Nobody ever asked for a refill. Patients usually were cured in one 10-day treatment or they died.”

On June 5, 1981 the first official documentation of the condition was published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Entitled ‘Pneumocystis carinii Pneumonia – Los Angeles’, Dr. Michael Gottlieb detailed the cases of five young gay men hospitalized with serious PCP, cytomegalovirus, and disseminated candida infections. This report began general awareness of AIDS in the USA.

A few days later the CDC formed a Task Force on Kaposi’s Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (KSOI). Almost a month after the CDC’s announcement, the New York Times reported that a total of 41 homosexual men had been diagnosed with Kaposi’s Sarcoma, eight of whom had died less than 24 months after the diagnosis was made. At the end of 1981, 5 to 6 new cases of the disease were being reported each week, and by the end of the year, 121 people had died from the disease.

This “gay cancer” was first mentioned in The Empty Closet in September, 1981 when it reported on an article in the Drugstore and Chronicle in which reporter Jack Jones talked with Dr. Alain Resin, at the Monro County Health Department, who was assigned by the Center for Disease Control to watch for cases of pneumocystis and also the Centers for Disease Control in Rochester is one of six U.S. cities where a special watch was undertaken. In September of 1981, there were no known cases of the “gay cancer” in the Rochester area. In the October, 1981 issue of The Empty Closet, Dr. Robert Delaney, a Rochesterian should be notified, of course, the disease and the field to gayness remains undefined.

By 1982 the condition had acquired a number of names - GRID 5 (gay-related immune deficiency), gay cancer, ‘community-acquired immune dysfunction’ and “grid compromise syndrome”. It was not until July, 1982 at a meeting in Washington, DC, that the name for AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was suggested. The CDC used the term for the first time in a Fact Sheet in July, 1982, when it reported that an average of one to two cases of AIDS were being diagnosed in the USA every day.

In “New Findings on Fatal Illnesses” by Bill Kelly in the January, 1982 issue of the EC, Bill reports that investigators have discerned a pattern of rare and sometimes fatal types of cancer and pneumonia among young urban gay males who are sexually active in drug-taking circles. The immune system breakdown has been noted in 180 patients in 15 states since July, of whom 92 percent were gay men.

By June, 355 cases of Kaposi’s Sarcoma and/or serious opportunistic infections in previously healthy young people had been reported to the CDC. By the beginning of July a total of 452 cases, from 23 states, had been reported to the CDC, and the disease was no longer solely affecting gay men; there was a small number of cases among heterosexual men and women. Over half of those identified as heterosexual had used intoxicating drugs at some point. G’dali Braverman, AIDS activist living in San Francisco stated that by mid-1982 people were starting to shake in their pants.

In April, 1982 The Empty Closet article ‘Gay Cancer’ Turns Straight” reported that the Washington Blade stated that ‘what was initially believed to be a disease peculiar to gay men is now being discovered in women and heterosexual men, in either the form of a cancer or pneumonia as reported in the Wall Street Journal. The disease, which has killed at least 99 persons in the past seven months, occurs in cases of Kaposi’s sarcoma or a form of pneumonia caused by normal- ly harmless pneumoconiosis carinii. Neither antibiotics nor antiviral drugs have been effective in treating the disease.

In a New York Times article ‘A Disease’s Spread Proves Anxiety’, by Herman R., published on August 8, 1982, Herman reports “It is frightening because one never knows what’s causing it, said a 28-year old law student who went to the St. Mark’s Clinic in Greenwich Village last week complaining of swollen glands, thought to be one early symptom of the disease. Every week a new theory comes out about how you’re going to spread it.”

By this time, news of the disease had spread through the gay community like wildfire. Who. How, where were all the all-consuming, frightening questions, not only by the gay community but, as we will see, by the straight community. African Americans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, and other ethnic groups would contract the disease. AIDS would infect women and children. Shoulders to Stand On is in awe of this group.

Shake in their pants.

Shoulders to Stand On is in awe of this group.

Shoulders To Stand On: Library Initiative takes off; screenings in May

Over the past two months, Shoulders has been busy scheduling a total of seven screenings for the documentary in libraries in the Monroe County Library System and the Pioneer Library system through a grant from the LGBT Giving Circle of the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

The following screenings have been booked for May and are open to the public free of charge. Many of these libraries are taking advantage of the offer to have the Forging Alliance exhibit and AIDS Posters from the U of R on display. Look for more screenings for June in the May issue of Shoulder To Stand On.


Sunday, May 17, 2 – 4 pm, Macedon Public Library, 30 W Main St, Macedon.

History Corner

A Monthly Newspaper of The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley

713 Monroe Avenue, Room 4, Rochester, NY 14607, (716) 244-8640
April, 1975 NO 49

FOCUS

In this issue, The EMPTY CLOSET focuses on the most intensive lobbying effort ever attempted by gays in New York State. The aim of the lobbying effort is to introduce legislation between two consenting adults legal pg. 6

IN THIS ISSUE: Dinner supports lob- bying pg. 1, What’s new at the Gay Brother- hood pg. 1, Who’s That Squatting on the Seat of Power pg. 1, Lobbyist Commercials by Kevin Scallill pg. Gay times in the Unemployment Line pg. 2, What’s New at the Gay Brotherhood pg. 5, Massacre at Local Bar pg. 10

Do you want to read this issue of the Empty Closet? Here is the link: http://www.lib.roches- ter.edu/index.cfm?page=4800.

On that page click on: Browse the Empty Closet issue -- Go to 1975 – April Calendar of Events

Gay Brotherhood Meeting Sun. 6 April 8 p.m.
Sun. 13 April Pot Luck Dinner (ben- efit) at Bachelor Forum 6-8 p.m.
Sun. 20 April New Gay Alliance Tue. 22 April Coordinating Council Thu. 27 April meeting OTHER EVENTS: Tue, 8 April VD Clinic 8-10 p.m at AMC Club.
Sun. 13 April Pot-Luck Dinner (benefit for Gay Brotherhood) at Bachelor Forum 6-8 p.m. $1 (See ad pg. 17)
18-20 Apr. Thursday Weekend. See ad pg. 2
Sun. 24 Apr. Party at Sodaux point. 10 a.m. to - See ad for details (pg 7)

Shoudlers To Stand On

By Evelyn Bailey, Executive Producer

Kevin Indovino, Producer/Director/Writer

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By Eric Bellman

I’m walking downtown through the crowd with Marta on a cold windy evening, just after Thanksgiving. Marta cuts quite a figure. She’s swathed in cold wind, cautiously studied ambient light, looking for somewhere in her apartment underneath the counter. 2. My skull remains attached, as I prefer, to my body.

Marta’s ultimate claim to notoriety is her name. She’s swathed in cold wind, cautiously studied ambient light, looking for somewhere in her apartment underneath the counter. 2. My skull remains attached, as I prefer, to my body.

Email: ELBCAD@RIT.EDU

Face Matters: DISCRIMINATION IS NOT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

By Beth Irene Monier

A movement is on the horizon as bills being introduced in state legislative session, which outright sanction and enforce LGBTQ discrimination. These
A few Bugs Short
One Ring to Rule Them All!

By David Hall

Here’s another story from the file marked: “Weird than Fiction.”

On February 3, 2015 in the town of Kermit, Texas, a 9-year-old boy was suspended from school for making a terrorist threat! Apparently, the kid, named Aiden, told one of his classmates that he could make them disappear by using a magic ring that came from a place called Mount Doom. Yep, that’s right — terrorist threat, 9-year-old kid, magic ring, Mount Doom.

The child’s father, Jason Stewart, assured both the school and the media that “...my son lacks magical powers necessary to threaten his friends’ existence.” The father then added: “But if he is, I’m sure he’d bring them right back!”

According to the story, earlier that week, Aiden had watched a DVD of one of the movies based on JRR Tolkien’s fantasy novel The Hobbit and learned about the magic ring that could turn Bilbo Baggins invisible and the dark, fiery place where the ring had originated called Mount Doom. Aiden then told his classmates about what he had learned. And he was accused of being a terrorist threat and suspended from school! Doesn’t that all make sense to you?

Okay, let’s start at the beginning. First of all, if you’re an administrator in a school located in a town named after the frog from the Muppets, you need to have a sense of humor.

Second, I took my nephew to see those Hobbit movies in theaters and I think that if a 9-year-old could not only sit through that daunting, hours-long presentation and enjoy the adventures of Bilbo Baggins and Frostrump or whatever-the-hell their names are, but actually understand what was going on, he should be able to sit through those cinematic trash-heaps and the only thing I understood was that the price of popcorn is a ridiculous! When the guy at the concession stand actually a truf named Ruppu? Also, if the kid that Aiden told about the magic ring from Mount Doom really believed the story, he must have been terribly scared (and not terribly bright). Do you think labeling Aiden a terrorist is really helping that classmate of his realize that it’s all make-believe? When I was 9, if I had complained to my mother that some kid was threatening to make me disappear, she would have responded: “No one can make you disappear! What are you, stupid? Get back outside and play! I’m busy drinking … um, I mean … cleaning!”

I suppose if we all thought like school administrators in Kermit, Texas, we’d just arm our US troops fighting in the Middle East with plastic Hobbit rings and expect them to terrified ISIS into surrendering by threatening to make them all disappear. I can hear the platoon leader now: “By all the power of Mordor, I command you to drop your weapons or face the crushing force of Mount Doom!”

The world certainly has changed since I was in elementary school. I’ll admit I felt for every one of my classmates’ offers to “I’ll show you mine, if you show me yours.” We’ve never once accused any of them of being a terrorist. A closet-case maybe, but never a terrorist.

It’s a tough world. Doesn’t it just make it tougher when morons who make the rules lose their sense of humor? Adults are complicating that young people no longer use their imaginations. I think the real terrorists were the Kermit School administrators who told Aiden’s attempt to use his imagination.

Let’s all just promise, the next we get a plastic Hobbit ring out of our box of Franken Berry cereal, we’ll handle it with respect. You never know where the real terrorists are hiding in the bathroom.

Contact David at davidhall59@gmail.com
Even some people who claim to be allies show ugly, mask-like shifts when it comes to sharing bathrooms with us. All of a sudden whether or not trans women are really women and trans men are really men (and ignore the non-binary people because every one does) becomes an important philosophical question when previously it was conceptually accepted. All of a sudden people become scared of their daughters being in a bathroom with someone like me. All of a sudden it becomes, “I’m for trans rights, but Not In My Backyard (or Bathroom, as the case may be).”

Why does it always come back to the bathroom? It often does for me, too. It does when I’m out of the house and have to wait for hours to find a safe restroom, one where I won’t have the cops called on me or be forced to deal with harassment or potential assault. It does when I have to watch my breath and body and be alert in the moment, constantly on my toes and ready to defend and protect for it and I’m convinced that we can make it through this one as well.

**What’s Bothering Brandon?**

ACE scores, Resilience and Phoebe Buffay

By Brandon W. Brooks

Out of boredom, or perhaps in an attempt to reconnect with my childhood, I have been re-watching the sitcom Friends.

One of the quintessential shows of the 1990s, Friends surrounded the antics and misadventures of five roommates. Each of them could afford a very large two-bedroom apartment in downtown Manhattan, or at least, the one I was told, “You’ll be using the men’s room, and it’s over there.”

So why the bathroom? I can only conclude that it’s because using the bathroom is a visceral (pun intended) and personal experience. Bathrooms have to have a veneer of safety, otherwise we wouldn’t feel comfortable with (or even capable of) making ourselves vulnerable in them. Because of that it’s the easiest route for politicians and patriarchs that are threatened by our existence to justify their hateful acts, and may have to be scared about assault in a public private place and fear brings votes, viewers, and money.

So what can we do about it? Make an issue out of it, if it’s going to be ignored as usual. Thus I launched a campaign of trans people sharing pictures of themselves in restrooms of the gender they identify as female. The purpose of this is to make people realize how ridiculous these proposed trans bathroom bills are. Eight to remove gender segregation of restrooms – sure, it’s great for trans men and women to be able to use the bathroom of their true gender, but that leaves all of the nonbinary (genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, Two Spirit, and others) people with no where that is safe for them.

In the long run, the only way to get rid of this argument and this last bastion of bigotry is to open restrooms to everyone. We’ve had bigger social changes than this before and survived and prospered for it and I’m convinced that we can make it through this one as well.

Psst, friends who did not experience the trauma Phoebe experienced in childhood. So why is this? Psychologists Mark Rains and Kate Mullan of Southern Kentucky Healthy Start in Augusta, Maine think they know the answer: resilience. They have developed a measure that couples the ACE measure in order to determine the likelihood of adult mental, social and emotional health. This measure is added to the childhood trauma equation. This 14-question survey measures the extent to which one was considered, encouraged, supported and celebrated during childhood using a five-point Likert scale for each of the 14 questions. This allows for great variation and interpretation between test-takers. When paired with ACE scores, the scores of this resilience measure reflect just how impacting positive support and encouragement can be, especially in our early years.

But resilience, just like trauma, is an ever-changing creature, one that can be nurtured or scarred throughout our lives, and not just during childhood. Although Phoebe may not have had family members or mentors who offered her the sword and shield of resilience during her colorful childhood, she does have friends in her adult life that do just that.

When I look back on life (I’m pushing thirty here!) I sometimes wonder in fear of what it was like for my friends, my parents, and my own parents. What kind of person might I have been if I did not have that one adult who understood, those friends who knew the potential costs of coming out in a Podunk town, or that teacher who kept my cover when I would skip gym class and hang out in her chemistry lab instead! Would I even be as marginally successful as I am today if not for my art or English professors? I shudder to think.

At the end of the day, I really must be thankful for being one of the so-called lucky ones. Despite growing up gay in a world that told me that I was wrong for being so, I think I’ve done well. However I must also give credit not only to my own stubborn nature that refused to believe that I was not right, but also to the countless others who lifted me up when I just kept feeling like staying down. We all need friends and mentors, whether it comes from our parents or relatives, professors or peers, role-models or strangers. Like the song says, “I’ll be there for you” – Phoebe Buffay, I’ll be there for you. Cuit the vomit.

Questions, comment or critique? Feel free to email the author at brandonbrooks@mail.adelphi.edu
Find the friends, fun, and common interests you’re looking for through the various groups listed here.

**DIGNITY-INTEGRITY**

Since March, 1975, Dignity-Integrity Rochester has been welcoming all who come through our doors, worshiping every week at 5 p.m. at St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 175 S. Fitzhugh St., at the corner of Broad St. We have the following services and activities for the month of April 2015:

1st Sunday: Episcopal Mass/Healing Service, with music
2nd Sunday: Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music
3rd Sunday: Episcopal Mass, quiet Sunday: Roman Catholic Evening Prayer,followed by a Potluck Dinner

The theme for the April Potluck dinner is “Primavera Potluck.” Think SPRING! Now that the snow seems to be melting away, it is time to look for your favorite spring recipe. No opportunity to cook or shop? Don’t worry, there is always enough to eat! The tradition has it that when we aren’t cooking up a Potluck supper on the fourth Sunday, we’re gathering for fellowship around a tasty coffee hour and going out to a local restaurant for dinner each Sunday. Join us anytime!

D-1 Trinity: You may think that we’re “old-school” Catholic and Episcopal, but throughout the years, in conjunction with the National Dignity and Integrity groups, we’ve been working from within the structure of these denominations to get LGBTQI folks accepted, ordained, and so much more. All are welcome in our community!

2015—Our 40th Anniversary! We’re booked for AUGUST 15, 2015 for a FABULOUS 40TH REUNION PICNIC! Volunteers are always welcome to prepare for this big event. We’ve started making lists of all the people we can remember (we’ve up to about 250) and now we need addresses. Please make sure you let us know how to contact you. It would be fantastic to see or hear from any of our many former members of DI as possible.

Send us your current contact information via email, info@DI-rochester.org, or write to us directly at 17 S. Fitzhugh Street, 14614 so we can be sure to send you an invitation!

You can call the Hotline at 585-234-5092 or check our website at www.di-rochester.org for updates on services and events.

**EMPIRE BEARS**

Spring! Finally, warmth, sunshine, getting outside, fresh air. I’m starting to sound like Oliver on Green Acres.

Anyway, the Bears are out on the prowl. You can find us having supper on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. April 1 at Texas Roadhouse on W. Henrietta, April 8 at Flavor of Asia on Clinton, April 15 at Carrabba’s on W. hen, April 22 at the Winfield Grill on Winton, and April 29 at Tony D’s on East Avenue.

You might also run into members at The Cinema, at Empire Lanes on alternate Sundays in the Friends and Family league, or at the Forum. We have the Bears this month, as the second weekend of April, many of our members will be in Erie at Drenched Fur, soaking in the pool, hot tub, pool deck, or sliding down the crazy water slide. Camping season starts soon, so make your reservations at Jones Pond or Hillside.

In March, we went to concerts, movies, drag shows, card games, and played a lot of board games. If you’d like to meet some new friends, join us at dinner one night, and we’ll add you to our email list, or look us up on Facebook.

**OPEN ARMS MCC**

Open Arms MCC is Beyond Open and Affirming...Beyond Welcoming, we are a Place to Call.

Our Sunday Morning Celebration Services begin at 10:30 a.m., offering Gospel, inclusive, progressive, exciting worship experience! We blend elements of traditional and contemporary worship styles which include hymns, prayer, scripture, audio visual and special music. Pastoral Intern Brandy always delivers a message that makes a unique connection with the scriptures and everyday life.

During our Children’s Worship Time, children invited to participate in our Children’s Moment before heading off to Rainbow Rainbow (ages 5-12) and Rainbow Sprouts (newborn to 5 years old) Sunday School Program. Following the service you can join us in our Community Center for our Social Time.

During the last month or so our social time has revolved around serving dinners out of donated materials. We made more than 60 pairs of mittens. The women’s and children’s sizes were given to ABW. Additional pairs for the Women’s Shelter, to the men’s went to Dimitri House. Our next community project will be collecting gently used or new towels for ABW.

Our evening Contemplative Worship Service is held each Sunday at 5:30 p.m. During Lent, Limos is in the community media based, contemplative service that is interactive, yet personally spiritual. You will be accepted, honored and loved.

Communion is served each Sunday in both services.

Our monthly Agape Supper Service is held the second Sunday of each month at 5:30 p.m. During this service you’ll experience worship while sharing a meal in companionship with others. Please bring a dish to share in this intimate worship experience.

Adult Sunday School continues to meet at 9 a.m. each week. We are studying “Being The Church.” The focus for this Adult Sunday School is how Christianity still has relevance in the 21st Century. Provide a variety of flexible resources, “Living the Questions” can help people explore the future of Christianity and understand that a meaningful faith can look like in today’s world.

Our Social Justice team continues to offer Dwayne’s House in Jamaica, Canada, which provides clothing and gives monetary assistance to the homeless LGBTIQ youth in Jamaica. Our work also continues in Eastern Europe as we fund travel expenses through our offering and call a Presbyterian mission. We have contributed over $100 to our pastor emeritus, Rev. Jim Mulcahy, as he builds churches, builds ministry to our LGBTQI siblings in Eastern Europe about God’s unconditional love.

Once the weather starts to warm up (hopefully by June?) we hope to be planting a community garden. Donations can be made in our Community Center on Monday mornings or Sundays for our Open Arms Feeding Bank, which provides food for those in need. Cash donations for our DUO fund (Do Unito Other) are used to assist the people in the Rochester community with urgent housing, medical, food or transportation needs.

FTFY Adult Families with Trans Youth, meets on the first Tuesday of every month from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Community Center. This is a support group for parents and other family members who want to understand and support their trans child with whatever difficulties they may be having. Families can learn ways to best treat their child in a loving and accepting way.

On Tuesday mornings, Rainbow Get together with Tom Somerville for Yoga from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and there is a $5 fee.

PFLAG (Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays and trans and questioning) is a support and activism group for anyone who supports the LGBTQIA community They meet on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Center.

Open Arms MCC is committed to building Bridges and Changing Lives and we are the only accepting church in Rochester. We are located at 707 East Main St. almost right across from Delta Sonic. There is plenty of free parking in front and to the side of our building. For updated information on these and other exciting upcoming events, check out our website at: openarmsmcc.org. Our Pastoral Intern Brandy Adams has office hours on Mondays from 12 to 2 p.m. or by appointment. You can reach us by phone at (585) 271-8478.

**ROCHESTER WOMEN’S COMMUNITY CHURCH**

The Rochester Women’s Community Church will present a June concert, Songs of LGBT Equality.

The concert will inspire you with songs written by women with a wide range of influences—by Sara Bareilles, “1,000 Grandmothers” by Holly Near, and the rousing gospel piece “Still I Rise” by Rosephanye Powell.

Join us on Saturday, June 6 at 8 p.m. at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. The concert will be free to attend with a free-will donation that will go to benefit an organization to help victims of domestic abuse.

The performance is sign language interpreted and wheelchair accessible

For more information call 334-4441 or visit our website, www.twccc.org.

**ROMANS**

ROMANS members are planning some exciting activities for the hot summer months.

Our regular meetings continue to happen every month at a member’s home and we are working on some interesting ideas for our meetings including a crafts making workshop, nude drawing session, plaster casting demonstration, etc. We also hope to offer some exciting activities that literally include nude camping and hiking, trips to nude beaches in New Jersey or Toronto, and nude swimming and sunbathing at a member’s backyard. Other clothed activities in the past included a trip to New York City for Gay Pride and a trip to Toronto for World Pride, a week on a gay cruise, etc.

ROMANS members are year-round nudists who are active indoors as well as outdoors. If you are interested in becoming a nudist as a lifestyle, you can check out our frequently updated ROMANS website www.romans.org for information.

ROMANS is a social club for gay and gay-friendly male nudists (or nu-nos) over 21. Currently the club is offering a year of free membership to all full-time students to promote the nude lifestyle among the younger generation.

Contact ROMANS at their message line 585-281-4964, by email morganstanley@yahoo.com or via regular mail at PO Box 92293, Rochester, NY 14692.
The Gay Alliance is seeking a reliable, energetic self-starter to sell Empty Closet advertising for a generous commission.

For more information, phone Susan Jordan at 244-9030 or e-mail: susanj@gayalliance.org
Playing a “Boy Toy”: Gregory Isaac Stone of Geva’s Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike, opening May 5

By Adam Young

“Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike,” a play by Christopher Durang, will debut at Geva Theatre Center on May 5. The Gay Alliance and Geva will host an “Out At Geva” performance on May 14. Patrons will need to mention “Out at Geva” when reserving tickets for the performance. A free, pre-show reception will be held on the second Thursday of the play’s run.

The comedy chronicles the ties-between-family members, when Hollywood diva Masha returns to the farm where she grew up, accompanied by her airhead boy-friend Spike. Sisters Vanya and Sonia extend a lukewarm welcome to Masha and Spike, and soon after, long simmering feelings of jealousy and resentment begin to boil among the family.

Gregory Isaac Stone, who plays Spike, describes his character as the proverbial “dooche-bag.” Spike embodies the classic Hollywood stereotype of a man who is shallow and lacks a true sense of vanity. Stone said.

Despite his dimwitted demeanor, Stone hinted there is more to Spike than meets the eye. The play contains some tender moments among the characters as long bottled-up emotions are ultimately expressed. “He wants to be liked. I think that’s very human in general,” Stone said.

Stone, a native of Indiana, has lived the past three years in New York City. Theatre is in his blood as both of his parents are involved in theatrical productions. Stone decided to test the waters himself as both of his parents are involved in musical theatre master-classes. In my opinion the more I learn about the different ways musical theatre is performed the better I am as a performer. Back in the day you could do everything as a cast member but now it’s different. My goal is to keep learning about musical theatre.

In film he has appeared in feature productions with Robert Guillaume, Gavin McLeod, Diahann Carroll and Tom Wopat, and in over 100 episodes of television shows. He also hosted a Motown Revue at Six Flags Over Texas.

Stone identifies as an introvert, although he performs on stage, he loves Broadway. A free, pre-show reception will be held on the second Thursday of the play’s run. The play is directed by Michael H. Arge. Tickets are $25 for general admission and $20 for seniors and students and may be ordered at www.blackfriar.org or by calling 385-494-1260.

Mr. Doyle has been involved in theatre, film, radio and TV for over 40 years. He has worked with Blackfriars, Geva, Merhorod Machine, Shipping Dock Theater, GCC-Center Stage, Rochester Children’s Theatre, and many other local and national groups. His most recent appearance was at MuCCC where he played Ernst Janning in “Judgment at Nuremberg.”

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"Diversions" from page 27

30 short and industrial films. As a voice actor he has worked in animated films, television, commercials, Internet training programs, and the occasional arcade game. On television he portrayed serial killer Arthur Shawcross in the Discovery Channel Series "Serial Killers," and is currently in production for a sitcom from ColoredSoda entitled "The Church." He is a member of SAG-AFTRA and is a graduate of Nazareth College.

"Diversions & Delights" is set in a Parisian concert hall on the Rue de la Peper- niere in 1899 — about a year before Wil- de's death, at the age of 66. In an attempt to earn some much-needed money, Wilde is speaking to the audience about his life, his work, and about his love for Lord Alfred Douglas.

Willie Dee from page 27

See a day all summer long. I learned so much about myself and my drive for performing. I loved that I could get paid to do something that did not feel like work at all.

"Bee, the closing performance of The Light Journey like that!"

Meanwhile, Broadway comes first. Wil- de and his voice to help a stand. I would love a difference in the world with the creation set brilliant choreography, and he makes a Mitchell's! He gets to express himself as focused and have my full self on that stage when I am performing.

"Audra McDonald is also a huge inspi- ration to me. Her work is magnificent and she is always challenging herself and con- tinuing to thrive! If there was one career identifying and fostering meritorious stu- dents of merit.

York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. The series wins Courage Star of "Transparent" way will always be special to me and I Burt the transgender community," said Tambor. "I am honored to this supporting role in the movement."

"Beyond his sensitive and intelligent portrayal of a transgender character on Transparent," Jeffrey Tambor has used his platform to express how society can learn from - and do so much more to help sup- port - the transgender community—said Jorge Valencia, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Point Foun- dation. "It is so important for LGBTQ young people to see that there are allies such as Tambor, who value their stories and what they can contribute to society.

The Co-Chairs for Point Honors are Brannon Green, Herb Hamsher and Emily Light. Point supports 50 scholars and 187 alumni will be pres- ent at the event to share with the audi- ence their inspiring stories about how they have overcome challenges to get their higher education degrees. Information about attending or supporting Point Honors is at www.pointfoundation.org/

Point Foundation's mission of support the youths' big night ("Prom-I-Con" on May 9, 7-11 p.m. at the Diplomat). $ 5.

Paul Pakusch Wedding Officiant

Out comic to perform at Dukes Bar & Grill

Peter Bisuto, an out comedian, will be performing at the old Daisy Dukes Comedy Club, now called Dukes Bar & Grill, in Webster on April 19, 6 p.m., tickets $15.

Dukes Bar & Grill is located at 2235 Empire Blvd. # 5, Webster, NY 14580, (585) 671-4880. Tickets are available online as well: http://www.thecomedyclub.us

Star Wars adds first official lesbian character

By Jase Peeples on The Advocate

To quote Han Solo, "Here's where the fun begins." The Star Wars universe is getting its first official LGBT character in the franchise's new canon, reports Big Shiny Robot.

The historic introduction will occur in writer Paul S. Kemp’s upcoming Star Wars novel Lords of the Sith, which is scheduled to be released April 28. Big Shiny Robot describes the new character, Moff Mors, as an "Imperial who has made some very serious mistakes but she is an incredibly capable leader and has found that her work in the Force prevents her from prevent absolute failure. She also happens to be a lesbian."

This is not the first time LGBT char- acters have popped up in a galaxy far, far away in some form. Video game developer Bioware recently announced same-sex romance options for players in the online role-play- ing game Star Wars: The Old Republic. Additionally, a brand new series of two gay Mandalorian men in a committed relationship was previously referenced in the Legacy of the Force books, a series that was part of the Star Wars expanded universe. (That continuity has since been wiped clean since Disney took over the sprawling space saga.) However, this is the first introduction of an LGBT char- acter that is officially a part of the Star Wars canon.

Diy Rey editor at large Shelly Shap- iro, who is responsible for the Star Wars fiction line of books, spoke up about the need for greater diversity in the Star Wars universe shortly after news about the inclusion of an LGBT character to the franchise's new canon was announced.

"This is certainly the first [LGBT] character in canon," Shapiro said on the Full of Sith podcast. "But there was a gay Mandalorian couple, so it's not brand new. It's not something I really think about, it just makes sense. There's a lot of diver- sity — there should be diversity in Star Wars. You have all these different species and it would be silly to not also recognize that there's a lot of diversity in humans. If there's any message at all, it's simply that Star Wars is as diverse (or more so because they have alien species) as humanity is in real life and we don't want to pretend it's not. It just felt perfectly natural."

Star Wars: Lords of the Sith is avail- able for preorder on Amazon.

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Mercedes Sulay

Prom fundraiser is April 19 at 140 Alex

140 Alex Bar and Grill, The Gay Alli- ance and Todd Ransous present the 2015 Big Gay Prom Fundraiser.

The event will take place at 140 Alex Bar and Grill (corner of Alexander Street and Broadway Street) on Sunday, April 19, at 2 p.m., hosted by Destiny Spice and Mera- cules Sulay.

Other performers include The Mighty Deelicious, Vivian Darling, Vanity Fair, and Taylor Maye. A special guest appear- ance will be made by Mary and Rhoda. Eggnog and empanadas will be sold.

Minimum suggested donation to ben- efit the youths' big night ("Prom-I-Con" on May 9, 7-11 p.m. at the Diplomat). $ 5.

Oscar winner Eddie Redmayne plays trans pioneer

The first photo of Oscar-winning actor Eddie Redmayne as 1930s sex reassignment surgery pioneer Lili Elbe has been released, The Guardian reports:

"The Danish Girl," adapted from David Ebershoff’s novel and directed by Tom Hooper, is the story of Elbe, who became one of the world’s first known recipients of this type of surgery. She was born in Denmark as Einar Mogens Wegener and underwent a series of then experimental operations in Berlin in 1930-31. Organ rejection following an attempt to transplant a uterus resulted in her death in 1931.

No release date for the film has been announced. In February Redmayne won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of theoretical physicist Stephen Hawk- ing in the film "The Theory of Everything." Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/fxxz5SvG8CGpS

Star of “Transparent” series wins Courage Award at Point Honors

Point Foundation (Point) will honor actor Jeffrey Tambor, the 2015 Golden Globe winner for his performance in the hit Amazon series “Transparent,” with the Point Courage Award on April 3. Point is an organization that speaks to the education-focused mission of Point Foundation, which is the nation’s largest scholarship-granting organization for LGBTQ stu- dents of merit.

"The Point Foundation’s mission of identifying and fostering meritorious stu- dents from the LGBTQ community is vital," said Tambor. "I am honored to accept this award and I am humbled by the opportunity to use progressive story- telling as a platform for social change. I want to thank the transgender and LGBTQ communities for their inspira- tion, commitment, and for allowing me this supporting role in the movement."

"Beyond his sensitive and intelligent portrayal of a transgender character on Transparent," Jeffrey Tambor has used his platform to express how society can learn from - and do so much more to help sup- port - the transgender community. —said Jorge Valencia, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Point Foun- dation. "It is so important for LGBTQ young people to see that there are allies such as Tambor, who value their stories and what they can contribute to society.

The Co-Chairs for Point Honors are Brannon Green, Herb Hamsher and Emily Light. Point supports 50 scholars and 187 alumni will be pres- ent at the event to share with the audi- ence their inspiring stories about how they have overcome challenges to get their higher education degrees. Information about attending or supporting Point Honors is at www.pointfoundation.org/

Star Wars adds first official lesbian character

By Jase Peeples on The Advocate

To quote Han Solo, "Here’s where the fun begins." The Star Wars universe is getting its first official LGBT character in the franchise’s new canon, reports Big Shiny Robot.

The historic introduction will occur in writer Paul S. Kemp’s upcoming Star Wars novel Lords of the Sith, which is scheduled to be released April 28.

Big Shiny Robot describes the new character, Moff Mors, as an "Imperial who has made some very serious mistakes but she is an incredibly capable leader and has found that her work in the Force prevents her from prevent absolute failure. She also happens to be a lesbian."

This is not the first time LGBT char- acters have popped up in a galaxy far, far away in some form. Video game developer Bioware recently announced same-sex romance options for players in the online role-play- ing game Star Wars: The Old Republic. Additionally, a brand new series of two gay Mandalorian men in a committed relationship was previously referenced in the Legacy of the Force books, a series that was part of the Star Wars expanded universe. (That continuity has since been wiped clean since Disney took over the sprawling space saga.) However, this is the first introduction of an LGBT char- acter that is officially a part of the Star Wars canon.

Diy Rey editor at large Shelly Shap- iro, who is responsible for the Star Wars fiction line of books, spoke up about the need for greater diversity in the Star Wars universe shortly after news about the inclusion of an LGBT character to the franchise’s new canon was announced.

"This is certainly the first [LGBT] character in canon," Shapiro said on the Full of Sith podcast. "But there was a gay Mandalorian couple, so it’s not brand new. It’s not something I really think about, it just makes sense. There’s a lot of diver- sity — there should be diversity in Star Wars. You have all these different species and it would be silly to not also recognize that there’s a lot of diversity in humans. If there’s any message at all, it’s simply that Star Wars is as diverse (or more so because they have alien species) as humanity is in real life and we don’t want to pretend it’s not. It just felt perfectly natural."

Star Wars: Lords of the Sith is avail- able for preorder on Amazon.
Like an orange on a Seder plate

By Merle Exit

Ma Nishtana, halaila hazeh, mikol ha’leilot? Why is this night different from all other nights? This is known as “the four questions” recited during the traditional Passover seder.

I never understood why that title was given since it is that one question with four answers. Nevertheless, the recitation is given to the youngest son present. My household had no sons and I was the youngest daughter.

There are a few other rituals that puzzled me as well. Aside from the obligatory four glasses of wine that made me shika (drunk) a fifth glass of wine is placed on the table for when we are to open the door and allow the prophet Elijah to enter and sip. When I was young I would stare at the glass as well as wonder as to whether Elijah was an alcoholic.

My puzzlement was in regards to Elijah. “When Miriam was five, her mother was pregnant with Moses. Miriam prophesied and said, ‘My mother is about to bear a son who will save Israel from Egypt’. When the time came for Yochevit to give birth, Miriam shared motherhood with her mother. On the day Moses was born, the house was filled with light. Her father kissed Miriam on the head and said, ‘Your prophesy was fulfilled’. When years later, it was time for the exodus, Miriam sang and danced her people to victory.”

The above quote was taken from a Feminist Hagaddah compiled by a former Queens-located feminist group called All the Queens Women. Although the group is defunct, the former members have kept their copy.

An Haggadah would best be described as a publication containing the rituals, prayers and explanations of the seder. In modern times, the Haggadah, usually written in Hebrew, is now compiled of both the Hebrew and its transliteration, along with English directives and explanations. The directives point to who gets to do the traditions and say the prayers as “The Leader” is supposed to be a male person. In fact, the traditional Haggadah clearly centers around giving credit to men.

Around the time that the organization was meeting it was rumored that during a speech, regarding Jewish women and the synagogue, a rabbi stood up and said that women belonged at the bimah (altar used for the reading of the Torah) like an orange on a seder plate.

In the traditional seder a prayer is cited for each of the items (there seems to be a Jewish prayer over everything, anyway). With the feminist version an added female angle follows, considering that the women did all the preparations but not the rituals. “They read of their fathers but not of their mothers?”

In the movie, “The Ten Commandments” ten plagues were put upon the Egyptians: water to blood; frogs; lice; flies; livestock diseased; thunder and hail; locust; darkness; and death of the firstborn. “The plagues serve to remind us of the plagues of women, including discrimination, enslavement to roles, lack of respect, rape, powerlessness, and isolation from each other.”

The seder is split into two parts, like an intermission. This allows for everyone to stuff themselves with delicious holiday foods such as gefilte fish, which is not a fish caught in the waters but a cooked appetizer served cold; chopped liver; hardboiled egg in salt water; matzo ball soup; brisket or chicken; stuffed cabbage, matzoh farfel and matzoh, of course. If your arteries are doing fine, spread some chicken fat on the matzoh. No challah bread for this holiday!

A traditional song known as “Dayenu” (it would have sufficed) is sung during the seder in many verses. However, this particular Haggadah cites lines such as: “If our mothers had been honored for their daughters as well as for their sons, dayenu. If women had been among the writers of the Tanach (canon of the Hebrew bible) and had interpreted our creation and our role in history, dayenu”. The conclusion of the seder has us drinking that fourth cup of wine as the leader says, “We hope that this evening’s seder has helped to strengthen our desire to gather together again to recall our past and present and to look to our future lives as women... as sisters.”

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Volunteer of the Month: Gerry Szymanski

As a small organization, many of the Gay Alliance’s programs and services are run by professionals who have decided to volunteer their skills to serve the community. For the month of April we’ve chosen to honor one such volunteer, Gerry Szymanski, Librarian and Director of the Gay Alliance Library & Archives.

Professionally, Gerry works as the Reserves and Digital Services Librarian at the Sibley Music Library at the Eastman School of Music, and we are lucky to benefit from his valuable background.

Gerry has contributed hundreds of hours to the Library & Archives over his several years tenure as Librarian, maintaining our collection of over 6,000 books, magazines, videos, and DVDs. He works with six other volunteers to maintain the physical space and the online catalog. He also serves on the Shoulders on Stand On committee and was featured in the film documentayy, and was a part of the team that created the panel display Forging Alliances: Rochester’s LGBT story.

In addition to his Library work, Gerry is both a writer and photographer. Outside the Gay Alliance, Gerry has served for over ten years as an official photographer for the ImageOut film festival, in addition to a four-year stint on the ImageART committee. Six of his short films have screened at ImageOUT, including “Insight Out: Mark Grueninger,” which received the first Mary Elizabeth Knight Award for best local film.

By offering his unique knowledge and experiences to the community, Gerry helps the agency preserve our community history, ensuring that it is accessible and available for generations to come. The distinct collection he and the Library & Archives volunteer team develop and maintain is a highlight of the Rochester LGBTQ community, and we are deeply grateful to Gerry for everything he has contributed to the Gay Alliance.

Thank you.

The following individuals are members of the Gay Alliance Legacy Society, we thank them for taking action to ensure a strong future for the LGBTI Communities of the Rochester area:

John Allsiri
Mark Chaplin & John Straway
Pat Collins & Judy Lawrence
Tom Ferrarese & Bill Giancursio
Bob Darnado
Patrick Gagliardo & David Giancursio
Jeanne Gainsburg
W. Bruce Germain
Whitney LeBlanc
Emily Jones
Tim Mains & David Gardiner
Anthony Masioli

The Legacy Society will provide a way to honor people who have named the Gay Alliance in their wills, on insurance policies, or through a number of other financial vehicles that often come with beneficial tax savings. To assist people in determining which of the many giving options is best the Gay Alliance has a number of resources available that explain the options. But, stressed Fearing, “Your own lawyer and financial planner are the best sources of information.

The Legacy Society has accomplished so much these past 42 years. Within our lifetime we have seen the disappearance of mental illness removed as a reality of being “homosexual” to witnessing the arrival of legal same-sex marriages. Together we have changed hearts and minds in Rochester.

However, the work continues,” added Fearing, “social acceptance and strong community do not come from legislatures.”

We’ll see you there -- and may the PRIDE be with you!
Speaking Engagements
February 2015

• SafeZone Training at SUNY Geneseo
• Transgender Inclusive Healthcare at Canandaigua VA Medical Center
• SafeZone Training at SUNY Geneseo
• Intersections Workshop at The MOCHA Center
• SafeZone Training for the Monroe County Library System
• LGBTQ 101 at Wegmans School of Pharmacy
• Transgender Panel Presentation at Nazareth College
• Tabling at MCC Damon City Campus Community Resource Fair

Feedback from February presentations:

• “It was all so great! I wanted it to be longer... I could have learned for hours!”
  • “I learned how to respond to uncomfortable situations as a teacher. Everything was fantastic, thank you. I just wish we had more time.”
  • “I learned how the simple things that we do in the clinic can affect the lives of others and that most of the time people are probably doing them and not realizing it. I would like to see this type of panel training become mandatory for our clinic providers, not just to make the experience better for the patients, but also to make the providers comfortable with treating transgender patients.”

SAGE APRIL CALENDAR

Thursday April 2 .......... 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom
Tuesday April 7 .......... 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom; 11:30-12:30 Brown Bag & Beverage; 12:30-1:3am Food Demo, hosts Jessica and Anne; 1:30-3pm Birthday celebration & games, your host Anne
Thursday April 9 .......... No Yoga. 10:30-12pm Breakfast at Dennys, 911 Jefferson Road. Please RSVP by 4/7 to 585-287-2958. Your host Audet
Tuesday April 14 .......... 10:30-11:3am Yoga with Tom; 11:30-12:30 Brown Bag & Beverage; 1:13pm Oasis presentation & programs by Josie & Ginny. Your host Anne
Thursday April 16 ...... 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom; 11:30-12:30 Brown Bag & Beverage; 12:30pm Movie day at the center, your hosts Gerry & Audet; 7-8:30pm Coffee at Equal Grounds, 750 South Ave., Rochester. Your host David
Saturday April 18 ........ 5-7pm Sage & Community Potluck and Bingo game. Please bring a dish to pass and go for the big win of token prizes! $3 fee for Bingo held at OAMCC 707 East Main St. Hosts Anne & Jessie
Tuesday April 21 .......... 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom 11:30-12:30 Brown Bag & Beverage, Euchre & Games, your host Anne
Thursday April 23 ........ 10:30-11:30 Yoga with Tom
Friday April 24 ........... 5pm Fish Fry, Patties Pantry, 2485 Dewey Ave. on the left after crossing railroad tracks. $9.99. Please RSVP to 585-287-2958 by 4/22
Tuesday April 28 ........ 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom; 11:30-3pm Brown Bag & Beverage, Arts and Crafts & Conversation: “Is LGBTQ culture disappearing?”
Thursday April 30 ........ 10:30-11:30am Yoga with Tom

Bad weather days: If schools are closed all programs are canceled that day.
Rainbow Sage, For LGBTQ People 50 and over, meets at Open Arms Community Center of Western New York, 707 East Main Street, Rochester, New York 14605. Yoga is from 10:30 to 11:30 $5. per person, Tuesday and Thursday. All programs are subject to change and Rainbow Sage members are responsible for setting up their own transportation to and from any program. All programs are open to the community and the Gay Alliance welcomes all to participate to enhance the quality of diverse, member-driven programming.

Youth

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

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

Gender Identity Support Group:
Tuesdays: 5:30-6:30pm. (Ages 13-18)
More info: youth@gayalliance.org

The Gay Alliance
875 E. Main Street, (5th Floor)
Auditorium Center, Rochester, NY 14605
Phone: 585-244-8640 • Web: gayalliance.org

Youth Services
On GC

Gay Alliance
on-line Resource Directory
The online community tool – providing local, state and national resources... twenty-four, seven!

www.gayalliance.org

GAY ALLIANCE NEWS FOR APRIL 2015
BISEXUALITY RESOURCES
AMLA- Los Angeles; American Bisexual
(Alley of Bisexuality); Bay Area Bisexual
Network: 800-441-9959. Contributions
Project (BOP); Biversity Boston; Bisexual
Women’s Network: 800-243-1327.
Columbia; Queer: ForemWay Health & Bi
Programs. Los Angeles Bi Task Force; New
York Area Bisexual Network; Rochester
Highline; OutFront. The Bisexual Resource
Center (email brc@ser-
source.org)

CULTURAL
Rochester Women’s Community Center
234-4441. (See Ongoing calendar).
Rochester Gay Men’s Club
www.rochestergaymen.com
Open Arms Community Center
Available for groups, meetings, 707 E.
Main St. Parking. Accepting and welcoming of all.
271-8478.

DAF DEATH SERVICES
See Rainbow Network of Rochester
See Facebook

LGBTQ & Straight Alliance
817-0026, <spectrumComment@
groups.facebook.com

ELDERS
Gay Alliance Rainbow Sage
Main St. Parking. Accepting and welcoming of all
217-8478 open hours.

NYF Ferry Center
Integrative Ferry Health.

Rochester Gay Men’s Group
Support group for men 20s and 30s.

Lesbian & Gay Family Building Project
Heaven’s Gate Housing with a pres-
ence throughout Upstate NY, the Project is dedi-
cated to helping LGBTQ people achieve
their goals of building and sustaining healthy families.
Claudia Stahlman, Project Director, 124 Front St.
(Binghamton), 607-899-6868, 518-494-3130; e-mail
LesGayFamily.building@outlook.com. See www.PrideAnd-
Joy.org.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
PFLAG’s free workshops for parenting parents and family members in coming out process; edu-
cate about LGBTQ community; advocating on behalf of
LGBT family members. rochesterpflag@gmail.
com. 585-993-3297.

Adapted Parent Support Group
Monthly potluck dinners. For information, loca-
tion, call Shari, 350-2529.

Anger Fist Ministry
Box of fresh/frozen food for $30 in advance
Menu changes monthly. For information and dis-
tribution sites, call 585-801-4815.

HIV/AIDS
Free testing for HIV exposure is
available from the New York State Department of Health.
Call Rochester Area Regional Hotline at (585) 423-8801, one 800-962-5603. Dead or heartbeats, people should call (585) 423-
8021 (TDD) available from NY Dept. of Health.
HIV and STD testing site listing. Rapid testing is only in 15 minutes. STD testing provided by Bulle.
head Family Planning. Rochester. Contact, Narxis @ Rochester.

Volunteer Legal Services
(585) 224-3327. Volunteer counselors at
1 West Main St., Suite 500 Rochester, NY 14614.

Legal services for low-income HIV positive clients.
No fee for cases involving attorney work at
scheduled at area medical provider locations or by calling
285-3020.

Trillium Health
Trillium Health is the leading provider of
HIV/AIDS services in Rochester and the Finger
Lake. On-site services include HIV testing and limited
STD screenings. Primary and HIV Specialty Med-
cal Care. Pharmacy, and many more. Satellite
offices in Geneva and Batavia. Trillium Health is also
a leader in providing services and education to
members of the LGBTQ community. Contact Infor-
mation: Rochester HealthCare West; 750 Main Ave.,
Rochester, NY 14608; Fax: (585) 275-3700. Health
Services After Hours: 585-244-1500. Finger Lakes
After Hours (Lifetime): 585-275-5155; Fax: 585-
244-1500. Finger Lakes After Hours (Toll Free):
385-244-1500. Finger Lakes Health System:
St. Mary’s Hospital, 7211 Florence Way, Geneva,
NY 14456, 315-781-6303.

Spectrum LGBTIQ & Straight Alliance
Deaf Rainbow Network of Rochester
Main St. Parking. Accepting and welcoming of all.
251-9570.

Elders Gay Alliance
Contact: Elders Gay Alliance at 855-391-7115.
See Ongoing calendar.

NYF Ferry Center
Enabling of nursing, social work, physical,
occupation -al, and speech therapies as well as home health
services. A complete family of managed care and insurance

Rainbow Network of Rochester
7211 Florence Way, Geneva. Provides HIV
testing, HIV specialty and primary care for resi-
idents of Ontario and surrounding counties.

LGBT Health Center of Rochester

LGBT Health

NY Youth Group Bi-Polar Support.
Second Saturday of every month. 315-428-9366.

TRANSGERDER
Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester (TAGR)
Support individualized gender reassignment services for
people and others. Last Saturday, 5-3pm, Open Arms MCO,

Adults Families of Trans Youth (AFTY)
First Tuesdays, 5-30pm-630pm, Open Arms MCO,

Families & Friends of Trans Adults (FTZA)
Support group for non-transgender people who are struggling with the transition of a transgen-
ner friend or loved one. Meets on the second and
fourth Tuesday of every month at the Meeting
Place, 2610 Elmwood Ave (look for Yolanda & Sabra).

Trans Lifeline
Hotline for transgender people experiencing cri-
sis. Staffed by transgender people for transgen-
der people. Trans Lifeline is available to respond to whatever support needs callers might have.
Trans Lifeline (877-560-8869). Additional info is available at www.trans-
lifeline.org.

Empire Justice Center
Julia A. Szymczak, Law. Equal Justice
Society. Empire Justice, LGBT Rights
Project, Teleface Center, West Justice Center, 1 West
Street, Suite 200, Rochester, NY 14614.

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**ROCHESTER AA/NA MEETINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>5:30-6:30</td>
<td>Open Arms Meeting Center</td>
<td>750 South Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>6:30-7:30</td>
<td>Open Arms Meeting Center</td>
<td>750 South Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>7:00-8:00</td>
<td>Open Arms Meeting Center</td>
<td>750 South Ave.</td>
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**On-going Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lora knitters</td>
<td>1st &amp; 3rd Sundays of the Month</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lora@lorgroup.org">lora@lorgroup.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trillium health</td>
<td>259 Monroe Ave., 11:30-12:30</td>
<td>585-943-1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library conference room</td>
<td>5th floor, 2675 Spencerport road</td>
<td>585-463-2731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay men's aa meeting</td>
<td>7th floor, 2675 Spencerport road</td>
<td>585-943-1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library conference room</td>
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**Martha M. Howden, LCSW, CASAC**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol
- Stress
- Grief
- Relationship
- Family Plan

**Narcotics Anonymous**

- 6:30-7:30, AODS and Recovery 1124 Cyber Road (Covenant United Methodist Church) This is an NA meeting that is open to all addicts who have a desire to stop using. Although it is not specifically a gay-oriented meeting, it is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as to anyone who is affected by HIV and AIDS.

**WEDNESDAYS**

- New Freedom/New Happiness Group 7pm. First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Wintron Rd. Bus ride: Take the first bus to downtown, then transfer to the #12 bus to 12 Corners. Use the stop just past the top of the hill at Highbridge and before Highland Ave. Travel the #1 Park Ave: to the corner of East and Wintron, then walk five minutes uphill (south) on Winton. This is a discussion meeting. All issues – as they relate to our alcoholism/addiction and recovery – are fair game.

**FRIDAYS**

- gay men’s aa meeting 7:30-8:30, closed meeting, Emmanuelle Baptist Church, 85 Park Ave.
- gay alliance youth 7-9pm, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St., 244-8640; Ages 13-20, youth@gayalliance.org

**SUNDAYS**

- Step in the Right Direction 7pm. First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Wintron Rd. Bus ride: The #18 University Ave. bus does not go by the church on weekend evenings. Travel the #1 Park Ave: bus to the corner of East and Wintron, then walk five minutes uphill (south) on Winton. This is an open discussion meeting. All issues – as they relate to our alcoholism/addiction and recovery – are fair game.

**SATURDAYS**

- Saturday Night Special 7pm. Unitarian Church, 220 Wintron Rd., S. Main St. 585-943-1200; oprin@rochesterrams.com
- Sophia’s Supper Club 1st, 3rd Saturdays, 25 Bernie Lane, 6:30 pm
- Men’s Cooking Group 3rd, 4th Saturdays, 585-355-7674; mcg@fastogether.org

**PFGA**

- Parents Families Friends & Lesbians Of Gay And Straight 585-993-3207; pfga@pfga.org
- Dignity-Integrity 1st Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist with music; 2nd Sunday: 5pm Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word with music; 3rd Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist (quiet); 4th Sunday: 5pm Prayers to start the week, followed by potluck supper

- Out & Equal Second Thursdays Social/business networking, 5:30-7:30 pm. Changing venues. E-mail: fingers@outandequal.org
- Gender/Alliy Gender Variants 7-9pm, Even Gounds, 750 South Ave. 585-943-1320; www.lorgroup.org
- LORA - Buffalo Women’s Coffee Social www.loragroup.org Events: https://www.facebook.com/groups/loragroup.org
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- LORAgroup Events: https://www.facebook.com/groups/loragroup.org


**WEDNESDAY 1**  
Empire Bears dinner, Texas Roadhouse, W. Henrietta Ave., 6 pm.

**SUNDAY 5**  
Easter Sunday  
Dignity Integrity, Episcopal Mass/Healing Service, with music. 5 pm at St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

**WEDNESDAY 8**  
Empire Bears dinner, Flavors of Asia, Clarendon St., 6 pm.

**THURSDAY 9**  
Diversions & Delights. Starring Peter J. Doyle as Oscar Wilde. Opening night, Blackfriars Theatre, 759 Main St., E. 7:30 pm. $25 general admission, $20 seniors/ students. Tickets at www.Blackfriars.org or by calling 585-454-1260. Performances also April 11 at 2 pm, April 12 at 6 pm.  
Out and Equal NY Finger Lakes. Second Thursday Networking Event. 5:30 pm, Centre City Place - hosted by Twan’s at Gibbs, 80 University Ave.

**SATURDAY 11**  
Queer Women of Color Film Festival screenings. 7 pm, Doors open 6:30 pm. The MOCHA Center, 149 Water St. Free. Sponsored by Unity Fellowship Church of Rochester and Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project.

**SUNDAY 12**  
Dignity Integrity, Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music. 5 pm at St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

**TUESDAY 14**  
SAGE Oasis presentation, programs by Josie and Gummy 1-3:30 pm, Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

**WEDNESDAY 15**  
Empty Closet deadline. For May issue, submitting deadline: 244-9030.

**FRIDAY 17**  
Happy Easter!  
Arenovations, no job is too large or small. 585-235-6688 (h).

**SATURDAY 18**  
SAGE community potluck and bingo game. $3 fee for bingo. Bring dish to pass. 5-8 pm. Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

**SATURDAY 19**  
Dignity Integrity, Episcopal Mass, quire. 5 pm at St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

**BIG Gay Prom fundraiser. 2 pm, 140 Alex Bar & Grill, hosted by Destiny Spice & Mercedes Salay. Eggrolls and empanadas for sale. Suggested donation $5.

**FRIDAY 24**  
LGBT Health and Healthcare Across the Generations, URMC conference on LGBT elder health. 7:30 am-4:30 pm, with keynote speaker Harvey Markadon of Fenway. To register: grace_fulcher@urmc.rochester.edu

**SATURDAY 26**  
“Let It Ride,” the Equinox Casino Night at Avenue Pub. 4-8 pm.

**Dignity Integrity, Roman Catholic Evening Prayer, followed by a potluck dinner. 5 pm at St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St. info@sdcro.org

**MONDAY 27**  
Marriage Equality rally, Federal Building. 5-6:30 pm. The day before the Supreme Court hears arguments on marriage equality. Rallies will be held across the country to urge the Court to make marriage equality legal nationwide.

**WEDNESDAY 29**  
Empire Bears dinner, Tony D’s, Exchange St., 6 pm.

**THURSDAY 30**  

**FRIDAY 1**  
May Day  
Reception honoring Sue Cowell, with presentation of Shoulders To Stand On Lifetime Achievement Award. 3-6 pm. Studio 180, 180 S. Paul St. Monies raised will establish a scholarship in Sue’s name at the LGBTQ Scholarship Fund, Rochester Area Community Foundation.

**SUNDAY 3**  
Shouder’s To Stand On documentary screening. 2:30-4:30 pm, Penfield Library, 1985 Baird Rd. Free.

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**CLASSIFIED ADS**

**Classified ads** are $5 for the first 30 words; each additional 10 words is another $1. We do not bill for Classifieds, so please send or bring ad and 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 contact you if we need to. The Empty Closet is not responsible for financial loss or physical injury that may result from any contact with an advertiser. Advertisers must use their own box number, voice mail, e-mail or phone number. No personal home addresses or e-mail addresses allowed. Classified ads are not published on The Empty Closet page of our website. However, each issue of the paper is reproduced online in its entirety.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Children’s Ministry thriving at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church for toddlers to ‘tweens. Join us for vibrant, inclusive, progressive worship on Sundays at 10:30 am, 707 E. Main St. info@openarmsmcc.org; (585) 271-8478.

**FOR RENT**

Park Ave Town House. 3 bedroom, 1 bath, hardwood floors, appliances including dishwasher, washer dryer, fenced yard enclosed front and rear porches, near East Ave. Wegmans. $1100/month plus security deposit.

**APARTMENT WANTED**

GWM looking for studio apartment in Park Ave. area for me and my small dog. Professional, non-smoker, non-drinker. Looking for place with all utilities included. 585-698-8157.

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Handyman: Simple repairs or full renovations, no job is too large or small. Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrical, Interior or Exterior. 35 years experience. Call Alan & Bill 585-204-0632 or cell 304-517-6832.

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Park Ave Town House. 3 bedroom, 1 bath, hardwood floors, appliances including dishwasher, washer dryer, fenced yard enclosed front and rear porches, near East Ave. Wegmans. $1100/month plus security deposit.

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**Advertising policy:**
The Empty Closet does not print advertisements that contain nude drawings or photographs, nor does it print any advertisement that states that the person pictured in the ad is for sale, or that you will “get” that particular person if you patronize the establishment advertised. Advertisements that are explicitly racist, sexist, or anti-gay will also be refused. All political advertisements must contain information about who placed them and a method of contact. Additionally, The Empty Closet does not print negative or “attack” advertisements that pertain to any person or organization in articles to provide undisputable evidence that the information in the ad is true do not further in any way the objectives and policies of the Gay Alliance or The Empty Closet, including the primary level that The Empty Closet’s purpose is to inform the Rochester gay community and to provide an impartial forum for ideas.

**Submissions:**
For publication, submit news items, ads, photos, letters, stories, poetry, gay, ads, photographs or art by mail or in person to The Empty Closet office by the 10th of the month. Design services for non-camera ready ads are available for a fee, (585) 244-9030, emptycloset@gagv.us.

**Publication Information:**
The Empty Closet is published 11 times a year (December and January combined by The Empty Closet Press for the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, Inc. Approximately 5000 copies of each issue are distributed during the publication run. The other issues are distributed during the remainder of the year. The majority of these issues are distributed directly to the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley.) The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, Inc., is a 501(c)3 organization.

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

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

The opinions of columnists, editors and other contributing writers and artists do not necessarily reflect the collective attitudes of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley or The Empty Closet. The publication of the name or photograph of any person or organization in articles is not an indication of the sexual or affectional orientation of that person or the members of that organization. For further assistance, please write to The Empty Closet, 875 E. Main St., Rochester, NY 14605, e-mail: emptycloset@gagv.us.

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