The Supreme Court will hear six marriage cases; ruling to come by June

Following its decision last fall to effectively green light same-sex marriage in 11 states, the U.S. Supreme Court on Jan. 17 agreed to hear six consolidated marriage cases out of Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Kentucky this term, with a ruling potentially by June.

The Court’s review will take place on a transformed legal landscape, with gay couples being able to marry in 36 states, covering two-thirds of the American people, and with nearly 60 federal and state courts having struck down discriminatory marriage bans in the past two years.

“The Supreme Court’s decision today begins what we hope will be the last chapter in our campaign to win marriage nationwide - and it’s time,” said Evan Wolfson, president of Freedom to Marry. “Freedom to Marry’s national strategy has been to build a critical mass of marriage state and critical mass of support for ending marriage discrimination, and after a long journey and much debate, America is ready for the freedom to marry. But couples are still discriminated against in 14 states, and the patchwork of discrimination harms families and businesses throughout the country. We will keep working hard to underscore the urgency of the Supreme Court’s bringing the country to national resolution, so that by June, all Americans share in the freedom to marry and our country stands on the right side of history.”

Virtually every court up to Marry’s national strategy has raised all boats, a mutual understanding and commitment to address the urgent social problems we face in Rochester including concentrated poverty, inequitable education, racism and homophobia.”

Steven Jarose of the National Coalition Building Institute commented, “Rochester’s gay community is rich in history and diversity. We’ve been very successful in celebrating the many aspects of our cultural identities that make up who we are. This workshop is important because it takes us deeper. Building upon a series of interactive exercises, we’ll be exploring the relationship between gender, sexual orientation and race.”

Tom Privitere

Pride at Work awards dinner to honor Tom Privitere for activism, leadership

The Rochester Finger Lakes Chapter of Pride at Work (P@W) will host their triennial True Colors Award dinner on March 24 at the Diplomat.

They will be honoring the Federation of Social Workers (FSW) (315-256-2838) for their critical assistance in establishing the Rochester Finger Lakes P@W chapter in 2007 and ongoing support for P@W and the advancement of rights for LGBTQ workers and their families.

The Pride at Work award will go to Thomas M. Privitere for 42 years of labor leadership and civil rights activism.

Tom has retired from the Public Employees Federation after 38 years as an organizer. He was part of the 1993 Gay March on Washington where then-SEIU President John Sweeney and AFSCME President Gerald McCann hosted gay labor activists from the March to convene Pride at Work, now an AFL-CIO constituency group and a nationally respected LGBTQ and labor rights voice. Tom is a founding member of the Rochester chapter and has served as Vice President since they were chartered in 2007.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.prideatwork.org or contact Bess Watts at 585-426-0862.
**Perspectives**

Calling someone confused for identifying as bi or pan only perpetuates hurtful stereotypes.

Quotes: “I identify as pansexual because I am capable of being attracted to people of all genders, regardless of their gender identity or expression. I used to call myself bisexual, but since coming out as transgender and being exposed to the broad spectrum of gender, I realize that my sexual orientation is not defined by an arbitrary cultural binary.”

“I remember my brother telling me ‘you don’t fit my definition of a bisexual’. Well what is your definition of a bisexual and is it more important than how I identify my experiences as a bisexual man of color? I am comfortable being intimate with a person and if it happens to be a man or a woman I am okay with that. Love is Love.”

“I identify as a caucasian, Irish, cis-gendered, pansexual, polyamorous female. I identified as bisexual until I learned there was a term for someone who was not attracted to just men and women, but people on all points of the gender spectrum. Pansexual does not mean I am attracted to ALL people, it means I am attracted to people based on things other than what’s in their pants.”

Unfortunately, there is ignorance about and prejudice against bi and pansexual people even within the LGBTQ community. Horizontal hostility weakens us.

Maybe the old labels are too limited and inflexible; maybe people confuse bisexuality and pansexuality with polyamory. Just because someone is attracted to more than one gender doesn’t mean they are sexually active with more than one person at a time.”

“Typically, bi/pan people have multiple partners.”

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Bisexuality and Pansexuality

B for Bisexuality is sometimes called the invisible in LGBTQ. Although there is a strong bi community nationwide and many resources are available online, here in Rochester bi activism has not really been visible for years. Thus myths and misconceptions about bisexuality — i.e. that there is no such way to coming out as gay.

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Aretha Franklin joined Lennox on a powerful vocal track that celebrates the independent woman, no longer quietly in the background, but instead making her own way in the world.

I’m thinking that I would like to create my own version of the song and call it, “LGBTQ Are Doin’ It For Themselves.”

Granted, it does not roll smoothly off the tongue, but here in Rochester I am pleased to say that the LGBTQ community is indeed doin’ it for themselves.

Not that long ago, more than half of the Gay Alliance annual operating budget came from the state and federal government sources. You may recall in this very column, less than two years ago, I told the community that we had lost a grant from New York State for $130,000. I was nervous and scared as I made an appeal to you for help.

I will not lie, the loss of those critical funds was devastating. Working with our Board of Directors, began to look very carefully for ways to lower our expenses and to raise our income. As a charitable non-profit, one of the most important lines of income is our donations.

So as I and the Board went through all of our expenses with a fine tooth comb, we also reached out to you, the LGBTQ and allied communities, and asked for your support.

Together these efforts were effective. Working diligently we were able to reduce our expenses on everything from our office security and telephone systems to our copier costs and our rent.

Best of all, you responded to our plea for support. The LGBTQ and allied communities acknowledged the importance of having a powerful, stable LGBTQ organization in Rochester. You stepped up with your dollars in hand. You told us that our 42 year history as Rochester’s champion for LGBTQ life and culture was important and worth preserving.

This past December (and January), as the Gay Alliance staff and Board were developing and approving the 2015 operating budget, I suddenly realized that we are doing this on our own. Our budget is again about the same size as it was when we were getting monies from New York State. Cutting expenses, combined with the support of businesses, private foundations and our donors, have allowed us to survive.

Doing it for ourselves is powerful.

We are proud to be an organization in Rochester. We raise our funds here just as we spend our funds here. When you consider making a donation, be certain that your donations bring LGBTQ inclusion to your workplace, to your schools, to your neighborhood.

Thank you for helping your own community. I can almost hear Lennox singing that the Rochester LGBTQ community are ‘standin’ on their own two feet and ringin’ on their own bell.’

**THE EMPTY CLOSET • THE GAY ALLIANCE • NUMBER 486 • FEBRUARY 2015**

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**Home delivery of The Empty Closet**

Gay Alliance, 875 E. Main St., Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605.

**Benefits:**

Subscription to The Empty Closet and our website

Finger Lakes Wine Merchant & News

Cigar Bar

Cigar Shop

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**Benefits:**

Subscription to The Empty Closet mailed to home or work, plus privileges at each level. Phone: 585-244-8460 or mail to Gay Alliance, 875 E. Main St., Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14605. Home delivery of The Empty Closet is free with your annual membership.
The February 21 workshop will look into the divergent views among African Americans about same-sex marriage, utilizing the film "The New Black." The group is also collaborating with the Coalition of Black Trade Unions, Pride at Work AFL-CIO and The MOCHA Center to develop a program around race, sexual identity and privilege in unions and the workplace.

Directly addressing the lack of LGBT inclusion as collaborators on community, poverty and education task forces, organizers are planning an event aimed at creating a safe space in order to increase consciousness of the LGBT community as central to the issues of race and identity, and thus the creation of strong communities.

About the Feb. 21 workshop

Sady Fischer said, "This workshop can be adapted for different audiences and used multiple times.

The reason it’s important – speaking about color, of color, often people think we have to pick one identity, but many of us believe in the complexities of communities. The Feb. 21 workshop will look at the various identities we have, such as sexual orientation, gender and race, and look for our similarities, rather than our differences."

Chris Goodwin said, "It’s imperative, if you care about the complexity of color, that we be involved. It’s imperative that we deal with our issues. We have to focus on everything that we have that haven’t come together. We will discuss how we perceive things, how we deal with our issues, how we are part of the problem." How can we be part of the solution? The workshop is to help people realize, we can’t be allies of others unless we can be allies of ourselves. How can a cisgender be a ally to a trans person? How can our gay brother’s be allies to me as a gay woman? Anne Fischer noted that the LGBTQ community is not thought of as potential laborators in community task forces on poverty and other issues. She sees this as due to anti-gay bias and to gays of all backgrounds not being visible on non-gay issues. "When we reached out on marriage equality, we were rejected by community task forces," she said. "And when groups like MOCHA reach out, they too are met by a brick wall. So people have stopped calling. We are just breaking through to where part of our Intersection program is working with black trade unions. It has taken years to break the barriers.""The perception is that LGBT people are not interested in working on poverty. We need people to work together to solve the problems. We are approaching it from the heart first and then in future doing specific education. It’s important now for people to understand what poverty feels like, or what discrimination feels like," Sady commented on the diversity among the facilitators of the Feb. 21 workshop. “It’s a way to represent the diversity within the community. I'd say this about our commumalities. There's no right or wrong -- we want to hear people's perceptions and feelings. It's very different from a lecture or education program.

People will have an opportunity to learn -- and also to have fun. I've enjoyed working on this project and hearing different perceptions. My hope is that we can create something people will be excited about.

People often feel like they have to pick one identity but it’s important to embrace all of our identities.

This workshop is about looking through a different lens; about recognizing our various identities and working to appreciate both our similarities and our differences. As Audre Lorde said: "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, respect and celebrate those differences."

"Part of having these conversations is to build allies within the LGBT community. Contrary to most people's perceptions, we're not all the same. We come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds; have various levels of income and education; have various gender identities and expressions; and as a result we have differing levels of power and privileges. For example, cisgender members of our communities can be allies to transgender members and speak out against transphobia. Male members of our community can be allies to femme and speak out against sexism. White members of our community can become allies to LGBTQ people of color and speak out against racial injustice. There is richness of diversity within the community that we don’t always appreciate.

This workshop is focused on members of the LGBTQ community and our allies. It is an opportunity for people to be heard, to learn and to have fun.

Building relationships takes time, takes commitment and takes desire.

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(Intersections continues page 6)
Hundreds of couples marry legally in Florida

On Jan. 5, Miami-Dade Co. Circuit Judge Sarah Zabel held a hearing where she lifted the stay on her ruling (Pareo v. Ruvin). On Jan. 6, hundreds of couples married legally all over Florida after the statewide stay imposed by Judge Robert Hinkle expired just after midnight.

Hundreds of couples lined up across Florida at the county clerk’s offices that opened their doors on Jan. 6. Millions of couples married legally all over Florida after the statewide stay imposed by Judge Robert Hinkle expired just after midnight.

They are represented by the law firm Carlson Fields Jorden Burt, Elizabeth F. Schwartz, Mary B. Meeks, and the National Council for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). During the hearing, the attorneys stated, “Another day the plaintiffs are denied their right to marry is a day that shames our community.”

Once Judge Zabel lifted the stay, Miami-Dade County Clerk Harvey Ruvin stated marriages could begin immediately in the county. Couples immediately began receiving their marriage licenses.

Judge Zabel agreed to marry the plaintiffs couples who wished to marry. Karla Arguello and Cathy Pareto are the first same-sex couple to receive a marriage license in Florida.

“This is a monumental day in Florida’s history. Loving same-sex couples have been waiting months, years, decades for the right to marry, the people they love,” said Nadine Smith, CEO of Equality Florida. “And we’re excited to be able to share this moment with the brave plaintiffs who plan on getting married today.”

Ten hours later, marriage equality opened up to the rest of Florida with the end-of-day expiration of a similar ruling from Judge Robert Hinkle.

Miami’s Local 10 reports: Judge Sarah Zabel’s words — “I’m lifting the stay” — brought immediate cheers in the courtroom Monday morning. With those words, marriage licenses can be issued to same-sex couples in Miami-Dade Country right away.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi has vigorously defended Florida’s gay-marriage ban, appealing Zabel’s ruling, a similar one in Monroe County and others. (Bondi, who has been married three times, has now decided to stop appealing gay Floridians’ right to marry.)

Equality Florida (@equalityfl)

Texas GOP wants to trash protections for 7.5 million citizens

Texas GOP lawmakers plan to introduce a bill that would nullify LGBT non-discrimination protections covering 7.5 million people.

The bill is being drafted in response to the Plano City Council’s passage of an LGBT inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance in December. It’s expected to be introduced by four Republican Plano-area lawmakers, including Rep. Matt Shaheen.

The Texas Observer reports:

Texas Pastor Council Executive Director David Welch, whose group is leading efforts to repeal equal rights ordinances in Plano and Houston, told the Observer the legislation would prohibit political subdivisions of the state from adding classes to nondiscrimination ordinances that aren’t protected under Texas or federal law — neither of which covers LGBT people.

“It should be a uniform standard statewide, and cities can’t just arbitrarily create new classes that criminalize a whole segment of the majority of the population,” Welch said. “It’s just self-evident that they’re going to try to do it by city. We’re dealing with a broad public policy that creates criminal punishments. That’s a pretty serious issue, and when it’s based on a special agenda by a small, tiny fragment of the population... that’s a legitimate necessity and reason for the state Legislature to act.”

The bill reportedly will be modeled after a law that passed in Tennessee in 2011.

In the landmark 1996 case Romer v. Evans, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Colorado law that banned nondiscrimination protections based on sexual orientation. However, the Tennessee bill attempted to get around Romer v. Evans by simply prohibiting any protected classes that aren’t included in state law, rather than specifically targeting the LGBT community. The National Council for Lesbian and Gay Rights filed a lawsuit challenging the Tennessee law, but it was dismissed for lack of standing. Now, NCLR reportedly plans to file a federal lawsuit challenging the Tennessee law.

NCLR leader Shannon Minter said the Tennessee bill passed in part because the business community was too slow in voicing its opposition to the measure.

From The Texas Observer:

“Hopefully this time in Texas the response will be more immediate, and I hope the legislators listen to the business community and do not do something that’s going to really hurt the Texas economy,” Minter said.

It’s been widely speculated that Plano passed its equal rights ordinance in response to Toyota’s decision to relocate a major facility to the city after the company’s employees expressed concern about the lack of LGBT protections in Texas. Plano-based Frigo-Lay also sent a letter to the City Council in support of the equal rights ordinance.

But Welch dismissed the argument that efforts to undo local nondiscrimination ordinances will hurt business, calling it “a red herring.” He said one of the engines of Texas’ strong economy is its “family-friendly” climate.

“We’re not going to let corporations, Toyota or anybody else, come in and dictate to the community what our standards are going to be on a moral level and religious level,” Welch said. “Companies like Frigo-Lay had better take thought of who their customers are before they start trying to backbash against the spread of same-sex marriage.”

Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/1yzz30w25dbE

Outlook leaves good after first day of 5th Circuit marriage hearings

On Jan. 9, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans heard oral arguments in marriage cases out of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi seeking both the freedom to marry and legal respect of same-sex couples’ lawful marriages.

Promising signs for the pro-equality side came in from reporters covering the 5th Circuit oral arguments.

As Towleroad legal editor Ari Ezra Waldman wrote, the three judge panel comprised of Obama appointee Judge James Graves, right-wing Reagan appointee Judge Jerry Smith, and wild card Reagan appointee Judge Patrick Higginbotham.

Early reports now point to Higginbotham lining up on the pro gay side of the arguments in both the Louisiana and Mississippi cases.

Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/1yzz3o3w25dbE

Chris Geidner of Buzzfeed tweeted, “Mississippi and Texas arguments remain, but after the La. arguments, the 5th Circuit appears poised to strike down state marriage bans.”

Evan Wolfson, president of Freedom to Marry, released the following statement: “Once again an appellate court was presented with the lopsided case in favor of the pro equality side.”
of the freedom to marry, the opponents having no evidence and no significant legal justification to outweigh the powerful arguments for ending the exclusion of gay couples from marriage. Couples in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi have the same aspirations for love and commitment, the same needs for the legal protections and responsibilities marriage brings, and the same rights under the Constitution as couples in the vast majority of the country where marriage discrimination has been discarded. Freedom to Marry joins these couples and their advocates in calling on the 5th Circuit to do what nearly 60 state and federal courts, including four federal circuit courts, have already done: affirm the freedom to marry and end the discrimination that harms families and helps no one.

President Obama declares marriage equality a civil right

In his sixth State of the Union address, President Barack Obama extolled progress toward same-sex couples’ freedom to marry in America, calling marriage for same-sex couples “a story of freedom and equality that is now legal in states that seven in ten Americans call home.” President Obama sounded a victorious note, declaring “the shadow of crisis has passed,” referring chiefly to economic challenges that have been center-stage since he was elected to the Presidency in 2008. The President also proclaimed gay marriage to be a civil right, celebrating the sea change in how Americans by and large perceive same-sex marriage: “I’ve seen something like gay marriage go from a wedge issue used to divide us apart to a story of freedom across our country, a civil right now legal in states that seven in ten Americans call home.”

Speaking of the moral and security imperative at hand, celebrating human dignity, the President mentioned the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bilingual” and “transgender” in his speech, marking the first time those words have been used in a state of the union address.

“That’s why we defend free speech, and advocate for political prisoners, and condemn the persecution of women, or religious minorities, or ethnic minorities, or gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender. We do these things not only because they’re right, but because they make us safer.”

The President also urged Americans to view difference as a source of strength that can unite us: “I want future generations to know that we are a people who see our differences as a great gift, that we respect the human dignity of every woman, gay or straight, white or black, Asian or Latino, poor or wealthy, religious or not.”

Gay groups, Congressmen comment

Evan Wolfson, president of Freedom to Marry, released the following statement:

“Once again, President Obama showed his commitment to the civil rights movement that has led to the freedom to marry now in 37 states representing 70 percent of the American people. President Obama’s leadership in helping bring the freedom to marry to all Americans will be a shining part of this president’s legacy, and now it is time for the Supreme Court to put the country on the right side of history by ending marriage discrimination throughout the United States, leaving no family and no state behind.”

Center for American Progress Executive Vice President for External Affairs Winne Stachelberg said, “The president’s historic inclusion of bisexual and transgender Americans in tonight’s speech is a reminder of how far we have come as a community and a country. We are ready to build on the progress that the president spoke of and to work to make the vision of a more just and equal America a reality.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan (W-CO) released the following statement on President Obama’s State of the Union Address. “I applaud the speech to the American people. As our economy continues to improve and recover from the great recession, too many working Americans are still struggling just to make ends meet. The president’s agenda will help raise wages and build an economy that works for every American, not just the wealthy and privileged few.”

The President laid our important initiatives to help hardworking Wisconsin workers, like Arianna Goodwin, improve their lives through education tax credits and more affordable access to community colleges,” Rep. Pocan continued. “I am especially pleased President Obama pushed for critical infrastructure investments. These investments will provide good jobs for hard-working Americans and ensure our country has a 21st century broader transportation system to compete in the global marketplace.”

I also support President Obama’s plan to close the income inequality gap by raising fees on the largest financial institutions and restoring tax fairness by reinstating the Reagan era capital gains tax rate for the highest earners to 28 percent to pay for initiatives which will benefit the middle-class and tax breaks for hard working Americans,” said Rep. Pocan. “Investing in education opportunities will also ease the economic squeeze on working families.”

While I support much of what the President had to say tonight, I am disappointed he pushed for an expansion of our nation’s flawed trade policies,” Rep. Pocan said. “I support fair trade, but I cannot support more bad trade deals that will hurt our American jobs and American industries. I hope President Obama and U.S. Trade Representative Froman are open to the concerns my colleagues and I have expressed about the consequences of fast-track legislation and the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade negotiations.

“Now that President Obama has laid out his agenda to help grow the middle-class and sustain our economic recovery, theonus is now on Congress to act,” concluded Rep. Pocan. “The American people cannot wait any longer for a grid-locked Congress to take action. It is time to move our country forward, but we can only make progress if we work together to increase opportunities for every single American.”

GDP homophobia ends ENDA’s chances

On Dec. 3, a GOP-controlled panel in the U.S. House voted against attaching the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) as an amendment to a broader defense authorization bill, the Washington Blade reports.

Rep. Alice Hastings (D-Fla.) introduced the amendment on behalf of Jared Polis (D-Colo.), who is gay and the chief sponsor of ENDA, during House Rules Committee consideration of the fiscal year 2015 defense authorization bill. Polis is a member of the Rules Committee, but was absent when the amendment came up for a vote.

The panel, which is heavily stacked in favor of Republicans, rejected the amendment 7-3 without discussion by a party-line vote. Had the Rules Committee accepted the amendment, it would have made ENDA part of the defense spending measure before it headed to a vote on the full House floor.

Last year, ENDA was approved by the Senate in a historic, bipartisan 64-32 vote. The House is now controlled by anti-gay Republicans.

Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/fixtv/Work/SWFL

Louise Slaughter voted yes


Voting in favor of the amendment were Reps. Louise Mcintoh Slaughter (D-N.Y.), James McGovern (D-Mass.) and Hastings. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) is one of eight House Republican co-sponsors of ENDA and a House Rules Committee member, but she wasn’t present during the committee session to vote on the amendment.

Gay rights leaders worldwide ask Obama for consistent policy

By Joe Myerson on gaystarnews.com

Gay rights leaders are calling on him to be more consistent with dealing with the governments that are passing anti-LGBT laws.

The letter, signed by people like Kenya’s Eric Gitari and The Gambia’s Pansamba Jow, suggest the way he dealt with Ugandan politicians should be the same as the way he deals with lawmakers from countries that do not receive the full aid the U.S. can give, such as Nigeria or Kyrgyzstan.

Read the full letter below:

Dear Mr. President:

We are citizens of your country. We write to you, with respect, because we appreciate your unapologetic public support for the fundamental human rights of LGBT people, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals globally, and because we know that your country’s actions carry great consequence in today’s world.

You have promised that the United States will stand with LGBT people in seeking fairness and equality in all of our countries. Many of us can speak to the positive efforts of U.S. embassies in our

(Gay rights continue page 13)
means the High Court will rule on the issue of marriage equality by the end of June. The case has also taken us to hear cases from Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Friends who supported each other through nursing school and now a commitment to marriage equality, DeBoer and Rowse are both hospital nurses and the parents of four special-needs children. They found each other, then adopted. They originally challenged Michigan’s adoption code so that they could adopt their children jointly rather than separately. DeBoer and Rowse believe they have the social security of two legal parents; they want to make permanent a marriage ban since it keeps April and Jayne, as well as the children, from being legally recognized as a family and from adequate protections for them. This case argues that state laws banning marriage equality violate the U.S. Constitution’s guarantees of equal protection and due process.

"We are now that close to fully being recognized as a family, and we are thrilled," said DeBoer. "This opportunity for our case to be heard by the Supreme Court is like nothing else out there so much to be hoped for." DeBoer-Rowse family is represented by attorney Anne M. Stanyar; Dana Nessel of Nessel & Kessel Law, Kenneth Mognill of Mognill, Penner & Essner; and Rachel Sanborne of the Boston-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates Network.

"By choosing to hear the DeBoer case, the Court now has the opportunity to end the institutional discrimination facing gay families in Michigan and so many other states, and to ensure that same-sex couples nationwide are able to fully enjoy marriage benefits and protections, more people face medical emergencies without being able to count on the security of marriage equality, and millions of children are born without proper recognition of their families and the thousands of others now being raised by same-sex couples and "the guarantee of equal protection must prevail," 

The state immediately filed an appeal, but in the interim, hundreds of couples who were denied marriage licenses filed similar lawsuits. Multiple other court rulings since Windsor have established marriage equality in New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Since the Supreme Court declined in those cases, same-sex couples in Kentucky and Minnesota were married in a string of clinics and now the courts have invalidated similar marriage bans in recent months. The U.S. Supreme Court on October 6, 2014 declined to review federal appeals court decisions striking down marriage bans in Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina and Wisconsin. Since the Supreme Court denied review in those cases, same-sex couples in those states were able to marry in the first two weeks of October 2014 without the harms that same-sex couples and their children face in states that still ban same-sex marriage.

The 4-3 decision in Obergefell, et al v. Hodges, upholds those states' bans on marriage for same-sex couples.

The Tennessee court staffs are Dr. Valeita Tanco and Dr. Sophia Jesty of Knoxville; Army Reserve Sergeant First Class Reginald K. Adams and his partner from Memphis; and Matthew Mansell and his partner from Franklin. Their attorneys are represented by Shannon Minter, Christopher F. Stoll, and David C. Coedell of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and Aubrey Rubinfeld, Maureen Holland, and Regina Lambert, and the law firms of Sherard & Roe PLC and Plocher & Gray LLP.

"This is an important day because it means that our family will finally have an opportunity to share our story with the Court and explain how this discrimina- 
tory law hurts us each day," said Tanco. "We believe that the Supreme Court will resolve this issue so we no longer need to live in fear of ourselves and our little girl because we don’t have the same legal pro-
tection Michigan’s families currently have. We are hopeful the Supreme Court will take up this case to go to trial among dozens decid-
ing to me to learn that LGBT Americans are 
face-to-face with constitutional issues in our lifetime.

Minter, who serves as NCLR legal director, said, "Currently, same-sex couples in many states are at an
to the freedom to marry, and we will continue our work to provide the security of marriage equality for all individuals in the United States."

"We are thrilled the Supreme Court will finally decide this issue," said James Euskirch, director of the ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisex-ual Transgender & HIV Project, "The country is ready for a national solution on marriage equality and the time is now. Single gay and lesbian people die before they have a chance to marry, their children are without proper protections, more people face medical emergencies without being able to count on the security of marriage equality, and millions of children are born without proper recognition of their families and the thousands of others now being raised by same-sex couples and "the guarantee of equal protection must prevail," 

Supreme comments on Kentucky cases

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Interview

NYS invites MOCHA Center to join AIDS Task Force... finally

By Adam Young

With offices at 189 North Water Street in Rochester and in Buffalo, the main goal of The MOCHA Center is to educate communities of color in methods to reduce their risk of HIV infection.

Last year, the organization also began offering HIV testing to high risk clients. Their mission, according to Executive Director Bruce Smail, is to offer "high impact prevention." Barriers in access to information and healthcare for racial minorities have fueled The MOCHA Center’s focus. "There have always been disparities amongst communities of color," Smail said.

Programs offered by The MOCHA Center include VOICES, aimed at HIV prevention education, and ARTAS, a program that links people who are HIV positive with proper healthcare. If clients require further medical care, the organization is partnered with Trillium Health and Anthony Jordan Health Center.

The MOCHA Center remains as one of only two in the state that were originally founded by black gay men (MOCHA was founded by Gary English). According to Smail, black men who have sex with men (MSM) represented the largest percentage of new HIV infections in New York at 42 percent in 2012. However, the organization was initially overlooked in receiving an invitation to join Governor Cuomo’s Task Force to End AIDS in New York State by 2020. Smail was eventually asked to join the Prevention Committee of the Task Force halfway through their meetings. Conveying the unique perspective of The MOCHA Center was challenging among the 60 members in the wake of the late invite. "It’s difficult to really have much voice in that committee just in terms of timing and really not a lot of space for conversation," Smail said.

As the initial discussions of the Task Force come to a close, Smail is curious to see if the Task Force will continue to have a role in implementing the recommendations submitted to the governor. He hopes that smaller organizations like The MOCHA Center will have more options made available to them for treating clients in the future, perhaps with the inclusion of a PrEP medication program.

The state government’s theory of ensuring that all HIV positive people receive treatment to the point of having an undetectable viral load, and thus reducing the risk of transmitting the virus to others, seems to hold water to Smail. "I think there is a concern, ‘can you really make that in 2020?’ We probably could, if we do it consistently," Smail said.

The MOCHA Center offers walk-in HIV testing five days a week to high risk clients. Each visitor is welcome to come in and speak with a counselor for assessment. For more information, contact the MOCHA Center at 420-1400, or visit mochacenter.org.

Bruce Smail

Recommendations were developed by the Task Force and then reviewed for submittal to the governor. Although The MOCHA Center was the sole organization on the Task Force with the primary focus of serving black MSM, Smail is mostly satisfied with the results. "It was definitely a great opportunity to be engaged with some of the big leaders across the state of New York... almost all of the major organizations [were] represented there," Smail said.

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My Own Private Rochester: Sady Fischer

By Susan Jordan

Sady Fischer, independent diversity consultant, was born in Honduras. When she was 7 she and her family went to live in Germany, and partly in Switzerland. When she was 13 the family came to Rochester, where her stepfather had a job. Sady went to high school here and then to Empire State College, where she majored in gender studies.

Sady told The Empty Closet, “I am currently working as an independent Diversity Trainer/Consultant and enjoy creating opportunities for honest, open conversations around feminist, racial and LGBTQ issues, from a sex-positive, feminist, queer-affirming perspective. I provide trainings and workshops for universities and colleges, businesses, organizations, community groups; I speak on issues related to sex and sexuality, diversity, power and privilege, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, being an ally, you name it! I also love to custom create workshops to meet people’s interests and needs, like the workshop I’m developing with the GAGV, MOCHA Center and NCBI that is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 21.” (See page 11)

Sady lives in Penfield with “my amazing 14-year-old son and has just started her own consulting business. “Diversity training is mostly related to challenging societal expectations,” she said, “I have been doing this kind of work for over 15 years, starting in college.”

About her favorite people, Sady said, “I live with and next to some of my favorite people in Rochester! My partner, my son and I all live together; my sister, my brother-in-law and my niece and nephew live next door to us. I love having my family so close by! However, my all time favorite person in the whole wide world is and always will be my son.”

She added, “I can’t mention all my favorite individuals because there are too many. I love that Rochester has so many people who are activist-based and focused on equality. We have a rich history and we’re still fighting for equality, and that’s something to be proud of. Intersections (or The Lens of Diversity) is part of that.”

She said, “I try to be involved with groups I feel aligned to. I tend to support and volunteer for organizations that are connected to my own intersecting identities. The GAGV and MOCHA Center connect with my queer mind; Latinas Unidas and Ibero reach my Latino heart; and the Susan B. Anthony Institute and Planned Parenthood touch my feminist spirit.”

As for her personal interests, Sady noted, “I’m an outdoor girl. I love how close a lot of the state parks are. Her favorite things about Rochester are ‘All the things to do! The sun energizes me and I just love being outside. I enjoy hiking, biking, camping and kayaking. In the summer I enjoy the Lilac Festival and Park Ave Fest; visiting local state parks like Letchworth and Stony Brook. And I love being near the water – the pier by Seabreeze is one of my favorite spots to visit. I took my son and his cousins with me to watch a meteor shower there once. It was absolutely beautiful!’

Coffee shops are probably her favorite hangout. She likes Equal-Grounds, Java’s and Boulder. When shopping she heads for Archimage, One World Goods and a new store called Zak’s Avenue, on South Ave.

Sady’s favorite groups include Ambush Rochester. She said, “I am one of the organizers of Ambush Rochester. Ambush started in Buffalo, and Susanna Speed and I brought it here. I like to describe it as once-a-month barhopping for lesbian/bisexual women and our male and straight friends and allies!”

Ambush Rochester has just celebrated its first anniversary. The group meets at a different venue every second Friday of the month.

On an ideal Saturday night, Sady says, “I’d hang out with friends and family, ordering food in and watching a movie. For a night out with friends, my favorite pastime is dancing to Latin music. I go to Baila Fridays at Tilt, at 10 p.m. every Friday, organized by one of my best friends, Tato Contreras – it’s also an LGBT Night.

She would take out of town visitors to Archimage, a local park, any festival or event that is going on, and, inevitably, out for coffee.■
Trans March honors the lost, calls for equality
By JoAnne Metzler

It started with this statement:
"Why We Will Be Marching on Saturday, Nov. 22.

"We march to be VISIBLE because people don’t know about us, even those who are trans and live in Rochester still don’t know about us.

"We march because we HAVE to, for those of us who are too afraid to march with us, because they could lose their jobs, their families, their friends, their homes and even their lives.

"We march because we CAN -- we have that right and freedom even though the New York State Senate has refused for seven years now to even recognize us as equals and protect those rights.

"Mainly we march because we NEED to remember and honor all the Trans people who have been lost to us because of ignorance, fear and hatred by the thousands over the years. We march so they will NOT be forgotten.

"We march to let you know we are HERE -- that we do exist and we are NOT going away.

"We march because we are Trans AND... we are silent and invisible no longer... silent and invisible no more."

The Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester, a support and education group that has been providing education, support, resources and advocacy for trans individuals, our families, our allies in the broader Rochester community since 1997, invited the Empire State Pride Agenda, Gay Alliance, Genesee Valley Gender Variants, the LGBT Rights Project, The MOCHA Center, New York Civil Liberties Union, Open Arms MCC, and Pride@Work AFL-CIO to be co-sponsors.

On the evening of Nov. 20, over 25 people met at the Open Arms Community Center for a sign painting party to observe the annual International Trans Day of Remembrance. They were joined by Nathan Schafer, Executive Director of the Empire State Pride Agenda, who, as one of the co-sponsors, provided pizza and soda for the event. Anne Tischer, well known local activist, presided over the sign-making event.

Then on the cold and windy afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 22, over 50 people met at the corners of Monroe Ave. and South Goodman St. and marched for an hour, crossing the streets, raising and waving their signs that said things like “Trans People Are Real People”, “Trans Pride!!! Silent No More!!!”, and “All I want for Christmas is Gender Equality”.

One person who had been part of a similar smaller march in November 2012 immediately noticed the drivers’ responses to the marchers. This person commented, “In 2012 when we did this march for the first time maybe a dozen drivers honked for the total hour we marched, this year it’s about a dozen drivers honking every 10 minutes - wow, what a difference!”

From right: P@W members Jeane Kennedy and Kendall Bell. Photo: Bess Watts
ed from accessing government benefits and health coverage, to getting a job and using appropriate facilities. I want to thank the advocates for their tireless work on this issue, and also Dr. Mary Bassett, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, for helping to make New York City a more just place.

"Today is a proud day for New York City as we celebrate the long-awaited passage of a bill that brings us one step closer to creating a safe and equal place for transgender New Yorkers," said Empire State Pride Agenda Executive Director Nathan M. Schaefer. "We applaud City Council Member Corey Johnson, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the entire New York City Council for making this important issue a priority.

"As a native-born transgender New Yorker, I thank Corey Johnson and the NY City Council for this bill that will make our life easier and complete a trans- tion that realistically ended many years ago," said U.S. Trans Rights Orga

national birth certificate for U.S. citizens born elsewhere, have been denied their fun- damental rights for far too long. We are hopeful the Court will fully and finally invalidate the discriminatory anti-marriage laws of Kentucky and other states.


Center for American Progress comments

Center for American Progress Executive Vice President for External Affairs Winnipeg Stachelberg said, "The Supreme Court’s decision to again take up the issue of marriage equality is welcome news to the thousands of loving and committed same-sex couples who seek a resolution to a cruel legal limbo that currently denies them the dignity and respect that all families deserve. We are confident that when the Supreme Court renders its decision, the Supreme Court will affirm that the fundamental right to marry is the right of all Americans.

"As a native-born transgender New Yorker, I thank Corey Johnson and the NY City Council for this bill that will make our life easier and complete a transition that realistically ended many years ago," said U.S. Trans Rights Organization (NYTRO) Director Melissa Sklarz. "Now, trans New Yorkers, past, present, and future, know that New York City takes their lives seriously in simplifying this basic step of dignity.

"The legislation that passed today is a foundational tool for advocates who seek to address the lifelong difficulties that transgender people experience with health, educational attainment and eco-


comic productivity," said Glenna Testone, Executive Director of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. "We are grateful for this crucial step to put a stop to the appallingly harmful, humiliation and discrimi-

nation that trans people face when they present a birth certificate that inaccurately reflects their gender. The Center applauds Council Member Johnson for introducing it and the Council for passing this vital legislation to ensure that transgender community members are able to have the basic human rights they are entitled to.

"Wealth should never be a prerequi-

site for equal treatment. The transgender youth served by the Ali Forney Center are destitute; they are far from being able to afford surgery, even if that is what they would choose," said Carl Siciliano, Execu-

tive Director of the Ali Forney Center. "I applaud this bill, which takes an impor-
tant step toward making the transition and equal treatment for transgender New Yorkers.

"The bill changes New York City into line with New York State’s policy change implemented earlier this year and with a number of Federal agencies and states, and serves as model legislation for the rest of the nation. In 2010, the U.S. Depart-

ment of State updated its policy regarding Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (a fed-

eral birth certificate for U.S. citizens born abroad) and U.S. passports to require that a person’s treating or evaluating physician writes a letter certifying that the person has undergone appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition. No proof of surgery is required. The Social Security Adminis-

tration has also eliminated its surgical requirement for amending gender mark-

ers. Other federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Veterans Health Administration and the Office of Personnel Management have adopted similar policies.

According to the National Transgen-

der Discrimination Survey, 40 percent of transgender people have faced harass-

ment when presenting identity documents that did not match their gender identity/expression.

In addition, 15 percent report being denied entry to certain places because of gender mismatches, and three percent report facing physical assault due to mismatched ID.

"Fight for $15": gay affluence is a myth

Luis Torres and Colin O’Malley of Metro Justice are mentoring the move-

ment to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour. A high percentage of LGBTQ people are taking the lead in the ‘Fight for $15’ movement.

(See the March EC for more information.)

The latest studies that indicate that LGBTQ people (especially of color or Trans) are more likely to be faced with poverty than non-LGBT people. Visibly straight America’s rights movement have probably influ-

enced and empowered attitudes among low-wage workers who are willing to speak up though it puts them at risk of being targeted on the job.

Movies and television shows frequent-

ly depict gay characters as rich, but despite images of affluence new studies find that 14 percent of LGBTQ Americans earn higher rates of poverty than those headed by heterosexuals. The reasons are com-

plex, but three primary failures of law, driven by stigma and anti-gay bias, finan-

cially penalize LGBT people: lack of pro-

tection from discrimination, refusal to rec-

ognize LGBT families and failure to ade-

quately protect LGBT students. These failures of law increase economic insecu-

rit y and poverty throughout the LGBT community.

(from the Williams Institute (the UCLA policy think tank):


African-American same-sex cou-

ples have poverty rates more than twice the rate of different-sex married African Americans.

Nearly one in four children living with a same-sex couple and 19.2 percent of children living with a female same-sex couple is in poverty. This com-

pares with 12.1 percent of children living with married heterosexual couples who are in poverty.

• African-American children in gay male households have the highest poverty rate (52.3 percent) of any children in any household type.

• 14 percent of lesbian couples and 77 percent of gay male couples received food stamps, compared to 6.5 percent of straight married couples. In addition, 22.2 percent of same-sex female couples received government cash assistance compared to 5.7 percent of different-sex couples. And 1.2 percent of men in same-sex couples received cash assistance compared to 0.6 percent of men in different-sex couples who received cash assistance.

NY Court of Appeals grants retrial in Lateisha Green hate crime case

By Arthur S. Leonard at Gay City News

The New York Court of Appeals, the state’s highest bench, ruled unanimously on Nov. 24 that the Appellate Division had correctly reversed the hate crime manslaughter conviction of Dwight R. DeLee in the 2008 killing of Lateisha Green, a transgender woman, in Syracuse.

Unlike the interdepartmental appeals court, however, the high court gave prosecutors the opportunity to resubmit hate crime manslaughter charges against DeLee to a grand jury.

Judge Susan P. Read’s decision for the court reveals nothing about the nature of the charged offense and makes no refer-

ence to the fact that Green was trans-

gender or that DeLee was charged with murdering her because of her gender identity. In stead, the coldly analytical opinion focuses solely on an inconsistency in the jury’s verdict and the trial judge’s failure to correct the situation by explaining that inconsistency to jurors and asking them to give the case a fresh look.

DeLee, who was 20 at the time of the crime, was convicted in 2009 by an Onondaga County jury of murdering DeLee’s short-lived coworker, 22-year-old Lateisha Green, and received a 25-year sentence. The pros-

ecutor’s anti-gay statements made by DeLee — including “get you faggots, get out of here... get the fuck out here” — in arguing the defendant was guilty of a hate crime motivated by animus toward Green’s sexual orientation. Blus based on DeLee’s sexual orientation — is not covered under the state’s 2000 hate crimes statute.

DeLee failed to prove all of the elements of the hate crime manslaughter conviction. In particular, the prosecution was unable to convince DeLee on second-degree murder charges, but instead found him guilty of first-degree man-

slaughter as a hate crime. The jury pro-

ceeded to find the defendant not guilty on charges related to the killing. The conviction of hate crime manslaughter without the hate crimes penalty enhancement.

After the verdict was rendered, DeLee’s attorney argued the verdict was inac-

turate because the hate crime man-

slaughter charge could be taken to mean that the jury found that the prosecution failed to prove all of the elements to the

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NYC Council (from page 3)

LOCAL AND STATE

(Stephen from page 6)

Windor ruling to uphold such ban.

We appreciate the opportunity to present the stories of our clients, some of whom have been in loving, committed relationships for a long time. Said Daniel Canon of Clay Daniel Walton & Adams. “They, like other couples in Kentucky and elsewhere, have been denied a fundamental right for far too long. We are hopeful the Court will fully and finally invalidate the discriminatory anti-marriage laws of Kentucky and other states.”


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crime of manslaughter and so his client could not be found guilty of manslaughter as a hate crime. The Appellate Division, in July 2013, sided with the prosecutor to pursue a new hate crime sentencing opinion, Justice Erin Peradotto focused on what she characterized as the jury’s error in instruction. His instructions, they found all the elements of manslaughter as a hate crime satisfied, they should not acquit on the simple manslaughter count. But Read found that the case “presents no situation which requires the application of these relevant precedents. Since the jury in this case acquitted De-le of manslaughter, it could not find him guilty ofmanslaughter as a hate crime. The instruction failed to prove at least one element of the hate crime manslaughter charge. In this case, as a result, it is inappropriate for the reviewing court to attempt to divine the jury’s collective members’ intent to find the defendant guilty of a hate crime.” The jury’s intention to convict De-le as “the lesser of just one juror.”

At the same time, given the possibility that the jury acquitted De-le on the lesser-included manslaughter charge as an indication of their serious doubt, it’s decision does not necessarily mean it “found that he did not commit an essential element of the greater offense.” Peradotto concluded by permitting a retrial on manslaughter as a hate crime charge but not on the simple manslaughter charge, “as a necessary, justifiable “reasonable balance.” No unconstitutional double jeopardy problem would ensue from this course of action.

In a concurring opinion, Judge Sheila Abdus-Salaam explained how to charge a jury in a hate crime case “but with an inconsistent verdict. Trial judges, she wrote, should instruct “the jury to treat a non-hate crime as a lesser included offense of an equivalent hate crime alleged committed via the same criminal acts” since “it would be unfair to the jury to allow a greater equal true triable offense of the law in New York State and can feel safe walking down the street in our own neighborhood.”

In December 1999, New York’s first hate crime conviction in the killing of a transgender person, both the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Empire State Pride Agenda called on the Onondaga County district attorney, attesting to the jury’s intention to convict De-le as “the lesser of just one juror.”

A written statement from TLDF quoted Attorney General Andrew Cuomo saying, “While I would have preferred to put this behind me while Teish’s killing happened, I do not believe it lessens the chance to see justice served in his retrial.”

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**Federal judge strikes down S.D. marriage ban**

On Jan. 12, U.S. District Judge Karen E. Schreier ruled that denying marriage for same-sex couples in South Dakota is unconstitutional. The ruling is stayed, meaning same-sex couples cannot yet receive marriage licenses in South Dakota. In a 28-page decision, Judge Schreier ruled that Plaintiffs have a fundamental right to marry. South Dakota law deprives them of that right solely because they are same-sex couples and without sufficient justification.

From the ruling’s conclusion:

In Loving, the Supreme Court addressed a traditionally accepted definition of marriage that prohibited Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving from marrying. Because Virginia’s laws deprived that couple of their fundamental right to marry, the Court struck down those laws. Little distinguishes this case from Loving. Plaintiffs have a fundamental right to marry. South Dakota law deprives them of that right solely because they are same-sex couples and without sufficient justification. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that plaintiffs’ motion for summary judgment (Docket 20) is granted, and defendants’ motion for summary judgment (Docket 43) is denied. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that SDCL 25-1-1, SDCL 25-3-18, Article 21, § 9 of the South Dakota Constitution, and any other provision of state law that precludes people from marrying, or refuses to recognize an existing marriage, solely because the individuals are of the same gender are unconstitutional because they violate the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that defendants are enjoined from enforcing those laws or otherwise declining to issue a marriage license solely because the applicants are of the same gender. It IS FURTHER ORDERED that a separate judgment will be entered and the effects of that judgment will be stayed until the judgment is final.

**Williams Institute numbers**

In South Dakota, there are approximately 714 cohabiting same-sex couples, of whom 21 percent are raising an estimated 302 children in their homes. Williams Institute research also suggests that 357 of these couples will likely marry in the next three years that same-sex marriage is available in South Dakota, generating an economic boost of nearly $2.4 million in the state and an additional $140 thousand in sales tax revenue.

**Key national statistics**

- More than three-quarters (75.8 percent) of same-sex couples across the country are living in the 36 states where they can marry (not including South Dakota) and more than seven-in-ten (70.4 percent) Americans are living in states that allow marriage for same-sex couples.

**Williams Institute research** suggests that there were 690,000 same-sex couples in the US in 2013 raising an estimated 200,000 children. As many as 30,000 of those children are being raised by married parents.

**Recent Williams Institute analyses** suggest that the number of married same-sex couples, estimated to be as high as 170,000 in 2013, has increased by more than 50 percent over the last three years.

The six plaintiffs families are from across the state and include veterans, nurses, a stay-at-home mom, a truck driver, a couple who have been together 30 years, and couples with children and grandchildren. They are represented by Joshua Nosovitz of the Minneapolis firm Madia Law LLC, Debra Voigt of Buc and Voigt Law Offices in Sioux Falls, SD, and Shannon Minter and Christopher F. Stoll of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

NCLR Senior Staff Attorney Christopher Stoll stated, “We are thrilled for our clients and for all same-sex couples in South Dakota, who have watched and waited as progress has been made in so many other states, and who can now see light at the end of the tunnel in their own state. We are also grateful to Judge Schreier for writing such a detailed and powerful analysis and for affirming in such strong terms that same-sex couples have the same fundamental freedom to marry as others. We hope this decision will hasten the day when the Supreme Court decides this issue for the country and ensures that all families are treated fairly and equally under the law.”

**Evan Wolfson, president of Freedom to Marry,** released the following statement: “Today’s ruling out of South Dakota affirms what nearly every court in the past year has held: loving and committed same-sex couples are guaranteed the freedom to marry by the U.S. Constitution. Every day of denial is a day of tangible hardship for same-sex couples and their families. The Supreme Court should take up a case as soon as possible and end marriage discrimination once and for all.”

In total, virtually every federal and state court has ruled in favor of the freedom to marry for same-sex couples with only one appellate court ruling the other way.

**GOP Attorney General vows to appeal**

GOP South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, in a statement posted to his state website: “It remains the State's position that the institution of marriage should be defined by the voters of South Dakota and not the federal courts. Because this case presents substantial legal questions of substantial public interest the Federal Court has stayed its judgment allowing South Dakota law to remain in effect pending the appeal.”

Jackley was first appointed attorney general in 2009, winning reelection in 2010 and 2014. He is the president-elect of the National Association of Attorney General, which is currently headed by Mississippi AG Jim Hood.

**Judge rules Michigan must recognize over 300 marriage licenses**

U.S. District Court Judge Mark Goldsmith ruled Jan. 15 that Michigan must recognize more than 300 marriage licenses issued to same-sex couples last March. Goldsmith stayed his ruling for 21 days. Freedom to Marry reports: Today’s ruling was in the case Caspar v. Snyder, which was filed on April 14, 2014 by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan on behalf of eight same-sex couples who received marriage licenses on the first day of the freedom to marry in Michigan. More than 300 couples received marriage licenses on March 22, after a federal judge struck down the state’s ban on marriage for same-sex couples.

The ruling was stayed later that afternoon, and although the federal government said that it would respect the Michigan marriage licenses for all purposes, Governor Rick Snyder said that the state would deny respect to the licenses as the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals considered arguments in the original federal lawsuit. Judge Goldsmith wrote: “The alleged harm from granting recognition and denial of at least some tangible benefits have already come about, thereby establishing that the factual record is sufficiently developed, such that there is no need to await future events for adjudication of the issues in this action. And delaying judicial resolution of these issues would serve no useful purpose. To the contrary, such delay would compound the harms these Plaintiffs suffer each day that their marital status remains unrecognized.”

Judge Goldsmith’s ruling, which is stayed for 21 days, means that all of the...
Japanese Zen Buddhist temple is first to perform symbolic same sex weddings

The Shunkoin Temple in Kyoto, Japan has become the first Zen Buddhist temple offering to officiate symbolic same sex weddings within the country. 

Japan's views on homosexuality and gender nonconforming individuals is a complex one. Despite artistic cultural exports that sometimes depict Japan as a socially progressive society in regards to gender and sexual expression, the country still struggles with broad legislation that would ensure LGBT equality.

A Pew poll conducted in 2013 found that Japanese citizens, while divided on the issue, were slightly more inclined to agree with the idea that homosexuality should be accepted by society. Nevertheless, change has been gradual.

"It's not like we have to keep tradition the way it is," Takafumi Kawakami, a priest at the Shunkoin Temple said in an interview with CNN. "We welcome every couple regardless of their faith or sexual orientation.

Though there are a number of openly queer politicians in Japan, openly gay people run the risk of being evicted, fired, or denied access to Japan's healthcare infrastructure.

"Japan still has no LGBT protection laws, lawmakers aren't even talking about it," said LGBT activist Maki Muraki. "If more people come out and get married, it'll increase LGBT awareness, marriage equality, and workplace equality.

Read more: http://www.towleroad.com/?a=307308

Mourning Leelah Alcorn: God doesn't make mistakes

By Sara Campbell

Leelah Alcorn threw herself in front of an oncoming semi-trailer in Ohio. A lot of the news reporting has failed to talk about one of the root causes of this problem: the torture of young LGBTQ children by their parents in the name of Jesus Christ.

I am a student studying to be a minister at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, in the ordination track with the United Church of Christ, and the Student Pastor at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church. I am a wife and a mother of a three-year-old son, and a devout Christian.

The piece of the Leelah Alcorn suicide that tears me apart is her parents. Her family believed that God wanted her to be a boy. According to Leelah, she was told repeatedly that "She was a boy, because God doesn't make mistakes."

What saddens me is how misguided they were, willing to sacrifice what seems to me a caring, beautiful, amazing, articulate young woman, for an external shell. Her parents were right, God doesn't make mistakes. Being Trans is NOT God making a mistake, being TRANS is a part of the full expression of God. God DOESN'T MAKE MISTAKES.

The blame for Leelah's suicide doesn't belong squarely on her parents' shoulders. It also belongs on the shoulders of the church leaders that were guiding her family. The church leaders that thought they could pray the girl out of her. The church leaders that thought they could full-submerge baptize her and bring her into new life in Christ. There is a perversion of the Gospel, Jesus Christ asks us to live with him authentically. To force people to deny what God has created them to be and use Jesus as the draping that adorns this denial is evil.

An authentic life is one that lives into exactly who God has created you to be. The loving God I believe in loves us all just the way we are. Regardless of that, loving someone unconditionally is not a path to condemnation. Living an authentic life that is a full expression of self, that is rooted in healthy and a positive self-image, is not a path to condemnation. However, human condemnation of people who are deemed to be different will create hell here on earth.

The blame for Leelah's suicide doesn't belong squarely on her church's shoulders either. It belongs on the shoulders of people like me, too. The liberal, non-bible literalists, LGBTQ loving, social justice minded church bears the responsibility for this too. We are not loud enough, we do not say enough into the dark places. God LOVES you unconditionally. God created you this way. God does not want or need you to change. We do not do enough to combat the hatred spewed forth in the name of our loving God.

I am sorry. I am sorry for the trauma and pain that church has created in your life. I'm so sorry for the pain you have gone through. I am sorry for the slurs hurled at you, for not yelling the love of God loud enough. I am sorry that in the name of Christ, a loving Christ who ate with the people who had been cast out by society, you were told that you were sub-human.

I am sorry. I am sorry that no one ever told you of the love of Jesus, the love that doesn't require change. A love that says who you are is made in the image of God. God doesn't make mistakes or junk. Being Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, is all an expression of a loving God. You are the face of God. Amen.
LGBT Cancer Network starts the conversation about anal cancer

Behind Closed Drawers: Exposing Anal Cancer

When thinking about cancer, many people react with fear, confusion, sadness, and anger. Anal cancer can provoke all of these feelings, along with additional feelings of embarrassment, uneasiness, and a sense of stigma. Now, it’s time to shed our anxieties (and our pants) to face anal cancer head on.

The National LGBT Cancer Network is launching a campaign to raise awareness about anal cancer and create a directory of free/low cost LGBT-friendly anal cancer screening facilities across the country. The Network says, “We invite you to show your support by donating at bit.ly/BehindClosedDrawers or texting “UNDIES” to 41444. We then ask you to help spread the word by posting a photo of your underwear on social media and tagging it with #BehindClosedDrawers. We hope to use these photos to add a touch of levity to a subject that is difficult to talk about.”

Tackling anal cancer is a natural fit for The National LGBT Cancer Network: while the incidence is relatively rare in the general population (about 1 in 500) it is up to 34x more prevalent in men who have sex with men, and increasing annually. While there is little confirmed data on anal cancer in transgender people, it is highly likely that those who engage in anal sex with men are also at a much greater risk for the disease. The majority of anal cancer cases are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV can be transmitted through both protected and unprotected anal intercourse and skin-to-skin contact, including manual stimulation.

HPV-positive men and transgender people with a history of anal intercourse are at the greatest risk for developing anal cancer; risk factors also include being a transplant recipient, a weakened immune system, smoking, and age. A growing number of physicians and health activists recommend that all men and transgender people who have anal sex with men, especially those who are HIV+, be screened every 1-3 years depending on their immunological well-being and CD4 count. They suggest that HIV-negative individuals be screened every three years. This work is important, because most people know little about anal cancer, and have never been screened for it, and don’t know that screenings exist. You can help us change that!

- National LGBT Cancer Network
- Local options and information
- Anal cancer prevention screening for all people is not but should be as readily available as the cervical cancer screening programs offered by gynecologists. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) causes both anal and cervical cancers, and they are treated in similar ways. High Resolution Anoscopy (HRA) is the screening procedure to determine if precancerous cells are present in the anal canal, and HRA has been provided by Theresa (Terry) Schwartz, NP at Rochester Colon and Rectal Surgeons since 2005. Any identified precancerous cells are then treated, and those cells are no longer a threat. Unfortunately, there is no treatment to eliminate the HPV from the anus, so routine screening of the anal canal is recommended, just as routine pelvic exams are recommended for anyone with a cervix.

Initially available only for people with HIV, HRA is recommended for people who have a history of HPV and/or ano-genital warts, regardless of whether they have anorectal symptoms. Think of all of the HIV negative women who died of cervical cancer in the 1970s before screening programs were available. There is no cure for HPV, which is the most commonly sexually transmitted infection. Some strains of HPV are known to cause only anal warts, and other strains are capable of causing cancers. Most people likely have a mixture of multiple types. While some people can clear HPV up until their mid-twenties, which is when the immune system is the strongest, any strains acquired from new sex partners after that age will likely persist. It is that persistence that makes people more likely to develop cancer.

Other factors which can hasten the process are immunosuppression (either HIV or chronic steroid use, such as in organ transplant recipients), tobacco use, stress, anal sex and other untreated sexually transmitted infections. It is important to note that while HPV, warts and cancer can be found in the anal canals of people who have never had anal sex, gay and bisexual men are at particular risk.

Not everyone who has HPV will develop anal cancer, but there is no way to predict who will and who will not. The best thing to do to keep yourself safe from this potentially fatal disease is to get screened. New patients can self-refer to RCRS at either the Brighton or Irondequoit location (244-5670). Confidential, on-judgmental, sex-affirming, screening is offered at Canandaigua VA Building Room 8, Library Conference Room, from 10-11 a.m.

For more information, contact Shirleen Bennett, 585-463-2713 or Wanda Martini, 585-205-3380.

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“Do It Without Shorts”
By Susan Jordan

There are many ways to stay active even in the depths of an upstate New York winter. Skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing and skating are obvious winter sports, but there are also indoor activities like Zumba and volleyball that can keep us moving until spring.

The Toronto Gay Ski and Snowboard Club has monthly evening socials and dinners, as well as parties and other events throughout the season. They hosted a “Super Ball” Jan. 30-Feb. 1 at Bristol Mountain in Canandaigua.

TGSC says, “With the #proud support of I LOVE NEW YORK LGBT and the Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, TGSC is proud to combine great skiing and snowboarding with the exceptional cultural riches the Finger Lakes region has to discover!”

Winter sports, indoors and out

In association with the [LGBTQ] Center of the Finger Lakes, Rochester Pride, the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley and LORA • lesbians of Rochester and allies, the Toronto Gay Ski & Snowboarding Club presents the second Super Ball: Bristol Mountain LGBTQ Ski & Snowboarding Weekend!

Also, each March, the members of TGSC team up with Supporting Our Youth in sponsoring a ski and snowboarding day for queer youth in Toronto. This event provides the opportunity for disadvantaged youth to have fun, escape the city and even get some exercise. It also allows young men and women to spend some time with positive role models in the community. This event is fully funded by the membership of the TGSC.

Telluride Gay Ski Week: Gay Ski Week in Telluride, Colo. (Feb. 22-March 1) is a favorite destination for many. Their website says, “We listen to what our guests have to say and so once again we will plan some big as well as some intimate events so that you have a week of options. Our Après Ski parties have become a daily tradition for all guests as well as the annual White Night Party, which has become Telluride’s celebration of the year.”

“Be checking in with us and we will keep you updated on events and specials. Even with some fun evening options we know the most popular reason for the week is the skiing. Telluride is continually rated as the top ski resort in the country almost fanatical about ski week and have been loud and generous in their support. We like that. Hmmm… there might just be a little gay in everybody.”

Snowboarding: Rochester’s Jenna A. Vanas notes, “My roommate convinced me to buy a snowboard, boots and bindings in 2001. From there on out she was supposed to teach me, but instead was going back to Corning to visit family on weekends during the winter of 2001. I broke down and bought a pass to Bristol Mountain for the season of 2001 and went on the mountain day in and day out, teaching myself how to snowboard. I spent about three to four days a week on the mountain. Finally at the end of the season of 2001 I learned how to snowboard and she was lucky enough to snowboard with me without teaching me how.

“My favorite time to snowboard is during spring because the snow is soft and easy to maneuver in. Also, spring season snowboarding or skiing is less cold and if you fall you’re not falling on a sheet of ice. Besides you can wear less layers and it’s fun watching crazy people come down the mountain in shorts and t-shirts…. I still snowboard from time to time.”

Zumba and volleyball: Not crazy about being outside in sub-zero temps? Try Zumba or volleyball to keep fit this winter.

Sam Brett told The Empty Closet, “I teach Zumba at the Downtown Fitness Club (50 Chestnut St.), every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., and every Friday at noon. The classes are open to members of the DFC, and also open to walk-ins from the general public (for a nominal fee).

“Zumba is a fun dance fitness phenomenon enjoyed by men and women of all ages. You will love the combination of dance and exercise together. Zumba is all about great music and easy to follow moves. And although the program is based on international rhythms, especially Latin, all kinds of music are incorporated. The advantage of group exercise fitness is that you can always blend in with the crowd and always adapt your workout to your abilities and desired physical impact. No dance or fitness experience needed. We just move and have FUN and forget that we are actually getting a great cardio workout.”

“In addition to Zumba, I also play volleyball indoors (both hard court, and beach volleyball). There are year-round leagues running at Hot Shots Indoors Volleyball, and at the Main Street Armory.”

Sam Brett leads his Zumba class.
Bisexuality, pansexuality and other non-monosexual and fluid identities involve the potential to feel sexually attracted to and to engage in emotional, romantic and/or sexual relationships with people of more than one sex or gender. A bi/pan/fluid person may or may not be equally attracted to different sexes, or may be attracted to persons regardless of sex or gender, and the degree of such attractions may vary over time.

Vocabulary

**Bisexual:**
A person who is sexually attracted to men and women.

**Pansexual:**
A person who is sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender identity, gender expression or biological sex. The term pansexual goes beyond a gender binary.

**Biphobia:**
Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against people who are, or are perceived to be, bisexual or pansexual. It may also be a fear of one’s own bisexual or pansexual attractions.

**Myths Debunked!**

**Myth: Bi/Pan people are cheaters.**
Bi/Pan people are not less faithful or less committed than any other group of people. Just like everyone else, bi/pan people are not attracted to everyone they meet.

**Myth: Bi/Pan people have multiple partners.**
People often confuse bisexuality and pansexuality with polyamory. Just because someone is attracted to more than one gender doesn’t mean they are sexually active with more than one person at a time.

**Myth: Bi/Pan people are just confused. It’s a stop on the way to coming out as gay.**
While some people do identify as bisexual or pansexual before coming out as gay or lesbian, for many people this is their real and valid identity! Calling someone confused for identifying as bi or pan only perpetuates hurtful stereotypes.

Resources

**Bisexual Resource Center**
www.biresource.net

**Bisexual.org**
www.bisexual.org

End Erasure!

- Acknowledge that bi/pan individuals aren’t “confused” or actually just gay.
- Don’t exclude bi/pan people from the LGBTQ umbrella simply because their partner is not the same gender.
- Don’t assume that someone is straight just because their partner is of the opposite sex, and don’t assume that someone is gay/lesbian just because their partner is of the same sex.
- Work to end negative stereotypes about bi/pan individuals in and out of the LGBTQ community.

A Few Bi/Pansexual Celebrities

Angelina Jolie (Actress)
Anna Paquin (Actress)
Azealia Banks (Singer)
Bai Ling (Actress)
Billie Joe Armstrong (Singer)
Clive Davis (Record Producer)
Kate Bornstein (Author/Activist)
Margaret Cho (Comedian)
Megan Fox (Actress)
Pete Townshend (Musician)
Sapphire (Author)

BISEXUAL/PANSEXUAL BASICS

Christiawn Emmanuel
I identify as a Pan-gender Pansexual. Pan-gender because I don’t identify as one gender or the other, instead I embody all of them. Pansexual because my attraction isn’t merely to one sex or the other. I’m a humble trail blazer who believes pansexuality is not our (my fellow Pan-sexuals) way of being defiant or just taking the opportunity to dip & dabble in everything. I own this! I own me!

Laine
I identify as pansexual because I am capable of being attracted to people of all genders, regardless of gender identity or expression. I used to call myself bisexual, but since coming out as transgender and being exposed to the broad spectrum of gender I realize that my sexual orientation is not defined by an arbitrary cultural binary.

as a bisexual man of color I am intimate with a person and or a women I am okay with...
Whitney

I identify as pansexual. Honestly I didn’t know what my sexuality was called until only a few years about. I just knew that bisexual didn’t really describe who I was.

When I found out what pansexuality is, I just felt that everything made sense and I had a sense of belonging when I knew there were others in the world like me. I feel like I found a missing part of myself. No, pansexual is not being sexually attracted to pans.

Bruce

I remember my brother telling me “you don’t fit my definition of a bisexual.” Well what is your definition of a bisexual and is it more important than how I identify my experiences?

I am comfortable being who I am if it happens to be a man or a woman. Love is Love.

Kat

I identify as a caucasian, Irish, cis-gendered, pansexual, polyamorous female. I identified as bisexual until I learned there was a term for someone who was not attracted to just men and women, but people on all points of the gender spectrum. Pansexual does not mean I’m attracted to ALL people, it means I’m attracted to people based on things other than what’s is in their pants.
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Honoring 10 Shoulders

Shoulders To Stand On honors 10 2013 Rochester Shoulders for their contributions to our struggle for equality and justice for the Greater Rochester community including our LGBT brothers and sisters and our allies.

First: Shoulders To Stand On recognizes that our community carries the Rochester community to greater awareness, integrity, visibility and pride! Because of YOU, our LGBT brothers, sisters, and allies, the Closet is not as full! So take a moment to look at yourself and the PROUD.

Shoulders honors Lovely Warren, the 6th Mayor of Rochester and the first woman mayor, for inviting Scott Fearing, Executive Director of the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, to speak at her public swearing in ceremony on Jan. 4 at the Auditorium Center, and for her announcement at the May 17 ESPA dinner that the city will extend transition-related healthcare coverage to transgender and gender non-conforming municipal employees. To this writer’s recollection, speaking at the Mayor’s swearing in ceremony was a first for the Executive Director of the Gay Alliance, and perhaps for any Rochester LGBT organization.

Shoulders honors MuCC, Multi-use Community Cultural Center, and founder Doug Rice. MuCC provides community groups with a turn-key, wheel chair accessible performance venue with flexibiity, normally set up for 90 seat. The list of those involved in making Doug’s dream a reality include Gari McCormick, Bobbe Oese-Siegel, Wanda Martinez, Kana Kennedy, Bill Jones, Annette Dragon, Anne Lovely, Thomas Warren, John Boole, Shawn Dorendal, Curtis Rivers, Kevin Indovino and many more helping hands.

Shoulders honors Evelyn Bailey, recipient of the Empire State Pride Agenda’s Community Service Award for being the Executive Producer of Shoulders To Stand On, the documentary on the history of the Rochester LGBT community. Evelyn also received the Community Leadership Award for Education from the American Association of University Women Rochester Branch, and was the Grand Marshal of the Rochester LGBT Pride Parade in July. LGBT Fund for Greater Rochester - Angela Bonazinga, Co-Chair, and Cathy Curtis Rivers, Kevin Indovino and many more.

Elaine Curtis Rivers, Kevin Indovino and many bie Oese-Siegel, Kana Kennedy, Bill Jones, a reality include Geri McCormick, Bob - o courtroom, the Closet is not as full!

Angela Bonazinga, Co-Chair, and Cathy Association of University Women Roches- the Rochester LGBT community. Evelyn Curtis Rivers, Kevin Indovino and many bie Oese-Siegel, Kana Kennedy, Bill Jones, a reality include Geri McCormick, Bob - o courtroom, the Closet is not as full!

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Growing Up

COPING STRATEGIES

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

By Eric Bellmann

A friend recently told me that he had observed a zombie robot, was a zombie robot, and then told me that he was a zombie robot, I do it again. I over-share. I use to believe that there was significant merit in painting a detailed picture of the complex person who hides within my physical self. I guess I learned that in therapy. Claim your space, own your pain, become a complete, multi-dimensional person.

What seems to produce no shortage of over-sharing is an annoyance that people just want to run away from, shut off or use as inspiration to circle in for the kill. Number One: I'm leaving exercise class walking up the hallway ahead of my dear friend Mary; a sweet, rather confused woman who was the absolutely hottest body builder in the whole joint as he's coming back from the water fountain. Interestingly (there's the clue), I say to her; "Why don't you smile to celebrate New Year?"

She looked blankly at me. So, he then pop his ear plugs, repeat my request. And his eyes widen and his lips part with the biggest, warmest grin I've ever seen, "Well, never mind," replied in-my-face, "Let's run through that again," I say, "Choreograph your life."

Item Number Two: I'm a gossip. I hate people with puppets. Ascribing a moral purity to match his torch for Mr. So-and-so, a torch that never burned, there was no smoke, no smell, no way to ingratiate myself, become a name-badge-carrying member of the most significant merit in painting a detailed picture of the complex person who hides within my physical self. I guess I learned that in therapy. Claim your space, own your pain, become a complete, multi-dimensional person.

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By Meredith Elizabeth Reinger

If you retire and just sit in front of TV, you will die. The cause and effect by an Old Man sitting in one of Webster's real-like-the-old-days garages with the actual-owner-working-under-the-Chevra... What is it about that life?

But Old-Man was not addressing me. Yes, two males plus female-marie were sitting in a very small space, squished between a cash register counter and well-used motorcycle lift. For twenty minutes, Pri-tho, Max, and some other Nearly Old Man yak yacked together.

"Hey, little Merry-in-my-head grumble, "Howdy Doody?" Me? I talk. I'm retired and soon enough Nearly Old Man yak yoked together.

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we ourselves manifest these bigotries, how we are the very ones who arophile and are part of these institutions and workplaces. Often, we find that these institutions and workplaces are broken, dysfunctional, and wounded in the very same ways that we are. The structures we have created are mirrors not of who we want to be, but who we really are. King would remind each of us that we cannot heal the world if we do not heal ourselves. So perhaps the greatest task, and the most difficult work we must do in light of King's teachings, is to heal ourselves. And this work must be done in relationship with our justice work in the world.

In "A Farewell to Arms," Ernest Hemingway said that the world breaks us all, but some of us go strong in broken places. King's teachings invite us to grow strong in our broken places - not only to mend the sin-sick world in which we live, but also to mend the sin-sick world that we carry around within us. And we can only do that if we are willing to look both inward and outward, healing ourselves of the bigotry, biases and demons that chip away at our efforts to work toward justice in this world. And our differences have been used to divide us instead of uniting us, so consequently we reside in a society where human brokenness, human isolation and human betrayal are played our every day. I know that the struggle against rac- ism that King talked about is only legiti- mately done with the understanding that King was creating an ongoing cycle of miseducation. Ironi- cally, our culture of woundedness and victimization has bonded us together in brokenness. The sharing of worlds to depict and honor our pain has created a new language of intimacy, a bonding ritu- al that allows us to talk across and around our pains. In exploiting our common wounds, we sometimes feel more able to find the trust and the understanding that eludes us as "healthy" people. When we bond in these unhealthy ways we lose opportunities in ourselves for moral leadership, and to work collaboratively with others to effect change in seemingly small ways that eventually lead to big outcomes.

Both Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. were leaders in the Montgomery bus boycott in challenging Alabama's Jim Crow laws. Both were working together for their desired outcome, and they could not have done it without the other. Had Rosa Parks not sat down by refus- ing her seat to a white man that day on the bus in December 1955, King could not have gotten up to promulgate a social gospel, which catapulted the civil rights movement. Each year, I mark the Martin Luther King holiday by re-examining myself in light of King's teachings. And in so doing, I try to uncover not only the ways in which the world breaks me, but also how it breaks other people. That keeps us frus- trated instead of united toward a common goal - a multicultural democracy.

I believe that when we use our gifts in the service of others as King has taught us we then shift the paradigm of personal brokenness to personal healing. We also shift the paradigm of looking for moral leadership from outside of ourselves to within ourselves; thus, realizing we are not only the agents of change in society, but also the moral leaders we have been looking for.

Our job, therefore, in keeping King's dream alive is to remember that our long - ing for social justice is also inextricably tied to our longing for personal healing.

The Gay Alliance • The Empty Closet
CLIMATE OF SUICIDE

A HAPPY NEW YEAR IN THE

By Brandon W. Broady

When a television show jumps right into the action of its storyline before the opening credits roll, it’s called a “cold open.” Just so I shall begin this year’s first fresh column, albeit with a slightly different subject matter: suicide.

Albert Camus, venerated editor and journalist, novelist, playwright and director, once asserted that suicide presents “the one only really serious philosophical question.” In his philosophical essay The Myth of Sisyphus (1942), Camus presented the 20th century modern man with that of Sisyphus’ fruitless efforts to roll that bolder up that hill. His family helpless at this point, feeling as if she never would be able to transition according to her personal religious doctrine. Alcorn’s mother was quoted as saying Alcorn was “going through a phase” and that God had made her a boy, and there was no changing that. Upon her sixteenth birthday, Alcorn died. Camus did not receive permission to undergo and begin her desperately needed transition from her parents. She is quoted in her posted suicide note as feeling completely helpless at this point, feeling as if she would never be able to transition according to her personal plan, that it doesn’t simply “get better”, and that she would never be happy thereafter. This note was signed automatically post on her Tumblr account, indicating Alcorn felt resolved in her heartbreakind end. She walked into a semi-trailer moving due south at high speeds shortly after.

Alcorn’s death spurred numerous reactions from the public, her family, and the LGBTQ community at large. Her death has indeed created a discourse on discrimination, specifically suicide faced by those who identify as trans. In this sense, her dreadful death has worked as a unifying force within the LGBTQ and ally community, underlining the pain and alienation experienced worldwide by transgender individuals.

But Alcorn’s death was a different kind of death; it was a suicide. The publicizing of suicides has resulted, over the decades, in various reactions from the public and those who closely monitor the current cultural zeitgeist. One would think that publicized suicides, by their very nature, would act as fearful reminders of what could happen if hopelessness is left to grow unchecked, leading most to seek or lend support to those in danger of making this irrevocable decision. Sometimes, however, the exact opposite occurs.

The Werther Effect, coined by American sociologists Peter Phillips, refers to the phenomenon where human behaviors, whether constructive or destructive to the self, are copied and continued between individuals through language, images, sounds or actions. In this sense, Phillips asserts that human behaviors can be “contagious” amongst communities of people. Phillips also specifically mentions that The Werther Effect can be accurately observed immediately following the nationwide publicizing of suicides, especially when suicides are broadcasted in a way that makes them appear glamorous, righteous or related to martyrdom.

This worries me.

I am worried that other LGBTQ youths may perceive the current climate for change and acceptance as minimal, especially in the face of some much suicide coverage. I say “so much” suicide coverage in reference to contemporary society’s access to abundant communicative technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram. Here we see images, news events, ideologies and countless posts whether we like it or not, usually repetitive due to “shares” and “retweets”, bombarding our newsfeeds with misguided and misguided opinions, and general misinformation. I am worried that being continually reminded that many LGBTQ youths are killing themselves due to perceived or actual alienation, may actually work to intensify those feelings of alienation, misrepresentation, and that suicide is the only viable option left.

Alcorn’s heavily publicized suicide note made it very clear to all of us that this way she felt during her last hours of life. Alcorn may have hoped her suicide would incite the want for change, but our coverage and reaction to her suicide may have, in actuality, only reinforced the social and climate forces responsible for making her feel that suicide was her only worthwhile choice.

Talking about suicide is necessary to cope with the loss, as well as help prevent suicide in the future, but the ways in which we breach and carry out this discussion are as just important. We should be aware that broadcasting and talking about those who commit suicide as being mortal may actually harm our fight for unity, strength and continued fortitude. It may darken our message of hope, and help to extinguish our flame.

If it takes a little self-monitoring to accomplish a clearer and more honest message of hope, I say flame-on.

Questions, comments or critique? Please feel free to e-mail the author at: brandonb@gayalliance.org
COMMUNITY

For 40 years, D-I Rochester has been meeting and serving the needs of our community and St. Simon's Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St., at the corner of Broad St. We have the following services and activities for the month of February 2015.

1st Sunday: Episcopal Mass/Healing Service, 10:30 a.m.
2nd Sunday: Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music
3rd Sunday: Episcopal Mass, quiet newsletter
4th Sunday: Roman Catholic Evening Prayer, followed by a Potluck Dinner!

On the first Sunday of Lent, the theme is “Simply Soup”. Bring along your favorite soup recipe or a loaf of bread and join us for food and fellowship. No time to cook or shop? Don’t worry, there is always enough to share. In lieu, tradition has it that when we aren’t cooking up a Potluck supper on the fourth Sunday, we’re gathering for fellowship and going out to a local restaurant for dinner each Sunday.

NEWS FROM THE PEWS: The 8th Annual Christmas Carol Sing, was wonderful. Think about making it your new annual tradition and join us next year. Tim Schramm always does a great job accompanying us in song… it really adds to the experience. Saturday, February 21: Winter Cabin Party will be held at Buckland Lodge in Brighton. “Comfort Food” is the theme for the potluck dinner at about 6 p.m. Bring a dish to pass and a favorite game or craft supply to use to help keep us all warm. Please call the Hotline or send us an email if you plan to attend so we bring enough side dishes.

February 2015—Our 40th Anniversary! While March 30th is our “official” anniversary (that’s when we started worshiping together), we’re booked for AUGUST 15, 2015 for a FABULOUS 40TH REUNION PICNIC! We’ve started making lists of all the people we can remember, but we don’t want to leave anyone out. Please make sure you let us know how to contact you. It would be fantastic to see or hear from as many former members of D-I as possible. Send your information via our email, info@di-rochester.org, or write to us directly at 17 S. Fitzhugh St. If we can’t reach you by February 4th, we will be sure to send you an invitation!

You can call the Hotline at 585-234-5049, e-mail at info@di-rochester.org or visit our website at openarmsmcc.org for updates on services and activities.

L.O.R.A. KNITTING GROUP

The L.O.R.A. Knitting Group is now meeting the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 6 to 8 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. This group is open to LGBTQ community and our allies; others are also provided in knitting and crochet (bring your supplies). For information and location, contact Terry Kight at TerryKight@rochester.rr.com, or drop in at 17 S. Fitzhugh St. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

OPEN ARMS MCC

Open Arms MCC is Beyond Opening and Affirming... Beyond Welcoming... A Place for ALL.

Sunday Morning Celebration Services begin at 10:30 a.m. offering a vibrant, inclusive, progressive worship experience. The open, inclusive and mission-oriented and contemporary worship style, Worship may include hymns, scripture, scripture, special music and our own Open Arms ensemble. Pastoral Intern Brax Adams always delivers a message that is both scriptural and socially relevant. During our Celebration Service, children are invited to part- icipate in our children’s Moment before heading off to our Rainbow Rangers (ages 5-12) and Rainbow Sprouts (newborn to five years old) Sunday School Program. Following the service you can join us in our Community Center for some social time.

Our Contemporary Praise and Worship Service is held each Sunday at 5:30 p.m. be assured that you will be fed, honored and loved. This contemporary and interactive service features our live Open Arms Praise Band and Pastoral Intern Sara Campbell leads your worship experience.

Communion is served each Sunday in both services. In February we will use Saturday social time and evening praise and worship to prepare our hearts as we participate in this intimate worship experience.

Starting on Sunday February 1, Adult Sunday School begins at 9 a.m. in both services and will be “Living The Questions.” The focus for this new year is for Sunday School with Christianity still have relevance in the 21st Century. Providing a variety of flexible learning experiences that help people explore the future of Christian- ity and what a meaningful faith can look like in our time.

Monday February 2, Sara Campbell will hold a weekly book study on the book by Patrick S. Cheng titled “From Sin to Salvation: Amazing Grace Overcoming the Christ.” This book reclaim the doctrines of sin and grace for LGBTQ people and others who have been wounded by such doctrines in the past. This book study will meet each Monday at 6:30 p.m. at Equal Ground Coffee, 750 South St.

Feb. 27 and Feb. 28 at 6 p.m. in honor of Black History Month Open Meeting will be held for two parts of the Academy Award-nominated documentary film: King: A Filmed Record… The Story of Martin Luther King Jr. The movie presents key events in the life of civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. The film will be shown at the Ithaca Gas Station in Montgomery, Alabama, it follows King through major steps in his struggle to promote the cause of nonviolent civil rights for African Americans. January was a busy month, but the Center looks forward to what is ahead.

For further information, call Max Goldberg at (585) 957-6627 or email Berry at DressyFemme@aol.com. Hope to see you there.

PRIDE AND JOY FAMILIES

“Pride and Joy Families Weekend Conference” are a wonderful opportunity for adults and children in LGBTQ fam- ilies to share their experiences, celebrate together, and find the support and resources they need to lead fuller, happier, “lives.” Adults and children who want to understand and support what struggles and difficulties their LGBTQ family members may be both celebratory and educational for LGBTQ families’ conferences, held in Ithaca, Binghamton, Utica, and most recently, Oneida. The conferences are designed to help people from Upstate New York and beyond. The Conference is sponsored by various local LGBTQ organizations including: the Binghamton University, Camp Highlight, Gay Parent Magazine, the Binghamton University Alumni Association, Out for Tomorrow, LGBTQI Community and Public Affairs.

ROCHESTER BUTCH FEMME CONNECTION

Rochester Butch Femme Connection supper club will have one dinner night out in February.

Saturday, February 21, we will meet at Joy’s Diner on West Henrietta Rd. (Route 15) at 7 p.m.

For additional information, contact Max at (585) 957-6627 or email Berry at DressyFemme@aol.com. Hope to see you there.

ROMANS

Happy Nude Year! ROMANS members had a Holiday Celebration au naturel in December. An event for 18+ members only.

We are pleased to announce that the monthly nude swim at Harro East Athletic Club, is back on Friday, March 20 on the Binghamton University Downtown Center in Binghamton.

The 2015 Conference promises to be much more, for all ages, stages and genders. A celebration of love, lib- erty, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) individuals, their children and children’s parents will be celebrated. Conference Chairperson, Dr. Professor Goldberg, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Clark University, will discuss how LGBTQ fam- ilies navigate their identities in their chil- dren’s schools.

Other workshop sessions will address family building, parenting, gender, race, and many other aspects of living in an LGBTQ family. Camp Highlight in New York will be provided by Camp Highlight, a camp for children in LGBTQ families. The Conference will also include intergenerational activities, a Family Dance Party, Resource/Vendor Expo, and off-site experiences to Binghamton- area attractions.

We will be holding our educational program this year in February, in the month of the year that was over we had the Men Only swim at Vassar Street organized by Naturist-Ex. Anyone interested in social nudism and wanting to join our activities in February and beyond, please check out our website at www.wnyromans.org. Rochester (Community continues on page 26)
Male Naturists (ROMANS) is a social club for gay and gay-friendly male nudists (or naturists) over 21. You can contact us at message line 585-281-4966, by E-mail wnymenans@yahoo.com or via regular mail at PO Box 92293, Rochester, NY 14692.

TRANS ALLIANCE OF GREATER ROCHESTER (TAGR)

Our third annual Year End Party with a “dessert luck” and clothing exchange and drive was a huge success! We had some really unique foods thanks to Marilyn – who knew you could put asparagus in a blanket?!

Then the clothes! At one point we had over 60 feet of table space covered in gently used clothing! People had a great time looking through and trying on whatever and some people almost needed a truck to take home what they had chosen. Even though a lot of the clothing did get taken, we ended up with about a dozen large bags that with the help of Pam Barnes were delivered to a grateful St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality on Jan. 15.

Saturday, February 14, 3 to 5 p.m. is our second Saturday Planning Group meeting. Please come with your ideas and hear what’s being planned for the next few months and the really exciting things for this year!

Our LAST Saturday of the month meeting is February 28, 3 to 5:30 p.m. and is our education meeting. We will have Julia Saez of the LGBT Rights Project here in Rochester talking about what has been going with the Project for the past year or so and how she has been able to provide unprecedented legal assistance for our Greater Rochester (and beyond) Trans community.

On Tuesday, March 31, to commemorate the International Trans Day of Visibility, we will hold our first ever Open House, which will include an award ceremony to recognize members of the trans and non trans community who have supported us recently and throughout the past year.

All our meetings take place at the Open Arms Community Center at 707 East Main St., almost across the street from Delta Sonic and there is plenty of parking in front and side of the Open Arms building.

Open Arms MCC, who graciously allows us to use their Community Center for our gatherings, needs donations for their ongoing food cupboard. Therefore we are asking TAGR meeting attendees to please bring at least one non-perishable food item for donation to our meetings as an ongoing thank you for allowing us to use their space.

There will be refreshments and we will be asking for at least a $1 donation towards supporting TAGR and the work we need and want to do!

“Trans...invisible and silent no longer… invisible and silent no more!”

Our website: www.rnytg.org rnytg.org facebook.com/rnytg info@rnytg.org twitter: @rochestertrans Our phone # is: 585-432-0456 ■
Go glitz on Feb. 7 at the Red Ball

Tired of your post-holiday slump and the seemingly endless Rochester winter? Valentine’s time is coming up, and the Gay Alliance will host its annual community dance, the Red Ball, on Feb. 7, with the theme this year of “Puttin’ on the Glitz.”

Participants are encouraged to wear Roaring Twenties attire, namely “Gatsby, gangsters, and flappers.” There will be prizes for the best-dressed.

Party-goers will be able to enjoy “speakeasy hooch,” hors d'oeuvres and a major raffle, dance to music by DJ Chuck Argeno, and pose with their partners in a photo booth with props.

The event will take place at Diplomat Banquet Center, 1956 Lyell Ave. 14604, and will run from 7 to 11 p.m. Tickets are $20 in advance with their partners in a photo booth with props.

The event will take place at Diplomat Banquet Center, 1956 Lyell Ave. 14604, and will run from 7 to 11 p.m. Tickets are $20 in advance with their partners in a photo booth with props. Tickets can be purchased at www.gayalliance.org, Equal Grounds, Outlandish (cash only), Parke-Ave. 14604, and will run from 7 to 11 p.m. Tickets are $20 in advance with their partners in a photo booth with props.

Cameron Mitchell Bell: In the show I play Bert Healy who is a radio host of the “Oxident Hour Of Smiles”. Annie makes an appearance on the broadcast in hopes of finding her parents.

I am also so lucky to be a part of our amazing ensemble where I play a wide variety of roles from catching stray dogs, to living on the streets, to working in the mansion of a billionaire, to advising the president of the United States! The most amazing part about my job is being able to be so many different characters and getting to live a day in the life of such drastically different people! It definitely keeps you on your toes... not to mention all the amazing costumes I get to wear! Why would you wanna wear one when you can wear five?

EC: Where do you hail from and how/why did you get into theatre?

CMB: Honestly I have been singing since age two and have been to rehearsal every day and getting to work with such a legend and staple in the history of American Musical Theatre was a dream come true.

I remember being a kid in the south listening to the original Broadway cast recording of Annie and to think I am working with the man who penned such famous songs as “Maybe” and “Tomorrow” really brings my full life circle.

This production is really something spectacular. Martin really wanted to return to the original concept of the 1977 Broadway version and give an audience a chance to see that made this musical such a hit. There’s really no need to try to make Annie into something new and modernized. I feel the original message of heart and optimism has always shown through from the beginning and that’s what we are giving those audience members every night.

EC: What performers have inspired and influenced you?

CMB: I was so fortunate to be exposed to such amazing performers and singers throughout my life and each of them inspired me in different times throughout my career.

However, I will always and forever LOVE Whitney Houston. There is just something about her voice that was so organic and heart wrenching. She brought church to pop music and having sat every Sunday in a Baptist pew, that was just the kind of influence I wanted. Other than her I would say the typical divas Celine, Mariah, Christina, and then there the odd balls Sandi Patty, Renee Fleming and David Phelps.

EC: Which do you think is more difficult – playing comedy or tragedy/drama?

CMB: I think they are both similar and different in their own way. Some of the funnest actors I have ever met were terribly sad people and vice versa. We all have our own skill sets and some more than others. To each his own, I always say.

EC: Anything to add!

CMB: I am a heavy social media person and if you want to see all the fun we are having at Annie’s I will let me on: Instagram: cameronmitchellbell

Twitter: @theclamarthommbell

Facebook: www.facebook.com/concameronmitchellbell

or check out my website cameronmitchellbell.com.

“Annie” is at the Auditorium Theatre March 10-15.

Kasha Davis. Photo, RuPaul’s Drag Race.

Mrs. Kasha Davis heads for Hollywood

By Susan Jordan

Mrs. Kasha Davis (aka Ed Popil) is the third Rochester queen to make it onto national TV show “RuPaul’s Drag Race” — following the broadcast in hopes of finding some organic and heart wrenching. She brought church to pop music and having sat every Sunday in a Baptist pew, that was just the kind of influence I wanted. Other than her I would say the typical divas Celine, Mariah, Christina, and then there the odd balls Sandi Patty, Renee Fleming and David Phelps.

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or check out my website cameronmitchellbell.com. - Cameron Mitchell Bell talks about “Annie”

By Susan Jordan

Cameron Mitchell Bell (Bert, Ensemble) is in the cast of Annie, playing at the Auditorium Theatre March 10-15.

His past career includes Off-Broadway: Time to Kill, National Tour: Clifford the Big Red Dog LIVE, Disney Cruise Line, Regional: Chicago, Disney’s Aladdin, Cadidie, Oklahoma, Thoroughly Modern Millie, You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown, Cameron Mitchell Bell.

Emptty Closet: Can you talk about the Bert Healy character you play and who he is? What are the biggest challenges and the greatest rewards for you with this role?

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Check out NYC’s Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

By R.M. Cook

Providing a safe haven for art... which is often excluded from mainstream exhibits and textbooks and looked upon as taboo or less important by historians and critics.” That’s the mission of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, located at 26 Wooster St., in NYC’s Soho district.

In 2012 the Leslie-Lohman received official accreditation as a museum from the State of New York making it the first gay and lesbian art museum in the world... dedicated solely to the study of lesbian and gay art.

Evolving from the private collection of its founders, the late Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman, the trove moved to its current location on Wooster Street in 2006. Represented in the museum’s archives are works by Warhol, Haring, Coccot, Hujar, Hockney and Mapplethorpe among many others. The permanent collection houses over 24,000 works; many are still being cataloged.

The venue provides an interesting and informative side trip for those visiting Manhattan who are curious about gay and lesbian art and the artists who produce such works. The gallery anticipates 50,000 visitors this year.

Other than a small pink sign over the door, the museum’s exterior is quite plain and provides no clue to the rich treasures of homosexual art and gay history preserved inside the small venue’s collection of paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, and sculpture. Floor space of 1,800 square feet is at a premium in the gallery as each square foot of real estate in NYC is extremely valuable. However, the exhibit area is well utilized and provides an inspiring educational and artistic experience in a welcoming, professional atmosphere.

Owing to limited display area only a small portion of the collection can be displayed at one time. The museum mounts six to eight themed exhibits each year. A recent exhibit, Paul Thék and His Circle in the 1950s, featured photographs, drawings, paintings, and prints of and about the life of artist Paul Thék and the young, artistic, beautiful and gay artists in the New York art scene long before Stonewall.

An upcoming exhibit, scheduled for early 2015, is entitled Irreverent. According to pre-show press the exhibit “...is inspired by the censorship of work by artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe... It will explain how sexuality has been, and continues to be, used as a tool to censor LGBTQ cultural artwork.”

Admission to the museum is free but donations are appreciated. Gallery hours are 12-4 p.m., Tues.—Sun., 12-8 p.m. Thurs. Closed Monday and all major holidays. Leslie-Lohman’s web site is www.leslielohman.org.
Low Country
culinary chomping
through Charleston
By Merle Exit
Charleston, South Carolina’s
cuisine is more than just “shrimp
and grits”. Bulldog Tours offers
a walking culinary tour focusing
on what is termed “low coun-
try cuisine,” beginning with
Dixie Supply Bakery and Café
for some good old plain creamy
grits, a bite size sweet potato
corn bread, and sweet tea. Sugar
is added to the brewing tea,
chilled and then served as iced
te.
Continuing on to Charleston
Cooks, a kitchen supply store,
our guide, Fran Bennett, talked
about Tomato Pie and Pimento
Cheese. Pimento cheese is one
staple that is served on top of a
dish or as a dip. It is basically
a combo of shredded cheddar,
sometimes other cheeses and
pimentos along with other ingre-
dients to flavor or spice it up.
Charleston Cooks introduced
us to Benne (sesame) wafers. Ses-
ame seeds were brought from
Africa in the 17th and 18th cen-
turies. The wafers are a combo
of the toasted seeds, sugar, but-
ter or margarine, and egg whites.
Market Street Sweets was
preparing a batch of peanut brit-
tle and we tasted it just as it
cooled off. We then had pra-
lines, sugar coated pecans, and
bear claws, their take on those
chocolate “turtles”.
On to the Spice and Tea
Exchange for mostly whiffs of a
vast amount of products. We did
have a sample of whatever tea
was being prepared, some dips,
and a few green tea mints.
Our next tasting was at A.W.
Shucks, where we had blue crab
dip, hush puppies with praline
butter and fried green toma-
toes. Actually the restaurant is
well known for their oysters, of
which there are some briny and
delicious local ones.
Jim and Nicks was the final
foodie. They are all about bar-
becue. We sampled some of their
pulled pork, collard greens, and
cole slaw. Finding the collard
greens much too spicy for me, I
requested a small glass of milk
to ease the pain. www.bulldog-
tours.com
She-Crab Soup is a must in
this area. What makes the differ-
ence is using the addedroe from
the crab. Everyone has their own
style of this delicious delicacy. I
sampled it at three restaurants
beginning with a place called
Amen Street. It was full of crab
meat, as if the lumped meat were
flaked. Sherry is poured atop
prior to eating it. That is a com-
mon aspect of this soup.
I had the opportunity to do
a small tasting with the chef
from the Swamp Fox Restaurant
located at the Francis Marion
Hotel. Their She-Crab Soup was
just as delicious, more “soupy”
with a decent amount of lumped
meat used more as the garnish.
The third She-Crab Soup
was devoured at Henry’s On
Market that was kind of in
between the two textures and
equally savory. We also sam-
ples Fried Green Tomatoes with
pimento cheese, southern hot
chicken with a sweet tea glaze,
some very salty collard greens,
and fried grits cake.
The final restaurant sam-
ping was at the Blind Tiger Pub
where I had: fried pickles, fried
green tomatoes, crab cake and
fresh tuna. The tomatoes were
napped with goat cheese, basil
aioli, and cucumber roasted corn
relish.
Needless to say, I didn’t Jet-
Blue to Charleston just for the
food. They were having a direct
trip from JFK for about $70 one
way. ■
Denise Herrera

Volunteer of the Month: Denise Herrera

We are thrilled to announce that Denise Herrera has been selected as volunteer of the month for February 2015. Over the past five years, Denise has donated countless hours of her interpreting services to the Gay Alliance, helping ensure that our workshops and events are accessible to as many people as possible. Volunteers like Denise are critical to the Gay Alliance’s efforts to be a more inclusive community. Providing interpreting services at events or workshops can pose a challenge for small non-profit organizations; the cost of contracting professional interpreters is often prohibitive. When skilled interpreters like Denise volunteer their talents they provide an important access: they highlight the power of community and the value of genuine inclusion.

Denise hails from Queens, and is a alumna of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. For five years, Denise has donated her interpreting skills at many events, including the Rochester LGBTQ Pride Festivals over the past several years. In addition to her time and energy at Pride, Denise has volunteered her interpreting skills at many of our trainings and workshops. Our deepest thanks go out to Denise for the invaluable contributions she continues to make to the Rochester LGBTQ and ally communities.

Registration opens for Spring SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Programs

By Jeanne Gainsburg

The spring session of the Gay Alliance SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program will take place on Friday, March 20, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (check in at 8:30 a.m.) at the Rochester Red Cross. We can also bring this program to your campus or workplace. The SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program is an interactive eight-hour course, which includes activities, small group discussions and opportunities for practicing skills as educators.

During this course, participants will be coached in running SafeZone trainings and offered opportunities to ask and answer questions in a supportive environment using the teaching skills that they acquire. Each participant will receive a SafeZone Training manual that will provide a complete course guide for running SafeZone Trainings, recommended exercises and activities, resources and suggested readings to extend knowledge.

Participants will be coached in running SafeZone trainings and offered opportunities to ask and answer questions in a supportive environment using the teaching skills that they acquire. Each participant will receive a SafeZone Training manual that will provide a complete course guide for running SafeZone Trainings, recommended exercises and activities, resources and suggested readings to extend knowledge.

The SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program provides a complete course guide for running SafeZone Trainings, a Gay Alliance SafeZone sticker and a certificate of course completion. Ongoing support will be offered to all participants through the Gay Alliance following the presentation, to offer assistance and suggestions for keeping programs fresh and up-to-date. Our January train-the-trainer session filled eight weeks prior to the workshop date, so please register early!

To register go to the Gay Alliance home page at www.gayalliance.org and click on the SAFEZONE slide.

For questions, please contact me at jeanneg@gayalliance.org or 585-244-8640 ext. 14.

Winter SpeakOUT Training

The Gay Alliance would like to invite you to participate in our Winter SpeakOUT Training: Providing Successful LGBTQ Education

The Gay Alliance SpeakOUT Training prepares participants to educate others on LGBTQ issues in a respectful way, to successfully advocate for LGBTQ individuals and to address challenges to full LGBTQ inclusion. SpeakOUT participants become more confident and articulate while talking with others about LGBTQ issues. This is a great experience for someone new to LGBTQ issues or someone who has lived or worked with the issues for years. Think of it as professional development for your life. This training is also the first step in becoming trained as a Gay Alliance Speakers Bureau member.

Facilitators: Jeanne Gainsburg, Gay Alliance Education Director and Rowan Collins, social justice activist and educator, join forces to bring you this fast-paced, dynamic and interactive workshop.

A dynamic mix of interactive exercises and lecture make for a fast-paced, intense and valuable learning experience.

The SpeakOUT Training will run on Friday, March 13 from 6-9pm and on Saturday, March 14, from 8:30am-5pm and is $75 per person. It will be held at Asbury First United Methodist Church at 1050 East Ave, Rochester, NY 14607.

To register, go to the Gay Alliance website: www.gayalliance.org and click on the SpeakOUT slide. Please direct all questions to jeanneg@gayalliance.org or 585-244-8640 ext. 14.

*ASL interpretation available if requested by March 27.
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

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**Speaking Engagements November - December 2014**

- Penguin Tango Talkback at Red House Arts Center, Syracuse
- Respectfully Communicating with LGBTQ People at Bryant & Stratton College (4 presentations)
- Caring For LGBTQ Older Adults at the Greater Rochester Collaborative MSW Program
- LGBTQ Issues in Social Work at SUNY Brockport
- Creating Safe and Inclusive Schools for Transgender Students at East Rochester School District
- Speaking at the Gay Alliance
- LGBTQ Issues in Social Work at the Greater Rochester Collaborative MSW Program
- Practicing Our Personal Stories at the Gay Alliance (2 trainings)
- SafeZone Training at LeMoyne College
- Shoulders To Stand On film and discussion at Lincoln Center, NYC
- SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program at The College of New Jersey
- SafeZone Training at West Irondequoit High School
- LGBTQ Cultural Competence Training for Service Providers of Older Adults at the Gay Alliance
- The LGBTQ Lifespan at the U. of R’s School of Education
- SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- SafeZone Train-the-Trainer Certification Program at the College of San Mateo, Calif.
- Transgender Workplace Inclusion at Rochester Regional Healthcare Associates
- Working with LGBTQ Older Adults at the Alzheimer’s Association, Central New York Chapter
- LGBTQ Vocabulary and Respectful Language at Webster Thomas High School GSA
- LGBTQ 101 at the Society for the Protection of Children
- Tabling at Human Rights Day at Downtown United Presbyterian
- Creating Safe and Inclusive Schools for Transgender Students at Twelve Corners Middle School
- SafeZone Training at Eastman School of Music
- Creating Transgender Inclusive Churches at the Irondequoit United Church of Christ
- LGBTQ Coming Out Stories at the Barker Road Middle School GSA

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**Feedback from evaluations:**

“She is absolutely phenomenal as a trainer and person. I have been to three other trainings... this was by far the best!”

“There was a focus on clear communication throughout. I feel like I will do better interacting with all kinds of people. It was great!! You two are awesome!”

“AWESOME! Best workshop we’ve ever had. So worth the time!”

“Mind-blowing, skills-building, life-affirming. The best part was the way the facilitator helped attendees work together to come to new understandings.”

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**SAGE FEBRUARY CALENDAR**

**Tuesday 2/3**……….. 10:30-11:30. Yoga with Tom

**Thursday 2/5**……….. 10:30-11:30. Yoga with Tom

**Tuesday 2/10**……….. 10:30-11:30 Yoga with Tom

**Thursday 2/12**……….. No yoga Breakfast at Denny’s at 10:30 am 911 Jefferson Road. Please RSVP by 2/10 to 585-287-2958

**Tuesday 2/17**……….. 10:30-11:30 Yoga with Tom. 11:30-3 pm Potluck; bring a salad or dessert. SAGE “Where are we going?” planning meeting. Your hosts Anne Tischer and Jessica Gibson.


**Tuesday 2/24**……….. 10:30-11:30 Yoga with Tom. 11:30 am-3pm Brown bag and beverage, Euchre. Your host Anne Tischer.

**Thursday 2/26**……….. Lunch at the Green House cafe, 2271 East Main Street at noon. Your Host Ginny Delin. RSVP by 2/20/15 to 585-287-2985.

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**Bad weather days:** if schools are closed all programs are canceled that day.

**Does anyone want to host an event or an outing? Please let Audet know:**
Also looking for ideas for March; will need any ideas by February 9.

**Rainbow Sage** - For LGBTQ People 50 and over, meets at Open Arms Metropolitan 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, members-driven programming.
Legal name change? Birth certificate amendments? You'll need those forms amended!

Our Notary can help!
Schedule a free appointment today!
Call 585 244-8640 or email: info@gayalliance.org

ROCHESTER AA/NA MEETINGS
Every week there are four regularly scheduled GLBT AA and two inclusive NA meetings in Rochester.

TUESDAYS
Narcotics Anonymous
6-7:30pm, AIDS and Recovery 1134 Culver Road (Covenant United Methodist Church) This is an NA meeting that is open to all addicts who have a desire to stop using. Although it is not specifically a gay-oriented meeting, it is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Each week features a reading from NA literature, followed by discussion.

Rochester Gay Men
5pm, St. Luke’s St. Simon’s Episcopal Church, 7th St. Men riders can take the #2 bus from the downtown stop on Main Street at the County Office Building to 7th St. Men.
• Closed meeting, restricted to addicts and alcoholics
• Men’s meeting
• Handicapped accessible
Meeting begins with a speaker, followed by open discussion.

SUNDAYS
Step in the Right Direction
7:30am, St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church (Trinity Alliance Church) This is an AA meeting that is open to all addicts who have a desire to stop using. Although it is not specifically a gay-oriented meeting, it is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Each week features a reading from NA literature, followed by discussion.

Rochester Gay Men
8am, St. Luke’s St. Simon’s Episcopal Church, 7th St. Men riders can take the #2 bus from the downtown stop on Main Street at the County Office Building to 7th St. Men.
• Closed meeting, restricted to addicts and alcoholics
• Men’s meeting
• NOT handicapped accessible
Meeting begins with a speaker, followed by open discussion.

FEBRUARY 2015 • NUMBER 486 • THE GAY ALLIANCE • THE EMPTY CLOSET

DAILY
Free HIV Testing
Tuesdays, 10-11am, 750 South Ave, 259 Monroe Ave. David Bohnett Cyber Center
Gay Alliance 5th floor lounge, Mon-Thurs. 11am-3pm, Fri. 11am-1pm, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640; www.gayalliance.org

MONDAYS
L.O.R.A. Coffee Social
Email: info@ioragroup.org.
LORA Late Bloomers Coming Out Group for Women
Rochester Historical Bowling Society
7pm. Clover Lanes
Gay Alliance Library & Archives, Every Mon. Wed. 6-8pm. David Bohnett Cyber Center, 5-7:30pm, first floor, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640
Born That Way
Formerly 3rd Presbyterian LGBT Support Group. First, 3rd Mondays, 7:30-9:30pm, 34 Main St. Carol. 492-3823 or Kaara. 605-7316.
HIV Positive Men’s Support group
Every Monday, 6pm, Trillium Health Center for Positive Living, 259 Monroe Ave.
Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
Mondays, 6pm, George Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.
Steps Beyond 5Shms
Crack a Sock Group. Mondays, 7-8pm, 289 Monroe Ave.

TUESDAYS
The Social Grind
10am-12noon and again 7-9:30pm at Equal–Grounds, 750 South Ave. Email: hhutch45@yahoo.com for info.
Adult Families of Trans Youth (AFTY)
First Tuesdays, 5-6:30pm, Open Arms MCC Community Center, 707 E. Main St.
LGBT Healthy Living
Veterans support. Second, fourth, Tuesdays, 10-11am Canandaigua VA, building 9, room 8. Veterans support. Second, fourth Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30, Open Arms MCC Com-Munity Center. 5-6pm, 271-8478.
Free syphilis testing
Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave., 5-8pm. 442-2220.
Women’s Community Church
Rehearsals each Tuesday. 10-12noon, 6-8pm, Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh Street, 234-4441, www.therwcc.org
LORA Kolters Girls
Gay Alliance Trans* Youth Support Group
5-7:30-8pm, GAVG office, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St. Ages 13-18, 244-8640.

WEDNESDAYS
Identity Group
The Identity Group is for LGBT identified individuals who have a developmental disability diagnosis. The group meets Wednesdays 3-4 pm at ARC Health Services (6060 Brighton Henrietta Townline Rd. 14623). The goal of the group is to provide a safe space to discuss identity issues, share personal experiences and increase self-esteem. The group is facilitated by Delatia Fico. LGMD. For more information, please contact Delatia Fico at dlfc2013@arcm.org or 585-216-0610 ext. 1552.
Gay Alliance Board of Directors
Meets Third Wednesdays, 6pm, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640.
New Freedom New Happiness
AA Gay meeting, 7pm, Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd. Men and women. Open.
Support Group for Parents who have lost Children
First, 3rd Wednesdays, 11am-12:30pm, Third Presbyterian Church, 4 Meigs St. Genesee Home Care Free. 325-1660.
CGAP
Rochester Rams General Meeting
2nd Wednesdays, 7:30pm, Rochester University. www.rochesterrams.com
HIV+ Mixed Men’s Group
Wednesdays, 6-8pm, Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave.
Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
6pm, Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.
Gay Alliance Library & Archives, Every Mon. 6-8pm. David Bohnett Cyber Center. 5-7:30pm, first floor, 875 E. Main St. 244-8640
Empire Bears
Wednesday Everyn. 6pm dinner at various venues. www.empirebears.com.

THURSDAYS
Pride at Work & AFL CIO
First Thursday, 5-6pm, 1554 Buffalo Road, Rochester 14624, 426-0882.
GLOBAL (Gay & Lesbians of Bauch & Lumb) Meets every third Thursday in Area 67 conference room at the Office Center. Voicetel: 338-4077
Rochester Gay Men’s Church
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. 6:30-8pm, 423-0650.
Free confidential walk-in HIV testing
Trillium Health, 259 Monroe Ave., 5-8pm. 442-2220.
Out & Equal Second Thursdays
Social/business networking, 5:30-7:30pm. Changing venues. E-mail: fingertips@OutandEqual. net.
Geneese Valley Gender Variant
7-9pm, Equal–Grounds, 750 South Ave. DV GenderVarians@yahoogroups.com

FRIYAYS
Gay Men’s AA meeting
Gay Alliance Youth, 7pm, Gay Alliance, 5th floor, 875 E. Main St., 244-8640; youth@gayalliance.org.
GLBTQ Motorcycle Group
Second Fridays, 5-5:30pm, Various locations. Rochester GLBTQ bikers@yahoo.com; 467-6456; bikerinfo@rochester. net.
LORA GayNes Night
Monthly LUTO Womyns Bingo Night
Third Fridays, 7 pm, at Empire Bingo. Contact: Christine, hiddennemmelrochester@yahoo.com; 585-943-1200 text/talk.

SATURDAYS
Rochester Rams Bar Night
Third Saturdays, 5pm-6pm, Bacherok, 670 University Ave. 217-9830.
Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester
Support educational and group for gender variant people, allies. Last Saturdays, 5-5:30pm, Open Arms MCC, 1707 E. Main St.
Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
8pm, George Eastman House parking lot. www.rochesterfrontrunners.org.
GNO Night
GNO, social group for transmen, now meets on the second Saturday of the month, 10am @ Equal–Grounds, 750 South Ave.
Saturday Night Special Gay AA
2nd Saturdays, 6-8pm. rochester@rochester. com
Rochester Rams General Meeting
3rd Saturdays, 25th Bernie Lane, 6-30pm.
Men’s Cooking Group
2nd Saturdays, 5pm, 355-755-6704; mcgo- frectheorl@aol.com.
SUNDAYS
PFLAG (Parents Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays)
585 813-5081; rochesterpflag@gmail.com.
Dignity-Innity
1st Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist with music; 2nd Sunday: 5pm Episcopal Eucharist (quiet); 3rd Sunday: 5pm Prayer service to start the week, followed by potluck supper.
Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church
707 E. Main St. Rochester. Services at: 10:30 am and 5:30 pm. 21-8478.
Gay Men’s Alcohols Anonymous
St. Luke’s St. Simon Cyrene Church, 17th St. 8-9pm. 385-1100; rochetergflag.com.

Legal name change? Birth certificate amendments? You’ll need those forms amended!

Our Notary can help!
Schedule a free appointment today!
Call 585 244-8640 or email: info@gayalliance.org

February

SUNDAY 1
Open Arms MCC Adult Sunday School begins 9 am. “Living the Questions”. 7:07, Main St.
Registration opens for UR Health Care Across the Generations, 7:30 am, 4:30 pm, April 25. grace_fuller@urmc.rochester.edu

MONDAY 2
Open Arms MCC weekend book study begins. Facilitator Sara Campbell. 6:30 pm, Equal Grounds Coffee House, 750 South Ave.

SATURDAY 7

SUNDAY 8
Dignity Integrity. Episcopal Mass/ Healing Service, with music, 5 pm, St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

THURSDAY 12
Open & Equal Thrusdays Networking 5:30-7:30 pm. The Lovin’ Cup Bistro & Brewe, 300 Park Point Drive, Suite 101. RSVP Facebook Group Out & Equal Finger Lakes, oenyfingerlandish.org or at Equal-Grounds, OUTlandish (cash only).

SATURDAY 14
Trans Alliance of Greater Rochester (TAGR). 10 to 1 pm. RochesterPFLAG@gmail.com. Meet at Jay’s Diner on West Henrietta Rd. (Route 15) at 7 pm. For further information, call Max at (585) 957-6627 or email Ferry at DynastyFemme@aol.com.

SUNDAY 15
Dignity Integrity. Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Word, with music, 5 pm, St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

MONDAY 16
Empty Closet deadline for March issue. 244-9036; susanj@gayalliance.org.

SATURDAY 21
“Strengthening our LGBTQ and Ally Communities through the LENS of DIFFERENCE: Race, Sexual Orientation, Gender and Gender Expression”. 8:45 am to 12 pm. MOCHA Center, 189 N. Water St., Suite 1, Rochester 14604. A $10 donation appreciated. RSVP: Anne Tischer 244-8640, x13, annet@gayalliance.org.

Dignity Integrity Winter Cabin Party. 6 pm, “Comfort Food.” Buckland Lodge at Brighton. Bring dinner to pass and favorite game or two. Deadline at 585-234-5092 or website at www.di-rochester.org/ for updates on services and activities.

Rochester Butch-Femme Connection. Meet at Jay’s Diner on West Henrietta Rd. (Route 15) at 7 pm. For further information, call Max at (585) 957-6627 or email Ferry at DynastyFemme@aol.com.

SUNDAY 22
Dignity Integrity. Episcopal Mass, quiet, 5 pm, St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

FRIDAY 27
Open Arms MCC film screening: “King: A Filmed Record From Montgomery to Memphis”. Also Feb. 28. 707 E. Main St. at (585) 271-8478; website openarmsmcc.org.

SATURDAY 28
TAGR. Last Saturdays education meeting. Speaker: Julia Sienz of the LGBT Rights Project. 3-5:30 pm, Open Arms MCC, 707 E. Main St.

PFLAG MEETS
3RD SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH
Meetings are at Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, 707 E. Main St., Rochester, NY 14605 from 1 to 3pm.

SUNDAY 22
Dignity Integrity. Episcopal Mass, quiet, 5 pm, St. Luke’s and St. Simon’s Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh St.

EM - JUSTIN HUBBELL
“PRIORITIES”
PUTTIN' ON THE GLITZ
A COMMUNITY VALENTINES DANCE

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7, 7 to 11 pm
DIPLOMAT BANQUET CENTER
1956 LYELL AVENUE 14606
Tickets $20 advance, $30 at the door.
Purchase online at www.gayalliance.org or at Equal Grounds,
OUTlandish (cash only), Parkleigh, Hedonist Artisan Chocolates.