

our lives



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Why we need our out elected officials representing us

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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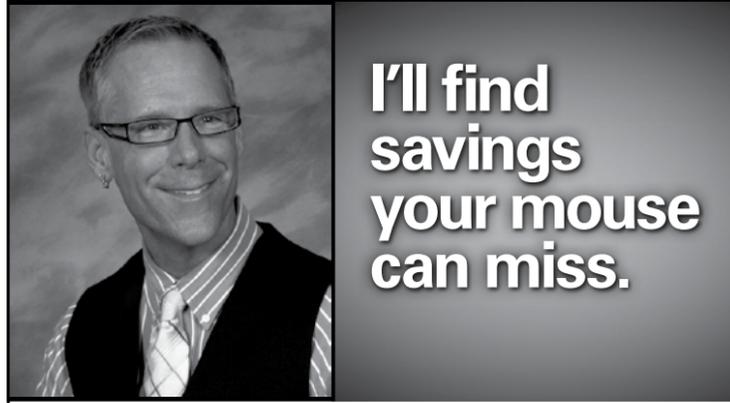
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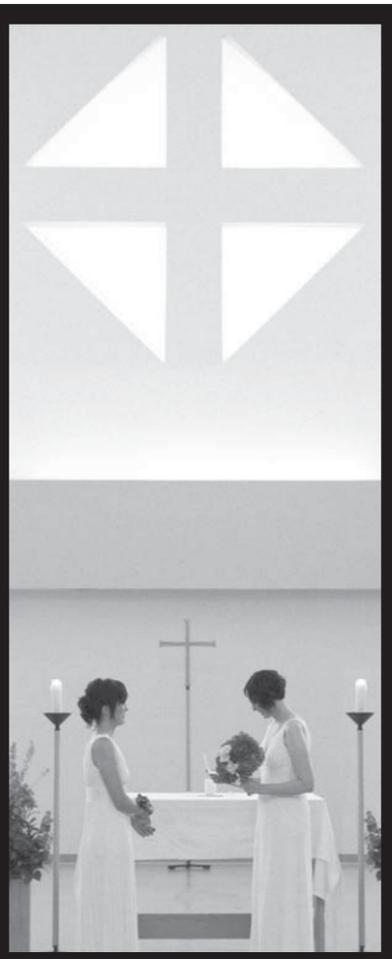
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**publisher**

## What Was Your Contact Situation?

Our movement can learn a lot from the struggle of other minorities. One of the most compelling areas to me is how our contact situation affects our greater LGBTQ understanding of ourselves.

Please take a moment to consider the disparities between various racial relationships in America. In each you'll see a very direct cause/effect stemming from how they were brought into contact with the dominate group. For some, their contact situation exploited extreme disadvantage. As an example, African Americans are still deeply suffering from being brought to this nation as slaves. In contrast, other racial and ethnic minorities have fared better because it was the wealthy who chose to immigrate and establish ethnic enclaves. This made it easier for those who chose to follow to find support and acquire wealth.

### But what does this have to do with LGBTQ people and love?

Uniquely, we are a group not born into our culture. Our contact situation is not when we come into contact with groups different than us—it is when we come into contact with others like us.

As an Indiana teenager in isolation, I remember my contact situation was through the early days of AOL's gay chat rooms. I have to quickly admit that overwhelming levels of shame and homophobia greeted me inside those rooms. They had a negative effect on me that was equal to (if not greater than) the positivity of discovering I was not alone. Even today, our individual levels of cultural competence and emotional maturity play significant roles in our own LGBTQ contact situations—in how we see, find, come in contact with, and communicate with our community. Our contact situation can play a role in determining what we value in ourselves and in each other. It provides accessibility to potential mentors and role models. In my personal opinion, it is something of extreme importance.

I often catch myself imagining who I would be today if something like *Our Lives* provided my contact situation. Truly, that forever drives me to build upon and improve this magazine and the community it serves. I've grown to know how I understand love (... *beyond my family, of course. Mom, I love you!*) through my service to the missions of *Our Lives*, OPEN, Fair Wisconsin, GSAFE and the gay hockey league, just to name a few. The leaders, mentors, and role models that each have brought into my life have begun to fill in many of the missing pieces to my puzzle. And as each piece falls into place, I find myself feeling more grateful and more whole, and my life is filled with more people who care about me. That support has replaced the sense of loneliness and insecurity that dominated my formative youth. I've also found that my willingness to give has increased tenfold as my new family has helped me see my value and what I have to offer. I'm finally finding peace through the love others have shown me, and it compels me to give back and make the contact situation of any who follow a more positive and hopeful experience.

With love,

**Patrick Farabaugh**

PUBLISHER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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**Kelly Doering** is a Madison-based photographer, web developer, and occasional tour director. As a photographer he specializes in portrait, event, and documentary photography which he often combines with his love of international travel. He is a founding board member of Note Karacel, a Chicago-based nonprofit focused on educating girls and community development in Uganda. Kelly is also a Certified International Tour Director and directs motor coach tours for Badger Tour and Travel. He also produces a humorous line of greeting cards of men in drag called What A Drag Productions. For more information visit his websites [StickPeopleProductions.com](http://StickPeopleProductions.com) and [WhatADragProductions.com](http://WhatADragProductions.com).



**Stephanie Graham** relocated to Wisconsin five years ago and now calls Madison home. She is a licensed psychologist, specializing in working with LGBTQ individuals and couples. She also works at Edgewood College as the Director of Personal Counseling Services and periodically teaches counseling courses at Edgewood College and UW-Madison. Stephanie lives with her partner, Toni, and their two cats, Lou and Sully. She enjoys running, biking, cross-country and downhill skiing, cooking, and playing softball in Madison's LGBTQ Badgerland Softball League. For more information about Stephanie's psychotherapy practice, check out [drstephaniegraham.com](http://drstephaniegraham.com).



### OUR KITCHEN by Leanne Cordisco

Celebrating what's in season at our local farmers' market

#### Italian Wedding Soup

Everyone needs a great soup recipe to make it through a long Wisconsin winter. It's perfect to make in large batches, it's comforting, it makes your kitchen smell great, and it lets the people you cook it for know that you love them. Or at least it does in my house. Here's my take on Italian Wedding Soup, the granddaddy of all chicken soups. It gets its name from how well the soup, meatballs, and spinach go together, not from being served at weddings.

**The Stock:** Toss 3 chicken carcasses (or 1 whole chicken), 3 large whole peeled carrots, 2 celery stalks, 1 large onion cut in half, 6 cloves garlic, 10 peppercorns, 2 bay leaves, and 1 Tbls salt in a large stock pot and cover with water (~6 quarts). Bring the water to a boil then turn the heat down to a slow simmer. Skim as necessary and gently simmer stock for 2 hours. Strain the stock and return it to the stock pot. Cut up the carrots and return them to the stock. Once the chicken has cooled, clean the meat from the bones and add it to the stock.

**The Meatballs:** Make them while the stock is simmering. In a food processor or blender, grind 1 slice of bread into breadcrumbs, remove and set aside. In the same blender, grind 2 cloves garlic, 1/4 onion, 1 egg, 6 sprigs of parsley, 1/4 C grated parmesan, 1 Tbls Worcestershire sauce, 1 tsp salt, a dash of pepper, and 1/4 C milk until smooth. In a large mixing bowl combine 2 lbs ground beef, the breadcrumbs, and the onion mixture. Refrigerate until the stock is done. Once the stock has been strained and is back in the pot, turn the heat up to high and roll each meatball to the size of a grape and add it to the stock.

**The Finishing Touches:** Add 1 C of your favorite small pasta to the cooking soup. I like Acini de Pepe, but you can use little stars or orzo, and cook for 5-8 minutes. In a mixing bowl, whisk 2 eggs, 1/4 C milk and 1/4 C grated Parmesan. Finely chop 1 lb of spinach and add it to the eggs. Slowly drizzle the egg mixture into the soup as you constantly stir the soup. Enjoy.

See Leanne make this at: [OURLIVESMADISON.COM](http://OURLIVESMADISON.COM)

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## Peace, Love, and Painting

The fairytale life of Lon Michels and Todd Olson doesn't just imitate art, it IS art.

Not since the glass slipper has "identification by shoe" played such a crucial role in a fairytale love story.

Lon Michels was completing an MFA in painting at UW-Madison when Todd Olson first met him. Prior to that, Lon had lived in Key West for 10 years, where he had achieved celebrity status as a landscape and portrait painter and for hosting a TV show called "Art & About." Todd, meanwhile, lived outside of Lodi where he had run the gay Prairie Garden B&B for 15 years.



Lon, who has painted since he was seven, has been teaching Todd how to paint over the last several years and the two often paint side by side, working together independently.

When Lon completed his MFA, he knew his carriage would turn into a pumpkin if he did not get back into the studio, so as soon as he graduated he relocated back to Key West to pick up his art career where he left it. Later that year, while Todd was wintering in Key West, he spied a zebra skin oxford across the room. He wondered if he could possibly be seeing the very same handsome prince he had first laid eyes on months earlier near Lodi, Wisconsin.

Emboldened by what he believed could hardly be a coincidence, Todd approached Lon and asked if he was the same man whose unique taste in footwear had caught his eye over 1,600 miles away. Indeed, the shoe fit. The incident led to a conversation. The conversation led to a date. The

date led to more dates.

It should be noted that both men had already had their share of health challenges and heartbreaks. You could describe their early courtship as somewhere between cautious optimism and full-on philophobia.

The obstacles were intense. Eighteen years ago, Todd had survived a near-death battle with AIDS-related Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. He was given six months but beat the odds. Now his symptoms are undetectable.

Nine years ago Lon, who is also HIV positive, temporarily lost his sight after a two-year ordeal with a retinal infection. He gave away his precious art books, made many significant life adjustments, and developed a unique way to keep painting. His assistant would organize his paints in a particular color order and Lon would work from right to left while feeling the canvas to know where his brush had already been.

But, by the time Lon and Todd met in their 40s, each had evolved beyond temporal earthly interests. They were sober, healthy, and following their own inner spiritual paths. "Religion is for people who are scared of Hell. Spirituality is for people who have already been there," Todd quoted, summarizing their philosophical perspectives.

Aptly, the breakthrough in their relationship came after being moved by a mystical experience that helped ame-



liorate their fears of commitment and reaffirmed that everything in the universe is mutually dependent and harmonious.

One afternoon, Lon built Todd a delicately balanced stack of stones in the foreshore of their favorite beach during low tide. Lon's father was a stonemason, so the project was both a charming tribute to his ancestors and a flirty display of his physical strength. As he worked, Lon thought about his growing feelings for Todd and humbly asked his higher power for guidance. The following day, Todd wanted to return to the beach to see if their obelisk was still standing. Lon assured Todd that there was no way it could have endured the force of high tide. When they returned to the beach, however, they found not just one tower of stones, but 17. That

settled it. They decided to suspend disbelief, risk love once again, and walk their path together.

Lon returned to his home state of Wisconsin and joined Todd at Prairie Gardens. Four years ago, the two wed in a big, beautiful ceremony between a 200-year-old burr oak that they affectionately refer to as the "Magic Healing Tree," and one of the many stone towers they have erected as a symbol of their love. They live with their cat Picasso, a loyal feline who did not leave Lon's side the entire time he was blind, and an open door to their friends and community.

Their home is filled with artwork and photos of their loved ones. Though they hope to turn one of the buildings on their property into studio space, for now their salon is also their *salon*.

Of all of Lon's art, the work that promises to trump his 2007 masterwork, *Les Demoiselles*, as his *pièce de résistance* is a monumental contemporary remake of the infamous Fifteenth Century painting *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. While he and Todd were touring some of the world's most sacred sites on their honeymoon, Lon envisioned this iconic Christian mural remade to depict openness, happiness, and satisfaction instead of betrayal and crucifixion. Appropriately, he had this epiphany deep inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus is said to have been buried.

In Lon's *Last Supper*, Christ sits with legs crossed, hovering above the table like the Buddha. His pants are printed with yin yang symbols, representing the unity and balance of existence. A diverse community of supporters surrounds Lon's Lord. Among the models for the epic painting are his beloved Todd (as both Jesus and Judas, perhaps a comment that for the seeker, self-betrayal is more menacing to enlightenment than external threats), Sculptor Doc Evermor and his life mate Lady Eleanor Every, Summer Grest and her partner Rebecca Laird, and other friends and celebrities the couple know and love.

Lon, who has painted since he was seven, has been teaching Todd how to paint over the last several years and the two often paint side by side, working together independently. In fact, a speed painting by Todd depicting Lon hard at work on "The Last Supper" sits on an easel just beside the mammoth canvas. His style is unique but his palette is similar to Lon's.

The patterns, colors, and intricacy of Lon and Todd's artwork mirror their effervescent, larger-than-life energy. They have overcome countless hurdles to be where they are, deeply appreciating the spiritual interconnectedness of art, love, and life.

And it is a journey they are walking together happily-ever-after.

Contact Todd Olson or Lon Michels through [lonmichelsart.com](http://lonmichelsart.com).

Check out Lon Michels's upcoming solo shows at Tory Folliard Gallery (Milwaukee, June 2, 2012); James Watrous Gallery (Overture Center, Madison, July 7, 2012); and the River Arts on Water Gallery (Prairie du Sac, Sept. 1, 2012). Todd Olson's work will be exhibited at the Portrait Society Gallery (Milwaukee, 2013). Lon's work is available at Hatch-house Gallery (Williamson Street, Madison). Todd is represented at River Arts on Water Gallery in Prairie du Sac. Both artists have prints and giclees of their work available at Ancient Healing in Sauk Prairie. Note: 10% of all sales at the Tory Folliard Gallery and Portrait Society Gallery will go to AIDS education, prevention, and care. —Karin Wolf



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# community

## Not a Mere Apparition

Playwright **Carol Mullen** talks with StageQ's **Tara Ayres** about her relationship with Madison's queer theater.



Carol Mullen became part of the StageQ community when Queer Shorts started producing her plays five years ago. She has written for Queer Shorts ever since, and last fall StageQ produced the premiere of her full-length play, *Ghost of a Chance*.

**When did you start writing?** I started writing shortly after I started reading. I learned to read at three-and-a-half and started cutting out pictures from magazines and writing stories about them. I majored in creative writing in college, focusing on fiction—mostly short stories. I got good grades, and was accepted into an MFA writing program, but I didn't think I was very good at it. Long narrative passages aren't my forte; I like dialogue. I've always liked theater, and it seemed like the logical direction to go.

I learned from school how to write an interesting story. The toughest part of it for me is determining where the story should start and where it should end. I fall in love with my characters, and starting a play is like the euphoria of a new love affair.

**You're brilliant at dialogue. Where does it come from? Do you consciously observe how certain people talk?** A lot of the dialogue comes from the voices in my head, but I'm an avid people watcher, observing people in random moments. I ride the bus to work, and I joke that I'm going to write a play called, "61 seconds on the 61C."

**You work a day job in addition to writing. Would you like to change that?** I have no aspiration to support myself through writing. I love my job. I've always had a job where I write for a living; currently I'm the communications director for a large research university.

I'm neither prolific enough nor genius enough to be commercially viable. Very, very few people actually achieve that.

**A lot of the dialogue comes from the voices in my head, but I'm an avid people watcher, observing people in random moments.**

**What influence does being a lesbian have on your writing?** Write what you know; I've been out since I was 18. I like to think that my work is universally accessible, but gay and lesbian characters are 99% of what I write about. I hope that anybody can come into a play of mine and laugh heartily and have a conversation about it on the way home from the theater. I don't have illusions about changing the world or existential revelations. I'm glad if other people find it accessible, I hope that they do, but I write with people like me in mind.

**How do you structure your plays?** Every play I write seems to have a character that's me. For example, in *Ghost of a Chance* I set out to write a play about Civil War re-enactors. My partner and I had been to Gettysburg a couple of times, done the ghost tours, and I was researching re-enactors. Then we ran into a lesbian couple who were



From *Ghost of a Chance*.



running a restaurant and became the inspiration for Tess and Sally. Then I just had to find a good conflict; you need to raise the stakes.

**Who inspires you? What kind of creative community do you have?** I have a writing group, and I would urge anyone who wants to write to find a writing group. I've been with my current group for six or seven years, it's a screenwriter and playwright's group. It's a great way to get candid feedback, and they'll also

hold you to a higher standard. It's one thing to talk about writing, it's another to write to deadline and meet expectations. I would happily tweak a play forever. They're organic; the characters are living things that continue to evolve for you. I'm sad when I'm done with a play.

**What's the hardest part of playwriting for you? The easiest?** Theater is different from any other art form because it's so collaborative. Writing is solitary, and then you turn the work over to a director. Every director is different, and every actor is different. I've never seen a production of my work where the director and actors didn't make it better. It's layers of participation; I'm a control freak, and it's been a great lesson for me to appreciate and understand all of these artists coming together to create a great product. The choices you made directing *Ghost of a Chance*—and the way the cast embodied the characters—made the play so much richer than it was.

**Where do you get your support?** The foundation of my ability to do this is my partner, who is so profoundly supportive and encouraging—and is also a word person: literature major, librarian, theater lover. She's always ready to read something and tell me that it's bullshit. Writing takes a lot of time, and it's time that I'm not spending on other things, including the relationship. I'm grateful to have my partner in life be so encouraging and supportive of that. ■

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Rev. Amy DeLong  
(right) with her  
partner Val.



## Love on Trial

In June of last year, the United Methodist Church publicly put the **Rev. Amy DeLong** on trial after she married two women. With it now behind her, DeLong narrates her experience reconciling her two loves.

It is difficult to know how to share my story of love without sounding too churchy. LGBTQ folks, me included, are incredibly skeptical of church talk—primarily because religion has so often been used as a bludgeon with which to beat us straight, literally.

But the truth is that my story does start in church, and I must begin there.

I was not raised United Methodist; it was a denomination I chose. I began attending the River Falls United Methodist Church while I was in college—the attraction was almost immediate. I resonated deeply with the United Methodist understanding of grace, their open communion table, and their four-fold focus on Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. I was enthused by their long commitment to theological openness and their emphasis on social justice. I was inspired by Methodist founder John Wesley, and his devotion to the poor and the outcast and for his willingness to preach the Gospel in all the wrong places to all the wrong people.

It was official. I was in love with the United Methodist Church.

Some years later, my pastor offered a new 34-week Bible study program. There were 12 of us in the class, like little disciples. Those were important weeks for me. During that time, I began to discern a call to ordained ministry and I fell in love with Val, one of my fellow classmates.

This was the beginning of a transcendent and turbulent time.

My relationship with Val quickly grew into the most beautiful, tender, mutually supportive connection I'd ever known. I wanted everyone to know about the love we had found, but there was a problem. As one who wanted to enter ordained ministry, our love needed to be kept secret.

The United Methodist, forward thinking in so many ways, had prohibitions against gays and lesbians that were archaic, punitive, and discriminatory. "Self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve the United Methodist Church." (The United Methodist Book of Discipline, §304.3)

But, my love for Val and my love for the church were inseparable: one sprang from the other. Both were life-giving and sustaining, grounded in a deep sense of faithfulness and loyalty. To have abandoned either love would have meant silencing the movement of the Spirit in our lives.

Our relationship was filled with wonder, excitement, and joy—but also with fear: a profound and paralyzing dread that we might be "found out." With family and friends and certainly at church, we maintained the pretense that we were just friends. We were careful not to sit too close or hold our gaze for too long. We only took walks at night, in the dark, and were physically affectionate only when we knew we were alone.

About six months after we started dating, we were on vacation in a secluded place. As we stood outside, sharing a kiss, I was aware that it was the first time we had kissed in the sunlight.

Eventually the immediacy of the fear began to subside a bit and we were able to come out, very privately, to people close to us. In seminary, we found a trusting community—and by the time I was ordained, many of my colleagues and supervisors knew I was gay and had met Val.

The few places where we could express the fullness of our relationship were precious to us. And yet, those times of authenticity also emphasized

the many areas of our lives where we were still required to pretend.

I was ever vigilant, spending inordinate amounts of energy trying to figure out if new friends, colleagues, or neighbors were friend or foe. Could we tell them? Would they accept us or judge us harshly? Such a bifurcated existence was crazy making—trying to discern which places were safe and which were fraught with danger. Not knowing how we were going to be treated was dreadful.

Even when we found a sympathetic person, the specter of losing the church I love always hung over my head. The rules of the church were clear; being gay and partnered and ordained was a "chargeable offense." Anyone—clergy or layperson, friend or stranger—could file a complaint and such a report could lead to the loss of my clergy credentials.

I tried to keep this part of my identity hidden. As a result, I kept myself at a distance from my parishioners and colleagues—afraid they might ask me questions about my life. I remember one clergy gathering where we were supposed to ask the person next to us a couple questions about each other's lives.

And as I turned to my conversation partner he immediately said to me, "Amy, tell me about the most important thing in your life." I wanted to tell him about Val, but I couldn't. I wanted to tell him about her two children whom we were raising together, but I couldn't. So I talked about my cat. Now aside from looking profoundly superficial—the most pathetic part was that I didn't have a cat. My life and my loves had been reduced to telling make-believe stories about a cat I didn't have.

As I entered ordained ministry, I naively thought I could be fully present to both Val and the church. I was wrong. I never stopped feeling pulled, almost in two—torn between the Church that I love and the Val that I love.

Living a divided life was taking its toll. The church had set up a duplicitous system. I could be ordained and appointed to pastoral ministry, but I had to pretend I wasn't gay. The church was glad to use my gifts, my talents, my time...as long as I kept one foot and all my mouth in the closet.

In the midst of such oppression, an evolution began within me. I knew, and had always known, that my sexual orientation and my love for Val were gifts from God, both of them. It was time to be authentic. And, if there was any shame to be placed, it was on the church for requiring me to deny my true self and to lie in order to preserve my job.

One night, seven years into pastoral ministry I snapped to my senses. Living out my desire to serve the United Methodist Church would no longer come at the expense of denying who I am. My love for the church would no longer supersede my love for Val.

What had begun as a slow trickle became a torrent. I came out and began speaking my truth. In her book, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, Sue Monk Kidd says, "The truth may set us free, but first it will shatter the safe, sweet way we live."

And so it has. In a little over a year, I left the local church and began a new kind of justice-oriented ministry. I lost my clergy salary, my parsonage, my health insurance. And most recently, I was dually charged with being a "self-avowed, practicing homosexual" and with performing a holy union for a same-gender couple. I underwent a church trial in June of 2011.

The website that was established to keep people apprised of the trial process is called LoveOnTrial.org. This was and continues to be a fitting title. The love of LGBTQ people is so often trivialized, disregarded, invalidated, often in the name of God. I was put on the stand in front of a jury of my peers (other ordained clergy) and questioned about the nature of my relationship with Val, about our life together, and our feelings for

**Most days, I can only see what I have gained—my integrity, comfort in my own skin, a deep peace that comes only from having gone through hell and emerged, not in ashes, but whole and fully alive.**

each other. I was even asked intimate questions about our sex life (questions I refused to answer). Love on Trial, indeed—our years of faithfulness and devotion, promise, and passion were reduced to questions designed to implicate me in what the church calls "prohibited conduct." (Editor's Note: To read more about Rev. DeLong's trial and the innovative sentence handed down by the trial court, go to [LoveOnTrial.org](http://LoveOnTrial.org).)

I was talking to a straight clergy friend a couple of months ago. He said to me, "I would be more demonstrative in my support of LGBT rights, but I don't want to have happen to me what happened to you."

My immediate thought was, "You'd be so lucky." My days of having to do a cost/benefit analysis before I speak my heart are over. I don't have to lie about who I am, or compartmentalize, or tell make-believe stories about my cat. It might be tempting for some to see only what I've lost. But that is not the economy by which I live. Most days, I can only see what I have gained—my integrity, comfort in

my own skin, a deep peace that comes only from having gone through hell and emerged, not in ashes, but whole and fully alive.

The fresh, fragile love that kindled in Val and me all those years ago continues to sustain us, fills us with joy and gratitude, and gives us courage and strength for all that is yet to come.

After the trial was completed, Val and I were quickly ushered into a press conference. As we held hands and exchanged a kiss in front of the intense lights of television cameras and the bright bursts of flash bulbs, I was keenly aware how far we had come from that first kiss in the sunlight more than 16 years earlier. ■

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**Ean Weslynn** is an entrepreneurial storyteller from Madison. After graduating from UW-Madison, he spent the last two years writing his debut novel, *The Freshman Fifteen*, a queer-centric YA urban fantasy series centered in modern Madison. For more information about Ean, go to eanweslynn.com.



**An Excerpt from *The Freshman Fifteen***

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Despite great progress for LGBTQ rights and visibility, one area that is lacking for LGBTQ readers and youth in particular is the accurate and natural presence of queer characters in books. It is in the spirit of supporting the proliferation of such literature that we bring you the following excerpt. It is taken from a recently self-published book about a gay college freshman who is also bestowed with superpowers and is the heir apparent to a prophecy.*

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *Huntar Fischer is totally cool with his fate, but right now he's 18. He wants to find himself a major, a man, and a fake id. But the harder he tries to keep his superpower, scholastic, and sex lives apart, the more they insist on the one type of threesome Huntar can't handle.*

Huntar Fischer moved through the cafeteria dodging groups of freshmen and the leftover parents who hadn't gotten the hint yet. He found Lukas, Louise, and his new roommate Bernard at a booth in the corner. Huntar set down his trays on the lunch table and eyed up his horde: one slice of pizza; one cheeseburger no onions; two orders of fries; a chicken enchilada; two pieces of cake—one coffee, one pineapple upside-down cake—and that was just the first tray.

"All you can eat isn't supposed to be a challenge, Hunt."  
"Whatever, both the entrees looked good."  
"The grass will always be greener, Huntar."  
"My ass will always be leaner, Louise."  
"The freshman fifteen is a clear and present danger."  
"Sorry I don't have the guile to survive on soy lattes and virgin blood like you."

"I will street-fight you, E. Honda." Louise stood, thin arms ending in fists on the table.  
"Bring it, Dhalsim." Huntar leaned back, arms open, hands beckoning.  
"Not at the dinner table," Lukas dad-voiced, too caught up in his text conversation to join the one happening around him for more than a quip. "You're scaring the baby."

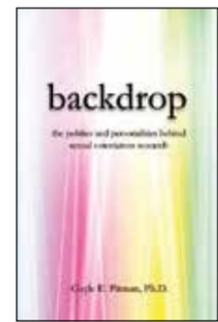
They looked over to Bernard, his brown eyes wide. The old friends smiled and with the tension of the moment released, began to enjoy their food.  
"I'm Louise," her chestnut eyes warm and inviting, her voice low and purposeful.  
"Jesus, Lou, keep it in your pants." Huntar's mouth full of pizza and fries. "I thought you were off men."  
"You're a lesbian?"

Louise did not look amused. "No, Bernard, we're queer."  
She was cursed with porcelain skin, auburn waves, and a killer rack. Louise was the outsider everyone wanted to get in. Unfortunately for her, guys and girls alike couldn't believe that she was queer so despite her preference, on paper she'd scored less than a co-ed passed out at a pride parade. ■

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**Backdrop: The Politics and Personalities Behind Sexual Orientation Research**

**BY GAYLE PITMAN** In *Backdrop*, Sacramento City College professor Pitman pulls back the veil of scientific objectivity practiced in psychological science, arguing that, when it comes to sexual orientation research, we could potentially glean more insights from the "backdrop" of politics and personalities behind the research than from the research itself. By introducing us to the researchers who conduct the studies (and to the activists and reactionaries who take these find-



ings to a political level), Pitman provides a context to the research that, in her opinion, gives meaning, importance, and nuance to the findings. Beginning with a focus on research investigating the causes of sexual orientation, moving then to the politics of transgender and intersex identities, and culminating in the political controversies of reparative therapy, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and same-sex marriage, Pitman sheds light on the rich and textured landscape behind the scientific research findings. And, in doing so, she raises a plethora of thorny political, moral, and philosophical questions. Published by Active Voice Press.



**LISA KAE PATTERSON** is a 39-year-old lesbian who works for the Madison School District as a Special Education Aid Sub. She loves being outdoors, reading, and writing poetry. The most important things to her are friends and family.

**PURPLE WALLS**

A warm embrace, loving eyes,  
a soft touch, words of encouragement,  
the kindness of a grandma.

Grandma's purple and white pansies  
as graceful as her script,  
flowing across the headboard.

Cookies made with love,  
smelling of coffee and cigarettes,  
holding you in place.

Purple walls surround me  
cold as steel but warm as her love;  
how I long to say I love you.

**Interfaith Dialog on Sexuality**  
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January 22nd -1 to 5pm-

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or email: [interfaith@lgbtoutreach.org](mailto:interfaith@lgbtoutreach.org)

Or send your name and a \$10 registration fee to: **OutReach LGBT Center**  
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**Fair Wisconsin Education Fund's First Annual Leadership Conference featuring Chaz Bono January 13-15, The Hilton, Milwaukee City Center**

The Leadership Conference is set to build a more skilled and connected network of leaders who are empowered to advance equality. Keynote address by Chaz Bono. [fairwisconsineducationfund.com](http://fairwisconsineducationfund.com)



**Out at the Symphony Friday, January 20, Overture Hall & Fresco, Madison**

Out at the Symphony is an opportunity to connect with John DeMain, the MSO and members and friends of the LGBTQ community in a fantastic night of great classical music and an exclusive party at one of downtown Madison's hottest venues. [madisonsymphony.org/out](http://madisonsymphony.org/out)



**Third Annual OPEN Dinner Celebration: Our Time is Now January 31, Union South, Madison**

Come mix and mingle with other out and allied professionals at OPEN's largest signature event. Paula Bonner, President and CEO of the University of Wisconsin Alumni Association, will deliver the keynote. [openmadison.org](http://openmadison.org)

ORGANIZATIONS

A representative sampling

**AIDS Network**  
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 252-6540  
[aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)

**Alianza Latina**  
734-246-8372

**Bowling Out Loud**  
[beckwith.matt@yahoo.com](mailto:beckwith.matt@yahoo.com)

**Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls**  
[dcandc.org](http://dcandc.org)

**Fair Wisconsin**  
122 State St., Madison (608) 441-0143  
[fairwisconsin.org](http://fairwisconsin.org)

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
[personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg](http://personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg)

**Gay/Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)**  
301 S. Bedford St., Madison (608) 661-4141  
[gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)

**Gay Softball League**  
[ssblmadison.com](http://ssblmadison.com)

**Gay Volleyball League**  
[madisongayvolleyball.com](http://madisongayvolleyball.com)

**Hermanos Latinos**  
[sneal@aidsnetwork.org](mailto:sneal@aidsnetwork.org)

**Lez In Color Yahoo Group**  
[LezInColor@yahoo.com](mailto:LezInColor@yahoo.com)

**Lez Talk Yahoo Group**  
[leztalkmadison@yahoo.com](mailto:leztalkmadison@yahoo.com)

**Madison Gay Hockey Association**  
[madisongayhockey.org](http://madisongayhockey.org)

**Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby**  
[minotaursrugby.org](http://minotaursrugby.org)

**New Harvest Foundation**  
[newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org)

**Out Professional and Executive Network (O.P.E.N.)**  
[openmadison.org](http://openmadison.org)

**OutReach Community Center**  
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 255-8582  
[lgbtoutreach.org](http://lgbtoutreach.org)

**PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**  
(608) 848-2333  
[pflag-madison.org](http://pflag-madison.org)

**Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus**  
[perfectharmonychorus.org](http://perfectharmonychorus.org)

**StageQ - Madison's Queer Theater**  
[stageq.com](http://stageq.com)

**UW - Madison LGBT Campus Center**  
800 Langdon St., Madison (608) 265-3344  
[wisc.edu/lgbt](http://wisc.edu/lgbt)

**Wisconsin Rainbow Families**  
[wirainbowfamilies.com](http://wirainbowfamilies.com)

November 17 | OPEN & Forward Theater's "Out at the Theater"



November 18 | Fair Wisconsin Autumn Auction



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Out Professional and Executive Network

- January 31 | OPEN Annual Dinner
- March | Spaghetti Fellowship
- April 19 | Breakfast Meeting
- May | Membership Appreciation at Plan B
- June | Betty-Lou Cruise
- July | Billy Elliott
- August | Pride Brunch, Parade
- September | Workplace Summit
- October | National Coming Out Day
- November | Chazen Museum

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**AIDS Network's Red Ribbon Affair**  
April | [aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)

**GSAFE Celebration of Leadership**  
May | [gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)

**FruitFest**  
June | [fruitfestmadison.org](http://fruitfestmadison.org)

**Milwaukee PrideFest**  
June 8, 9 & 10 | [pridefest.com](http://pridefest.com)

**Interfaith Dialog on Sexuality, January 22, Pyle Center, Madison** Come to this important event to learn strategies on creating open and affirming congregations, to develop relations with other seekers in the LGBT community, and to hear stories of those who have struggled for justice and inclusion in religious communities. [lgbtoutreach.org](http://lgbtoutreach.org)



**Philip Glass's Galileo Galilei, January 26-29, The Playhouse at Overture Center, Madison** The opera offers a moving portrait of the famous astronomer's life, told backwards in time from his final days to explore questions of science, religion, and, ultimately, humanity. [madisonopera.org](http://madisonopera.org)

**I Love the 70s Bingo, January 29, The Edgewater Hotel, Madison** Kicking of the seventh fabulous season! Hosted by Cass Marie Domino, the celebrity ball callers are Z104's Aaron Rogers and WIBA's Chandra Lynn. Benefits AIDS Network. [madcampbingo.org](http://madcampbingo.org)

**Midwest Gay Ski Weekend, February 3-5, Granite Peak Ski Area, Wausau** There will be great skiing or snowboarding for all ability levels on more than 70 runs. The sixth annual ski event is a great way to meet guys from all over the Midwest. [skibudz.org](http://skibudz.org)

**Tacky & Tasteless Bingo, February 26, The Edgewater Hotel, Madison** Hosted by Cass Marie Domino, the celebrity ball callers are NBC15's Christine Bellport and Leigh Mills. Benefits AIDS Network. [madcampbingo.org](http://madcampbingo.org)

**New Harvest's Dinner/Comedy Fundraiser, March 3, The Edgewater Hotel, Madison** Join community leaders and celebrate another year of empowering our communities with funding from the New Harvest Foundation. Entertainment provided by comedian Karen Williams. [newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org)

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**W**atch out, Mia!" I shouted. Sensing danger, I leaned forward from the back of my 1980 Chevy van as we flew down the highway. Craning my neck to see the busy road ahead, my heart pounded in my chest as I braced for impact.

"Hold on everyone! I'm slamming on the brakes!" Mia yelled as she gripped the steering wheel. Focusing intently on the cars slowing at the bottom of the hill, her foot slammed on the brake pedal. As the tires reverberated, we held our breath and hoped they had one more stop in them.

It was December 28, 1987, the second day of driving from Wisconsin to Florida. There seemed no other choice for me than to drive away from the pain of rejection. Seconds after I said the words, "I'm a lesbian," the dream of my mother's acceptance died as she clutched the Bible to her chest instead of me. The freezing Wisconsin winters, like the hearts of my family, compelled me to spur my three comrades into driving through the night. And yet all I could hear was my mother's shrill response, "God will punish you and you will go to Hell. I'll pray for you."

Here on the road, I wondered, *How will I ever be free of this internal*

**The doctor told them I would most likely never walk again. Given a 3 percent chance to survive, it was unlikely I would make it out of the hospital alive.**

# Choose Love

**Healer/Communicator Asia Voight on how tragedy put her back in touch with her intuition and the healing power of love.**

*struggle to be okay with who I am without my family's acceptance? I feel trapped inside my shell of fear and shame. Does God really hate me?*

Falling onto her captain's chair, Mia's stocky body finally rested. The van's bumper had managed to stop within an inch of the car in front of us.

"Good job, Mia!" We cheered. I turned and smiled to my girlfriend, Lisa. We were an unlikely couple. She was a punk with street smarts and I was a cheerleading honor roll student. *We're going to be okay*, I thought, as I collapsed in relief. *I so appreciate this moment*. However, it didn't last.

The windowless van hid the site of the oncoming semi barreling down the hill like a rolling tsunami. His stone-filled trailer sped with uncontrollable momentum. Slamming into our van, the whiplashing power propelled me into the floorboards. Flinging clothes, bedding, and suitcases off of me, I managed to stand. Lisa and I frantically tried to open the van's doors. The metal, gnarled and twisted, would not budge.

I heard Mia screaming, "Hurry! Get out! There's fire!" Urgency turned to panic as I watched the van's interior fill up with smoke. Startled, a figure appeared before me. I looked in awe as this glowing being adorned in robes of maroon, grays, and blues stood urging me on. "To the front of the van and hurry," he said in a deep strong voice. "Out the window," he continued. Without him saying so, I knew this was my guardian angel.

I made my way through the flames, and we were all rushed by ambulance to the hospital. In the intensive care unit, with massive burns on 72 percent of my body, lacerations, and a fractured collarbone, I reluctantly gave the nurse my parents' phone number. When they arrived, the doctor told them that with severe muscle and nerve loss, I would most likely never walk again. My legs were completely paralyzed. Given a 3 percent chance to survive, it was unlikely I would make it out of the hospital alive.

"We're starting a prayer chain for you," my mother stated at my bedside. A tracheotomy with a respirator kept me unable to speak. My eyes grew wide and my brow furrowed. *What will they pray? That I stop being a lesbian? Or will they ask God to lock this lesbian in Hell?*

On the threshold of death for months, every breath became precious. Behind closed eyelids, I imagined myself as a deep-sea diver plunging through the waters of my congested lungs looking for life. I insanely feared death and the haunting afterlife that waits for a lesbian like me.

The day I feared arrived. The alarm on my respirator blared out through the halls as the entire staff dove on me. "Code Blue!" A web of tubes and arms collided in front of my face. My breath gone, my eyes frantically searched for a way out. A door that did not exist a moment before appeared. Crossing the threshold of the ethers into a stunning starlit uni-

verse, I could stand and my body was healed. Three teachers who called themselves "ascended masters" warmly greeted me. In this beautiful tranquil expanse, I began sobbing. Remembering my family's vehement disapproval, I instinctively thought, *They must not know I'm a lesbian or I wouldn't be here in this lovely space*.

Smiling and telepathically knowing my thoughts they said, "We know you and your heart. It is not an issue for us that you love another woman."

"Really?" I said as I stopped crying in amazement.

"What about all the Bible passages that this is a sin?"

They gently shook their heads saying, "They're missing the point."

"Oh, well, what is the point?"

"What we and God desire to know is: How have you given?"

"I don't know. What does true giving feel like?"

They sent me a shimmering, glowing, white and pink light that filled every cell of my being with love and joy.

"That was incredible! Compared to that amount of giving, I've been sharing this much ..." I held up my thumb and forefinger with an inch of space in between them as I scrunched up my face in embarrassment.

"You've been living in fear. Return to earth and choose love. The angels, spirit guides, animal helpers, God, and we are with you. You will have many moments of remembering and forgetting that you are loved. Practice awareness, and your moments of living in love will increase."

The wondrous giving energy that I had felt moments ago was instantly replaced with immense apprehension when I thought about returning to Earth. Because of my deep religious upbringing, I had doubts that God loved and accepted me *unconditionally*.

Smiling, my spirit teachers knew what I needed. Beside them appeared a brilliant cascade of greens, purples, and whites more spectacular than the Northern Lights. The light was God. It said, "My child, let us dance and play. Rejoice in the splendor all around you." I was shown what resembled the glowing red, orange, and burnt yellows of the Grand Canyon, when the Light said, "You are this beauty. You are everyone and everything. I love you." My heart opened in joy and I knew this to be true.

Finally at peace, I returned to the spirit teachers. Their recommendation was to re-awaken my childhood ability to talk with animals and to use my intuition to help others find their direction in life. Reluctantly, I hugged them goodbye and returned to my painfully wounded body.

Back in my bed, *I felt the prayers* of giving people thinking of me. I no longer feared this support. Their prayers and affirming words gave me the energy to continue to improve. Miraculously, I healed and within weeks *walked* out of intensive care proud and immensely grateful. ■

**Asia Voight is an internationally known Intuitive Life Guide, Animal Communicator, Intuitive Business Strategist, Teacher, Inspirational Speaker, and Author. Asia connects with animals on a soul level to help resolve emotional and behavioral issues and assists them in deepening their bond with their human companions. She also helps people reconnect with their own intuitive and healing abilities, potential, and life's purpose. Asia's work has been featured on ABC, NBC, and Fox TV. She recently had her own successful Hay House Radio Event reaching thousands of people all over the world. She has graced the covers of publications such as Brava and Women Magazine, and the front page of the Wisconsin State Journal. Asia is a newly published author in four soon-to-be-released books. Two of them were written with *New York Times* best selling authors, Jack Canfield and Dr. Brian Weiss. For more information, go to [AsiaVoight.com](http://AsiaVoight.com)**



## MADISON spectrum MAGAZINE

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE MADISON AREA



This publication celebrates diversity in the Madison area. It publishes in your January *Madison Magazine* and will also be available online and at select pick-up locations listed below.

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Visit [spectrummadison.com](http://spectrummadison.com) for a searchable, diverse resource directory. Debuts January 2012!

**THE MAGAZINE WILL BE AVAILABLE JANUARY 15TH AT THE FOLLOWING PICK UP LOCATIONS:**

- East Madison Community Center • Goodman Community Center
- Bayview Neighborhood Center • Boys & Girls Club of Dane County
- Bridge Lake Point Waunona Neighborhood Center • Kennedy Heights Neighborhood Center • Lussier Community Education Center
- Lussier Teen Center • Neighborhood House • Northport Apartments
- Community Center • Vera Court, Neighborhood Center
- Warner Park Community Recreation Center
- Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center • Wisconsin Youth & Family Center





# We're Growing Stronger Every Year!

## CARING & COMMITTED COUPLES LIST 2012

In just one year since we introduced our collaborative list with **Fair Wisconsin**, our number of out and allied couples on it have nearly doubled! This year 495 Wisconsin couples answered the call of **Our Lives** and **Fair Wisconsin** to stand up for love and fairness. Together we are sending a message—to our community, our youth, our allies and our opponents—that caring and committed LGBTQ couples are here to stay and deserve recognition and protection. From Madison to Milwaukee and Port Washington to Platteville, *together* we are building a fair Wisconsin.

Responses were collected through a collaborative survey e-mailed to both the **Fair Wisconsin** and **Our Lives** mailing lists. Sign up for either (or both!) at [FairWisconsin.com](http://FairWisconsin.com) and [OurLivesMadison.com](http://OurLivesMadison.com).

### KEY

- Couples are listed by the number of years spent together.
- Bold text indicates couples registered under Wisconsin's Domestic Partnership Registry.
- Allied/supportive straight couples are followed by an (\*).



### ON THE COVER: Shawnee Parsil & James Sutherland

[ Wedding date: June 16, 2012 ]

**3 YEARS** // Sometimes we still feel like a new couple and are still learning how our relationship works. We see each other pretty clearly, with all our quirks and habits. We also laugh together every day. Honoring ourselves as individuals as well as a couple is something we know to be important. This can mean kicking one of us out of the house to hockey practice or writing class. It means having a "date night" and focusing on us as a couple. It means having full and rich days and being delighted to come home to each other each and every night.

#### ALGOMA

10 Susan Connor & Robyn Mulhoney

#### AMERY

54 Doris & Joe Meyer \*

#### APPLETON

49 Marvia & Bill Perreault \*

44 John & Beth Lepinski \*

**17 Greg Born & Timothy Hennes**

**16 Chad & Andrew Wege**

**15 Jerry Koleske & Michael Nitz**

13 Rachel Crowl & Helen Boyd Kramer

**13 Rose Hammond & Brenda Rivet**

12 Sandie Brown & Nicole Casamassa

**11 Erin & Nicole Buenzli**

9 Jesse & Patti Heffernan \*

**8.5 Julie Konik & Christine Smith**

**8.5 Sara Rabideau & Samantha Tassoul**

**8 Heather & Natalie Starr**

7 Alisa DiSalvo & Aimee Zaleski

**5 Chuck Erickson & E-Ben Grisby**

**5 Jessica & Joline**

**5 Kathy Flores & Ann Kendzierski**

**5 Kristine Ellwood & Patricia Posorski**

#### BAILEYS HARBOR

**12 Mike Meulemans & Doug Smith**

#### BARABOO

11 David & Ryan Berahn

#### BARRON

**6.5 Daniel Djubenski & Brandon Litwiller**

#### BAYFIELD

21 Erick Arnold & Shannon Swanstrom \*

2 Heather & Kat Werchouski

#### BELOIT

**9 Tina Lenz & Joanne Mandt**

#### BERLIN

1 Jessica Inda & Kimberly Schweigert

#### BLACK CREEK

29 Neal & Jill Krohlow \*

#### BOSCOBEL

**36 T.J. Meehan & Larry Ortt**

#### BRISTOL

4.5 Sarah Davis & Jonathan Melcher \*

#### BROWN DEER

**19 Lys Buck & Liz Yoon**

8 Adam & Britt Wegner \*

#### CAMBRIDGE

38 Mim Jacobson & Marian Korth

32 George L. Gay & Brian D. Soper

#### CHILI

7 Cassie Frost & Tanya Marg

#### CHIPPEWA FALLS

22 Brett & Heather Pickerign \*

#### COON VALLEY

**3 Albert Johnston & Donald Schuh**

#### CUDAHY

10 Megan O'Keefe & Crystal Silkwood

#### CUSTER

**31 Kim Beckham & Debra Hunt**

#### DANE

30 Robert Dreps & Elizabeth Koehl \*

#### DE PERE

42 Nancy & John Nusbaum \*

#### DEERFIELD

15 Courtney & Huck Gent

#### DEFORREST

3 Angie Alcorta & H. Due

#### DELAFIELD

**9 Alex & James Langreder**

#### DELAVAN

6 Gaia & Laura Lenz-Perkins

#### EAST TROY

8 Shelly & Tracy

#### EAU CLAIRE

**36 Carol Schumacher & Virginia Wolf**

**35 John D. Peterson & Arturo Santos**

14 Christopher Iannone & Thomas Murphy

**13 Gretchen & Jo Lindoo**

**11 Chuck Schwie & Travis Welke**

**10 Erin Rosenberger & Libby Smith**

#### EDGAR

22 Tom Hvizdak & Don Rogalla

#### EDGERTON

7 Kristofer Bauch & Kevin Hunt

#### ELLSWORTH

**4 Erin & Melissa Kaspar-Frett**

#### EVANSVILLE

6 Nathan & Amelia Royko Maurer \*

#### FITCHBURG

30 John & Betsy Freiburger \*

**23 Anne Hecht & Diane Olsen**

**22 Susan Cary & Vicki May**

**17 Michele Perreault & Stephanie Spoehr**

14.5 Catherine Briggs & Marthea A Fox

14 Thomas Gillen & Brian Widder

9.5 Katie Belanger & Jason Sidener \*

8 Sara Carfora & Tom Rodenberg \*

**7 James Mulder-Philyaw & Charles Philyaw**

4 Melissa Phinney & Wesley Powers \*

2 Karissa Grunden & Erica McCorkindale

1 Maggie Augustin & Patty Riepl

#### FOUNTAIN CITY

**16 Margaret Beth Cherne & Cindy Killion**

#### FOX POINT

**41 Robert Starshak & Ross Draegert**

#### FRANKLIN

**50 Gail Baier & Janice Clark**

**34 John Flynn & Michael**

#### FREDONIA

**27 Chris Hewitt & Dean Wiegert**

#### FRIENDSHIP

**12 Carla Byrnes & Sara Oswald**

#### GERMANTOWN

**10 Dennis Kohler & Pat Brown**

#### GLENDALE

7 Warren Dugan & Steve Powell

4 Gina Lisko & Julie Taylor

#### GORDON

32 Kathleen Gates & Katherine S.

#### GREEN BAY

19 Ben & Michelle Schultz \*

**14 Jay Bero & Steve Thomson**

**11 Lucas Long & John Paul**

**10 Angela & Deanne Pierce**

**6 Andrew DeBaker & Scott Vanidestine**

#### GREENFIELD

8 Gail Grzybowski & Donna Skiba

5 James (JR) & Rod Rasch-Claussen

3 Jackie Degenhardt & Donna Schweda

#### HARTLAND

12 Pamela Hill & Sheryl Jones

11 Jenny Jones & Sarah Smith

#### HUBERTUS

**18 Nancy Maas & Tammy Thorlakson**

#### JACKSON

21 Joel J. Heim & Nelia B Scovill \*

#### JANESVILLE

25 Debra Grenzow & Barb Smith

**14 Kelley Richardt & Maria Parker**

**13 Doug Balfanz & Joe Stoffels**

**13 Maria Parker & Kelley Richardt**

**11 Becky Leahy & Lora Whitten**

10 Adam Ostermann & Kelley Blair Ostermann

9 Robert Crandall & Michael Piette

1 Kayla Parrish & Amy Peterson

#### JEFFERSON

4 Sheryl Schutt & Tarrah Spooner

#### KAUKAUNA

**2.5 Robert Gulig & Scott Webber**

#### KENOSHA

23 Phillip Anderson & Bill Hetland

#### KEWAUNEE

30 Gary & Marsha Brown \*

#### KIEL

**18 Kevin Heling & Steven Mantia**

#### LA CROSSE

**29 Mary O'Sullivan & Francie Bal**

22 Tara DeLong & Willemstad Van Roosenbeek

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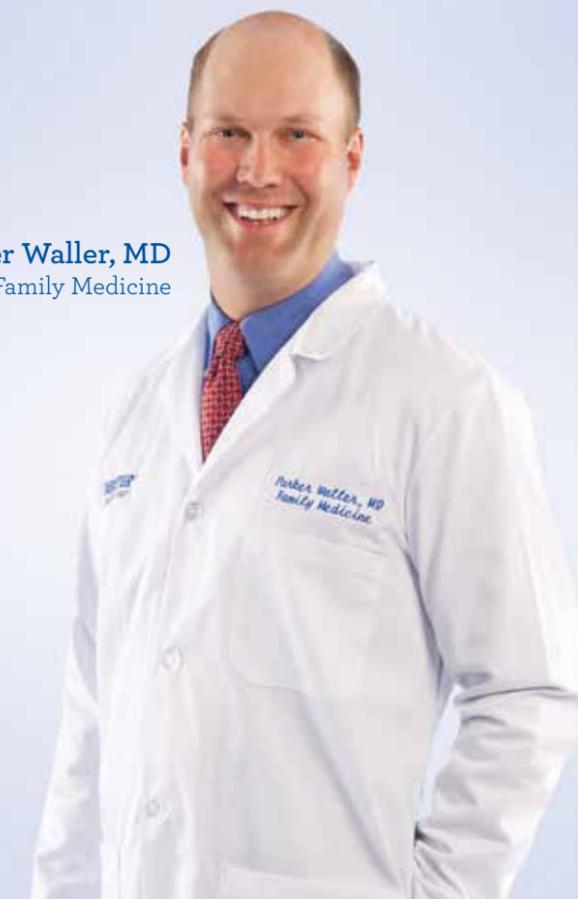
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**Tonia Brock & Kristen Petroschius**

[ Kristen is Director of Administration and Development, GSAFE: GSA for Safe Schools ]

**4 YEARS** // The key to keeping our relationship strong is balancing that pure-blissful-spiritually-rich-feel-it-in-your-bones kind of love with the mundane “thank you for doing the dishes” sort of love. Warm smiles, our son, and the fact we are creating the world we want to be in; this keeps us going.

- 2.5 Laura & Michelle
- 2 Casey Ebeling & Pat Langendorfer \*
- 2 Han Chen & Ying Zhang
- 2 Kalli Kohler & Kevin Stanaitis \*
- 1 Aaron S. & Elizabeth Schuda \*

**LA POINTE**

- 20 Glenn Carlson & Michael Childers

**LAKE GENEVA**

- 38 Beth & Jody Lynn Rendall

**LAKE MILLS**

- 29 Roger Packard & David Musolf

**LODI**

- 29 Ron Lloyd & Ann Groves Lloyd \*
- 4 Lon Michels & Todd Olson

**MADISON**

- 60 Joann F. & Joseph W. Elder \*
- 51.5 Jerry Kaufman & Judith Zukerman Kaufman \*
- 45 James & Louise Lund \*
- 45 Jeffrey Dean & Jill Weber Dean \*
- 43 Curt & Joan Anderson \*
- 42 Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
- 38 Ron & Debbie Konkol \*
- 37 Robert Lewin & DJB
- 36 Raphael Kadushin & Thomas McGhee
- 35 David & Kathleen Mahoney \*
- 35 Jerry Anderson & Holly Jorgenson \*
- 34 Sunshine Jones & Joann Kelley
- 32 Janice Czynson & Crystal Hyslop
- 32 Lee Melahn & Rick Shaver
- 31 Louie Phillips & Brian Schultz
- 31 James Dietrich & Steven Webster \*
- 31 Linda Halsey & Mary Milhaupt
- 30 Nancy Buckwalter & Sue Hughes
- 30 Danielle Dresden & Donna Peckett
- 30 Michael Bell & Diane Mayerfeld \*



**Vivienne & Sandy Andersen**

[ Arrived in Madison in August ]

**15 YEARS** // We are best friends first. This doesn't just happen; we have cultivated this friendship. When challenged, we turn toward each other and look to each other for support and strength. We know that it is us versus the world; that whatever happens—joyful, or otherwise—we will face it together.



- 29 Melissa Keyes & Ingrid Rothe
- 29 Sue A. Currier & Janis N. Senungetuk
- 29 Tom DeChant & Paul Gibler
- 29 J. Patrick & S. J. Robinson
- 29 John Cannon & John Fritsch
- 29 Sara Karon & Catherine Odette
- 28 Michael F. Bemis & Duane M. Hansen
- 27 Robert Bergeman & John H. Sacia
- 26 Todd Hill & Tom Jacobson
- 26 Todd Streicher & Rylee Wedekind \*
- 25 Margo Kealey & Sarah Newport
- 25 Priscilla Herman & Barb
- 25 Rob Latousek & Brian McCormick
- 24 Leslie Bernstein & Grace Cooper
- 24 Jacquelyn Strahl & P. Weiss
- 24 Lois Bradley & Pat Framke
- 23 Chad LaFlash & Dale Decker
- 23 Deborah Schmitt & Elaine Wheeler \*
- 23 John & Pam Noyd \*
- 22 Jim Chiolino & David Heuer
- 22 Heidi Wilde & Kennedy \*
- 22 Martha Cranley & Larry Martin \*
- 21 Naomi “Nikki” Baublatt (deceased) & Cris Derrick
- 21 Sondra Dalton & Brenda Swenson
- 21 Andrew & Giso Broman
- 20 Donna M Miller & Mary Kaye Radtke
- 20 Maggie Dugan & Melanie Witte
- 20 Charlotte Easterling & Eric Shipley \*
- 20 Helen Boyne and Sarah Flynn
- 19 Chuck Mocco & Thomas Scheid
- 19 Dan Ross & Charlie Squires
- 19 Troy Dassler & Robert Winters
- 18.5 Richard Butler & Chartles Klauer

- 18 Callie Bell & Beth Thigpen
- 18 Karen Bennett & Carolyn Virginia
- 18 Susan Oshman & Tamara Seeker
- 18 Craig & Gretchen Forbes \*
- 17 Judy Seymour & Mary Sykes
- 17 Rigoberto Gallegos & David Wahlberg
- 17 Scott Lundberg & Burt Tower
- 16 Deborah Daniel & Linda Novinger
- 16 Judy Howard & Amy Scarr
- 16 Kate Schultz & Gretchen Zahorik
- 16 Linda Novinger & Deborah Daniel
- 16 R.M. Christesen & K.C. Larson
- 16 John Nondorf & Bryn Scriver
- 16 Kim Fisher & Linda Ketcham
- 15 Paul Cochran and John Kibler
- 15 Sandra Andersen & Vivienne Andersen
- 14 Diedre Buckley & Catherine L. Cullen
- 14 Meredith Westover & Genie
- 14 Linda Ketcham & Kim Fisher
- 13.5 Rain Foster & Brenda Stewart
- 13 John Leonard & Ken Pennings
- 13 Liz Dannenbaum & Donna Winter
- 12 Cecilia Ford & Donna Dallos
- 12 Deb Fruit-Gaines & Sheila Jacobson-Gaines
- 12 Abbie Hill & Mary Waitrovich
- 12 Bob Klebb & David Waugh
- 12 Devery Cash & Darren Kittleson
- 12 Linda Kraus & Robert Swokowski \*
- 12 Nancy Speir & Carol Nelson

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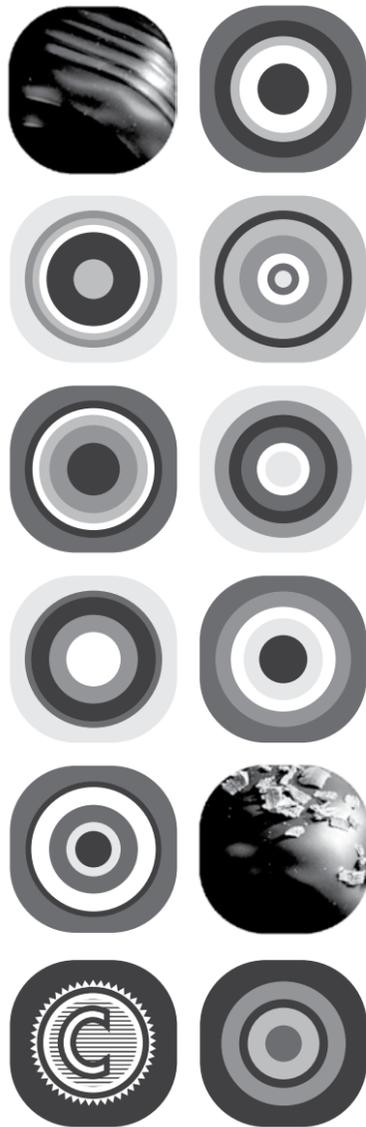
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- 11 Jane Bettner & Joan Jung**
- 11 Terry Heiliger & James Moe**
- 11 Aaron P Schultz & Randy Wagner
- 11 Loni Broesch & Jenn Rotman
- 11 Nano Boye Nagle & Harris
- 11 Shahla Werner & Andy Weidert
- 11 Shay Harris & Boye Nagle
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- 10 John & Julie Meister \*
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- 10 Mary Frohna & Aericka Helf
- 10 Sandra Janagold & Mary Muellenbach
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- 9.5 Philip Frank & Mark Pocan**
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- 7 Dean Nett & Alan Strozak

- 7 Dorothy Rietzler & Kari Sievert
- 7 Lisa Buchanan & Shawna Kollath
- 7 Michele Burton-Driscoll & Tyler Driscoll
- 7 Rachel Avery & Terri Pepper
- 7 Sara Christopherson & Jonny Hunter \*
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- 6 Mary Lelle & Asia Voight
- 6 Maureen Brady & Cheri Maples
- 6 Nate Mathis-Vargas & Steven Vargas-Mathis
- 6 Theo Braden & Christopher Krimmer
- 5.5 Heather Hazelwood & Becci Menghini**
- 5.5 Petrovnia & Chris McIntosh**
- 5.5 Lisa Haase & Becky Carvin
- 5 Amanda Evenstone & Dawn Siebert**
- 5 Judy Davidoff & Rhonda Lanford**
- 5 Lisa M. Becher & Lynn L. Etnier**
- 5 Philip Keller & Steven Sievert**
- 5 Shannon Kavanagh & Kristina Kosnick**
- 5 Summer Grest & Rebecca Laird**
- 5 Bailey Garvin & Erich Pitcher
- 5 Gigj Vail & Teri Kahel
- 4.5 Melissa & Molly Dittmer-Herrmann**
- 4.5 Katy Conley & Leonie Dolch
- 4 Francesca & Jennifer Frisque**
- 4 Jason Holder & Cameron Earley**
- 4 Jay Edgar & Joshua Feyen**
- 4 Jessica Courtier & Kate Hewson**
- 4 John Sims & Garret Trinrud**
- 4 Sara Hesse & Yvette Robinson**
- 4 Tonia Brock & Kristen Petroschius**
- 4 Andi Bill & Chops Seggerman
- 4 Jason Kivela & Paul Waller
- 4 Lana Lawrence & Louise Stout
- 4 Monica Adams & Shaquita Griffin



**Monica Adams & Shaquita Griffin**

[ Monica is founder of Freedom Inc. ]

**4 YEARS //** Our relationship romantically and intimately honors the way that we each move through the world and continue the work of our ancestors. We do this with dedication, promise, commitment, and passion. We are Black Love.



**DJ Johnson & Matt Mulligan**

[ Wedding Date: July 13, 2012; Text derived from upcoming wedding vows. ]

**6 YEARS //** By mutual commitment to creating an atmosphere of care, consideration, and respect—and by willingness to face the tensions and anxieties that underline daily life—we strive to make our family a source of great strength and pride. We celebrate love with each other, through both our commonalities and differences.

- 4 Lee Kampa & Eric Sedelmaier
- 4 Mel Freitag & Amber Sowards
- 4 Tina Dorschel & Andrea Wipperfurth
- 3.5 Bonnie & Sarah Schulte**
- 3.5 Kasey DeWitt & Christine McKinley
- 3 Ali Treviño-Murphy & Amy Winkelman**
- 3 Casey Kenney & Sarah Groeneveld**
- 3 Chrystal Schreck & Heather Seeley**
- 3 David Goodwin & John Mysliwicz**
- 3 Elisa Derickson & Daniel Krueger**
- 3 Jake Christian & Steve Wilcox**
- 3 Jill Muenich & Laura Webster**
- 3 Donald J Steffes & Iqbal K Tafader
- 3 Joseph Halaas & Andrew Irving
- 3 Kari Rongstad & Ally Nicol
- 3 Luke Wolfgram & David Rhode
- 3 Marcelle & Sid Richards
- 3 Mercedes Reed & Rachel Strauch-Nelson
- 3 Nan Mortensen & Crystal Rossman
- 3 Raena Glauvitz & Jenny Hanson
- 3 Rolando Cruz & Thomas Reid
- 3 Shawnee Parsil & James Sutherland
- 2.5 Juliet Darken & Marlo Dobrient**
- 2.5 Ellen Hebron & Mel Marcum
- 2.5 Paul Hauri & Liam Wolf
- 2.5 Whitney Wharton & Mary Carol Woodman
- 2 Heather Kauffman & Heather Putnam**
- 2 Ames Barker & Sophia Ott
- 2 Arie Hylkema & Audrey Jacobsen \*
- 2 Ashley Anderson & Jacquelyn Freund
- 2 CeJae Boggess & Joel Duffrin
- 2 Charlene Hanson & Sarah Zindel
- 2 Daun Johnstone & Helen Grzesnokowski Hazelmare
- 2 Gabi Helfert & Joey Johannsen
- 2 Jason Rittel & Jenna Shelley \*
- 2 Jessica Langoehr & Dana Gill
- 2 Jillian & Amy Kjeldahl
- 2 Karissa Grunden & Erica McCorkindale
- 2 Kristin Esguerra & Jeltreta Tejada \*
- 2 Linda Balisle & Cindy Crane
- 2 Sabra Katz-Wise & Julie C. Keller
- 2 Spike Garrett & Sean Langenecker
- 2 Tom Beck & Brad Ryland
- 1.5 Antoinette Coles & Karen Dilday

- 1.5 Jason Rush & Troy Theis
- 1.5 Kris Kalb & Robert Von Rutenberg
- 1.5 Toni Baker & Stephanie Graham
- 1 Brent Duckwitz & Brian Elmore
- 1 Michael Bruno & Yannick Henrion
- 1 Richard Kilmer & Andy Ringquist
- 0.5 Derek House & Emil Treige
- 0.5 Elise Ganser & Brittany Simler
- 0.25 Michelle Michalak & Luke Winn \*
- MANITOWOC**
- 11 William Kirkpatrick & Erica Strauss \*
- 5 Joe & Rachel George \*
- MARATHON**
- 31 Mark Blume & Thomas Voss**
- MARINETTE**
- 10 Rhonda Mellinger & Amy Reddinger**
- MARSHFIELD**
- 52 Lois & Neil Greehling \*
- MASON**
- 10 Sara Moses & Lauren Tuori**
- MAZOMANIE**
- 21 Jazzi & Susie Gaafe
- 5 Debbie & Jackie**
- MCFARLAND**
- 4 Sashe Mishur & Kate Moran
- MENOMONEE FALLS**
- 9 Michael Treolo & Elaine Wulf-Treolo \*
- 6 Danielle & Tiffany McAtee
- MENOMONIE**
- 52 David & Julie McNaughton \*
- 29 Patrick B Jorge & Jerry Duncanson
- 16 Susan Conlin & Julie Miller**
- MEQUON**
- 11 Brian Le Starge & Dale Mueller**
- MERRILL**
- 4 Janet Koenig-Sowinski & Calla Sowinski
- MIDDLETON**
- 41 Bill Diederich & Jim Green**
- 16 Ron Meerhoff & Michael Rhoads
- 10 Lindsay Raftis & Alicia Stevenson**
- 6 Janet Pulvermacher & AJ Regali \*
- 5 Philip Rennek & Marco Torrez
- 4 Kelly & Patty**
- 3 Brooke Hall & Rachael Thompson
- 1 Megan McConley & Megan Orvold



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**member profile**



**name:**  
**John Sims**  
**title:**  
**Vice President**  
**employer:**  
**JP Morgan**

OPEN is proud to feature Charter Member John Sims. John is currently serving as President of OPEN's Board of Directors. As a banker at JPMorgan, John advises clients to help them manage their personal balance sheet (Liquidity, Investment Management, Lending and Financial Planning).

John has enjoyed working with the OPEN Board to help lead this amazing member-driven organization. 2011 has been a wonderful year for OPEN and we are very excited about continued growth as individuals and as an organization during 2012.

"OPEN has allowed me to work with wonderful members, sponsors, board members and committee volunteers. We are developing an organization to better connect leaders of all professions in the Capital Region." **—John Sims**

January 31 • SAVE THE DATE

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Association



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**Crystal Hyslop & Janice Czynson**

[ First Dane County couple to sign the Wisconsin Domestic Partnership Registry. ]

**32 YEARS** // Our formula for staying together for 32 years: We are willing to communicate until we resolve a problem. We acknowledge that we appreciate and need each other and are lucky to have each other. When things get rough we remember what first drew us to each other.

**MILTON**

12 Keith Steibneck & Brad Yarmark

**MILWAUKEE**

44 Gerald Dishaw & Thomas Sharp  
37 Randy Schoedler & Tom  
35 Roy Badger & Garth Wangemann  
31 Steven Sanders & Rand C Schmidt  
30 Chris Schofield & Sarah Kubetz  
30 Wendy Pologe & Mary Thoreson  
29 Melody Carranza & Karen Livingston  
28 Gary Hollander & Paul Mandracchia  
28 Raymond & Gregory Konz-Krzyszinski  
27 Mary Houseman & Janis Shogren  
25 Brenda Coley & Sandra Jones  
25 Gerry Coon & Stewart Dempsey  
23 Rick Finger & Sheldon Schur  
19 Paul Nowak & Mark Straight  
18 Miriam Ben-Shalom & Karen Weiss  
18 Will Fellows & Bronze Quinton  
17 Tracey Joan Fecteau & Kari George  
16 Ruth Boulet & Kathleen Williams  
15 John & Karter Harmon-Wilkening  
15 John Harmon & Karter Harmon-Wilkening  
15 Monica & Kathy Mesa  
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13 Candice Hackbarth & Debbie Knepe  
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Our History by Richard Wagner

# Shakespeare of the Sandbars

Wisconsin River Valley's Keith McCutcheon was a sonneteer of gay love.



Fear not—there's no intention to join the debate as to who wrote Shakespeare's dramas! Rather, I invoke the Bard of Avon adjectively to describe one who wrote classical sonnets about love—about gay love—well before Stonewall and the Wisconsin he knew.

The man who penned these poems came from the Wisconsin River Valley, west of Madison, where sandbars sit amidst the lazy flow of the river. His name was Keith McCutcheon, and he came from Arena, Wisconsin.

The settlement at Arena goes back to 1836, the year when Wisconsin became a territory in its own name. "Old Arena" was first settled on the banks of the Wisconsin River, and one explanation for the name is from the Latin meaning an open sandy place. Boats of the territorial river trade would stop and a ferry crossed the river to Cassel Prairie.

When the railroad got to Madison in 1854 and was going to be extended to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi, stakes marked its route across the most level land. Since old Arena would be bypassed, in 1856 they moved the village one mile to the South to be on the railroad. Some of the immigrant Irish railroad workers stayed in the new village. The village boasted of hotels, churches, saloons, blacksmith shop, and a drug store, but it remained unincorporated until 1923. Its census data was part of the township of the same name with less than 1,500 people at the turn of the twentieth century.

When incorporated, the village had several hundred people, so it was quite a small place in which Keith grew up. As he said of small towns, "Oh, this is a small town—only a tiny place—yet here is home—where acquaintances are friends, and all society is equal—and one's affairs are common knowledge."

**D**OT FOR our God this Crusade of the earth,  
 Yet OF God, and for Peace: not of the Soul,  
 But for this life, its fullness and its worth—  
 Drowning out discord with concerted whole...  
 The Christmas Star, as symbol to all men,  
 Seems now unsoen, with bitter work at hand;  
 But wars must end: we'll see that star again  
 with Peace, Goodwill to men of every land...  
 Still sorrow, sacrifice, and hope must come  
 To strong hearts and to weak; yet thru long dark  
 The ears of men may hear with keener hark  
 Those great words: "Peace on earth to men"—till some  
 Bright day we'll lift our eyes anew to Thee  
 And cry in humble voice: "Thank God, we're free!"

*Keith McCutcheon 1942*

A 1942 Christmas verse

In the mid 1920s, Keith was fortunate to go to Madison to attend the university, then in a city of 38,378. Among his Madison early writings are "A Story of Youth" including a scene of going down to the Bush on the south side to get gin during prohibition.

In his college essays he wrote often to show the value of love and friendship. In explaining one character named Kenneth he writes, "Kenneth, who loved his friend with the devotion of Jonathan, longed to do something for him." Another reference said, "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." The allusion to the biblical love between Jonathan and David would have been generally understood in a more scripturally literal age as of strong friendship, though the story has been often cited today as an early code of homosexual love and may have been known as such even then.

In other college writings of the 1920s, he shows a strong longing for male friendship but is cautious about exposing it. "I wrote a letter to my friend, a better friend than I can tell. It was filled with loving phrases, that thrilled as I penned them, and praises that sincerity alone could prompt. Would he be thrilled with equal fire, and filled with a desire to meet me, and to greet me once again?" Next he wrote, "Today there came a letter from a friend that I know well is better than the best of friends to me; for in his answer to my words of longing for his company, he wrote that he liked me, had thought of those few days, in the busy summer maze, that we had been together; and he responded he would see me at those places where so lately our two faces had been often seen, and known as friends that no ordinary thing could part. My heart was relieved when I received this letter; I took it and put it away where common men cannot see, and ridicule me." Perhaps those summer days had been on sandbars out on the Wisconsin River for he also wrote at this time of camping on the river's islands.

From his campus period is the "Sonnets to Leon" of more than 24 stanzas. In it he references struggles about male love. These show the internal homophobia to be expected in this age. In the twelfth stanza he writes:

*And men have worshiped me as I do you:  
 But bitter chastity proved most unkind;  
 Strange fears half-filled, —repulsed me when I knew;  
 Yet still returned caresses loathed in mind.*

*Strange Fate: and yet this sweet perversity  
 Of Love, I've learned, attains a noble rule  
 Of hearts—so many times Love's ruled me!*

*Along the crimson stem of heart's red blood  
 Again my love is in the blooming bud.*

At times, Keith speaks of finding support for his type of dangerous love.

*One consolation is; I'm not alone,  
 For many more are feeling what I feel,  
 In passive mis'ry gambling on Fate's wheel,  
 But eyes diverted seeing Beauty's own  
 Sweet profile; and despite near danger zone  
 We'll ever wise because a certain zeal  
 Of passion makes their lives too keen and facile  
 In the mold of beauty and the sweeter tome.*

The torment for those struggling with male love is expressed in the line, "How often have you fled from love? Or from its sweet perversity?" knowing that all too often the world will give it a "cold shoulder" or worse.

The final stanza is titled "L,Envoi," and in it he finally makes it explicit:

*Rare Virtue—rarer Vice! Anomaly  
 Of passion—homosexual—perverse!*

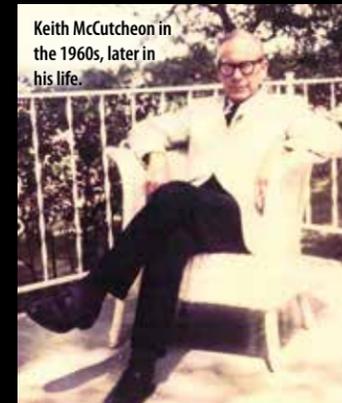
Even though unpublished, this seems very tortuous and containing the self-loathing induced by society of the 1920s, and yet is quite strong in its passions. One of his teachers comments about another work that Keith's style was "too highly colored for my taste."

In the 1930s, Keith McCutcheon decided to stay in Madison. Before settling in the capital city he had a further connection with his Wisconsin River Valley roots when he studied for a year with Frank Lloyd Wright. At times, he traveled with him over the United States being exposed to architecture under the guidance of the master. Presumably this was when he also learned drafting, a skill later used in his interior decorating business, which he took up while he continued his writing. He published a little chapbook of his verses entitled, "Lyrics of the Night," which came from Sickle Publishing Co. of Mazomanie, WI. He would also publish in 1935 a booklet, "Seven Sonnets: Sung Softly from the Soul" and in 1936, "Japanese Prints: Seven Love Poems of Old Nippon Transcribed from the Ancient Book of Imagination ..."

In August 1933, Keith starting writing a column for the *Rio Journal*, giving literary and other observations and sometimes including his own poetry. The paper's editor introduced him to his readers as "a very brilliant young poet and author." His first column was on the World's Fair in Chicago, which was entitled "A Century of Progress." Keith extolled the fair and modern design.

In September 1933, Keith noted, "I am spending a few days at the river. It is the Wisconsin and not a very big and wide river at all at this point. But it has a peace and quiet beauty that is restful. My friend is sitting near me; smoking his pipe and watching the sky ... Twilight is setting, closing the shutters of a September day."

Then ill health struck, and he spent more than a year at the State Sanatorium in Waukesha County to recover from tuberculosis. Another Madison



Keith McCutcheon in the 1960s, later in his life.

writer Betty Cass, a columnist for the *Wisconsin State Journal* wrote of Keith's struggle as a "once vital young man." She thought his "verse was like delicate cameos cut from virgin stone."

As he mended, in 1935, he was writing for the *Rio* paper once again. While he was in residence, he had writings in *The Beacon*, a journal published by the sanatorium. During his stay in the sanatorium it appears he found a new companion. A 1934 manuscript entitled, "The Silver Answer, A Sonnet Sequence," is clearly dedicated to one he loves, but who appears to have rejected him.

*I never learn the secret of reserve  
 But fling my whole soul at love's dancing feet,  
 With mad applause approved caprice and swerve;  
 Seem satisfied with but the crumbs of sweet.*

Keith would write in the *Rio Journal* in May 1935. "I am grateful that no man has defined LOVE ... it still remains an experience ... bitter or beautiful, painful or pleasant ... And no one can describe the depth of emotion to another, though it is universal ... here I write as if I were in love! I am; who is free of the feeling? Life itself is worthy of all our love."

In August of 1935, his *Rio* column is full of praise for Oscar Wilde. Keith claimed Wilde "reached the pinnacle of Art and preached the pinnacle of Beauty." He references Wilde's "Love is a Sacrament that should be taken kneeling." About Wilde's fall from grace and trial he notes, "those who tread to tunes of folly must pay the fiddlers fee ... Yet we must not judge his folly; nor pronounce the price to pay ..." He concludes, "For pleasure of perfect prose, and for sheer loveliness of words, for subtle sense and clever paradox, the work of Oscar Wilde will open shining vistas and broad reaches of sunlit beauty."

Keith also published poems and other literary offerings in *The Daily Cardi-*

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nal during the late 1930s. *The Daily Cardinal* from time to time had a literary supplement page with Wisconsin writers. Keith at one point describes having a Catholic friend in some work of this period. Though not directly linked, a 1936 sonnet has the line, "I prayed you'd kiss the cross—and then ... kiss me."

There is an undated short story manuscript titled, "Mountain Summer," which reads like an early version of *Brokeback Mountain*. A college man, Dick Page, goes to a working ranch in Wyoming owned by a fraternity brother of his father. Once there, he "felt it would be more fun to sleep in the bunkhouse with the hands." After a while he is sent to an upper mountain pasture where Ted, described as a "Nice lookin' boy," will be his "pardner." Dick describes Ted as "good looking by any standards" and they begin to find companionship. A waterfall makes a natural shower with a swim hole and there the story develops. "In a sudden easy movement, Ted rolled close to Dick, raised his head, leaned over, and with a tenderness, with instinctive passion kissed him on the mouth." That night in the mountain cabin they shared, Dick returned Ted's kiss and the story draws to an end with less explicitness than today's movies.

Much of Keith's work remained unpublished, but of that which was published much had coded though fairly clear references to what could be seen gay love. One group of poems was called "Twilight Verses" as if their descriptions could not stand the full force of light. In these he writes of "Acolytes of sterile love." His expression leaves no doubt about this strange type of love. "To subtle things: cool rush of river-water over the body like the sleek pleasure of white sheets; the hot, rough reaches of sand bars ... like petulant masculine kisses ..." The image of a rough man's cheek as part of the feel of a masculine kiss draws from the sandbar imagery unique to Keith's own journey.

Again he would write, "As ours are not accepted Love." One sequence, entitled "Twilight Songs from a Wisconsin River Sandbar" has phrases "like man-lovers" and "like sterile love." Keith's work was replete with references to "dark angels" and "moonpaths" as part of the language of this hidden love.

A small selection of Keith's poems were printed in the 1940s and entitled, "Two Pieces of Venetian Glass." These come from the period later in his life when he lived with his longtime partner, Joe, and are dedicated to him. The title poem seems to sum up both much of what he sensed about love and yet the fragile status of gay men in a homophobic world. It pretty much speaks for itself:

*Two goblets of Venetian glass are we—  
Both blown by one swift breath, two bubbles sheer  
As air on stems of crystal artistry;  
Two, yet one, so like two appear.  
Two goblets of Venetian glass, so rare  
And precious values are not named; and eyes  
Of those-who-know are opened as they stare  
And covet fragile beauty with their sighs.  
Two pieces of Venetian glass a breath  
Could break if carelessness betrayed; yet strong  
To hold the wine-mad force of life and death  
Through many years for toasts that love be long...*

Keith died in 1968 right before Stonewall. One of the gay men who was a pall bearer remembers the home funeral service on Jenifer Street with a Shakespearean inscription over the coffin. It was from Hamlet, and could not be more appropriate to one who celebrated the sonnet form and who wrote of gay love in darker times. "Good-night, sweet prince. And flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest." ■

Dick Wagner (rrdickwagner@gmail.com), openly gay former Dane County Board Chair and co-chair of Governor Earl's Commission on Lesbian and Gay Issues, is now working on gay Wisconsin history and welcomes topics and sources.

## quality of life

### OUR PETS



## Freddie and His Gerry

**Breed:** Shih Tzu/Cocker Spaniel mix

**Age:** Approximately 6½ years old

**Owner:** Gerry Haney, Board Vice President, AIDS Network

**Where/how did you get Freddie?** I was looking for a dog for some time. The day that I found Freddie, I was going to look at another dog for which someone was already signing papers. I went to the Dane County Humane Society just to feel like I was covering all my bases. When I saw Freddie in his cage, I melted. He had the cutest look on his face and was such a sweet guy.

**What kind of family member is Freddie? (What role does he play in your life?)** He is my best friend, snuggle buddy, walking friend, and cleaner of everything that is on the floor.

**What is Freddie's favorite toy?** He has two. His favorite one for outside is his purple squeak ball that he loves to play fetch with. His favorite toy for inside is called "Baby." It is a one-eared lamb that he snuggles and sleeps with.

**What are Freddie's must-have treats?** Since he is a cocker spaniel mix, he loves his food. He LOVES his blue Einstein toy I picked up at Bad Dog Frida. You put a few carrot treats in there and he goes to his box to work on getting them out.

**How do you meet Freddie's needs?** I would like to think that I meet his basic needs and beyond. When he needs a good belly rub or has something stuck to his fur, I am there to help him.

**How does he meet yours?** Actually, I have said that if I made a list of everything I wanted in a four-legged friend and compare it to the qualities he has, my list would fall short of all the qualities he has. He literally is my best friend and family member. When I am in my home office working, he lets me know when it is time to take a break or when it is time to rub his belly by sitting on his back legs and staring me down.

**If dogs could talk, what would he say?** Buy more canned food, chicken treats, and dehydrated salmon ... Oh yeah, I love you, too!

### Do You Know a Cute Pet or Its Owner?

This is the first installment of a new column featuring readers and their beloved pets. To suggest people and their pets, write to [pets@ourlivesmadison.com](mailto:pets@ourlivesmadison.com).

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# quality of life

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Chris Sewell, MD, MBA  
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Business Tip**

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# quality of life

OUR ISSUES

## Relationship Resolutions

Dr. Stephanie Graham suggests a few pointers.

One of the most common themes for New Year's resolutions I hear from individuals, aside from beginning a new exercise or healthy eating routine, is around relationships—from wanting to find a partner, to ending a problematic relationship, to establishing different boundaries with friends or family members—much thought goes into ourselves and our relationships at this time of year. Why do we spend so much time and energy contemplating relationships? I propose that we, as human beings, strive for connection with others. Without deep



Identifying as LGBTQ and being raised in an era of anti-LGBTQ sentiment contributes to the internalization of biases and prejudices regarding this identity, also called *internalized homo/transphobia*.

and meaningful connections, we often feel isolated, lonely, and unfulfilled. This need for connection, however, can also lead us to lose sight of our own values, wants, and needs and, at times, lead us into an unhealthy relationship dynamic. Sometimes it is easier to maintain an unhealthy connection rather than end or change a relationship due to the risk and vulnerability involved in taking action to make desired changes that you may need or want.

### Relationship Evaluation

You may be wondering how to determine

if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy, and I offer two perspectives you can use to assess your relationships: 1) an *external* perspective includes examining the behavioral patterns that you and/or your partner/friend/family member does that cause problems, and 2) an *internal* perspective includes thinking about the way you feel about yourself and your life when you are with your partner/friend/family member. For example, you may notice that you and your partner/friend/family member are unable to have a conversation without arguing (external pattern) and that you often leave your interactions with this person feeling guilty, ashamed, angry, or confused (internal state). Or, on the contrary, in another relationship, you feel rejuvenated and respected, look forward to spending time together, and be able to fully be yourself. Taking time to evaluate your current relationships from both perspectives may provide you with more direction in your resolution toward healthy relationships!

### Common Ingredients of Healthy Relationships

Research has shown that there are some common ingredients found in healthy relationships. First, the relationship should be fun! Of course, no relationship is always fun, but enjoying each other's company and the things you do together is important. Another foundational aspect of a healthy relationship is the ability to communicate effectively and disagree fairly—are you able to talk about and deal with problems and differences openly? Can you share your perspective, even if it is different, and feel heard and understood? In addition, support and respect for each other, your values, thoughts, decisions, and dreams can be seen in healthy relationships. This can be tricky, particularly if you have known this person for a while as, over time, we tend to change; respecting and valuing change is healthy. Moreover, having a shared responsibility for the relationship can be beneficial: there is mutuality and a fair distribution of the work that comes with maintaining connection. Last, but not least, trust is essential for a healthy relationship. Honesty, faithfulness, and the belief that each

A heterosexual couple can easily identify the differences between friendship, dating, living together, being engaged, being married, etc., as each is marked by some clear demarcation or ritual, but same-sex relationships do not have such clarity as our relationships are less likely to be formally recognized.

person has the other's best interest at the core of the relationship cannot be overstated.

### Relationship Hurdles for Our Community

Identifying as LGBTQ can be a wonderful, empowering experience; however, it can also be challenging given unique stressors such as homo/transphobia, systemic oppression, and discrimination. Moreover, identifying as LGBTQ and being raised in an era of anti-LGBTQ sentiment in the U.S. contributes to the internalization of biases and prejudices regarding this identity, also called *internalized* homo/transphobia. Research shows that our relationships with lovers, partners, friends, and family *and* with ourselves can be significantly impacted by these stressors.

Additionally, there is a lack of clear guidelines and role models for LGBTQ relationships. Coupling, living together, having a healthy and well-defined friendship with a same-sex friend, and even explaining to our family and heterosexual friends about our relationships can be complicated. This relational ambiguity may be due to very little role modeling of relationships in our community as well as lack of recognition of LGBTQ couples and friendships in the mainstream media. For example, a heterosexual couple can easily identify the differences between friendship, dating, living together, being engaged, being married, etc., as each is marked by some clear demarcation or ritual, but same-sex relationships do not have such clarity as our relationships are less likely to be formally recognized. This makes it hard to look to the community for guidelines or relationship role models.

In addition, the majority of LGBTQ individuals are typically raised in heterosexual family structures, which offer little modeling on how to navigate non-traditional gender roles and responsibilities in a family. Despite these relational challenges, there is freedom in being able to define relationships without the prescribed notions and expectations of society. It just takes a little work on our part.

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## quality of life

### OUR RIGHTS

# Political Pillars

Learn why **Tamara Packard** believes Tammy Baldwin and Mark Pocan—and future out politicians—need our support.

According to the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, the first openly gay or lesbian person elected to office in the United States was Ann Arbor, Michigan, City Council member Kathy Kozachenko. That was in 1974, fewer than 40 years ago. The fourth out politician elected in the country was right here in Madison: Jim Yeadon was appointed to fill a vacant seat on City Council in 1976 and later won an election to keep his seat.



78th Assembly District in 1993, and when she ran for and won her first race to become the United States Representative for the Second Congressional District of Wisconsin in 1999, Mark stood for and won her Assembly seat. This fall, Congresswoman Baldwin announced her bid for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Herb Kohl. Hours after that announcement, Assembly member Pocan told supporters he wanted nothing more than to keep following in Baldwin's footsteps: he would run to take her place in the United States House.

To be sure, Tammy and Mark each have done wonderful work representing their constituents on issues relating to veterans, the elderly, education, health care, the environment, and more. Tammy has shown a rare and special ability to connect with people, understand the problems they are facing, and help them with solutions. Mark has become a skilled dealmaker behind the scenes, and is well known for his sharp and insightful political wit, calling out hypocrites and pointing to ironies in a way that makes us laugh instead of cry.

Yet one of the most important roles that Tammy and Mark each serve is as out lesbian and gay politicians. By living their lives honestly and openly, by bringing their experiences to work with them every day, in the words of the Victory Fund, "They change America's politics." Gay rights bills do not come up for consideration every day, or even every year, in either the U.S. or Wisconsin Capitol. But virtually every bill that comes up has the potential to affect members of the LGBTQ community, and with out elected officials involved in the process, every bill has the potential to bring equality just a little bit closer to reality.

**Virtually every bill that comes up has the potential to affect members of the LGBTQ community, and with out elected officials involved in the process, every bill has the potential to bring equality just a little bit closer to reality.**

In the mid-1970s, Tammy Baldwin and Mark Pocan were still kids, but you can bet that they were paying attention. By 1986, there were an estimated several dozen out LGBTQ elected officials in the world—and Tammy Baldwin had just become one of them, after being elected to the Dane County Board of Supervisors only two years after graduating from college. One of her constituents was Mark Pocan, who soon joined her as another openly gay official on the County Board. From there, both "Mark" and "Tammy," as they are affectionately known to so many of us, have become pillars in Wisconsin and national politics. Tammy was elected to represent residents of Wisconsin's



Baldwin and Pocan at the Fair Wisconsin Leadership Awards

Committee, Rep. Pocan made sure that Wisconsin's Domestic Partnership Registry was preserved as a strong and important part of Governor Doyle's 2009 budget bill.

Obviously, I am a huge fan of both Tammy and Mark. In the interest of full disclosure, I have publicly endorsed both of them in their November 2012 races and contributed financially to their campaigns. But as wonderful as Tammy and Mark are, they cannot do it alone. We need out and proud LGBTQ candidates at every level of government, and in sufficient numbers to be able to support one another in bringing this nation to full civil equality for LGBTQ people. The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund is the national organization that exists to make this happen. Tammy Baldwin was an early beneficiary of the Victory Fund's support, and Mark Pocan recently earned the Fund's endorsement of his race for the U.S. House of Representatives. Since it began in 1991, the Victory Fund has helped thousands of out LGBTQ candidates around the country win elections and go on to advance equality in those roles. The Victory Fund counts among its recent victorious candidates Annise Parker, the Mayor of Houston; Adam Ebbin, the first openly gay person elected to the Virginia State Senate; Georgia state representative Simone Bell, the first African-American lesbian to win election to a state legislature; and Victoria Kolakowski, the first openly transgender candidate elected to a judicial seat in the U.S. With inspiring role models like these, no doubt the next Mark Pocan and the next Tammy Baldwin are seeing that they can be out and succeed in their political dreams. With more politicians like these, we are bound to achieve equality together. ■

Tamara Packard is a Madison civil rights lawyer, activist and partner in the law firm of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach LLP, [www.cwpb.com](http://www.cwpb.com).



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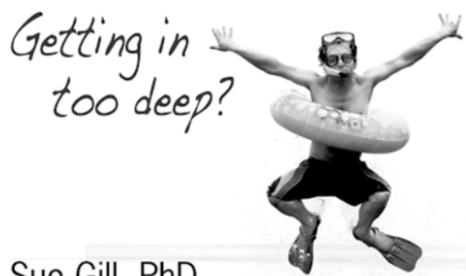
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## Senior Love Stories

Two senior couples open up to **Caroline Werner** about their loves.

**h**ere are two stories about what love means to two couples. Both have had long-term relationships. One of them is starting a new lifetime commitment, after one person's partner died. These stories speak to the strength of love that exists despite the fact that our relationships generally don't have a lot of support from the larger society we live in. We can all learn a lot from these enduring relationships. The secrets are in their stories.

### Two Women: Looking for Love?

Was I looking for love? No! I was looking for independence and a chance to live on my own, for the first time in my life. I've been



I am not able to pinpoint the exact dates when *me* evolved into *we*, *mine* became *ours*, and our household became our home.

a wife, a mother, a widow, a grandmother, now a divorcee and a lifelong caregiver. At 61 years old, I was going to school and looking for a new beginning. I needed a part-time job and a place to live.

That's when THEY came into my life, two remarkable women, who changed my life forever. Actually I came into their lives, as a caregiver and support person. During our first meeting, we sat in the living room, talking, laughing, and harmonizing. She smiled and laughed, while SHE told me of their needs. Within a week, my cat and I moved in.

I found myself in a new home with care giving time, time to study, and time to be-

come part of the family. I spent time doing personal cares, being a companion, caring for the house, and growing to love my housemates as sisters. Over the next couple of years, we did everything together, traveling, gardening, and celebrating holidays and birthdays together with my children and grandchildren. **I had found a safe and rewarding place to call home.**

Almost two years ago, our lives changed forever. Within a 36-hour period, SHE unexpectedly lost her partner. They had been together 40 years. SHE came back to a heartbreakingly empty house. We sat and talked together, cried together, and tried to put HER life back together.

I want away to Seattle, three times, trying to figure out where I belonged. I thought about staying in Seattle, but I was pulled back each time. The last time I returned to the train station in Columbus, SHE was there, waiting for ME. I was surprised at what joy I felt. But we were still months away from allowing ourselves the opportunity to discover what was really happening to our relationship.

On August 18, 2011, I shared these words with HER:

*Tell me what commitment looks like.  
Hold each other up, during unbelievable heartache.  
Care for one another and support one another in suffering and in joy.  
Work and play together. Laugh and cry together.  
Accept each other, for who we have been,  
For who we are and who we will become together.  
This is what commitment looks like to me.  
This is my continued commitment to you.  
I love you with all my heart and trust you with my life.  
I love you.*

### Two Men: I Love YOU

I met YOU in the fall of 1970. I had just started a new job and was being introduced to the other workers. When I shook YOUR hand and looked into YOUR eyes, I felt an immediate attraction. These feelings frightened me, because I had not yet acknowledged or processed my homosexual desires;

and I was, in fact, dating a young woman at the time trying desperately to project a straight image.

We began to hang out together playing pool, going to movies, and bar hopping. Our friendship intensified and within six months we agreed to rent an apartment together. I broke off contact with my female friend. After three months of living together, we became lovers. It was at that time that I freely, willingly, and lovingly entered into a committed relationship.

At the age of 22, I thought of love as simply attraction, good sex, and companionship. **At the age of 62, I realize the definition of love continues to undergo numerous transformations.** Our evolution included adapting from individual to shared interests, sharing intellectual pursuits, and establishing mutual respect. I am not able to pinpoint the exact dates when *me* evolved into *we*, *mine* became *ours*, and our household became our home.

There are lots of components that contribute to a healthy, long-lasting, and loving relationship. Things like unconditional acceptance, shared decision-making, accepting financial responsibility, a good sense of

**Within a 36-hour period, SHE unexpectedly lost her partner. They had been together 40 years. SHE came back to a heartbreakingly empty house.**

humor, and so many more. But in the end, it really comes down to being able to share each of life's events—good and bad—with your best friend. You know you're in love when the first thing you want to do when you discover something new is to share the news with your partner.

Upon waking each morning, I realize I am in this relationship because I value it so highly. When I peer into YOUR eyes, I see joy. We share many daily rituals together and offer each other support, encouragement, and many spontaneous hugs.

This is our love story.

Caroline Werner is a retired social worker who provided case management to Dane County seniors. She is also a past OutReach Volunteer of the Year recipient.

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**f**ashion-forward and retrospective all at once in his signature 1950s-esque glasses, Kyle Cherek is perhaps most visibly known as the host of the Emmy-nominated television series, *Wisconsin Foodie* (produced and created by friend Arthur Ir-cink), though he's become perhaps a reluctant fashionable foodie icon. "I have a big personality by way of being from a large family and needing to be remembered at the gas station as the station wagon pulled away," he jokes.

Kyle is the "Man About Town About Food" columnist for Milwaukee's *M Magazine*; he's a model in Nicholas Grider's "Men in Suits" portrait photography series; his Walker's Point loft made print in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*; he doubles as national sales director for Rufus, a women-owned luxury clothing company; and this year he was nominated "Best Local TV Personality" in the *Shepherd Express*.

In one word, Kyle Cherek is an amalgamation. "It used to be that someone like A. J. Leibling or Gay Talese or David Hicks could be masculine and feminine, could write in an erudite manner about boxing and food and decorating and horse racing, have great style and be utter gentlemen and—I don't know how else to say it—be a great blend of both the masculine and the feminine, be true men but without being brutish, one-dimensional characters. Those are my heroes," he says.

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**OUR TASTE**

**Kyle Cherek** (kylecherek.com)  
Host, *Wisconsin Foodie* (wisconsinfoodie.com)  
Blogger, *M: Milwaukee's Lifestyle Magazine* (mmagazinemilwaukee.com)  
National Sales Director, *Rufus* (rufus.com)

One of Kyle's most important mentors growing up was a gay man, though his mentor's sexuality was "immediately irrelevant." Kyle gives support as an ally for a number of LGBTQ causes and organizations, and has also inserted relevant cultural notes on *Wisconsin Foodie*, such as in his commentary on New York diner *Florent*.

"I think gay, bi, transgender people—and all the different labels that we've had to put onto it—are people who understand the fluidity of identity far better than, well, the rest of us, usually. It's just too bad that the rest of us...the "general" world, haven't caught up to their wisdom.

**Growing up in a smallish town in Wisconsin and living here, it taught me about the acute value of community because so much of the country didn't understand who we are.**

So when I have a great sense of aesthetic in my apartment or in my style or I can talk about food but I can also feel entirely comfortable on the combine tractor with you know, a guy's guy farmer, that's encompassing the whole human being. I grew up thinking this is the kind of man I want to be, so it seems natural to me," he says.

Kyle acts as the "Greek chorus" of *Wisconsin Foodie*, narrating the story of Wisconsin's food culture: James Beard Award-winning and nominated chefs, internationally renowned cheese makers, and organic Berkshire hog farmers—among others—who don't wear their achievements on their sleeves, Kyle observes, but rather "roll them up, go to work, and don't brag."

"Growing up in a smallish town in Wisconsin and living here, it taught me about the acute value of community because so much of the country didn't understand who we are. They put us into one dimensionality. What I love about that is that we learned to do it for ourselves because we were here, not because we were comparing ourselves to anyone else. I think that permeates every community in the Midwest, particularly Wisconsin," he says. —**Marcelle Richards**

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## Meeting the Challenge

GSAFE scholarship recipient **Derek Nelson** applies his newfound knowledge to solving problems of today and the future.

In the prime of my high school career, I had a meltdown that forever altered the course of my life. Coming to terms with being gay in rural Wisconsin—as a Catholic and tri-athlete—was one of the greatest challenges I have faced, but I did so with the help of so many.

In my junior year, I took our school into uncharted territory by starting the school's first GSA and LGBTQ awareness campaign. After a televised school board meeting, I officially became the face for the organization. We faced many challenges our first year that began to set the stage for a world I had never seen firsthand before. The first Day of Silence was met with much resistance from students resulting in verbal threats, vandalism, and disturbing posters randomly posted throughout the school. After the shock and dismay and Sunday sermons following the event, I was surprised to find our next meeting packed with an army of more than 50 students ready to help make the second year a success.

So it was, I graduated from Baraboo High School in 2009 with successes and an experience of forever changing the student atmosphere for students to come, as well as a scholarship from GSAFE. The feeling of such an accomplishment was tremendous, and after an inspiring summer of being a mentor at GSAFE's LTI camp, I knew that the ability to change the world is within reach.

I've continued on to college at UW-La Crosse pursuing Information Systems and Finance studies. I also quickly became involved in environmental organizations and took part in an ongoing campaign called the NO MORE COAL Coalition. The goal is to get our campus to stop depending on coal, the mining of which destroys the mountains and health of people in Appalachia. What has disturbed me most is

the amount of money, lobbyists, and power these coal companies use against the employees and communities of the region. As time has passed, it has become more evident to me that the root cause of our world's many challenges is corporate greed and lobbying power.

I was able to take part in Powershift this year (a national youth convention in D.C., bringing 10,000 students together from all regions), and I was exposed to the many ideas and students just like me finding solutions to fix our energy crisis, rising tuition, fossil fuel addiction, health-care concerns, and many more. After long hours, workshops, and little sleep, we ended the weekend with one enormous march to the Capitol and Federal Reserve. Never before have I felt the amount of spirit, courage, and optimism that I did that day.

What I brought back was an idea that we can use technology as a driving force to protect what is in the best interest of the people. Over the summer I formed sonaarr.com to help bring the ideas of youth and technology to Main Street in the hopes that we can drive customers to more local purchases, keeping our money within our communities. Since then, I have realized that Sonaarr's boundaries are best left without limitations. I have started a venture project to help the ideas of many youth and community members become reality, focusing on technology-centered ventures.

As we as a world progress forward, I believe that technology holds our greatest potential in overcoming our challenges. As I sit in our sixth floor office in downtown La Crosse, overlooking one of the greatest rivers in existence, the Mississippi, I couldn't be more inspired, enthused, and excited for what is to come and the solutions that will arise. ■

**What I brought back was an idea that we can use technology as a driving force to protect what is in the best interest of the people.**

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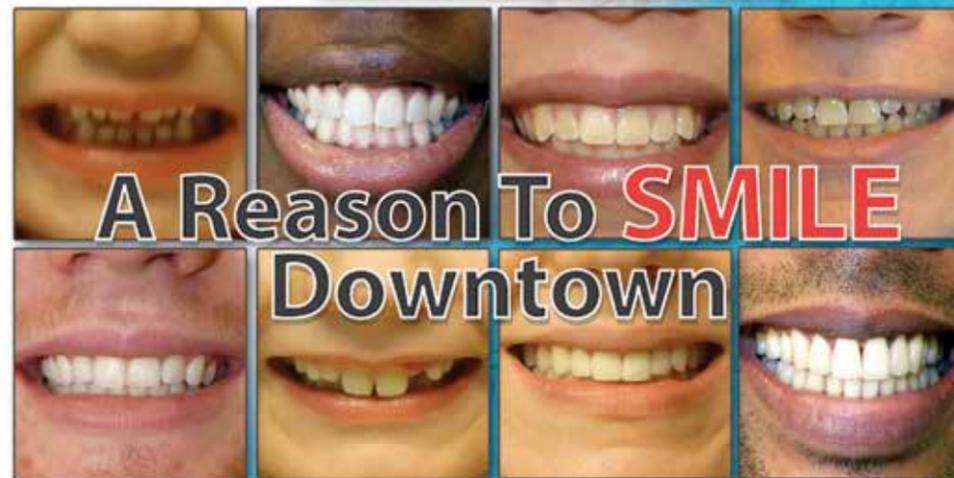


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# Madison Symphony Orchestra

John DeMain | Music Director

## Out at the Symphony

Friday, January 20

Concert in Overture Hall with Augustin Hadelich at 7:30 PM

After-party at *fresco* at 10 PM

\$55 for Orchestra Level ticket and party

\$39 for Mezzanine Level ticket and party

\$15 party only

Make reservations by Jan 17

at 608.257.3734 or

[madisonsymphony.org/out](http://madisonsymphony.org/out)



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