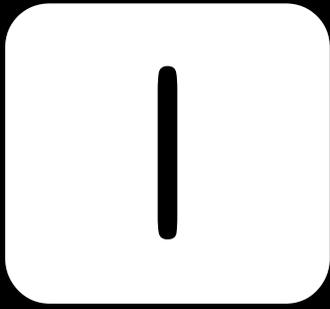


November/December 2008

our lives



Madison Schools' Resource Teacher **Bonnie Augusta**
The Youngest Superdelegate Dinner on Cloud 9
Embody Medical Spa **Blades Against AIDS** Java Cat

Madison's LGBTQA Magazine

RESOURCE GUIDE

the path to parenting

Estate Planning
Custodial Accounts
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+
MORE

**Brendan Barrett
and Vance Skinner**
with daughters Ashlyn and Bailie
Wisconsin Rainbow Families

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our lives
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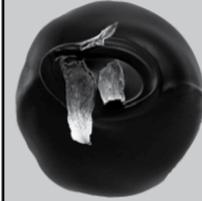
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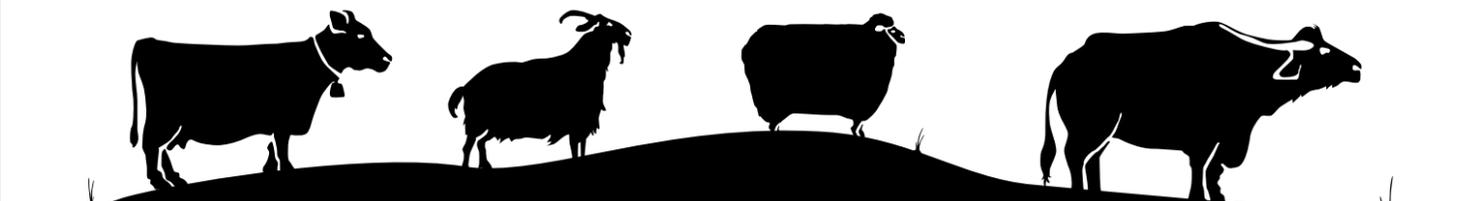
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Cover Photo by **Melody Hanson**
melhanson@yahoo.com

our lives News, Politics, and Social Issues Forum
LEVI-STRAUS
Submitted by **wardholz**

Levi-Straus is taking a leadership role in fighting the proposed California amendment blocking same-sex marriage. Time to start buying lots of new 501s to support them. [Read the entire thread online](#)



Madison's LGBTQ Magazine

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A Step in the Right Direction

"The counter-spell for fear is courage: facing the possibility of the worst and then going ahead with what you know is right. The counter-spell for despair is action in service of a vision. The counter-spell for paralysis is stubborn, persistent passion. Even if we're wrong, if nothing we do makes a difference, courage and passion are a better place to be than hopelessness, cynicism, and fear. If the authorities repress us, that's better than becoming people who repress ourselves. If we see our dreams ripped out of our hands, that's better than never daring to dream at all." ~Starhawk



Like many children, I used to dream about the kind of parent I would make. This was before my sexuality was ever part of the picture. I shaped my ideas of who I would become by looking at the role models I had to follow.

I understand and acknowledge that only a minority of our community have children of their own. I refuse to believe that statistic exists because we've never wanted them, though. Reports show a higher probability of it existing because of all the emotional and legal hurdles we have to jump over to make our families a reality.

So, why an issue dedicated to families then? Because we are stubborn and we are persistent. Because we have courage and passion. And because each step we take forward in educating ourselves and our allies about the local resources we have available removes some of those hurdles and makes that path for the next person an easier one to walk.

With that said, I am proud to report that Madison has pioneered something that, to the best of my knowledge, is a first for our nation. At about the same time that fifteen-year-old Lawrence King was shot and killed by a fellow student in his Oxnard, California, school for openly confessing an unrequited crush, some students around his age here in Wisconsin could just begin finding this magazine on the shelves of their local public high school libraries.

We are making a difference.

Thank you for creating a community that is a family and whose resilience and hope are consistent sources of inspiration.

With love, Patrick Farabaugh PUBLISHER / EDITOR



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contributors

To contact all OURLIVESMADISON.COM users, visit their profiles at: www.ourlivesmadison.com/user/username

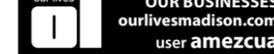
Michele Perreault is an attorney with DeWitt Ross & Stevens, SC. She practices state-wide in areas of family law and civil litigation, with a special emphasis on domestic partnership matters, adoption and divorce. Michele has been recognized by Madison Magazine as one of Madison's Top Lawyers. She has also been recognized by Law and Politics Magazine as a Rising Star, a designation achieved by less than 3% of attorneys state-wide. Michele serves on the board of directors of Fair Wisconsin, as well as on the Wisconsin State Bar Family Law Section. She looks forward to the day that she can make good on the promise she and her partner made to have their daughter serve as a flower girl, albeit possibly the world's oldest flower girl, at their wedding.



Bonnie Raimy initially majored in fashion merchandising at Kent State and held several retail positions before discovering merchandising was not her passion. She earned an M.A. in Creative Writing and taught secondary multicultural literature in Delaware before moving to Madison in 2006. Her desire to own her own business, coupled with her innate sense of fashion, became the catalyst for change, and her personal shopping business was born. Bonnie caters to those who find shopping intimidating and overwhelming. She believes clothing should make people feel confident and comfortable, celebrating each person's individual beauty.



Roberto Amezcua is a first generation Mexican/American who came to Madison in 1998 from El Paso, Texas, to work as a computer programmer. On his off time he enjoys exercising, dining out and dancing with his partner Dennis. His most loved hobby is photography. He enjoys the emotional connection of images to his life experiences and finds it is a means to connect with others' experiences. The combination of his day job and hobby makes for a nice balance, programming on the left side of the brain and photography on the right! You can see some of his work at amezcua.com.



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Gay & Lesbian Consumer Index™

Community Marketing, Inc. (CMI), the San Francisco-based gay and lesbian research, marketing and communications firm, released the most comprehensive LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) market research report ever conducted, the **Gay Consumer Index™** and the **Lesbian Consumer Index™**, in August 2007. The study was co-produced by Rivendell Media and sponsored by Absolut.

Community Marketing, Inc.'s **Gay & Lesbian Consumer Index™** study gathered a total of 26,205 complete responses. 24,563 respondents reside in the United States, and some of the U.S. respondents are bisexual, transgender or straight, and are not included in these indices, or in the sample key findings below.

	Lesbians	Gay Men
Total Respondents	10,344	12,044
Sample Demographics Include...		
Median age	45	45
In relationships and living together	64.5%	46.3%
Single	23.3%	42.6%
Have children under age 18 living in home	20%	5%
Annual household income	Approx. \$80,000	
Work in the medical / health industry	15.2%	8%
Own a single family home	59.0%	41.2%
Rent an apartment	18.4%	28.6%
Sample Key Findings Include...		
Personal internet usage (per week)	10 hours	12 hours
TV viewing (per week)	10 hours	10 hours
Dine out per week	3 times	4 times
Guardian of a cat	50.8%	28.4%
Guardian of a dog	58.5%	37.6%
Purchased a plasma or HDTV in the last year	17.3%	20.0%
Drive a hybrid car	3.2%	2.6%
Voted in 2006 mid-term elections	78.0%	83.8%

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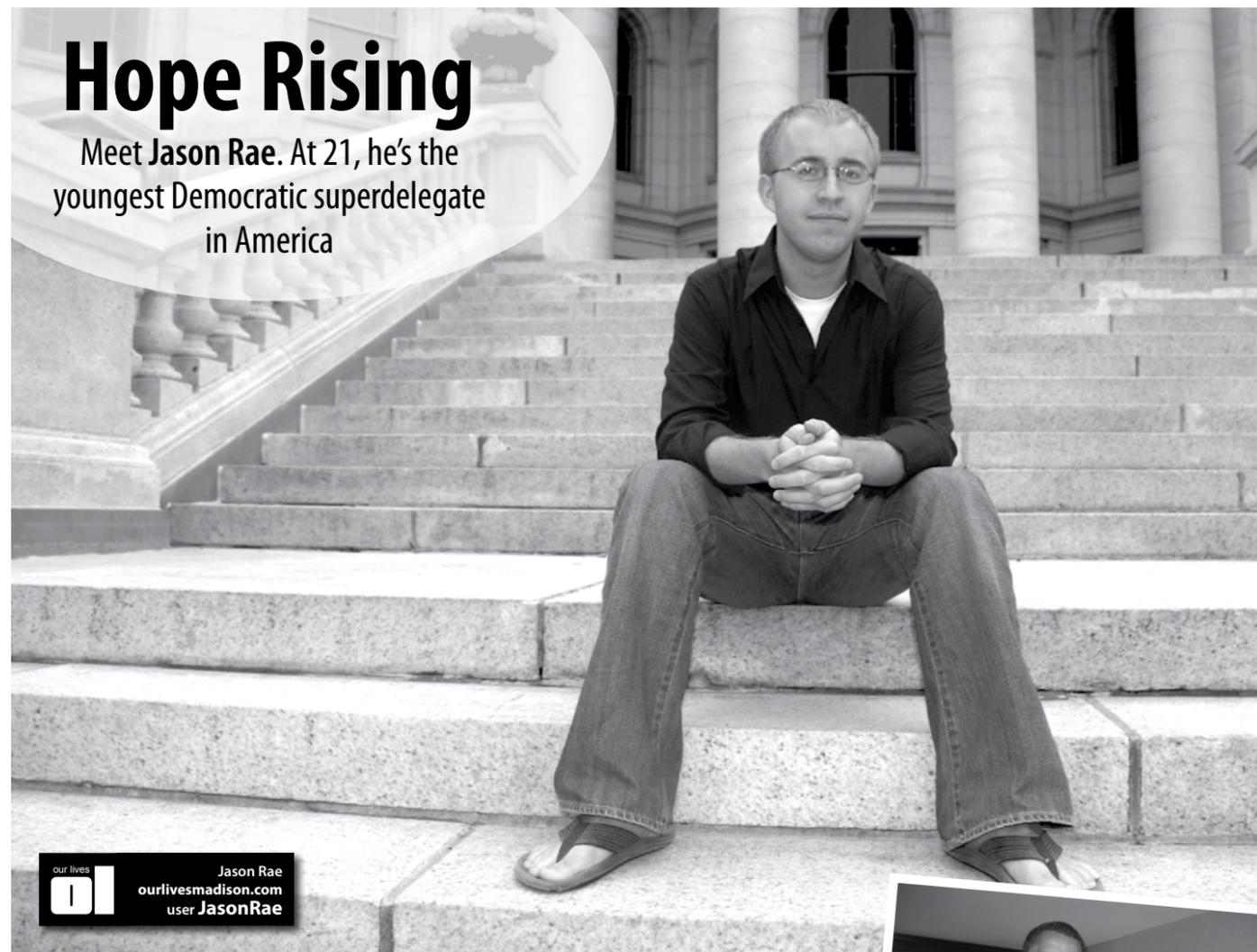
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OUR PEOPLE

Hope Rising

Meet Jason Rae. At 21, he's the youngest Democratic superdelegate in America



our lives | Jason Rae
ourlivesmadison.com
 user JasonRae

Where are you from, and where do you call home now? I grew up and spent the first 18 years of my life in Rice Lake, Wisconsin—God's country. My parents were born and raised in the area and still call it home. Currently though, I'm in my final year at Marquette University. I find myself calling Milwaukee home presently, but will always have Rice Lake in my heart.

Wisconsin has always been one of the closest presidential races. In 2004, John Kerry only won the state by about 10,000 votes.

How did you get involved in politics? It was just something that happened. Mary Hubler, my State Representative, got me started. She took me to a few meetings before I was even old enough to drive, and since then politics have been a part of my life. I started attending local county party meetings, got involved in some statewide committees, and then took a big step

in 2004 when, at 17, I ran for the Democratic National Committee. My involvement has grown exponentially since then.

How does someone become a superdelegate? Superdelegates automatically get the position of an unpledged delegate based on membership in one of three groups. The first group is all of the Democratic governors, next are Democratic members of Congress, and then finally members of the Democratic National Committee. Because I was elected to the DNC in 2004, I became an automatic delegate, aka superdelegate, for the 2008 convention.

What should Wisconsin voters know? Wisconsin has always been one of the closest presidential races. In 2004, John Kerry only won the state by about 10,000 votes. Wisconsin voters need to know how important their role is; how important it is that they turn out on election day. They have the choice between four more years of failed policies



or bringing about the change that America so desperately needs.

You've met with Chelsea Clinton, Michelle and Barack Obama. You've taken phone calls from Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright. What next?

I wish I had some clue where I see myself after I graduate in May. Right now I have no idea. Possibly graduate school, possibly running for office some day. Right now though, I'm focused solely on making sure we elect Barack Obama in November and then focused on finishing up classes at Marquette so I can graduate. ■

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Playbill and Calendar edited by Tara Ayres

PLAYBILL

A Cathartic Tango

Mercury Players delivers a lesson in gay history and human vulnerability in playwright Douglas Holtz's *Tearoom Tango*

mercury Players Theatre's production of *Tearoom Tango* by local playwright Douglas Holtz tackles a taboo topic as it delves into the world of anonymous bathroom sex, as seen through the eyes of six men who frequent these "tearooms." Playwright Holtz believes that he's bringing a hidden part of gay male experience into the open.

Holtz says that the workshop aspect of the production "means that we've been nurturing the script; we've had readings, one-on-one discussions with cast members, getting their feedback. Problems in the script could be smoked out, resulting in a tighter, cleaner script. The structure has changed, so that instead of six monologues, each person has two monologues that flow back and forth."

"When I began writing *Tearoom Tango*, I had worked on *True Confessions of a Go-Go Girl*, which was based on monologues about women who worked in strip clubs: who these women were as people, the power dynamics in their lives. I felt that this (the "tearoom") was another world that people don't talk about; it's a deep dark secret in gay male history. These are stories of everyday people, it's not just senators and pop stars. It deals with some of the shame and being closeted that forces people into this world. It deals with sexual addictions and their interaction with other addictions. It goes into dark places in the gay male psyche that people don't like to talk about. But as we found last year, once this is out in the open, it's easier to deal with. This play has been a catharsis for me, helping me move beyond the issues that I've had in my own life."

This is a staged production, with all of the movement and action of the tearoom. There are no sex acts per se, but some of the movements are extremely suggestive, so the play is for adults only.

Tearoom Tango is directed by Jessica Jane Witham. Holtz said, "I had wanted a woman director, and as much a female crew as possible. I really enjoy having all that female energy in the room, and so does the rest of the cast. We had also thought that if we had straight actors, it

would help make them more comfortable with the content. And we wanted the balance of perspective that women would bring. Our stage manager last year, Karin Silet, had such amazing insights and helped push the show into new directions. Jessica is totally comfortable with the visceralness of the script, and she's the perfect director for this show.

Five of the six characters in *Tango* are gay-identified, with one straight character. According to Holtz: "I wanted to have one straight-identified character, a married construction worker, which I think is largely about sexual addiction. There's a myth in gay culture that gay men don't go there, it's a straight guy thing, but I believe that's a lie. It's exposing an aspect of gay male culture that's closeted within the culture." ■



Douglas Holtz and Jess Witham in *Tango*

It deals with some of the shame and being closeted that forces people into this world.

Tearoom Tango has been in process for years. Holtz originally read the play a few

years ago. After significant re-writes, Mercury did a staged reading a year ago. Typically during a workshop reading, the audience is invited to talkbacks afterwards to provide feedback. Holtz described the talkbacks last year as amazing and insightful. "It was validating to hear the comments and stories that came out of that. One guy came up from Chicago and talked about how he was closeted working for the government and couldn't come out because of national security. He had tearoom sex in the Madison area because it was the closest, safest outlet for him."

Tearoom Tango
Written by local playwright **Douglas Holtz**
Directed by **Jessica Jane Witham**
Produced by **Mercury Players** at The MerLab Theatre (930 N. Fair Oaks Ave)
Performances: Nov 21th - Nov 29th, 2008
Performance Times: 8 pm
Ticket Prices: \$15
Reservations: 608-661-9696, ext 5

THEATRE CALENDAR

A representative sampling

EXCHANGE AT CAFÉ MIMOSA
by Oana Maria Cajal
Mercury Players Theatre
Madison, October 31 - November 15
mercuryplayerstheatre.com

FIFTH OF JULY
by Lanford Wilson
University Theatre at UW-Rock County
Janesville, November 6 - 9
madstage.com/companies/uwrockcounty.html

HAMLET
by William Shakespeare
Strollers Theatre
Madison, November 6 - 29
strollerstheatre.org

MANGIA, MANGIA
by Danielle Dresden
TAPIT/new works
Madison, November 7 - 23
tapitnewworks.org

THE WIZ
By William F. Brown and Charlie Smalls
Edgewood College Theater
Madison, November 14 - 22
theatre.edgewood.edu

DANCING WITH MY OTHER
By Kathie Rasmussen
Broom Street Theatre
Madison, November 14 - December 21
broomstreet.org

MADAMA BUTTERFLY
By Giacomo Puccini
Madison Opera
Madison, November 21 - 23
madisonopera.org

TEAROOM TANGO
by Douglas Holtz
Mercury Players Theatre
Madison, November 21 - 29
mercuryplayerstheatre.com

A QUEER CAROL
by Joe Godfrey
StageQ, Inc.
Madison, December 5 - 21
stageq.com

THE WIZARD OF OZ
Overture Center for the Arts
Madison, December 12 - 14
overturecenter.com

SEVEN SANTAS
by Jeff Goode
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Madison, December 12 - 20
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What Does it Mean to be a Man?

Becoming Alec by Darwin Ward



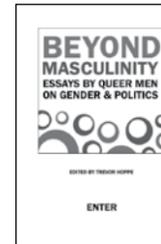
BECOMING ALEC, THE DEBUT NOVEL BY MADISON'S own Darwin Ward, has been a sleeper hit, securing a spot for the author in the Wisconsin Book Festival and generating some great buzz and discussion in feminist and GLBT literary circles around town.

The novel's protagonist, Alec, starts out as a working-class lesbian who eventually identifies as a transman. We follow him as he creates family, realizes his true self and finds love and contentment

along the way. Alec's journey also takes him through butch-femme culture, and the novel sensitively yet unflinchingly explores the often tense boundary between butch lesbian and transmasculine identities. Ward explores the positive and negative aspects of transition with grace and aplomb, neither sugarcoating the difficulties transpeople often face nor ruining the narrative with melodrama. Alec's story is accessible, particular, genuine and best of all, wholly heartfelt. —Gretchen Treu

What Does it Mean to be a Man?

Beyond Masculinity: Essays by Queer Men on Gender and Politics by Trevor Hoppe



BEYOND MASCULINITY: ESSAYS BY QUEER MEN ON Gender and Politics is the first time I've gotten a book via a free download. By simply going to beyondmasculinity.com, it can be downloaded as a PDF. Additionally, twelve of the essays are available as MP3 files through a link to iTunes.

The essays fall into five themes: "Beyond Binary Gender," "Desire, Sex, & Sexuality," "Negotiating Identity," "Queer Feminist Politics" and "Transforming Masculinity." Each section challenges what it means to be a man in a world with a multidimensional spectrum of gender instead of the familiar, limited spectra of male/female and gay/bi/straight. Hoppe also included short passages from each essay in the index as a sort of abstract.

Essays range from intensely personal to more academic. Most readers will probably pick and choose from the selections rather than read the work cover to cover. "Sissy" by Mark D. Snyder is among my favorites. It explains the origins of Boston-based activists' commitment to the LGBT cause. Another essay that resonated is "My Single Problem" by Jason Dilts. The twenty-four year-old author ponders society's insistence that we must be paired to be considered whole, complete and happy. His essay parallels the feminist retellings of *Cinderella* (e.g. *Just Ella*) that have been appearing in young adult literature challenging the notion that Prince Charming will solve everything. While the form of "Shaking Our Shells: Cherokee Two-Spirits Rebalancing the World" by Qwo-Li Driskill makes it challenging to read, it is well worth the effort. It draws on the Native American tradition of Two-Spirit people, showing gender variance is not new, but actually very old. Every one of the essays contains views well worth the time to explore.

I would recommend anyone interested in broadening their view of gender identity take time to download *Beyond Masculinity*. Pick and choose those essays that catch your interest. You will be well rewarded by the fresh and challenging views you encounter. —Ward Holz

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Cultural, Social, Service and Nightlife listings edited by Patrick Farabaugh



Blades Against AIDS

November 8, Capitol Ice Arena
2616 Pleasant View Road, Middleton
Join the Madison Gay Hockey Association for an open community skate from 7-9pm to benefit the AIDS Network. Music on the main rink, food catered by Queen Anne's catering in the lobby. After party to be announced. Tickets are \$15 madisongayhockey.org



The Wizard of Oz

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Felicia Melton-Smyth Holiday Gift Drive

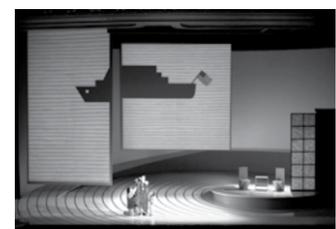
December 8-25, Shamrock Bar
In loving remembrance of a community icon and treasure, help keep Felicia's vision alive by contributing to the annual holiday gift drive she started to benefit families that have been affected by HIV/AIDS. shamrockbar.com

Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945
Through December 10, UW Memorial Library, Madison
GSAFE is co-hosting this exhibition from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with the UW-Madison General Library System. gsaforsafeschools.org & ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/hsx

Thanksgiving Ideas Night at Fromagination
November 13th, 4:00-7:00pm, Fromagination, 12 S. Carroll St., Madison
Let the cheesemongers help you create the perfect cheese plate for Thanksgiving. Join them for an evening of tasting as they help you select the perfect cheeses to pair with your feast and also for all those holiday parties you're going to host. fromagination.com

Transgender Day of Remembrance
November 15-22, Various Locations, Madison
The Madison Area Transgender Association and the UW-Madison LGBT Campus Center collaborate to produce a week of programming including a Day of Remembrance Rally, a film fest and the Trans Monologues. wisc.edu/lgbt

Business Alliance Meet and Greet
November 18, 5:00-7:00pm, OutReach, 600 Williamson St., Madison
Monthly business/networking event includes cocktails and snacks madisonbusinessalliance.com



Madama Butterfly Opens Madison Opera's Season

November 21-23, Overture Center, Madison
In celebration of Giacomo Puccini's 150th anniversary, Madison Opera presents one of the composer's most beloved works. *Madama Butterfly* recounts the emotional story of a young geisha seduced and abandoned by an American Navy lieutenant. Madison Opera's production is sure to move audiences with a dramatic and visual splendor, matched only by Puccini's breathtaking music. madisonopera.org

Monthly Chocolate Tasting
November 20, 7:00 - 8:30pm, Gail Ambrosius Chocolatier, 2086 Atwood Ave., Madison
Tastings will be in Gail's Kitchen right on Atwood Avenue. You'll travel around the equator, exploring the deep, complex flavors of six different single origin chocolates, and taste how Gail brings out those flavors in her truffles. gailambrosius.com

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus' 12th Season Winter Concert
December 6th, 7:30 pm, First Unitarian Society of Madison, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison and **December 14th, 3:30pm, St. Stephens Lutheran Church, 5700 Pheasant Hill Rd., Monona**
PHMC presents, "There's no place like home... with Perfect Harmony!" with two performances in the Madison area. PHMC presents a broad mix of music spanning Solstice, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Christmas traditions. perfectharmonychorus.org

Madison Ballet's The Nutcracker
December 19-21 & Christmas Eve., Overture Hall, Madison
Artistic Director W. Earle Smith will refresh this timeless tradition with new choreography performed by Madison's only professional ballet company. For the first time, we'll watch the story unfold as Clara matures into a young woman. Accompanied by the majesty of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, *The Nutcracker* is as artistically compelling as it is enchanting. madisonballet.org

ORGANIZATIONS

A representative sampling

AIDS Network
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 252-6540
aidsnetwork.org

Bowling Out Loud
beckwith.matt@yahoo.com

Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls
dcandc.org

Fair Wisconsin
122 State St., Madison (608) 441-0143
fairwisconsin.org

First Congregational Church
1609 University Ave., Madison (608) 233-9751
firstcongmadison.org

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
personalpages.tds.net/~tmclcur

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

Gay Softball League
ssblmadison.com

Gay Volleyball League
madisongayvolleyball.com

Hermanos Latinos
sneal@aidsnetwork.org

LGBT Business Alliance
madisonbusinessalliance.com

Madison Gay Hockey Association
madisongayhockey.org

Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby
madisonminotaursrfg.org

New Harvest Foundation
newharvestfoundation.org

OutReach Community Center
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 255-8582
lgbtoutreach.org

PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(608) 848-2333
pflag-madison.org

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus
perfectharmonychorus.org

Proud Theatre
proudtheater.org

Rural Dykes Association
pswfarm@juno.com

StageQ
stageq.com

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

Wisconsin Rainbow Families
wirainbowfamilies.com

September 12 | Fair Wisconsin Art Auction at the Artisan Gallery



PHOTOS BY JESSICA HORN

1. Renee Herber, Artisan Gallery owner and host Theresa Able, Cullen Weston Pines & Bach partner Tamara Packard 2. Fair Wisconsin Deputy Executive Director Bill Conway, Theresa Able 3. An auction attendee 4. Fair Wisconsin Executive Director Glenn Carlson with State Field Director Jean Wennlund and Penny Bruskin 5. Isthmus Associate Publisher Linda Baldwin, Theresa Able 6. Dane County Board Member Kyle Richmond 7. Soap Opera co-owner Chuck Beckwith and guest 8. An auction attendee 9. Russ, Chris, and Clementine Christian 10. Soap Opera co-owner Chuck Bauer

our lives



LGBT Market Facts

In focus groups and other consumer research conducted by Prime Access over the past 15 years, gay and lesbian consumers, regardless of geography, report a strong preference for advertising and other marketing communications that address them directly and portray them openly for who they are and how they live their lives. They consistently find this targeted advertising the most arresting, persuasive and memorable of all the marketing messages they are exposed to.

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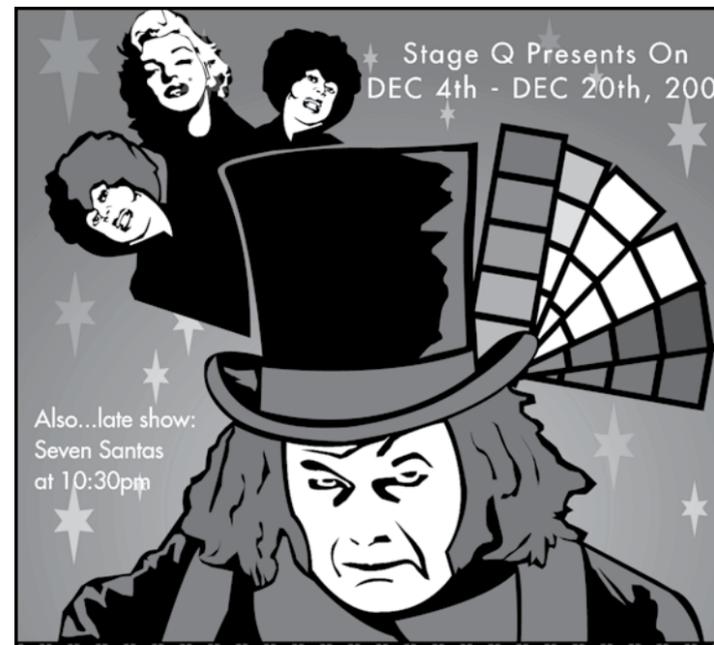
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Saturday, December 6, 7:30pm
First Unitarian Society Meeting House
900 University Bay Drive, Madison

Sunday, December 14, 3:30pm
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
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Tickets: \$15 Adult, \$12 Student/Senior
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**Wednesdays
7-8pm**

Queery (7-7:30) - Locally produced LGBT news & culture (music on 1st show of month)
This Way Out (7:30-8) - International gay & lesbian radio magazine

256-2001

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OUR EVENTS

October 10 | Former Green Bay Packer Esera Tuaolo at WOOF's



October 11 | GSAFE's second annual Run/Walk/Eat



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Madison Gay Volleyball League
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Live DJ-House Dance Party • SPIT NYC

SUNDAY'S
Packer Games on the BIG screen • BEAR BASH/FREE PIZZA

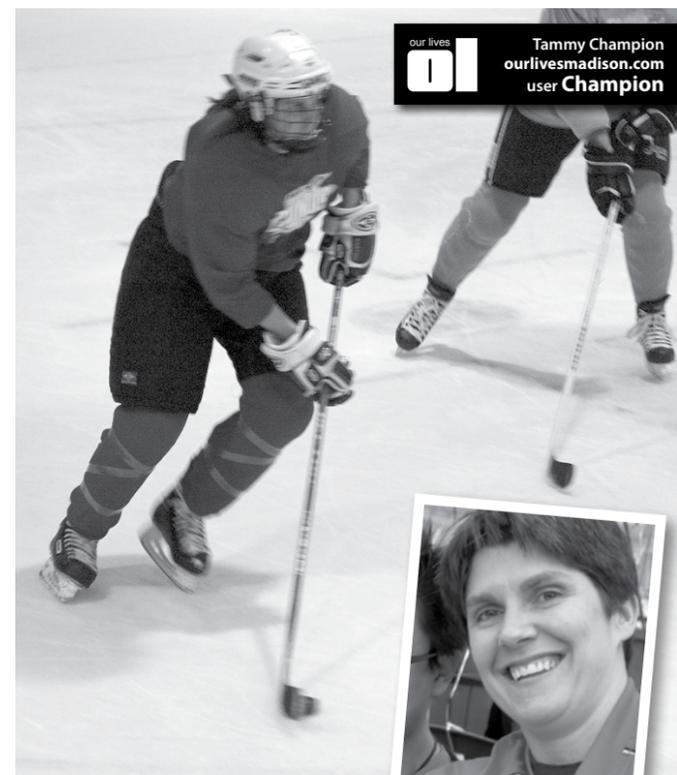
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OUR ATHLETES

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For Tammy Champion, hockey is more than a sport. It is a way of life.



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How did you get started playing hockey?

I was pretty much born into hockey. Not only was I born in Canada, I was born on an island in Canada. Prince Edward Island is surrounded by the North Atlantic Ocean and laced with rivers which are frozen for many months each year. My family shoveled natural hockey rinks on the river that ran next to my house.

What attracted you to the sport? It was a family past-time. I looked up to my six older brothers, all of whom played hockey. Once I was able to walk, my brothers would bundle me up in my snowsuit and pull me on a sled down to the river to watch them play hockey. As a kid I was made to stand in the goal until I learned to skate well. If I didn't stop the puck, I had to skate down-river to retrieve it. Consequently, I learned to skate pretty quickly. I also was very driven to keep up with my brothers and play as well as they did. Fortunately, my community had a girls' minor hockey team, which I joined when I was 14. That was my first exposure to an organized hockey league.

Any especially memorable moments on the ice? I have played a lot of hockey in my life, and I've been a part of many great teams. I am currently a coach and mentor/player for the Madison Gay Hockey Association (MGHA) where I get to watch new players have their first memorable moments. It is exciting to be on the ice when someone gets their first goal or catches their first great pass or makes their first great play or wins their first game.

What teams are you playing with currently? I play with the Madison Lightning, a recreational team in the Women's Central Hockey League, and the MGHA.

Any advice for someone thinking about starting to play? 1. Don't waste your money on expensive gear at first. A goal off the \$10 stick counts the same as one off the \$200 stick. 2. All hockey skates are going to hurt your feet in the beginning—with time they will become like your favorite pair of sneakers that you don't want to get rid of. 3. Falling is a good thing. If you're not falling, you're not trying hard enough. 4. The more you play, the better you become. 5. It is a team sport - choose the play that makes your teammate look good. 6. I say go for it. To me, it's the best of all sports. ■

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In Search of Zen

Proselytizing from a queer perspective, academic **Michael Sweet**, ponders the draw to Buddhist principals that LGBT people feel when searching for serenity and a spiritual path.



our lives
Michael Sweet
ourlivesmadison.com
user msweet

The late Geshe Wangyal, was sitting with us and some other students once and simply said, "You two stay together and care for each other." Those few affirming words from a wise and loving teacher were more than enough for us.

"So, how did a nice Jewish gay boy become a Buddhist of all things?" This is a question that new friends and acquaintances have asked me many times over the years (well, not always with that exact phraseology). I'd like to turn that into a question of more general interest: "What does Buddhism in particular have to offer queer persons as a path to spiritual and psychological growth?" The need for religious or spiritual experience is universal, as the great psychologist William James pointed out, and the means used to find it are varied: through fasting, exercise, prayer, meditation, yoga, psychotropic substances and being in nature, to name only a few. One common way to access spiritual experience is through participation in a religious community, which in this country has meant primarily Christian churches, Jewish temples, and more recently Muslim mosques. Unfortunately, due to deeply ingrained homophobic beliefs and attitudes, LGBT people have encountered many obstacles to full participation in the majority of churches and synagogues; in many cases we are relegated to toleration and second-class status at best, condemnation and expulsion in the worst cases. Given this background, I've found it perplexing that the focus in most workshops, seminars and lectures on the subject of queer spirituality is exclusively on the Judeo-Christian traditions, dealing with topics such as how churches can become more queer-friendly, why the Bible really isn't really anti-gay, how God or Jesus loves us equally, etc. Such events can be highly positive for those LGBT people who feel a strong bond with the faith traditions they were raised in and want to remain in them in a healthier way. But to talk only about Judeo-Christian views does not at all address the needs of the very large numbers of queer folks who have turned away from the monotheistic religions once and for all, but continue to search for a belief system and structure that will help them create a more meaningful life. Buddhism and other non-Western spiritualities (Hinduism, Daoism and others) offer some alternatives. I will only discuss Buddhism here, since that is the teaching that I know best and the one which has had a profound impact on my life; hopefully others

will share their experiences with other religious and spiritual paths in future issues of *Our Lives*.

We are raised to think of religion as being about worshipping God, or gods—however, Buddhism is a non-theistic "religion" (itself a modern Western concept; a Buddhist would use the term "Dharma," meaning both way of life and teaching). There is no creator-god in Buddhism. The universe comes into being and functions according to natural laws; living creatures are psychobiological systems, and our lives are governed by our actions (karma) and their effects. It's basically "what goes around comes around"—our actions produce good or bad effects without any divine judgment or demonic intervention. The aim of Buddhist practice is to develop inner calmness and stability, awareness of oneself and the nature of reality, and to respond to other living beings with compassion and loving-kindness. The more real empathy we feel toward others, even those who may be hostile to us out of ignorance or prejudice, the less we will think and behave in selfish or angry ways that in the long run are self-destructive as well as harmful to others. There are many types of Buddhist teaching (Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism), but all of them are directed to these basic goals. As a psychotherapist trained in Western psychology, I see these Buddhist ideas and techniques as one method we can use to become more emotionally and socially mature, to be able to live reasonably happy and productive lives, coping more effectively with life's joys and pressures, and with the illness, old age and death that will eventually come to all of us. These are worthy but modest objectives from the Buddhist perspective—Buddhism as a religion ultimately aims for total freedom from the pain of the human condition, the state of nirvana. Few have the capacity and dedication for this however, just as few Christians, however sincere and committed, can attain the spiritual heights of a St. Francis or St. Theresa.

To return to our initial question: Why are so many gay, lesbian and transgender people active in Buddhism centers and groups, not to speak of the probably much larger number who have incorporated aspects of Buddhism into their personal spirituality, without any formal Buddhist affiliation? Absent any research on this topic, I can only offer some tentative speculations, based on my almost 40 years of involvement in American Buddhism. When I was a confused and anxious 19 year-old gay boy, discovering Buddhism was an inspiration and a revelation to me; many of my gay and lesbian Buddhist friends have talked of similar experiences. In the first place, there is no institutional homophobia in Buddhism—sexual orientation and gender difference are totally irrelevant from a

Buddhist perspective. Whether one loves a person of the same or the other gender (or both), wears a dress, a suit, denim or leathers, the essential thing is to act lovingly toward others and not to do harm. Buddhist monks and nuns, leading celibate lives themselves, have never been involved in sanctioning marriage, which was considered a purely secular matter. Buddhist societies (Tibet, Thailand, Sri Lanka, China, Japan and other Asian cultures) accommodate a wide variety of lifestyles among laypeople: monogamy, polygamy, polyandry (woman with multiple spouses, especially in Tibet and the Himalayas), as well as same-sex relationships. For myself and Len, my partner of now 42 years, it was a deeply moving experience when our Buddhist teacher, the late Geshe Wangyal, was sitting with us and some other students once and simply said, "You two stay together and care for each other." Those few affirming words from a wise and loving teacher were more than enough for us.

The second reason for queer folks' interest in Buddhism, in my opinion, stems from our tendency to more readily question accepted beliefs, compared to our non-queer counterparts. I attribute this to the fact that most of us feel a sense of difference as kids, knowing we aren't going to fit into the heterosexual, nuclear family mold. Growing up different can cause painful loneliness and alienation, but it can also have positive effects, providing an outsider perspective that can foster independent and critical thinking. As a pre-teen going to after-school religious instruction, I found Judaism interesting but illogical, and often questioned my teachers (to their great distress): Why shouldn't all good people go to heaven, regardless of their religion? How does the biblical account of creation fit in with the findings of geology and evolution? And that key unanswerable question: Why does an all-powerful, compassionate deity allow innocent people to suffer terrible illnesses, violence, injustices and natural disasters? Jewish and Christian theology just did not make sense to me; on the contrary, I found most of Buddhism perfectly in accordance with logic, scientific and psychological knowledge, and my own perceptions. There are certain important Buddhist beliefs that cannot be verified scientifically: notably, that living beings are re-born again and again, with karma operating across many lives. Thus, most orthodox Buddhists believe that bad things happening to them in the present are the "ripening" of some misdeed they committed in a previous body. This theory may be correct, and I think it is good to act as if it is, but it is just as much a matter of faith as the belief in a creator, or the Trinity. Nevertheless, one can remain agnostic on such issues and still derive immense benefit from Buddhist practice; kindness, compassion, self-awareness, living in a helpful way to

Growing up different can cause painful loneliness and alienation, but it can also have positive effects, providing an outsider perspective that can foster independent and critical thinking.

others and oneself—all of these things are good in themselves and can be methodically cultivated through study, meditation and action. The Dalai Lama often says that people don't need to change their religion; one can remain a good Christian, Jew, Muslim or Hindu, and despite very significant theological differences, strive toward the

There is no institutional homophobia in Buddhism—sexual orientation and gender difference are totally irrelevant from a Buddhist perspective.

same objectives as Buddhists: inner peace, empathy, non-violence, insight—none of which are the property of any particular religion or philosophy. I've known many devoted Christians and Jews, including clergy, who consider themselves part-Buddhist.

For people interested in exploring Buddhist perspectives, Madison presents a goldmine of opportunity. There are many excellent introductory books about Buddhism in our libraries and bookstores, and the Madison area has numerous Buddhist teachers and groups from many different traditions, including Zen, several varieties of Tibetan Buddhism and Insight/Mindfulness training (derived from Theravada Buddhism, prevalent in Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka and elsewhere). To paraphrase the Buddha's advice as he was leaving this life—don't believe anything just because it's in a holy book or some authority figure tells you so, but do keep an open mind, explore and experiment, see what makes sense and is helpful to you, and create your own path. ■

Michael Sweet began studying Buddhism in 1967 and entered the Buddhist Studies program at UW-Madison under Geshe Lhundub Sopa. He was a Fulbright scholar who studied in both Sri Lanka and Nepal, receiving his Ph.D. in 1977. He later obtained his M.S.W. at UW-Milwaukee, and a second Ph.D. in counseling psychology from UW-Madison. He and his partner, Leonard, reside in Monona.

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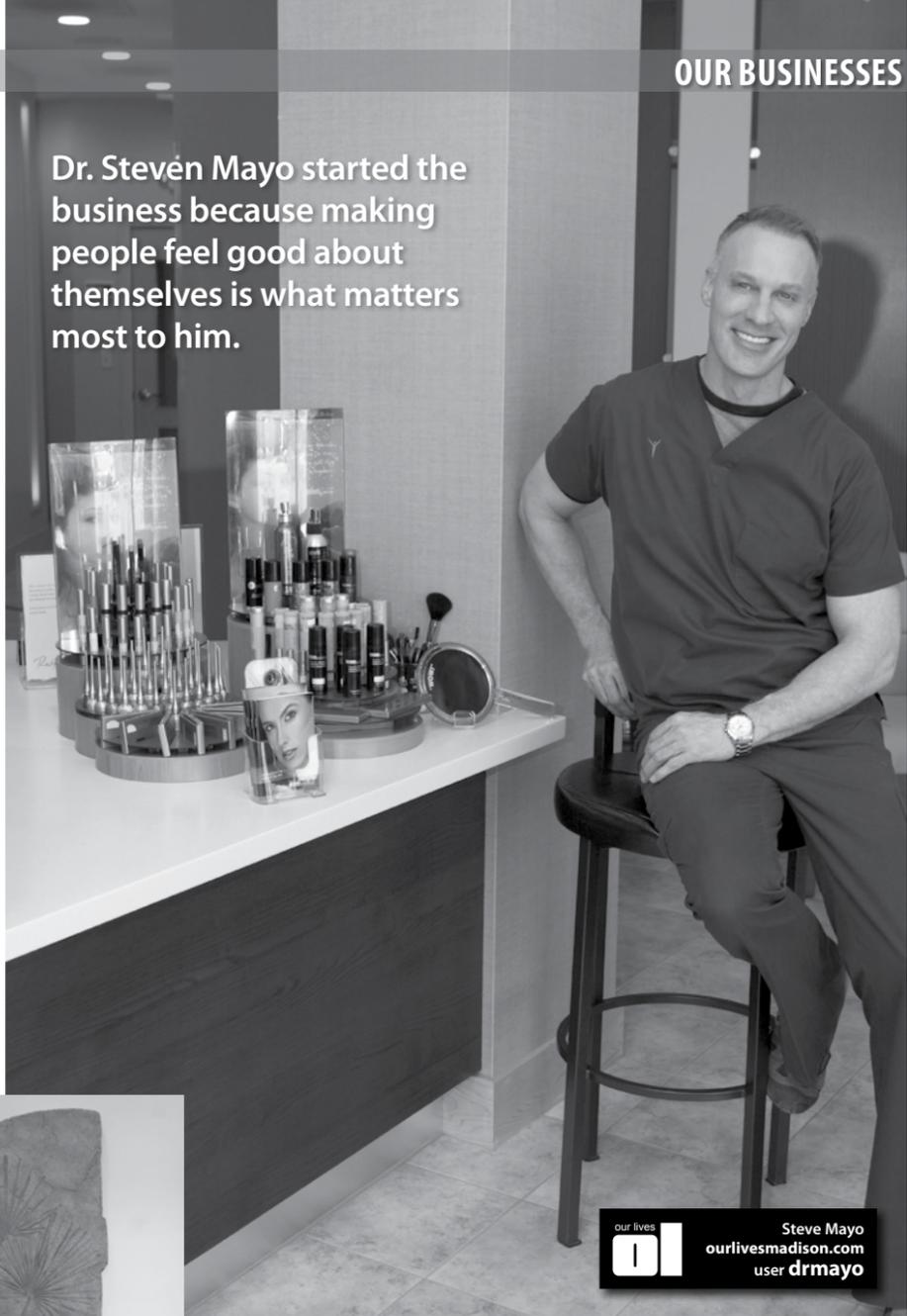
Dr. Steven Mayo has crafted the Embody Medical Spa into an oasis of positive well-being.

American culture in general, and gay male culture in particular, can place an extreme and unhealthy emphasis on youth and beauty over other, more substantive considerations. It's easy to get lost in needing the acceptance of others before learning how to accept yourself. It's easy to fall prey to greedy plastic surgeons and phony, overpriced skin-care products. Then, with that in mind, it's refreshing to learn about a local medical spa that emphasizes health and confidence, not outward attractiveness, as the basis for its practice.

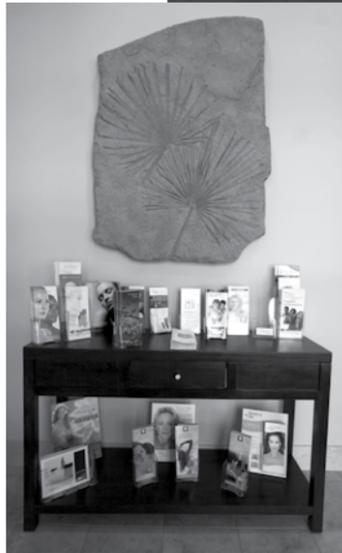
Embodly Medical Spa is in the first floor of a gorgeous new development in Fitchburg, overlooking a lush Wisconsin prairie. The interior of the spa is delicately appointed, has friendly staff, a soothing indoor waterfall, and Enya piped in over the loudspeakers. The calm, client-centered approach that underlies the company's philosophy echoes the tasteful website, embodlymedicalsapa.com, which I perused before my arrival. After warm greetings and a brief tour, I sat down to interview the founders to find out what they do, and, more importantly, why.

Dr. Steven Mayo is a former anesthesiologist who started the business with a crack team of aestheticians (his partner Jarod, Lori, and Laura) because helping people feel good about themselves is what matters most to him. The services they provide are commonly associated with celebrities—facial fillers, Botox, LipoDissolve and permanent hair reduction, to name a few. The staff of Embodly maintains that looking your best should be available to everyone, and they provide a financing plan to make procedures affordable to more people. Steve isn't ashamed of what he does, and he and his staff have worked hard to

Dr. Steven Mayo started the business because making people feel good about themselves is what matters most to him.



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overcome the stigma of these sorts of services and to strip away the negative emotions and unhealthy self-images that commonly cause people to seek them. They provide high quality medical-grade, skin-care products and even makeup that is medically formulated to be good for your skin. They also stress the value of education in skin care, helping people find products that actively work to keep their skin healthy, and giving expert advice on how and when to use sunblock to protect against cancer and keep

the skin healthy and young.

As a 23-year old, I'm not exactly a member of the target demographic for Embodly. I (naively) look forward to my first wrinkles, and I love smile lines and other unique indications of a person's personality and history. However, despite my misgivings about our culture's fetish for youth, I think that if, in 20 years, I change my perspective and decide to go in for some rejuvenating procedures, I couldn't find a more supportive, safe, positive and talented group of people to provide those services with care and consideration. —Gretchen Treu

Gretchen Treu works at A Room Of One's Own bookstore and is happy to chat about books with anybody who stops in.



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As the reality of creating our own families increases, so do the paths we take to get there. The Law Center for Children and Families reports on a variety of options and success stories.

The Path to Parenting



By Attorneys Lynn J. Bodi, Carol M. Gopen, Judith Sperling-Newton, and Emily Dudak Taylor



As everyone reading *OUR LIVES* probably knows all too well, LGBT families do not receive the benefits and protections that are granted automatically to other families because under present law, same-sex couples cannot marry. That means LGBT families must be pro-active. But taking action to protect your family legally can be daunting. You have probably put it on your "to-do" list, and there it has sat.

This article will help to demystify the process through which LBGT families must go to protect their families under Wisconsin law, and to impress upon them the importance of acting now and moving this item to the top of the to-do list.

Create a "Co-Parenting Agreement"

If you and your partner are considering having or already have children, the first thing you should do is consult an attorney who can prepare a co-parenting agreement. This is a private agreement between you and your partner in which you set forth how, together, you will care for your child during your relationship, if you separate (called "dissolution"), or if one of you becomes seriously ill or dies.

For example, Anne and Elizabeth have a daughter, Ashlynn. Anne is Ashlynn's biological and legal parent. In a co-parenting agreement with Elizabeth, Anne can express her intent to co-parent Ashlynn with Elizabeth. Topics for Anne and Elizabeth to address in the agreement include who would have legal custody of Ashlynn if they break up, where Ashlynn would live and go to school, and how each parent would financially support the child. Generally, alternative dispute resolution provisions are also recommended. These provisions would state that if there is a dispute over Ashlynn or the agreement in the future, Anne and Elizabeth agree to attempt to resolve the dispute with a mediator and avoid going into court.

Co-parenting agreements are unenforceable under Wisconsin law. However, they do have value. Anne and Elizabeth will have an emotional investment to honor the agreement that they created, even if a court will not order them to do exactly as the agreement says. Second, co-parenting agreements memorialize the intent of the parties and the facts of their family. If, for example, Elizabeth and Anne separate and Anne prohibits or restricts contact between Elizabeth and Ashlynn, the co-parenting agreement could remind Anne of her intent in happier times and could form the basis for a visitation action by Elizabeth. In these ways, co-parenting agreements can be valuable tools for protecting a family.

Become a Legal Parent of Your Child

Yes, you can become a legal parent of your partner's biological child in Wisconsin, despite what you may have heard or read. In fact, LGBT families have multiple paths to parentage from which to choose.

Legal parentage makes LGBT parents in law what they are in fact: parents. The status creates a legally recognized relationship that gives both parent and child many rights, responsibilities, benefits and protections.

If Elizabeth becomes a legal parent to Ashlynn, she would have the right to make major decisions for her, such as consenting to non-emergency medical treatment. She would also have the constitutional right to the care, custody, companionship and control of the child.

Elizabeth would also have the responsibilities of a legal parent. For example, she, like Anne, would have a legal duty to support Ashlynn financially until Ashlynn reaches the age of 18.

Benefits to both the parent and child also flow from legal parentage. Under the Family Medical Leave Act, Elizabeth would be entitled to take time off work if Ashlynn became ill. (The Act also enables legal parents to take time off when a child is born or adopted.) Ashlynn would now be able to inherit from Elizabeth (even if Elizabeth does not have a will) and to receive her Social Security disability and death benefits.

The entire family is protected when both parents have legal parentage. If Elizabeth and Anne separated, Ashlynn could receive child support payments from both parents, and a court would determine Ashlynn's custody and physical placement schedule based on her best interests. And if Anne dies, her extended family cannot take Ashlynn away from Elizabeth.

Security for the Whole Family

ADOPTION Janet, a family practice physician, and Nicole, a middle school physical education teacher, live in Janesville, Wisconsin, and are the parents of two beautiful children, Thomas (age 2) and Eva (age 4 months). Although Thomas and Eva were born to Janet, they became the legal children of both partners through adoption.

Janet believes she would not have had the courage to have children without the security of knowing they would legally become Nicole's, too. "I am proud of our family. Because we took the time to go through the adoption process, we have secured the future of our children to the best of our ability."

Nicole will never take for granted being a mom. Many people come up to Janet and Nicole and comment how lucky the children are to have two moms. When Nicole hears this, she says, "All I can do is smile."



Legal parentage may be available to:

- The partner of a woman who conceives a child using advanced reproductive technology ("ART"), such as egg/sperm donation, insemination, in vitro fertilization and surrogacy.
- A partner who did not participate in the conception of his or her partner's child, or his or her partner's adoption of a child, but who acts as a parent to the child. This requires the partner's consent.
- Male partners who use a surrogate to conceive and give birth to one or more children, whether or not either partner's sperm is used.
- Any partner who acts as a parent to his or her partner's child, with the partner's consent.

If you or your partner fall into one of these categories, obtaining legal parentage may be possible. Your family should consult an attorney who can talk you through the various methods for obtaining legal parentage in Wisconsin. At the core of this principle is that parentage should be determined according to the intent of the parties and not solely by biology, the method of conception or the circumstances of the child's birth. Legal parentage recognizes the importance of preserving the relationships children develop with the adults who nurture, support and love them as parents.

Guardianship Is Not Your Only Option

You may have heard that a guardianship is the best protection an LGBT family can expect in Wisconsin. A Guardianship is a legal status given

to the non-legal parent by a court that empowers the non-legal parent to make certain decisions and have certain responsibilities for the child. Guardianships do not, however, give the same rights as a legal parent, and a guardian is not even close to equal to a legal parent.

For example, if Elizabeth becomes Ashlynn's guardian, Ashlynn still would not automatically inherit from Elizabeth. And, if Elizabeth and Anne separated, Elizabeth would have no right to custody of Ashlynn, and perhaps not even visitation. Elizabeth also would not have a duty to financially support Ashlynn.

The most dangerous flaw in a guardianship is that the legal parent must consent to it—and can terminate it. Therefore, Elizabeth's relationship with Ashlynn is still subject to Anne's whim. Some attorneys attempt to limit the ability of the legal parent to terminate the guardianship, but such limitations are likely unenforceable under Wisconsin guardianship law.

Another flaw in this strategy for protection is that a guardianship is not permanent. Even if Anne continues to consent to Elizabeth's guardianship, the guardianship will terminate automatically as soon as Ashlynn turns 18. At that point, the legal relationship between Elizabeth and Ashlynn would no longer exist.

Finally, guardianships do not protect the family in the case of the legal parent's incapacitation or death. If Anne became incapacitated or died, Elizabeth's guardianship may not continue. Instead, estate planning laws and documents would take over and govern who should be appointed by a court to care for Ashlynn. Courts may favor the biological parent's "immediate family" (meaning their parents and siblings).

Advanced Reproductive Technology Service Providers

The following are some of the providers of advanced reproductive technology that offer services to the LGBT community:

- **Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin Reproductive Medicine Center in Milwaukee**
Dr. Estil Strawn, Jr., at 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666 or froedtert.com/fertility
- **Gundersen Lutheran Fertility Center in La Crosse**
Dr. Kathy Trumbull at 608-775-2306 or gundluth.org
- **Reproductive Health & Fertility Center in Madison and Rockford, Illinois**
Dr. Sawetawan and Dr. Graczykowski at 877-373-7552 or 815-986-3737 or wemakefamilies.com
- **The Surrogacy Center in Madison**
Mary Murphey at 608-821-8230 or surrogacycenter.com
- **University of Wisconsin Hospital, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility, in Madison**
Dr. Dan Lebovic at 608-265-0300 or uwhealth.org/infertility
- **Wisconsin Fertility Institute in Middleton**
Dr. David Olive and Dr. Elizabeth Pritts at 608-824-0075 or wisconsinfertility.com

Did You Know ...?

... that the Equal Protection Clause in the U.S. Constitution prohibits laws that punish or disadvantage children based solely on the circumstances of their birth or the marital status of their parents?

A few attorneys in Wisconsin have succeeded in asserting this Constitutional right of children to obtain legal parentage from both of their parents. And as these children grow up, federal and state governmental agencies and courts are recognizing and enforcing the parentage and adoption orders. For example, if Elizabeth became a legal parent of Ashlynn, and then died while Ashlynn was still a minor, Ashlynn could receive Elizabeth's Social Security benefits.

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Fatherhood Realized

Wisconsin Rainbow Families' **Vance Skinner** and **Brendan Barrett** outline the evolution of their identities and what lead to their desire to have children.

Photographed by **Melody Hanson, Imagine Photography**



Vance Skinner

What makes someone want to have children? This may seem like a silly question for some, and a very real question for others. For me, answering it requires a personal reflection on coming out as well as the related struggles of growing up in a society which had not yet accepted gay men having children. The concept of raising children is very different from person to person as well as for each gender. And how each of us gets to that result can be very different, too. Just growing up and how each of us got from A-to-B is very different between Brendan and myself. I consider our story a testament to each other, how we met, and ultimately how we came to have two beautiful girls!

Many people claim to have a "maternal instinct" that drives them towards having children. I did not have this particular feeling. However, I did have thoughts and feelings around the idea of family. Like others, these thoughts were of me, my wife and two kids. Unfortunately these ideas surfaced in high school at about the same period I began struggling with my sexuality. Now at age 39, I can look back to high school in La Crosse and make sense of those extremely difficult times. I made many bad choices, which involved drugs and the overall suppression of my sexuality through an array of girlfriends. They, like me, often got hurt and confused. Compounded further were the experiences I had with my straight friends. They allowed me to justify in my mind that my sexuality was only a phase and would pass. Thus, the girlfriends and idea of family continued. Even now as I write this, many forgotten memories are conjured up. In particular laying in bed at night and desperately praying to be "normal." I remember desperately trying to sort out how I was going to get married and have a family if these thoughts and feelings would not pass! At that time I wasn't friends with anyone who I knew was gay or who I could look to as a role model. Same-sex families were practically unknown and certainly far on the fringe. A family consisted of a man and a woman or an occasional single parent.

It wasn't until moving to Milwaukee to attend college that I started to experience a broader gay culture. While La Crosse had a few gay bars, Milwaukee had a gay community that allowed for more exposure. Still, after years of clubbing and socializing, an inner feeling began to resurface: Is this it? Is this the rest of my life? I realized again that my world had not changed,

only the players had. Gay men just didn't talk about taboo things like kids or marriage unless it involved nieces and nephews. I remember the terms "breeder" and "Stepford Fag" being thrown around. Even now, I think this is in part due to the laws (written and unwritten) of our society. It wasn't until recently that some states started allowing same-sex marriage. We gays were left to our commitment ceremonies and domestic partner registries. While growing more aware and less distracted by societal norms, my idea of family became more creative. Still, the fact that so few gay men spoke about family only made the hope of ever achieving my own more distant and distressing.

My struggle to be a dad had become my own inner isolation, and, while not as chaotic as battling with sexual identity, the finality of believing I might miss out was often too much to handle. Family still seemed reserved for my straight friends, however well-adjusted or dysfunctional they may be. That was until one day when fate presented itself as a fork in the road. That's when I was introduced to my soon-to-be husband. Upon meeting him, I had an immediate sense that something was very different. Cliché, I know... But, without a doubt it was an immediate connection of a different kind. It was only our second date when the subject of children came up. This was the first time I'd ever openly discussed this—the desire to have a family with another person. I will never forget those moments when we were learning about each other and our life ambitions. The only word that can describe that period in my life is liberating. I had found my life partner.

Brendan Barrett

Vance struggled with his sexuality and the idea of family. For me, it was quite different. I was not reconciled with being gay until later in life. My family journey began as a very young adult attending college in Whitewater. I always knew I would be a dad. I came from a family with a mom and dad, brother and sister. I had a very traditional childhood. I dated women all through college. I was the one-woman type of boyfriend. I was loyal. I had two long-term girlfriends that I imagined having children with. Then, when I was 28, I met a gay friend. It wasn't until then that I realized I was gay. Even after I began dating men, I still had the drive to want children. I just didn't know how it would happen. I kept all this from my family. I distanced myself from all of them. The day I met Vance, my life began again. Our courtship was traditional. This was the first time I had a conversation with another guy about having kids and the thought of it was good. Vance and I had many conversations about life while we dated. Talking about children was especially fulfilling because we both were very passionate about it. There was never a question of having children; it was just a matter of when.

We learned we were having twins very early on in the pregnancy. We also learned that we were both the biological dads, which was a double surprise.

About a year into our relationship, we began our family journey. Back then there were no Wisconsin-based agencies or well-known "how to" books for gay families. We remember contacting our first family law practice and asked, "Do you work with gay couples who want to have children?" We received a prompt "yes" without any of the feared biases or anticipated rejections. Judy, the lawyer who provided that prompt response, soon became a part of the equation and remains someone whom we consider to be a member of our extended family today. Today, many people are familiar with surrogacy. However, what many people still do not know are the unique challenges and decisions facing gay men. We opted to go with an anonymous egg donor and someone we would ultimately have to trust to carry our fertilized eggs. We were not prepared for other things like the psychological evaluations necessary to ensure we were ready or capable of being good parents. At the time it felt somewhat insulting. Here were two committed, loving adults being subjected to what no adolescent single parent ever has

How to Adopt a Child: Here and Abroad

If you and your partner are interested in growing your family by adoption, there are a few things you should know before you start.

A common misperception in Wisconsin is that even one partner in an LGBT family will find it nearly impossible to adopt within the United States because of his or her sexuality. Often, that is why LGBT families pursue international adoption.

There is no Wisconsin or federal statute prohibiting an LGBT person from adopting domestically, or internationally, for that matter. However, while there are no written legal barriers, there are practical obstacles to overcome. But it can be done.

With domestic adoption, the most important step is finding an adoption agency with which you feel comfortable, welcome and safe. Finding such an agency at the outset may reduce the chances that your family will face discrimination later in the process. Once your family has applied and been accepted into a domestic program, and has been "home studied" and approved, then you simply wait to be matched with a child, just like any other family. And just like any other family, you will face the same waiting and uncertainty. But eventually, you may also share the same happy success.

With international adoption, there are two obstacles to confront. The first, is again, finding a welcoming adoption agency. But in an international adoption, you often need two agencies: one in Wisconsin to process state-required paperwork, and another elsewhere in the United States with an international adoption program.

The second hurdle is the most difficult to overcome: the adoption laws of the child's country of origin. Sadly, some countries do not allow their citizens' children to be adopted by single parents or parents who are unwilling to sign an "Affidavit of Heterosexuality" under penalty of perjury. There are, however, several countries from which one parent in an LGBT family can adopt successfully. (We are aware of no case in which an LGBT couple was allowed to adopt together in the country of origin. Families can, however, return to Wisconsin and obtain legal parentage for the parent who did not adopt in the country of origin.)

The first step in any international adoption is to find an attorney who is experienced in not just LGBT issues and adoption law, but also international adoption and immigration law. That attorney should educate you and walk you through each step of the process, especially choosing an appropriate country to adopt from and a reputable, safe international adoption agency.

Domestic Adoption Agencies Who Welcome LGBT Families

- **Adoptions of Wisconsin in Madison**
Contact Colleen Schmit at 608-821-8220 or adoptionsofwisconsin.com
- **Children & Families First in Madison**
Contact Anne Johnson at 608-576-0498 or www.cffwi.org
- **Community Adoption Center in Manitowoc**
Contact Laurie Resch at 1-800-ADOPTME
- **Special Children in Elm Grove**
Contact Beth Peters at 262-821-2125 or spchild@sbcglobal.net or specialchildreninc.com
- **The Adoption Option in Waukesha**
Contact Roberta Fries at 262-544-4278

to go through; the ultimate bad parent/bad person test. We underwent AIDS testing as well. Ultimately realizing this was more for our own health and well being, it was yet again a reminder of our difference. We had some deep philosophical discussions about adoption. Questions like, "Why shouldn't we adopt when there are so many needy children?" and "Is it selfish to go the route of surrogacy as opposed to adopting and risking the biological mom (or dad) wanting the child back?" When we informed our parents that we were becoming dads, it was uncharted territory. Vance's mom countered with, "You're men—how will you know how to raise girls?" instead of the typical "Congratulations" that usually accompanies a happy announcement.

With regard to the pregnancy and our surrogate: It requires an incredible amount of mutual trust and just as much paperwork. We learned we were having twins very early on in the pregnancy. We also learned that we were both the biological dads, which was a double surprise. While we were excited, this was when the nerves started to kick-in, or so we thought.

Our daughters were born in 2003 at a small hospital near our surrogate's home—not in a city where the assumed acceptance would accompany a larger, more open-minded hospital. We remember the drive when we were told it was time: It was surreal. No talking, just reflection along with a jumble of nerves. Here it was: All this time in the making and all those hurdles and hoops; we were about to realize our dream. We arrived very early in the morning, and just as we sat down in the waiting room, we began to hear voices coming down the hall. Then, as the nurses passed we noticed they were pushing two carts with two newborn babies—OUR DAUGHTERS! Shortly after we were invited to come see our newborn girls. They were premature and tiny—only five pounds. We met our daughters for the very first time! We did the things all new parents do, like check to see that all their toes and fingers were there and noticing whether or not they looked like either of us.

The hospital turned out to be incredibly accepting of us as new parents. We were offered a room right in the birthing area and met with a hospital social worker to explain our relationship to the surrogate. Initially, we were not listed as the parents on the girls' birth certificates, which created a huge weight of emotions and accompanying challenges. It was a very emotional day in court when we were finally granted birth certificates for our daughters with our names documenting us as their parents; a day we will never forget.

Since the girls' birth we have had a lot of wonderful experiences. We belong to a great church now where the girls have also gone to preschool since they were two years old. The teachers and parents have been very welcoming and are our extended community. One of their teachers asked, "What do I tell the other children when they ask, 'Why does Ashlyn and Bailie have two dads?'" That is tricky question. We suggested she may want to tell their parents that they are asking and let them be involved in developing an answer. We also asked her what would you tell a kid if another child didn't have a mom or dad? As a teacher, you probably get that question a little more often and the answers are similar. One teacher gave us the book "And Tango Makes Three" and another bought "The Family Book." Both are about same-sex families. This felt like true inclusion to the church and school. We have met a lot of great families who we socialize with at church and school functions. Joining the church has been one of our best decisions as a family. Our family is also actively involved in Wisconsin Rainbow Families, which is a great resource that allows LGBT families from around the state to interact with one another. We have met numerous families and friends through WRF, which has helped us to learn from one another and provide the framework for our daughters to interact with families of a similar dynamic.

The questions around "What makes someone want to have children?" and the associated feelings are different for every person, gay or straight. The challenges and barriers faced by same-sex couples are not so different in some ways, but unfortunately very challenging in others. While we realize we're among a fairly new group of American families, we are increasing in numbers. In reading our story we hope that we can inspire others to follow their dreams regardless of their situation. The feelings associated with becoming a parent and ultimately having children are something that is incredibly unique. Truly, it's of the best feelings in the world! ■



Fighting for Riley

Melissa and Mandy are a two-mom household with a love for children. They have 11 kids—some biological and some brought into their family through other means.

Riley joined their family as a foster child when he was first born. When Riley was about a year old, his biological parents asked Melissa and Mandy to adopt him. Melissa and Mandy hired a lawyer to handle the adoption. All was going well, and the path to adoption appeared clear and simple.

However, fourteen months into Riley's life with moms Melissa and Mandy, the court ordered that the birth-mother's soon-to-be ex-husband, who was unrelated to Riley and who had a questionable past, was his legal father. Melissa and Mandy were devastated. They and their attorney began a long and uphill custody battle that went to the appellate courts and back to trial court. They were persistent and eventually they prevailed, adopting Riley in 2006.

Melissa and Mandy have now welcomed Riley's younger brother into their home and have established legal guardianship for him as a means to avoid the issues they faced with his older brother. ■

By working with an attorney experienced in LGBT issues, LGBT families can create a plan that gives them a level of protection close to what is automatically given to "next of kin." Gary could express his wish that Kyle continue to parent their child upon his death. Gary could demand that Kyle be allowed to visit him in any health-care facility as a member of his "immediate family."

Couples should expect an attorney to prepare individualized documents for their family, including Wills, Powers of Attorney for Health Care and Finances, Living Wills, and various health care and visitation authorizations. In some circumstances, living trusts are warranted, but beware of this expensive legal fad that is all too often "sold" to the LGBT community.

Couples should also expect the attorney to guide them through beneficiary designations for retirement accounts and life insurance policies, to help them title their property to avoid probate fees and gift taxes, and to refer them to welcoming financial service providers with experience in LGBT financial issues (see sidebar). At the end of the process, an attorney should help the couple execute the documents properly and instruct them on how to keep the documents safe. The documents are worth nothing if the key people don't know about, can't find, or don't have access to them when they are needed.

If a same-sex couple has children, life and estate planning becomes even more important. Such families need more than just wills, powers of attorney, and medical releases; they need documents such as Nominations of Guardian for Minor Child and Minor Support Trusts.

Gift-tax planning is also essential to a complete LGBT-specific estate plan. It is a piece often overlooked by couples and even their attorneys. Gift taxation has one of the most serious effects of the marriage ban. For instance, joint checking accounts and joint ownership of a home can create gift tax issues. Even the division of property during a break-up, or the payment of a child's tuition by the non-legal parent, can have gift-tax implications.

A thorough LGBT life and estate planning attorney should not only clean up the gift-tax problems brought to them, but also advise their clients on how to structure their finances going forward in their life together, so as to avoid gift-tax problems altogether.

Life and Estate Planning

The next step an LGBT family must take to protect their family is to complete the life-planning and estate-planning process.

Gary and Kyle have been together for 20 years. Their lives are completely merged, and they love each other very much. However, if Gary became gravely ill, Kyle would not have any more right to make health care decisions for him, to hear about his condition, or to visit him in the hospital, than a next-door neighbor. If Gary died, Kyle would have no right to direct how Gary's remains should be disposed of. And if they had a child together, Kyle would have no right to continue to parent Gary's child. That is, unless Gary and Kyle had completed the life and estate planning process....

Because same-sex couples cannot marry under present law, they do not receive the benefits and protections that are granted automatically to other families. Instead, the law treats them as "legal strangers," more like business partners than life partners. Because of this discrimination, same-sex couples must plan very carefully to protect their families in the event any one of them, including their child, becomes ill, incapacitated or dies. This is especially true if family members are unsupportive of a partner's sexuality or their choice of a partner.

Careful planning does not mean simply filling out a template will and power of attorney found on the internet or in some LGBT legal guide from the local bookstore. In fact, in some cases, such documents can do more harm than good, especially when a child is involved.

Suggested Financial Service Providers

- **Kelly Financial in Madison, Wisconsin**

Mary Greenhalgh provides life insurance, retirement, investment and business continuation planning. She can be reached at 608-294-4089 or mgreenhalgh@kellyfi.com.

- **The Krizek Group in Elm Grove, Wisconsin**

Scott Krizek provides life insurance, long-term disability insurance, and long-term care insurance and planning. He can be reached at 262-785-9315.

- **Wegner LLP, CPAs & Consultants in Madison and Baraboo**

Bruce Mayer, CPA and partner, provides accounting services to the LGBT community, including individual income and gift tax returns, as well as small business and non-profit organization accounting, audits, and tax returns. He can be reached at 608-442-1939 or bruce.mayer@wegnercpas.com.

For better or for worse, contract law essentially governs LGBT families. By not having a life and estate plan, upon your incapacitation or death, you are inviting federal and state law to haphazardly govern your family using a so-called "traditional" family model. Completing the life and estate planning process can be tedious and, at times, slightly morbid. But with the right attorney, it can be a positive experience with the final product being your peace of mind.

Name Changes for You and Your Family

Another step many LGBT couples take to protect and cement their families is changing their names. Not surprisingly, many LGBT families wish to share the same last name. It is a way, in lieu of marriage, to declare to the world that you are a family. But name changes carry more than just emotional value. They can help protect families in day-to-day life as well. In addition, transgendered individuals may wish to change their first names to reflect their gender.

Under Wisconsin law, there are two ways to change your legal name: by common law or by statute. The common law route, meaning law created by previous cases not statute, requires one to use the new name "consistently and continuously" and not for a fraudulent purpose. This route is not recommended for LGBT families, as it is too vague and without any documentary evidence.

The statutory route, although it is more complicated and time consuming than the common-law route, is the advised route. The standard for a statutory name change is simple: It must not be for a fraudulent purpose, such as avoiding creditors. In addition to meeting the standard, one must publish notice of the final hearing in a local newspaper. This is done to give creditors and the public the right to appear at the hearing and object to the name change if they wish. Some people handle the process on their own; others are more comfortable retaining an attorney to help with preparing and filing the documents, and appearing at the hearing.

If the statutory name change is granted, a new birth certificate will be issued by the vital records office in the petitioner's state of birth. The family must then obtain new driver's licenses, passports, Social Security cards, and in some states, voter registration cards (do so well before an election). They must also inform their creditors, financial institutions, schools and other service providers.

Take Action Now

Now you know the basics. Now you are ready for action. Choose an attorney with care. Demand that your attorney educate you. Take an active role in planning for your family's future. And most importantly, don't put it off until tomorrow. This is an investment that will bring you peace of mind and a lifetime of benefits for your family. ■

The Law Center for Children & Families in Madison, Wisconsin, practices statewide in the areas of adoption, advanced reproduction, child custody and support, divorce and dissolution, international family law, grandparent and foster parent rights, guardianships, immigration, and life and estate planning.

LGBT Family Support Services

- **Wisconsin Rainbow Families**
wirainbowfamilies.com

- **Outreach, Madison**
(608) 255-8582, lgbtoutreach.org

- **Happy Bambino, Madison**
(608) 204-6147, happybambino.com

- **Gay-Bi Fathers Group**, (608) 345-4885

- **Current/Future Single Parents' Group**
hansonjenny@rocketmail.com

Our History by Richard Wagner

How Far We've Come...

Could gays present themselves as parents?
No, said the Wisconsin Supreme Court in the early 1970s



Superintendent John Garstecki gave the following notice to Paul Safransky in 1972:

"You are hereby notified that you are discharged from employment at Southern Wisconsin Colony and Training School due to problems associated with your homosexual life style."

Safransky was a state civil service employee with permanent status at this institution for the domiciliary care of mental health patients, but it was

clear as the case developed that not all the people with issues were the patients. He was employed as a houseparent in Tranberg Hall doing a regular shift supervising mildly and moderately retarded teenage boys. At the time of his dismissal, Paul Safransky was an active member of the Gay People's Union in Milwaukee and at various times was on the board of directors of the organization. He was that rarity of an out gay man in the immediate post-Stonewall era.

The disciplinary hearing conducted on June 29, 1972 established the following: 1. that he admitted he was "an avowed homosexual;" 2. that he openly discussed his activities with co-workers and in the presence of the residents while on duty; 3. that this created problems in the working relationships with co-workers; And 4. that it created a problem "with respect to your relationship to residents and the image they perceive in your position as a houseparent."

It was the duty of the appellant to emulate parenthood and present a code of conduct that residents of Southern Colony could copy.

As a young activist, Paul Safransky appealed his dismissal with support from the Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union. The State Personnel Board heard the case.

The Department of Health and Social Services, the employing agency, called several witnesses including a Miss Tucker. She related Safransky he discussed that "his roommate was an impersonator and he turned tricks with, you know, with other men... and how he sets the wigs... and just how they dressed and dancing and different things." Mrs. Irene Saltys indicated he wore eye shadow, mascara and face powder.

There was never at any time a charge that Safransky had made sexual overtures to patients under the institution's care or was noted, "that he openly instructed his patients in his way of life."

The State Personnel Board made several findings including, "That homosexual activity is contrary to the generally recognized and accepted standards of morality and the appellant's activity of this nature had a substantial adverse effect in the performance of his job duties." And the Board found, "Because the appellant, in his position duties, served as a houseparent which required... displaying proper parental care, custody, and control and moral training, his admitted homosexual tendencies and attitudes constituted an adverse influence to the proper performance of his position duties and his discharge on this basis should be sustained."

Safransky, having lost, then appealed to the Circuit Court in Dane County, which had jurisdiction over state government's actions. David Adamnay, a lawyer and professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, filed an *Amicus Curiae* brief. Gay newsletters said the brief was on behalf of the Gay Liberation Front of Madison. Circuit Court Judge William Jackman upheld the decision of the State Personnel Board stating, "While homosexual activity is probably not

rare, it is not conduct that is generally accepted as normal among the great majority of persons. It may be a manifestation of mental illness or disturbance of varying degrees." Jackman used terms like "abnormal" and "unorthodox" in regard to homosexuality. The mention of mental illness would recall that gays were more frequently in the mental health institutions, not employed by them in pre-Stonewall days.

Safransky made his next appeal to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. (There were no appeals courts in the state at that time.)

The Supremes' decision addressed several aspects of the case.

First, they apparently narrowed the legal status of the State Personnel Board findings. The Supreme Court decision noted, "The Board made a finding 'that homosexual activity is contrary to the generally recognized and accepted standards of morality.' No evidence was submitted as to this finding. Therefore, the finding is not supported by evidence."

Thus, it appeared as if the court did not want to make a blanket ruling about homosexuals and public employment. The decision focused on this specific employment.

The Court noted, "It was the duty of the appellant to emulate parentship and present a code of conduct that residents of Southern Colony could copy. He was to represent and project to patients an appropriate male image consistent with that expressed by the remainder of society.

Further, per the Court, "One specific aspect of the responsibilities of the houseparent was to direct the patients to a proper understanding of human sexuality. Such an understanding required the projection of the orthodoxy of male heterosexuality." One might wonder how proper was the Justices' understanding of sexuality since this was many years after the 1948 Kinsey study of Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.

But for the Court, there was only one orthodoxy. "Consistent with the projection of the normalcy of heterodoxy by the houseparent was the requirement that he project the unorthodoxy of male homosexuality to the patients under his care." Thus, there was no chance for an openly gay person to be a houseparent in the Court's thinking. Open gayness was a direct challenge to homosexuality's supposedly unorthodox status.

Thus, Safransky lost his job. But the story continued in a way that wiped out this *ancien regime* of pre-Stonewall days.

In 1970, Pat Lucey, a liberal Democrat in the Kennedy tradition, had been elected Governor, and one of his big issues was cabinet government. One of Pat Lucey's close advisors was David Adamany, a gay man. In fact while the Safransky case was proceeding through the courts, Lucey appointed Adamany as his Secretary of Revenue.

Prior to Lucey, the structure of Wisconsin state government was that independent boards ran many parts of state agencies. The Health and Social Services Board was one such independent board with members serving fixed terms. Thus, Lucey would wait four years with one appointment each year before he would control the Board. But when he did it would be the end of the administration of Wilbur Schmidt and his regime that had fired Safransky in 1972.

In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to have a non-discrimination law on the basis of sexual orientation regarding employment, housing and public accommodation. Liberal Republican Lee Sherman Drefus signed the bill. Findings such as Safransky's might still happen but legal redress was now possible in Wisconsin.

In the mid-1980s, a revamped Department of Health and Social Services with a Secretary appointed by another liberal Democrat, then-Governor Tony Earl, would uphold a decision by the Outagamie County Department of Social Services to place a foster child in the home of a gay man (Allan Beatty, who lived with his partner Dick Flintrop in Oshkosh). So both the doers of the bad deed and the policy of viewing gays as unable to parent changed drastically from that early 1970s experience. ■

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 working on gay Wisconsin history in his retirement and welcomes topics and sources.

The Teachers' Teacher

As the GLBTQ Resource Teacher for the Madison School District, **Bonnie Augusta** is empowering GLBTQ students while educating faculty and staff on how to support the needs of queer youth.

When I arrive at Café Zoma, Bonnie Augusta is sitting with a cup of plain, black coffee. Unassuming and casual, she wears a fleece over a long-sleeved T-shirt. Her Madison Schools nametag hangs around her neck. Bonnie is much like her cup of coffee: no frills, gets the job done and leaves a sustained buzz long afterwards.

Since 2001 Bonnie has been the GLBTQ Resource Teacher for the Madison School District. Bonnie scales a range of responsibilities: training educators and support staff at the district level; leading anti-discrimination and anti-harassment workshops in the schools; and being on hand when a student is in crisis. Of her job, she beams, "I'm never bored!"

Madison is one of six school districts in the country to have a designated and funded GLBTQ staff person. GLBTQ kids go through the same kinds of developmental and academic challenges that all kids face. But gaining social acceptance as a GLBTQ youth can not only be difficult, it can be devastating. Add the possibility of abuse (which can be physical, sexual or in the form of harassment at home or in school) and family rejection, and you have a recipe for low self-esteem. Thus, academic learning, physical and mental health, and identity formation are all affected.

Bonnie makes no bones about what students should do if they experience something that gets in the way of their learning or makes them feel unsafe. "Tell someone. Tell a teacher, a support staff, tell me. Keep telling someone until you get a response."

Bonnie is the hub. She connects students, teachers and parents with the resources they need. It could be a school's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), a counselor, or area groups such as Teens Like Us. Through phone calls and emails, Bonnie points people in the right direction. And

She warns that after her visit, it may seem like more harassment is occurring. It's not that the number of cases increases, but that the reporting increases. "And that's a good thing," she says. "It means that kids trust that something will be done."

if you contact her, you will get an answer, usually within the same day. I ask her how she recharges, given that she makes herself so available. She recounts a recent visit to a GSA meeting. One particular student who had been having some trouble was there. She says, "I saw this student glowing, thriving. That lets me know I'm on the right track."

Madison is lucky, not only to have such a position, but also to have Bonnie in it. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the early 1970s and began what would become a 30-year career as a special education teacher. I haven't seen her in action, but I get the sense that she glides effortlessly between getting administrator buy-in to comforting students to telling her own coming-out story to student groups.

When Bonnie works with a school having harassment or discrimination issues, she drives home three key points: **1)** Everyone has the right to an opinion. **2)** No one has the right to harass. **3)** When you see harassment, interrupt it. She warns that after her visit, it may seem like more harassment is occurring. It's not that the number of cases increases, but that the reporting increases. "And that's a good thing," she says. "It means that kids trust that something will be done."



Bonnie Augusta, OutReach's 2008 Susan Green Woman of the Year

Bonnie is instrumental in making Madison schools a safe environment, but it is not a one-woman job. In district training sessions, she teaches other educators, support staff and administrators to recognize a student's need, respond to it, and get everyone who can help involved. When she makes a school visit for a student in crisis, as she helps the student, she is also training the support staff involved so the next time, he or she can see the situation through solo. Bonnie relies on these folks to be her "eyes and ears," keeping her aware of particular students and situations.

Bonnie is rather pleased, rightly so, with what Madison is able to provide to all of its students. She is adamant when she says, "Working in the intersection of oppressions helps to alleviate any oppression." It benefits all students, but there is still more to do. She refers to the Wisconsin statute on pupil nondiscrimination, part of which reads:

[No person may be] denied the benefits of or be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational or other program or activity because of the person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability.

It's that part about "curricular" that Bonnie latches on to. She would like to ensure that curricula are non-discriminatory and inclusive. She isn't aware of a district with a curriculum that includes a GLBTQ component, but if she has her say, Madison could become the first. She says unabashedly, "There's very little that stops me!"

At the end of our interview, her cup of coffee untouched, she says wistfully, "I wish more people would take the time to stop and listen to young people, to their experience of school, that it is very different from ours. These kids are amazingly wise about what their experience is and we need to listen." Bonnie is an advocate in the truest sense of the word. When she says, "It is the responsibility of adults to do something if kids are not safe," it sounds, not like a personal belief, but a covenant she keeps, and one she hopes others abide by as well. ■

Area LGBTQ Resource Organizations

ACLU of Wisconsin's Youth & Civil Liberties Council

Articles, law library and Q&A on civil liberties topics related to youth. aclu-wi.org/youth/rights/rights.html

Youth SOS (includes Briarpatch Homeless and Runaway Youth Program)
Service organization dedicated to strengthening and improving lives of youth. youthsos.org

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)
Public awareness, youth leadership development, skill development for GSA advisors and other secondary school educators. gsafesafeschools.org

Madison Public Library Gay and Lesbian Pride Month
Bibliography of books and web resources on LGBTQ topics. madisonpubliclibrary.org/calendar/june/gaypride.html

OutReach
Madison organization for building LGBTQ community. lgbtoutreach.org

Project Q
Youth Program of the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center. wprojectq.org

Proud Theater

Theater group in Madison for LBGTQ youth or youth of LBGTQ parents. proudtheater.org

Rainbow Alliance for Youth of Wisconsin

Provides education, social justice and community organizing resources to LBGTQ youth groups in Wisconsin. diverseandresilient.org/youth

Teens Like Us

LGBTQ youth community. myspace.com/teenslikeus

Children of GLBTQ Parents

Community building and social justice organization for children of LBGTQ parents. colage.org

PFLAG-Madison Chapter

Support and advocacy group dedicated to making life better for GLBT persons, their families and friends. pflag-madison.org

My Family Playgroup

Playgroup for children of LGBT parents as well as socializing and networking for the parents. myfamilyplaygroup.com

Same Sex Parenting Group

Facilitated parenting group held at Happy Bambino. happybambino.com

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'Tis the Season

With winter returning and hours of sunlight on the decline, **Dale Decker** offers some advice on how to cope through seasonal depression.

Now that fall is coming to an end, with temperatures falling and the sun showing its face less and less, many people are feeling the winter blues. The bulky clothing, lack of exercise, and cold weather are enough to frustrate even the most hearty Wisconsinite. Some people struggle more than others, and science is only just beginning to explore the effect of seasons on mood.

Location certainly plays a role in the winter blues. About 10 percent of people in the northern latitudes of the U.S. will have some winter blues and 1-2 percent of those will have severe symptoms. Genetics appear to play a role as well—you are at higher risk if a family member has seasonal depression.

The most common complaints with seasonal mood changes are:

- Depressed or blue mood
- Increased appetite
- Craving starchy or sugary foods
- Weight gain
- Loss of energy
- Increased desire to sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Social withdrawal

The jury is still out on what causes seasonal depression, but there are some good leads. Sunlight helps balance the daily hormonal changes in the body, and less sunlight makes it harder for your body to know when it should be awake or asleep. The farther you live from the equator, the less sunlight you will get during winter months and thus have more potential for seasonal mood changes. Moving to the tropics is not feasible for most of us, but there are some very practical things you can do to make fall and winter more pleasant. Try these strategies if your seasonal blues are mild:

- Get outside into the sunlight daily
- Open your blinds and turn on lights in your home
- Exercise at least three times per week
- Avoid long naps
- Get out of bed at the same time each day
- Limit starchy or sugary foods
- Keep socially active



About 10 percent of people in the northern latitudes of the US will have some winter blues and 1-2 percent of those will have severe symptoms.



If your seasonal mood swings are causing problems with relationships or work, seek professional assistance. Don't wait for things to get worse because seasonal symptoms appear to resolve more quickly and are less severe if treated early. A medical professional can also help rule out some disorders that can mimic depression, such as low thyroid levels, low blood sugar and viral infections. Here is an overview of treatments that a medical professional can recommend:

Light therapy involves sitting in front of a special light source each day. Many people find this strategy appealing because it does not involve taking medications and has only a few possible side effects, including eye strain and difficulty sleeping if used too close to bedtime. Most of these side effects subside as your body becomes acclimated to the light. The most frequent barrier to success with light therapy is the time commitment. It takes discipline and planning to spend 30 to 60 minutes sitting in one location every day.

Medications are another option. On the positive side, medications are easy to use and effective. The potential for side effects increases, but, just like light therapy, most

Taking a vacation to a warm and sunny location in the winter can give you the boost you need to make it through to spring.

people find the bothersome side effects quickly decrease to tolerable levels.

Counseling can help you identify the behaviors and thoughts that increase the winter blues. This type of counseling is very practical and focuses on removing barriers to healthy habits and examining negative thinking. Counseling requires a time commitment but has the advantage of having no side effects.

Taking a vacation to a warm and sunny location in the winter can give you the boost you need to make it through to spring. While this is an expensive option, it certainly is the most fun! However, it is difficult to schedule the vacation at the correct time because the onset of seasonal mood problems can change from year to year. ■

Dale Decker has been a psychotherapist and substance abuse counselor in our community since 1994. He can be found online at www.daledecker.net

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Handle With Care

Family planning necessitates a lot of time and consideration. **Michele Perreault** suggests begining with learning about who you'll hire to help.

more than most groups, LGBT individuals benefit greatly from seeking out and receiving competent legal services. Unfortunately, until we achieve full legal equality, in many circumstances we have to develop legal protections and benefits that others are accorded automatically. Additionally, in some circumstances, such as family law and estate planning, the protections we need are often different from those needed by heterosexuals. For that reason, it is crucial that LGBT individuals and families seek legal assistance from attorneys with familiarity and



For example, in the area of family law, in some cases, a legal guardianship is absolutely the right approach to take. In other circumstances an adoption or determination of parentage may be the better route.



expertise in helping our families. However, just as one size does not fit all, it is also true that one legal approach does not help all people. You should try on different attorneys before making what could be the most important "purchase" of your life.

Be wary of any attorneys who tell you

that they are the only attorneys who offer a particular service, or are unwilling to give you the names of other attorneys who practice in a given field. Good attorneys have no problem providing you with the names and contact information of at least a couple others who might be able to help. There really is no legal protection that can only be offered by one person or by one firm. Interview a few attorneys to determine who provides the best options, at the best price, and with the best personal fit for you. Most attorneys will give you at least a 10-15 minutes free consultation to learn more about their experience and range of costs. Longer personal consultations may come with a charge, but often provide the best opportunity to get a feel for the options that are available.

Come to a consultation with a prepared list of questions. That helps keep the time focused, and makes it easier for you to compare attorneys before deciding which to hire.

Do not make the mistake of equating cost with benefit. One reason some attorneys may be reluctant to give names of other attorneys is that their prices are not in line with the market. Even within the same city, and between attorneys with the same experience, cost of legal services can vary wildly. Again, by interviewing several, you will get a feel for the cost, benefits and experience.

Make sure your attorney offers you several legal options and can speak intelligently about the pros and cons of each. For example, in the area of family law, in some cases, a legal guardianship is absolutely the right approach to take. In other circumstances, an adoption or determination of parentage is the best approach to take. Similarly, some clients need only a simple will and powers of attorney for health care and finances. Others benefit from a full estate plan designed to protect against estate taxes, including creation of complex trust documents. Your legal needs may well change throughout your life, such that at one point a simple, very inexpensive will is all that is needed, and later in life you may develop a need for more legal protection. Again, the larger point is that no single approach is best for all people.

If you are feeling pressured to sign a contract with an attorney, trust your instincts. The lawyer or law firm is not going to disappear overnight.

Give yourself time to make a reasoned decision. In most circumstances, there is no need to rush to decide which lawyer or law firm to hire. If you are feeling pressured to sign a contract with an attorney, trust your instincts. The lawyer or law firm is not going to disappear overnight. Unless you need work immediately, always give yourself a little time to reflect on your options.

The bottom line is that there is no such thing as one attorney or one approach that fits all people at all points in their lives. Taking the time to meet with a few attorneys can give you more options for both services and costs that you feel confident you have made the best choice for you. ■

Michele Perreault is an associate attorney for DeWitt Ross & Stevens (www.dewittross.com). Her practice covers three primary areas: family law, litigation, and city prosecutor.



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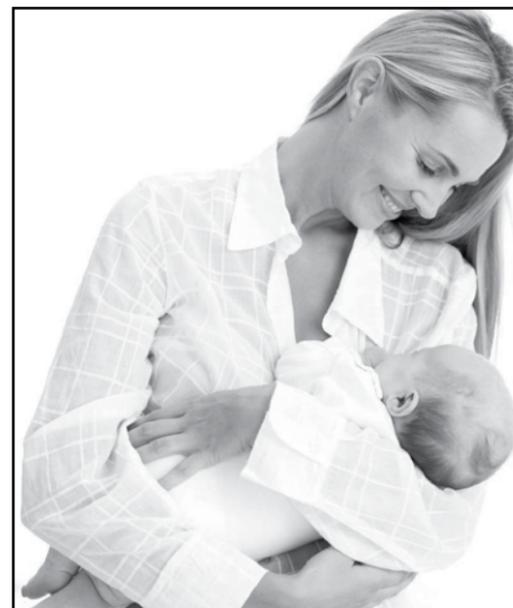
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OUR MONEY

Another Kind of Childcare

As your family planning begins, **Jaime Zimmerman** suggests opening a custodial account to protect your future child's financial health.

One of the basic rules of smart investing is to start early. And when it comes to saving for your child's education, the earlier you start, the better. By setting up a custodial account, in which you or another adult is the custodian of a child's investments, you can save for future college costs or accumulate enough resources to give the child the funds with which to set out in life as an adult. It's a great tool for parents, grandparents or others to make gifts of cash or securities to children who are too young to handle such assets.

A custodial account is simple to open, but you should consider whether an UGMA (Uniform Gift to Minors Act) or UTMA (Uniform Transfer to Minors Act) account is the best choice. In either case, it's important to understand that the property held in a custodial account is owned by the child. In other words, once the gift is made, you can't take the money back. Once more, when the child turns 18 or 21 (depending on the state's age of majority), they can use the money for anything they want. We sometimes call these the "Yale or Vail" accounts.

Another concern of gifting assets to your child is that income generated may be subject to the "kiddie tax." If the child is under age 18 and has unearned income above a threshold of \$1,700 (2007), that income will be taxed at the parent's rate, not the child's. In addition, the money in the account may count against the child when seeking financial aid for college. And if you're concerned about your own estate taxes, then you should avoid naming yourself as the custodian. If you die before the account terminates, the account will be included in your estate for tax purposes.

So what are the advantages of custodial accounts? For starters, although there are no contribution limits to a custodial account, anyone can transfer up to \$12,000 without federal gift-tax consequences and you can transfer cash and/or securities into their account. For some, this is a great estate-planning tool. Transferring a highly appreciated stock avoids a tax consequence for you especially if the custodial account will likely pay a much lower rate of



It's important to understand that the property held in a custodial account is owned by the child. In other words, once the gift is made, you can't take the money back.



tax when the security is sold. Remember though, that YOUR cost basis of a gifted security carries over to the child and will be used to determine the amount of gain for tax purposes.

Other benefits of the UGMA or UTMA are that you as custodian have control of the assets as long as the child's a minor. And withdrawals are not restricted to higher-education uses either. Unlike some other options, you can use the money as needed as long as it benefits the child.

Before establishing a custodial account, you should determine if other options may be more appropriate. You may find it would be better to invest in a Coverdell ESA, a 529 plan or a trust. It's also possible a traditional IRA or Roth IRA may be more appropriate. As always, consult with your tax and financial advisors to see what's most appropriate for your situation. ■

Jaime Zimmerman is a Vice President, Senior Investment Consultant, at the Madison office of Robert W. Baird & Co., member SIPC. For more information, visit www.jzimmermanfinancialadvisor.com

OUR APPAREL

It's in the Bag

Remember to get something for yourself this holiday, too. **Bonnie Raimy** picks her top satchels of the season.

KENTON SORENSON

Madison Bag

\$500 | From Kenton (the designer), "The leather is tanned in St. Louis using an old fashioned plant derived tanning process that produces a tough, dense leather that conforms and softens with use. It's the same type of leather used for saddles and belts. I hand dye each piece with an oil dye and saturate the leather with oils and waxes to give it flexibility and protection from the elements. All stitching is done by hand for durability, using a heavy waxed linen thread. **I personally make each bag by hand in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.** I've been designing and hand crafting bags since 1999."

CARE: Apply a light coat of a beeswax conditioner like Fiebing's Aussie Leather Conditioner twice a year. As with any leather, don't let it bake all day in a car during the summer.

BONNIE'S NOTE: This is an investment, but this bag is only getting better with age. If you want top quality, something that will start conversations and tell its own stories, this is the bag.

AVAILABLE AT: CONTEXT, 113 King St., Madison contextclothing.com



J. FOLD Gear Bag \$140 | This is a cool bag, and I love its funkiness! It takes a bold personality to pull off white... shoes, belt, and yes, satchel! If you can rock this, though, you can rock anything! Jazzman has already ordered this bag, and it should be in-store.



DETAILS: Distressed white. Rugged all-leather bag. Raw leather interior. One front pocket and one interior pocket

AVAILABLE AT: Jazzman, 340 State St., Madison

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A Divine Intervention

Catering to the likes of all ages, **Cloud 9 Grille** serves up a menu diverse enough to please even the most mature palate.

SOMETIMES, PARENTS JUST WANT TO FEEL LIKE GROWN-UPS. You know – have dinner in a well-appointed restaurant, enjoy a meal that does NOT automatically come with a side of fries? But some days, a babysitter is not an option.

Luckily, there's Cloud 9, which manages to serve adults and children exactly what they want. The family-friendly first floor features a casual environment, studded with televisions to allow you to keep tabs on the game. Dark woods and dramatic décor create a comfortable environment for any day of the week.

Upstairs, the amazing view is the star of the show. Two distinct rooms – the Stardust Lounge and the Sunset Room – offer a view of the Capitol amidst sparkling city lights, made dramatic by the quiet setting. This is the place to escape to when it's just the two of you.

Whichever floor you choose, the menu offers the same pleasing selection, combining innovative combinations with classic favorites. Start with the white cheddar and sweet corn fondue – a hot, cheesy dip served with fresh tortilla chips and crusty breadsticks. Stuffed mushrooms come in the form of large white caps filled with a crab-infused cream cheese and fried, served alongside a creamy, spicy remoulade.

The popular raspberry chicken salad is a pleasant surprise, with none of the many flavorful ingredients overshadowing the others. Each bite is a kaleidoscope of tart apple, thick-cut smoky bacon, candied walnuts, bleu cheese, grilled chicken and a subtle raspberry vinaigrette, offset by a crisp romaine backdrop. The chipotle chicken pasta came highly-recommended by our gregarious server, and it's easy to see why: penne tossed with blackened chicken breast, mushrooms, peppers and onions in a spicy chipotle cream sauce left my tongue tingling with joy. While it's not a dish for milder palates, a signature martini will easily cool you down.

But don't let that scare you from a bringing in a mixed crew – the children's menu sticks to kid favorites, such as chicken tenders and macaroni and cheese, paired with healthy crudités to dip. Traditional pub fare like Reubens and burgers, comfort foods like roasted chicken and pot roast, and sizzling steakhouse cuts round out the menu to ensure that there's something for everybody in a setting sure to please. —**Amy VanKauwenbergh**

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letoile-restaurant.com

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380 W. Washington Ave.,
251-9999
Indian \$\$

Marigold Kitchen
118 S. Pinckney St., 661-5559
Sandwiches, Soup \$
marigoldkitchen.com

Michael's Frozen Custard
2531 Monroe St., 231-3500
Frozen Custard, Burgers \$
ilovemichaels.com

New Orleans Takeout
1517 Monroe St., 280-8000
New Orleans Cuisine \$
eatmobettah.com

Ocean Grill
23 N. MLK Jr. Blvd., 285-2582
Seafood \$\$
oceangrillmadison.com

The Old Fashioned
23 N. Pinckney St., 310-4545
Steak, American \$\$
theoldfashioned.com

Opus Lounge
116 King St., 441-6787
Tapas \$\$
opuslounge.com

Parthenon Gyros
116 State St., 251-6311
Greek \$

Restaurant Muramoto
106 King St., 260-2680
Asian Fusion, Vegetarian \$

Roman Candle
1054 Williamson St., 258-2000
Pizza \$
theromancandle.com

Sardine
517 Williamson St., 441-1600
French \$\$\$

Shamrock Bar
117 W. Main St., 255-5029
Sunday Brunch \$
shamrockbar.com

Sucre
20 W. Mifflin St., 310-4520
Dessert \$
suresweet.com

Sunprint Cafe
1 S. Pinckney St., 268-0114
Sandwiches, Vegetarian \$

Takara
315 State St., 268-0188
Japanese, Sushi \$

Tornado Club
116 S. Hamilton St., 256-3570
Steak \$\$\$
apartmentrenting.com/tornado

Weary Traveler
1201 Williamson St., 442-6207
International \$

Wisconsin Union
800 Langdon St., 265-3000
American, Sandwiches \$
www.union.wisc.edu

East

Bunky's Cafe
2827 Atwood Ave., 204-7004
Italian, Mediterranean \$\$
bunkyscafe.net

Cloud 9 Grille
876 Jupiter Drive, 441-3250
American \$\$
cloud9grille.com

Ella's Deli
2902 E. Washington Ave.,
241-5291
Kosher/Deli, Ice Cream \$
ellasdeliandicecreamparlor.com

Fork and Spoon Cafe
1133 E. Wilson St., 257-7216
Italian, Pasta \$
forkandspooncafe.com

Glass Nickel
2916 Atwood Ave., 245-0880
Pizza \$
glassnickelpizza.com

Harmony Bar & Grill
2201 Atwood Ave., 249-4333
Pizza, Burgers \$

Lao Laan-Xang
2098 Atwood Ave., 819-0140
Laotian, Vegetarian \$\$

Mariner's Inn
5339 Lighthouse Bay Dr.,
246-3120
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/mariners

Monty's Blue Plate
2089 Atwood Ave., 244-8505
American, Pies \$
montysblueplatediner.com

Nau-Ti-Gal
5360 Westport Rd., 246-3130
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/nautigal

Tex Tubbs Taco Palace
2089 Atwood Ave., 242-1800
Tex-Mex \$
textubbstacos.com

Alchemy
1980 Atwood Ave., 244-8563
American, Burgers \$

West

Bar Bistro 608
430 N. Midvale Blvd., 316-6900
Seafood, Steak \$\$\$

Biaggi's
601 Junction Rd., 664-9288
Italian, Pasta \$\$
www.biaggis.com

Bluephies
2701 Monroe St., 231-3663
American, Vegetarian \$\$
bluephies.com

Captain Bill's
2701 Century Harbor Rd.,
831-7327
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/capbills

Flat Top Grill
538 N. Midvale Blvd., 236-4008
Asian Fusion \$\$
flattopgrill.com

Fleming's Steak & Wine Bar
750 N. Midvale Blvd.,
233-9550
Steak, Seafood \$\$\$\$
flemingssteakhouse.com

Glass Nickel
5003 University Ave.,
218-9000
Pizza \$
glassnickelpizza.com

Mediterranean Hookah Lounge
77 Sirloin Strip, 251-7733
Mediterranean \$\$
Inka Heritage
602 S. Park St., 310-4282
Peruvian \$\$\$

J.T. Whitney's Brewpub
674 S. Whitney Way, 274-1776
Brewery, American \$\$
jtwhitneys.com

Jordan's Big Ten Pub
1330 Regent St., 251-6375
American, Burgers \$
jordansbigten.com

La Hacienda
515 S. Park St., 255-8227
Mexican \$

Madeleine's Patisserie
3742 Speedway Rd., 441-0909
Bread, Pastries \$
madeleinesmadison.com

Mickie's Dairy Bar
1511 Monroe St., 256-9476
Breakfast, Burgers \$

Tex Tubbs Taco Palace
2701 University Ave.,
231-3473
Tex-Mex \$
textubbstacos.com

Zuzu Cafe
1336 Drake St., 260-9898
Sandwiches/Deli \$

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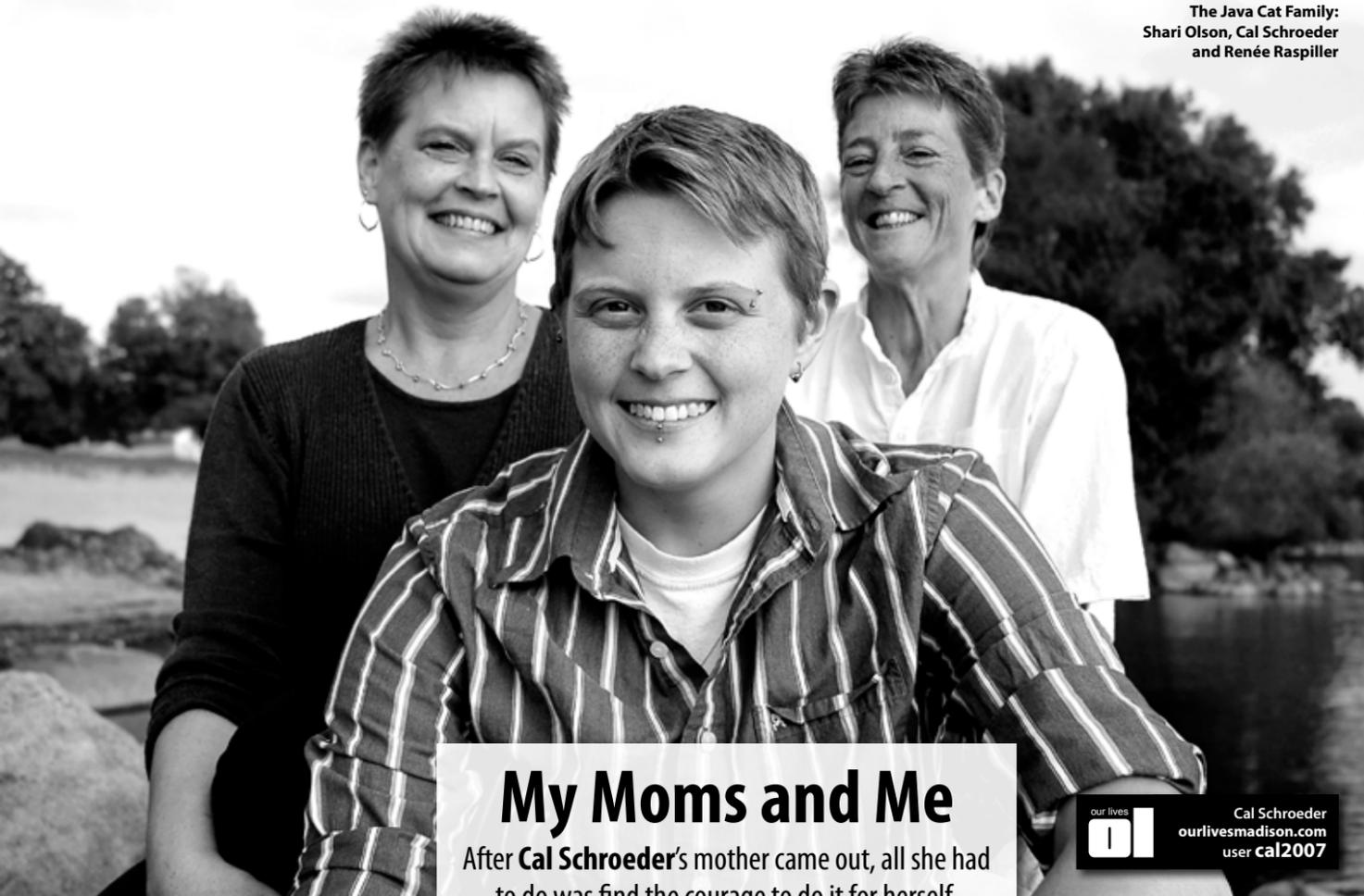
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The Java Cat Family:
Shari Olson, Cal Schroeder
and Renée Raspiller



My Moms and Me

After Cal Schroeder's mother came out, all she had to do was find the courage to do it for herself.

our lives
Cal Schroeder
ourlivesmadison.com
user cal2007

When I came out at 18, most of my close friends and family were completely supportive and utterly unfazed: they had just been waiting for me to actually tell them that I was gay.

The way my mother, Shari, tells the story, when I was a year-and-a-half old, she contemplated with the idea that I might be gay. I didn't like dresses or make-up or dolls or anything a little girl would typically like. Instead I wanted to be outside and play sports with the boys, keep my hair short like theirs, and I even stole and wore my older brother's clothes. Most people would think it was the typical tomboy phase, except that I never phased out of it.

Easing my coming-out was the fact that the year before, my twice-married mother (I have two siblings) met her now-partner Renée and had her own coming-out. That was taken with shock; no one had suspected it, not even me. But despite the surprise, everyone accepted it, except me. It was stereotypical actually; I already knew by then that I was a lesbian, but I didn't know how to tell my family. I was mad that my own mother could come out but I couldn't. It took me another year, and my mother confronting me, before I was out. I guess the reason I waited so long was that I was just looking for the right time. I finally realized that there was no such thing as a right time.

I guess the reason I waited so long was that I was just looking for the right time. I finally realized that there was no such thing as a right time.

Having both my mothers around helped me transition easier and faster from being in the closet to being out. Both my mother and Renée had been waiting for me to come out and had plenty of advice to give me (as Mothers do), whether they meant to or not. Renée immediately gave me books with coming-out stories and movies with lesbian storylines. They showed me gay-friendly places in our community, and I got to watch and see how they dealt with ignorant and homophobic people. I also got to see an example of a positive and healthy relationship in my mom and Renée. Even better, having my mothers open the coffeeshop Java Cat made my being out even easier: instead of finding my way into the gay community, it came to me.

The one year I spent away from Madison at college in Platteville, I ended up with a homophobic roommate. Rather than tell me to pack it in and head home to Madison, my mom and Renée helped me find the GSA and get a new roommate. In this way, they reinforced for me that being gay wasn't a problem, and if someone thought it was, it was that person's problem, not mine.

Like most people, there are members of my extended family who didn't accept me when I came out and probably never will, but I have my immediate family, my grandmother, my friends and our gay community right here supporting me. ■

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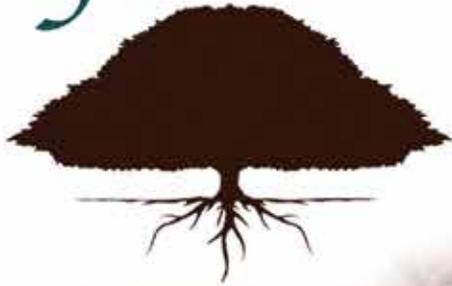
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Jumbo Coconut Shrimp: Six jumbo shrimp tails mixed with a flaky coconut breading, served with our own house-made dipping sauce \$7.95

Empanada: A Caribbean fried pastry, filled with your choice of chicken, pork, beef, cheese, beans, spinach or potato \$3.50

Salads

Tasty Tilapia Salad: Pan seared tilapia (fried or steamed) laid across a bed of organic mixed greens, sweet peppers, tomatoes and cilantro slathered in a sweet mango dressing. \$9.75

Tasty Strawberry Salad: Caribbean chicken, fresh strawberries covered with a delicious strawberry dressing, served on a bed of organic mixed greens. \$9.50

Mango Man Salad: Tender chicken (steamed) cooked to perfecto, with a sweet sliced juicy mangoes, tossed in a green delicious mango dressing on a bed of organic mixed greens. \$9.50

Entrees/Platos

Pura Vida Quesadilla: Two corn quesadillas filled with your choice of cheese, pork or chicken. Served with salad, rice and beans. Pure Life Baby! \$11.50

Island Special: Your choice of shrimp or tilapia, served in a semi-sweet coconut sauce, with salad rice and beans \$15.95

Costa Rican Plate of the Day: Served with rice, beans, plantains and salad. \$ varies

Caribbean Tacos: Two soft corn tortillas with your choice of chicken, beef, pork or tilapia, lettuce tomato, cilantro, and your choice of sauce \$6.50

The Tico Burrito: Large flour tortilla with chicken, beef, pork or tilapia, lettuce, tomato, sour cream, cilantro, your choice of sauce \$7.50

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Desserts

Dessert Empanada: \$5.95

Traditional Tres Leches Cake \$5.95

Shakes: Chocolate or strawberry \$4.25

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