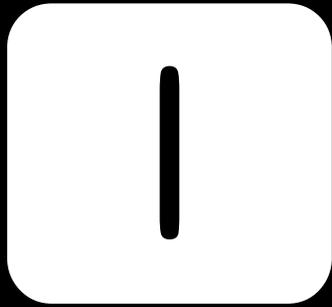


our lives



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A look into the process, challenges, and rewards

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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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VIRGINIA HARRISON WITH HER DAUGHTER ELLIE, PARTNER MELISSA, AND DOGS SCOUT AND WINNIE.

Love Makes Us a Family

We have all heard the saying that "love makes a family," and the contributors to this family-focused issue couldn't agree more. When everyone connects more and more via technology and increasingly less so in face-to-face conversations, our in-person relationships can take on an even sweeter feel. And when our bonds with humankind are stretched by the ever-intensifying polarization of politics, economic divisions, and the hysteria of the 24-hour news cycle, sometimes it is simply the love of and with our families—those into which we were born and those which we have chosen—that grounds us.

Attorney Linda Balisle reflects back over her life and holds up those who have been "good family." Dr. Sue Gill compares the way in which distance swimmer Diana Nyad carefully cultivated her chosen family with how each of us could examine our family relationships to make the most of what works and create chosen families of our own. Greater Madison is home to many children being raised by LGBT parents. I got to meet two such families and share their stories of love and adoption. Finally, attorney Michele Perreault updates us on the state of Wisconsin family law and the implications for LGBT families with and without children.

Protecting Families: Standards for LGBT Families is a document created by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), and NCLR's National Family Law Advisory Council. It honors the commitment families make to one another and seeks to advise parents to protect their relationships and the rights of their children. It begins:

We are incredibly proud of our community's successes in creating families with children and doing the loving, joyful, and challenging work of parenting. Bringing children into a family is a transformative experience and integrates us into the larger community. However, our children are vulnerable to being separated from their parents because the law does not always fully recognize our families.

The document offers a sort of state of LGBT relationship mores and recommends "Standards for LGBT Families." It can be read in its entirety at www.glad.org/protecting-families.

As we enter a time of year peppered with gatherings of families of origin, it is good to know we have it within our power to create new traditions and celebrate with those in our chosen family, too.

Virginia Harrison
EDITOR

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contributors



Dr. Sue Gill lives in Madison with her partner of 15 years and her two dogs. She is a psychologist with a private practice specializing in anxiety and trauma-related issues. She enjoys the use of alternative approaches such as neurofeedback and EMDR to help people on their journey. She brings her dog to work every day. Sue is passionate about mountain biking and rides with Mad FORCs, Madison's female off-road cycling team. She can be found on the web at madisontherapy.com.

Ryan Petty is a Ph.D. student in biochemistry at UW-Madison. To stay active, he fences with and helps train the UW Fencing Team. His most personal growth has come from his time at OutReach, where he has volunteered for over four years and is entering his third year on the Board of Directors. He also co-facilitates OutReach's group for 18-24-year-olds, OutThere. He loves his work with *Our Lives*, helping to highlight the current and future leaders among LGBT youth. He can be contacted at ryanvpetty@gmail.com.



OUR KITCHEN by Leanne Cordisco

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



Holiday Chicken with Roasted Root Vegetables

Fall is the time for cooks to turn their attention to roasting. We've said goodbye to the heat and humidity of summer and hello to the good smells and warmth of a hot oven. Root vegetables, plentiful at the farmers' market and in CSA boxes, are satisfying when roasted to perfection, and celeriac is one of my favorites. To the uninformed it looks like a knobby mess, but this ugly vegetable is simply delicious when roasted or braised. When raw, it tastes like a cross between a carrot and celery, but when cooked the celery flavor is intensified. Here's a recipe for a decadent roasted chicken with root vegetables.

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 celeriac
- 3 yukon gold potatoes
- 1 whole black truffle (optional)
- 2 Tbls butter
- 2 Tbls olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Watch Leanne make this recipe on ourlivesmadison.com!

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Wash the chicken inside and out, pat dry. Refrigerate the uncovered chicken for 2 hours. Salt and pepper the cavity of the chicken. Thinly slice the truffle and place it under the skin of the chicken breast and legs. Peel and dice the potatoes and celeriac into small pieces. Coat the vegetables with olive oil, salt them generously and place them in the bottom of a roasting pan. Rub the chicken with butter and sprinkle it with salt and pepper. Place the chicken on the bed of root vegetables and place in the oven. After 20 minutes, turn the oven temperature down to 325 degrees and cook the chicken for 20 minutes per pound. Remove the chicken from the oven, and let it rest for 10 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

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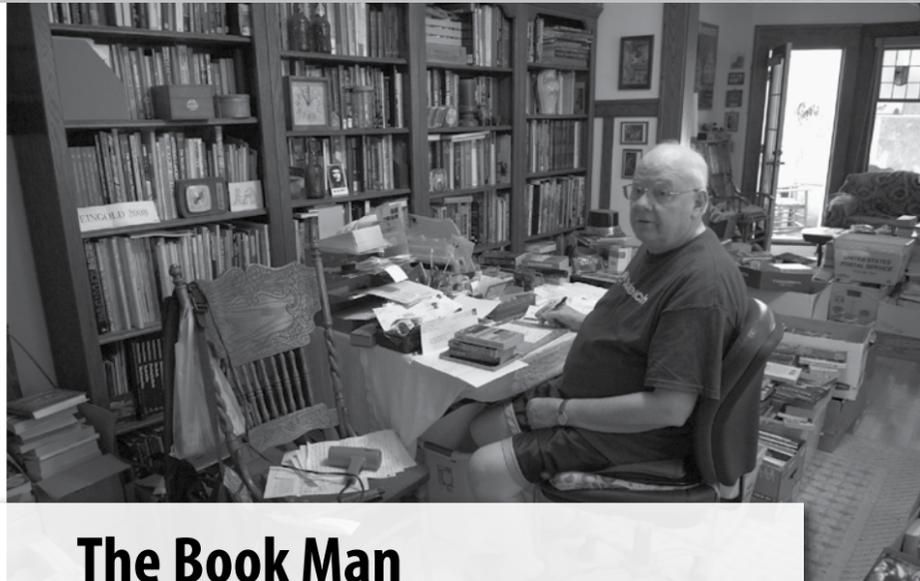
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The Book Man

OutReach Man of the Year **Dennis Bergren** is proof that one person can make a difference.

● came out at the height of the AIDS crisis and hysteria. In the news was whether an Illinois teenager, Ryan White, could come to school or drink out of the public water fountain.

Nurses wouldn't enter an AIDS patient's room but left his food outside the door to turn cold.

A silver lining that came of that was that the public became aware that there were gay people—we were not an invisible minority anymore. Gays became very visible: demonstrating, demanding recognition and treatment, sometimes being very in-your-face about it.

Having gotten my political initiation in the first TAA Strike against the UW in which we gained union accreditation in 1969, I became an activist for gay rights. I used my base in the Madison Area Gay/Bi Fathers Group and Frontiers Social Organization to support gay-friendly candidates and causes.

Politically I joined the Green Party as they were boldly public in stating their support for gay marriage and equality of rights for all groups long before the Democratic Party was dragged kicking and screaming into endorsing us. I helped the national and state Green Party platform committees write the gay rights sections of their party platforms and led the establishment of the Lavender Green Caucus of the Wisconsin Green Party in addition to serving on the state board for many years as that caucus' representative.

The Boy Scouts of America publicly stripped an Eagle Scout of his ranking because he was gay, and their action was upheld by the U.S.

Supreme Court. As a member of a coalition of LGBT representatives, we convinced the local United Way to stop listing the Boy Scouts as an automatic check off because they excluded gay kids and gay scout masters.

I was looking for acceptance—by myself and by society—by striving for acceptance of gay people into society. I had spent 35 years in deep denial, hiding and living in fear of being discovered. It was still a time when one had to be careful about being out. I taught high school and I never felt safe about coming out publicly there. It would have given antagonistic students a powerful weapon to use against me, for instance. The few teacher colleagues that knew about me were very supportive. While I was a teacher in the Madison high schools, several of us got together and formed GLEE—the Gay and Lesbian Educational Employees—which provided a place for us to get together, share our public and personal lives, and support one another. It was a huge matter, for example, to convince the board of our union to allow a notification in our newsletter that our group existed and that LGBT teachers and other employees were welcome to join us.

My support at the time was my coming out group from the United (predecessor of OutReach) which we continued for several years and The Gay/Bi Fathers Group where I found a group of men who became close friends. The Madison group formed in 1984 and I joined upon coming out in 1985. I served for many years as the group's secretary and president and helped convince them to support gay-friendly candidates and causes in the political and social areas. Recognizing our responsibilities as fathers, we still give annual donations to Proud Theater and GSA for Safe Schools, as well as OutReach and Wisconsin Books to Prisoners.

After retiring from teaching, I came out fairly publicly, not broadcasting it but not hiding it anymore. Will Fellows included my story as a chapter in "Farm Boys" which gained me some notoriety. I was fairly active in the local PFLAG group. It was at the time when the UW offered the first course in gay studies and Joe Elder asked me to speak in his course about my journey to self-acceptance. Students at UW can now get a degree in gay studies. That's how far we've come.

With the passage of the gay marriage ban to the Wisconsin Constitution, the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice decided to take a more active role in obtaining equal rights for Wisconsin LGBT citizens.

Because I was out and known to several members of the board, I was asked to join the state board of WNPJ to present and represent LGBT issues. Another of their signature issues was Prison Justice. Here I found an action, which was meaningful and needed, that fulfilled my personal needs as well.

Wisconsin Books to Prisoners was formed as a project of Rainbow Bookstore in the fall of 2006 by a small group of individuals concerned about the treatment of prisoners. They decided to try to help by sending reading materials directly to prisoners themselves. At one of their information presentations, I asked if they would be interested in sending out LGBT books and said that I could get some surplus books from OutReach where I volunteered with the library committee. They were very supportive, I joined the group, and we added gay and lesbian literature as a choice in our brochures.

Wisconsin Books to Prisoners now sends to Wisconsin prisoners only, but the LGBT Project sends to LGBT prisoners in all states that will allow us. At present that is 41 states—we're totally banned in three states. We are now a project of OutReach, and I thank OutReach as well their individual volunteers for aid and support.

Being gay and in prison is not easy. The isolation, marginalization, and abuse that LGBT individuals often suffer in general society is magnified under prison conditions. As a result, many gay prisoners, and especially transgendered prisoners, are often put in isolation for their own protection where they spend 23 hours daily in their cells. Many are very lonely, some having been abandoned by their families for being gay—or friends and family having drifted away or died—leaving no one to visit, send money, or even provide contact with the outside world. Once in segregation they have to abide by segregation rules including no library visits.

Wisconsin Books to Prisoners now sends to Wisconsin prisoners only, but the LGBT Project sends to LGBT prisoners in all states that will allow us. At present that is 41 states—we're totally banned in 3 states.

At the end of that first year (2007) we had had 40 LGBT requests for books. I applied to our own New Harvest Foundation for a grant of \$600 to help with postage, printing, and purchasing costs. They gave us \$1200, and I was overjoyed but also worried about how I could spend all that money. Little did I know.

As word spread that we offered free books with no strings attached, our project has grown immensely and there are now over 1600 self-identified LGBT prisoners in our database who have received at least one package from us; most have received several packages. While I use those numbers to show success for this project, it is most disturbing that there are so many LGBT people in prison. Let us hope that social conditions will provide increased acceptance and a better environment for our community in the future.

The letters of thank you I receive are very moving. Here is an example:

How can I say Thank You enough! My name was called at Mail Call and there were my four wonderful books. It made me so happy that when I opened the package, I cried. You are such kind people to look out for gay inmates like this. —TB

It seems I have found my niche.

Want to help? We are always in need of volunteers, LGBT books, and monetary donations for postage expenses. For more information, call OutReach at 608-255-8582 or go to lgbtoutreach.org. ■



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Cyber Cop

Madison Police Detective **Cindy Murphy** is on the digital beat, but her job is as real-world as it gets.

Who are you and where are you from? My name is Cindy Murphy. I'm a detective and digital forensic examiner for the City of Madison Police Department, where I've worked since 1991. I grew up in and around Iowa City, Iowa.

How did you come to be a police detective? What led you to become a cell phone and computer forensics expert? After joining MPD, I worked patrol for about 9 years. I loved patrol work but had a couple of on-duty injuries that put me on light duty for quite awhile in 1998. While on recovery, I caught the digital forensics bug while assisting a now-retired detective on one of the first computer forensics cases in our department. It was a completely different side of policing, and a new set of fascinating problems to work on. After recovering, I went back to work on the streets, but before long, I was injured and back on light duty. I worked on updating the department's web page and helped out with another computer forensics case.

I was promoted to detective in 2000 and worked General Assignment and Financial Crimes while continuing to help with computer-related cases. Eventually, over half of my workload consisted of computer-related crimes, and in 2003 the department created a new position in the detective bureau for a Computer Crimes detective and I worked computer crimes and computer forensics full-time. Now we have two full-time and one part-time forensic examiner. In December, I will graduate with my master's degree in Forensic Computing and Cyber Crime Investigation from University College in Dublin, Ireland.

I believe that LGBT individuals are more vulnerable in cyberspace. I think that part of the increased risk has to do with the human need for acceptance and affirmation.

Why do you do this work? I do this work because it's fascinating and really rewarding. I love a challenge, and I love to solve problems. In police work, you see people and communities at their absolute best and at their absolute worst, and you learn a lot about yourself along the way. Digital forensics fits my love of problem solving and challenges, and the evidence that results is often invaluable to investigations.

Some of the work you do involves youth or adults who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender. Are these people more vulnerable in cyberspace? Why? Based upon my experience in doing this work I believe that LGBT individuals are more vulnerable in cyberspace. I think that part of the increased risk has to do with the human need for acceptance and affirmation—we all want to feel like we're understood and that we fit in someplace. When people go online looking for affirmation and understanding, sometimes they find it there, but sometimes they open themselves up to people who are looking to take advantage of them.

Please provide some examples of how LGBT youth have been victimized online or via cell phone. I have seen a number of cases where LGBT kids have had questions about their sexuality or gender identity that for



whatever reason they were uncomfortable going to their parents with. In seeking answers to those questions, or looking for other kids or adults who are going through similar situations, they ended up developing online romances with adults who took advantage of them. Many times, kids haven't experienced those ulterior motives enough to understand that the people they're communicating with aren't really interested in helping them, but rather are communicating with the kids for their own prurient interests. It is also not uncommon to see that kids will engage in sexting and posting images and videos of themselves online in the process of working through their feelings about their sexuality.

What advice do you have for readers who have children or know an adult who engages in risky behavior online? I think sometimes it's hard for kids to make the distinction between a friend and a stranger in their online communications. I once worked a case where a young lady was groomed and seduced by an online predator. At the same time this was happening, she was working on an assignment for school about online safety for kids. She didn't make the connection that she was communicating with someone who was potentially dangerous, because the person was kind and complimentary to her, and because she "knew" him after communicating for several weeks before meeting him in the "real" world.

My advice is that readers should understand that the online world is the real world, especially for kids. Talk to your kids about how easy it is for people to mask their true intentions, especially online. Get involved with your kids' computer use, and know what your kids are doing online—whom they're communicating with on both their computers and their phones.

What resources are available for readers to learn more about avoiding cybercrime or reporting suspected cases? The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children posts a great deal of information and resources for parents and caretakers regarding online safety at missingkids.org. Also, the Madison Police Department provides community presentations and educational resources through their safety education program. More information can be found at cityofmadison.com/police/specialunits/safetyEducation.

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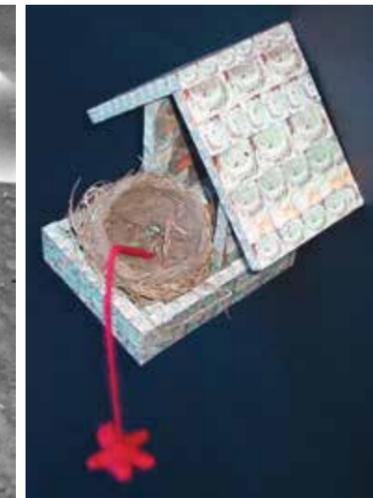


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For Michele, who has spent her richly rewarding career making art and building community, these moments making art with her child are beautiful and deep.

Chicago), Michele writes, "The birth of my second child, Evan, gave me a keen understanding that birth and death are similar journeys that can happen simultaneously. The act of mothering has transfigured me as a woman and as an artist. I often use dangling elements such as umbilical cords or strings to capture the tenuousness upon which much of our lives seem to hang." Though motherhood is the focus of much of her current work, Michele has, for much of the last decade, been viewed as one of Madison's best elementary age art teachers and a pillar of the city's community art movement. After graduating with a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1993, Michele became a certified teacher and moved to Madison. She has taught art at several Madison public schools and is currently the K-5 art teacher at Shorewood Hills Elementary School.

Aside from impacting the lives of thousands of our children as a teacher, Michele began creating community art projects in 2000 when she led the Clay Tile Hands Mural project for the lobby of the United Way on Atwood Avenue. She has worked with hundreds of children to launch large-scale community art projects that include poetry, quilts, dolls, papier-mâché masks, ceramics, and other sculptural installations. In recent years she has collaborated with hundreds of working artists and children to make the mosaic murals Roots and Wings (2010) at Kennedy Heights Community Center, Living the Dream (2010) at the Villager Atrium in South Madison, and Growing Friendships around the World (2008) at Shorewood Hills Elementary School.

Her life and work demonstrate impressive ideals: activity, inclusivity, inquiry, solving common issues, and adding beauty and meaning to our world. Whether Michele is making art with her child, her students, her friends, or herself, Madison is fortunate she is here, building our community and making people more aware of the value of art and authenticity in our lives.

(SPECIAL NOTE: Michele just wrote and received a \$9,988 grant from the Foundation for Madison's Public Schools to purchase age-appropriate LGBTQ books. A set of about 20 books will be placed in every elementary school library in every public school in Madison. Teachers and school staff will receive training about how to use them. All books were purchased from A Room of One's Own Independent Bookstore.) —Karin Wolf

Heart Art

Madison elementary school art teacher Michele Hatchell builds community and personal connection through art.

Mimi, a beautiful blond child with long locks and an interminably free spirit, makes incredible stuff. Katherine Michele Hatchell (friends call her Michele), one of Mimi's moms, encourages her child to explore trees and nests, spin and weave fibers, take photographs, develop multimedia installations, write poetry, make assemblage sculptures with duct tape and cardboard, nail pieces of wood together to build elaborate cat trees, and make everything else that allows Mimi to express the wonders of this world. Creativity is their thing and it permeates every aspect of their lives together.

Their photographic self-portraits, shot through pipes, in tunnels, and under bridges, reveal a connection rooted in love, trust, and curiosity. For Michele, who has spent her richly rewarding career making art and building community, these moments making art with her child are beautiful and deep. "This is definitely where I make my heart art," she says.

Michele's solo work and her collaborations with Mimi since 2008 have been focused on mothering, from the joy and journey of parenting a nine-year-old, non-gendered pioneer, to the grief she and her former partner experienced after losing a baby through stillbirth six years ago. In her artist statement for the 2010 exhibition, "Mothers" (Woman Made Gallery,

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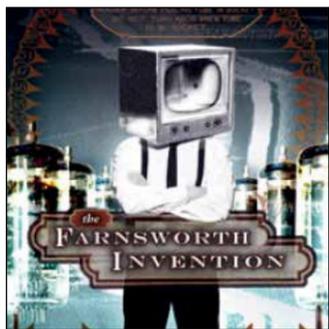
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**Come OUT to the Theater
November 17, Overture Center**

Join Forward Theater Company and LGBT community members for an evening OUT at the theater. Event includes discounted tickets to *The Farnsworth Invention* by Aaron Sorkin, a private pre-show talk, and an hors d'oeuvres reception in the rotunda lobby before the show.
openmadison.org



**Claptrapp: The Sound of Musicals
December 1-17, Bartell Theater**

Not a musical, Claptrapp is a hilarious adult send-up of the classic *The Sound of Music*. Playwright Joe Godfrey maintains the basic plot of the original story while weaving together lyrics from more than 40 other Broadway musicals to create an altogether original comedy production.
stageq.com



**Fair Wisconsin Education Fund's
First Annual Leadership
Conference featuring Chaz Bono
January 13-15, The Hilton,
Milwaukee City Center**

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

ORGANIZATIONS

A representative sampling

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

Alianza Latina
734-246-8372

Bowling Out Loud
beckwith.matt@yahoo.com

Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls
dcandc.org

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

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg

**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

Lez In Color Yahoo Group
LezInColor@yahoo.com

Lez Talk Yahoo Group
leztalkmadison@yahoo.com

Madison Gay Hockey Association
madisongayhockey.org

Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby
minotaursrugby.org

New Harvest Foundation
newharvestfoundation.org

**Out Professional and
Executive Network (O.P.E.N.)**
openmadison.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

StageQ - Madison's Queer Theater
stageq.com

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

Wisconsin Rainbow Families
wirainbowfamilies.com

September 16, 2011 | OutReach Awards Banquet



October 16, 2011 | GSAFE 5th Annual Walk/Run/Eat



GET LISTED To see your event on this page, be sure to post it on our community calendar ourlivesmadison.com

Save the Date

AIDS Network's Camp Bingo
Jan, Feb & March | aidsnetwork.org

OPEN Annual Dinner
January 31 | openmadison.org

**New Harvest Foundation's
27th Annual Dinner Dance**
March | newharvestfoundation.org

AIDS Network's Red Ribbon Affair
April | aidsnetwork.org

GSAFE Celebration of Leadership
May | gsaforsafeschools.org

FruitFest
June | planbmadison.com

Winter Art Festival, November 12 and 13, Monona Terrace, Madison Winter Art Festival features 140 Wisconsin exhibitors with a wonderful selection of pottery, paintings, glass art, wood, photography, jewelry, sculpture and more.
artcraftwis.org



Bat Boy: The Musical, November 18, 19 and December 1-10, UW Vilas Hall-Mitchell Theatre, Madison This is the 100% true* story of the infamous half bat/half boy! Learn the challenges of life and love when you grow up a mutant in this funny, HORRORific musical spoof. *True according to *The Weekly World News* tabloid!
utmadison.com

Madison Symphony Orchestra's Christmas Spectacular, December 2-4, Overture Center, Madison The annual Christmas Spectacular is a stunning showcase of Madison talent with outstanding special guests.
madisonsymphony.org

Disney's Beauty and the Beast, December 6-11, Overture Center, Madison Disney's Beauty and the Beast, the smash hit Broadway musical, is coming to Madison!
overturecenter.com

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus Winter Concerts, December 9-10, Madison Masonic Center This year's theme is "Peace on Earth," reflecting the serenity of the season.
perfectharmonychorus.org

Madison Ballet's The Nutcracker, December 17-26, Overture Hall, Madison A combination of fabulous costumes, dynamic lighting, and lavish set design are the perfect vehicle for the energetic choreography of Artistic Director W. Earle Smith and Tchaikovsky's famous score.
madisonballet.org

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A Family BY Choice

Dr. Sue Gill challenges you to develop an inner template for what "family" can mean to you.

I spent this past summer mesmerized by the story of Diana Nyad, the 61-year-old woman who attempted to swim from Cuba to Florida. Although she was forced to quit after 40 hours of swimming because of multiple man-of-war stings, I continue to be inspired by her vision, determination, and strength. I was also struck by the size of the support system that was required for the swim and awed by the dedication that her team of 50 people seemed to freely give her.

Diana was a record-holding long distance swimmer when she was young and has said that she swam out of anger at the time. She then stopped swimming for 30 years until she neared her 60th birthday, when she decided to do the Cuba swim to demonstrate to herself and all of us that life can be filled with purpose and joy at any age. She spent two years training and compiling her amazing support team, she became a stronger swimmer at 60 than she was at 28, and she now seemed to be swimming from a place of love and connection instead of anger.

When I read accounts of the swim written by various members of Diana's team, I was struck by the deep level of commitment that they all seem to have to Diana. These people are far more than hired trainers, doctors, and navigation experts, they sound like family. Diana created a family who loved her through two years of intense training, two swim attempts, and 40 hours of swimming through jellyfish stings and strong ocean currents. We all yearn to have that family. We can all create that family.

Diana originally swam out of anger, and is now swimming from a place of love and connection. This is foundational when creating family. Be a loving person and loving people will be attracted to you. Actively find the positive in yourself and others. Get really good at identifying and setting healthy boundaries. Strive for physical, emotional, and spiritual health in yourself, and surround yourself with others who are doing the same.

Many of us have dealt with real rejection from our family of origin. For some, this rejection was short-lived and is now somewhat repaired, while for others it has been permanent. Some of us had very supportive families, but lived with the fear of rejection for years before finally getting the courage to talk to family members and allow them to be fully supportive (e.g., "Dear, we always knew that you were gay, we were just waiting for you to tell us!").



The healthiest life is one that is as integrated as possible. In the context of family, try to integrate your chosen family with your family of origin as much as you can.

Whether real or feared, this rejection probably creates an attitude of distancing of the self from others to protect the self from being hurt. This self-protection can be subtle, such as in the party animal who knows everyone but is not deeply known by anyone. A person can also be self-protective by talking deeply but intellectually about everything, or by talking

about very personal things to anybody who will listen—throwing up a wall of emotions to keep people at bay.

The person who chronically keeps people at distance will never develop an inner template of "family" that includes a deep understanding of the concept. If you don't know something exists, you won't crave it or make a place for it in your life. Like Babcock Hall Chocolate Peanut Butter ice cream or single-track mountain bike riding ... before I came to Madison I did not know these things existed. Now that I've experienced the joy of both, I crave them. If you have never felt the deep satisfaction of being fully embraced, known, and supported by a family, you will be less likely to seek the kinds of relationships that continue to add that to your life.

Let's face it: we live in a hetero-normative, cis-gender assumptive world. So girls grow up hearing some form of the story that we are all supposed to want to be princesses, marry our shining prince, and look resplendent in our lovely sequined wedding dress. Boys grow up with some kind of boy version of that story. When I was little I wanted to be a cowboy when I grew up and became furious with anyone who tried to correct me by stating that I should want to be a cowgirl. And the concept of wanting to be a princess with a prince was entirely unfathomable to me. My inner concept of self and the future I wanted did not fit society's norms. Even though I had parents who were tolerant of my "tomboy" dreams, society did not provide any fairy tales or role models to fit those dreams.

Now that Bert and Ernie are officially not gay, we don't have any good little kid role models out there. One impact of this is that many people grow up with a subtle but deeply hitting message that "I don't belong." This gets reinforced in some families that follow strict hetero and gender norms. As a consequence, we may grow into adults who have less of an inner sense of what it feels like to belong, we may become hyper-vigilant as a way to guard

against future real or perceived rejection, and we might not recognize quality relationships when they come our way. Some of us even run away from healthy relationships when we happen upon them because they just feel strange.

LGBT youth often follow a developmental path that differs from other youth. I hear many stories about young boys who were "caught" cross dressing when they were young and quickly learned to hide, suppress, and feel ashamed of any urges to express femininity. These children don't get to spend the years playing dress up that some cis-girls do as a way to refine their inner concept of female. Many LGBT youth experience puberty and dating developmentally in a way that differs from other youth. Early dating should really be a time to explore the larger concept of chosen family, the chance to get to know the family of the boy- or girlfriend, to integrate oneself into a larger circle of people who could potentially be family in the future, to imagine a long-term relationship with the dating partner and their family, to get to really know what is important in a close circle of relationships. This

is not so easy when you are fundamentally dating the wrong person or hiding the fact that you are dating at all. This can even become a set up for abuse or exploitation when that person finally gets a thin sense of belonging without fully understanding all that true belonging entails. They are so thrilled to find one sense of belonging that they overlook all kinds of red flags and plow themselves headlong into abuse.

How can we create family given all of these barriers? Let's go back to Diana Nyad. She now swims from a place of love and connectedness instead of anger. I've never met her, but I'm pretty sure that she has created an inner template that says, "People will be loving toward me, they will be present for me, I can rely on them, they like me and I like them. I want good people in my life." If these thoughts seem really foreign to you, start here. Create this template and continue to fine-tune it.

Examine the relationships that you have with the members of your family of origin. Are there ways for you to improve these relationships? Are there some people you may have



Diana Nyad, swimming.

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rejected in order to prevent the possibility of them rejecting you? Are there old hurts that need to be worked through in whatever ways might be appropriate so that you can have relationships based on the here and now? Actively look for ways that you can connect instead of being mad for the ways you can't. For example, your mom may still be hurt that you will never have the big traditional church wedding that she always dreamed of for you, and you might be hurt that she still calls your life partner your "friend." But the two of you might have a ball when you go garage sale shopping together, you still love her killer cookies, and the whole family loves to get together for cards. If so, find a way to do more garage sale shopping, cookie eating, and card playing with her. After all, part of "family" involves sticking together despite all of the flaws. And if you continue to feel hurt that your father doesn't have deeply emotional conversations with you, stop trying to have those conversations! Go clear brush together and add some more people to your

Some of us even run away from healthy relationships when we happen upon them because they just feel strange.

chosen family who can fill the role of deeply emotional conversationalist.

Also examine your relationships with the members of your chosen family. This includes your primary relationship if you are in one, everybody who came with them, and the friends in your life. Have you surrounded yourself with quality people with whom you deeply connect? Do you spend a lot of time together? Are you learning to identify and nurture those relationships that fill an important family function for you?

I believe that the healthiest life is one that is as integrated as possible. In the context of family, try to integrate your chosen family with your family of origin as much as you can. I understand that this is not possible for some people, but do so wherever you find slight openings to bring the two worlds together. You can also integrate your life by living with internal consistency. Examine your work life, social life, and home life in the context of the self you present to your family. Would people who know you from these different worlds be shocked if they

saw your behavior in another context? You will feel the most connected if you live in such a way that these worlds could intermingle easily.

Finally, actively challenge the old templates you formed while growing up if they are interfering with your ability to form a healthy chosen family. I was the girl who wanted to be a cowboy when I grew up. The template that came from that was, "I am different and nobody will ever understand me." The consequence was that I chronically kept people at a distance. By actively challenging that belief and looking for exceptions to the belief (instead of looking for instances that confirm the belief), I have formed a new template that says, "Different is cool. Wear it genuinely and with confidence and people will be drawn to you."

I will continue to hope that Bert and Ernie get married and that Dora the Explorer changes her name to Alex and goes by "they." In the meantime, I am so grateful for the inspiration of Diana Nyad, the 61-year-old lesbian who tried to swim from Cuba to Florida with her chosen family beside her all the way.

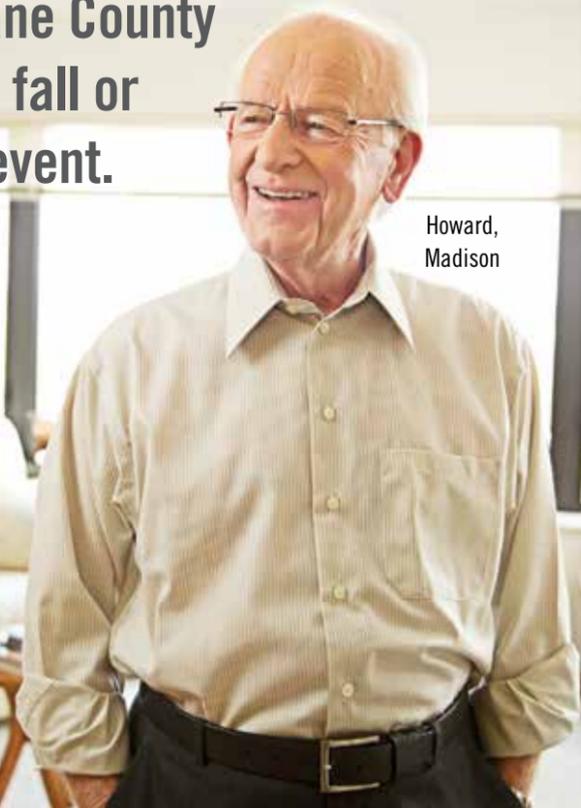
Keep doing the inner work that you need to do to fully engage in family. Build your family. Connect. Get really good at recognizing healthy people and healthy relationships. Surround yourself with people who deeply love you. ■

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**NEW HARVEST FOUNDATION
2010 ANNUAL REPORT**

Our Mission

New Harvest Foundation is the only foundation in South Central Wisconsin that channels charitable contributions exclusively to organizations working to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, services, culture and community development. Founded in 1984, New Harvest Foundation is operated by a 14-member Board of Directors, along with other volunteers. It pools contributions of hundreds of donors each year to provide grant money to LGBT causes.

What We Do: Raise Money

As a Foundation, we raise funds from the broad community through events and fund-raising campaigns. In 1996 the Foundation established an endowment to expand its financial base and to ensure a prosperous future. Contributors may designate their tax-deductible gifts to the Grants Program or to the Endowment.

New Harvest Foundation enjoys support from every segment of the community. Most contributors are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, but we also receive support from straight but not narrow families and friends. We receive contributions through workplace giving from Community Shares of Wisconsin, as well as electronic funds transfers, and wills/estate plans. Many contributors find giving to New Harvest Foundation an ideal way to channel funds to a variety of organizations that serve LGBT people. Contributors appreciate that our Board of Directors and Grant Screening committee take the guesswork out of identifying and supporting quality projects and programs. You may remain anonymous. New Harvest Foundation does not share its lists with other organizations.

Why We Do It: To Give Back

New Harvest Foundation is the only organization in South Central Wisconsin dedicated to funding a spectrum of LGBT issues. Since New Harvest Foundation began, over 25 years ago, we have awarded over \$375,000 to approximately 200 projects, a wide range of established and fledgling organizations have received funds over the years. Additional information about the grant process, including an application and grant cycle timelines, is available at www.newharvestfoundation.org.

We raise money to give back!

2010 Annual Letter from our Co-Chairs

*"Striving to make a difference in collaboration
with all of our LGBT communities"*

The New Harvest Foundation is constantly working in the present and looking toward the future. We have a successful, proactive board; an energetic group of volunteers; a generous donor base; and regular grant requests. What more could we ask for? The more important questions are, "What more should we do? How can we make a difference? What can we do and when should we do it?" The answers to these questions are constantly shaping the way New Harvest approaches and supports our South Central Wisconsin's LGBT communities in our third decade of existence.

We try to identify unmet or under-resourced needs in our communities. We strive to work with other groups, asking for their input to work collaboratively. To make the biggest difference in our communities, we have narrowed our focus to two major areas: Support for LGBT Youth and LGBT Seniors. We need to empower our teens and young adults as they enter and find their way and at the same time, honor and support those who've spent their lives contributing to our diverse and many LGBT communities.

We continue to work to determine how we can put this into action and, even more importantly, how we can obtain results that are meaningful! This is our Journey. This is our Dream. We know that we'll need to continue to partner with many local and regional organizations. We also know that we'll need to redouble our fundraising efforts. Simply identifying a need is not enough. We need also to determine how we can make substantive change.

You, as a New Harvest donor, prospect or supporter are key to our efforts. You can help by maintaining, increasing or starting your support for New Harvest. You can help by re-energizing and invigorating our events, initiatives and grants. You can also help by working with us to make our communities even stronger, more vital, vigorous and complete. And you can help us spread the news of all our efforts.

As we look forward toward our fourth decade, we're excited and thrilled! Won't you join us and help make our vision our reality?

*Tret Fure
Mark Porter*

2010 Grant Recipients

\$3,500 New Harvest Foundation proudly sponsored the *Lieutenant Governor's Conference on LGBT Youth*, hosted by the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) and Diverse and Resilient. The conference was held at UW Oshkosh on March 8, 2010 and drew 210 adults and 83 high school students from around the state. Those in attendance participated in workshops and panels addressing anti-gay bias in schools, and heard the Lieutenant Governor speak about laws protecting LGBT youth and deficiencies in our laws protecting transgender students.

\$5,000 NHF also helped the *Young Auditorium* of UW Whitewater host the Laramie Residency, which creates an awareness of American attitudes about violence against gay people in America through two plays, "The Laramie Project" and "The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later." Post-performance discussions brought about an open dialogue on local and national LGBT issues and concerns.

\$3,000 Madison is frequently graced with the melodic voices of *Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus*. PHMC is a gay and gay-friendly men's chorus in need of a quality sound system. In order to enhance the tuneful experience of their performance, New Harvest Foundation funded this endeavor. We look forward to hearing even more beautiful choral music from PHMC!

\$1,250 *Wisconsin Books to Prisoners'* "LGBT Project" sends books to LGBT prisoners in hopes of alleviating the isolation, marginalization, and abuse that LGBT individuals suffer under prison conditions. The WBTP-LGBT Project has now filled requests from over 550 LGBT prisoners. New Harvest Foundation awarded a second grant to this noble project in 2010.

\$2,500 New Harvest Foundation has worked closely with *OutReach, Inc.* for several years in their efforts to increase the number of people with diverse backgrounds who are connected to LGBT organizations or culture in Madison. OutReach's "Diversity and Racial Justice Project" focuses on creating LGBT community visibility within communities of color, and educating their staff related to race and ethnicity within LGBT issues.

\$2,500 Support through counseling, youth groups, leadership development and HIV/AIDS education is an important need of LGBT youth. Fortunately, Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin's "*Teens Like Us*" program does all of this. NHF helped finance the implementation of an all-boys group session. Group support sessions typically are attended by mostly female youth. A lone teenage boy will drop in, may feel like a minority, and never return. This new program reaches out to LGBTQ male youth.

Updates

In the spring of 2011 *Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus* (PHMC) completed the purchase of sound equipment. We're very excited to be in the implementation stage of a multi-phase project. At this time we have implemented the use of the sound equipment for local performances such as our cabaret shows and will be using it for performances in the 2011-2012 season. Additionally, this purchase is a key component of our spring 2012 project "Heartlands". "Heartlands" is based on a collection of stories from singers and friends of PHMC and tells the stories of growing up gay in the heartland. In May/June we will be presenting several performances of "Heartlands" in collaboration with senior centers and facilities focusing on performances in smaller communities as outreach to our seniors in these communities. – *Ken Forney, Artistic Director, Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus.*

Guys Like Us (GLU) has been meeting one time per month as a safe space for teenage males who are gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning. The group has provided an opportunity for these young men to share experiences, concerns, and ask questions about growing up gay and staying safe. Every group meeting focuses on HIV prevention among participating teenage young men between 13-19 years of age. Participants of GLU learn not only how to develop skills associated with positive identity development at a critical point in their development, but also how to communicate these skills to their peers. Group participants are empowered to be an informative resource in teaching healthy life skills to the wider network of peers in their social system, expanding the scope of influence of this project to those unwilling or unable to seek out supportive LGBTQ resources yet are nonetheless engaging in high risk behavior. We are incredibly appreciative to the New Harvest Foundation and its supporters for the opportunity to develop this *Teens Like Us* (TLU) satellite group that focuses on the population most at risk for HIV. – *Alex Einsman, Youth Group Co-facilitator*

Apply for a Grant

Grants fall into several focus areas: social service, social change, public education, health care, arts and culture, and development of LGBT communities. Grant proposals should address one or more of those areas.

New Harvest Foundation makes grants to organizations that:

- » provide services that benefit the lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender communities in South Central Wisconsin;
- » are not-for-profit and exempt from federal taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code, or who use a qualifying fiscal sponsor.
- » At this time, we are especially interested in supporting programs that support LGBTQ youth and seniors.

For more information on NHF's funding priorities, screening criteria, limitations, size of grants, application process, and decision-making process, as well as to apply online, please visit newharvestfoundation.org.

Fundraising Initiatives

Events

New Harvest Foundation engages in event-based fundraising each year. In 2010, we held two events, our annual *Dinner Dance* and our biennial *Art Auction*. Each year, the NHF Dinner Dance warms a cold winter night. This year's celebration gave us an opportunity to share the organization's accomplishments and to recharge our spirits for another year. The evening's line-up included a very successful silent auction and after-dinner entertainment with Chicago's sketch comedy troupe, GayCo Productions. Our keynote speaker, Professor Bill McConkey, updated us on his mission to challenge Wisconsin's Marriage Amendment, not only because of his gay daughter, but because it was the right thing to do.

The success of any event is dependent on the support and contributions we receive from many. This is certainly true for the 2010 Art Auction, held on a beautiful autumn day at Quivey's Grove in Madison. More than 75 locally, regionally, and nationally-known artists donated original paintings, sculpture, photography, ceramics, jewelry, and other artwork for this event. We experimented with and expanded our use of technology with this year's event by providing both on-line and on-site auctions. Michael Bruno and Graeme Reid entertained and educated auction participants as co-hosts of the live auction. A grand time was had by all.

For 25 years, the NHF has been doing the right thing. We have contributed more than \$375,000 to fund local LGBT initiatives and, all the while, have created a solid network of our area's best allies in the fight for equality and support. We boldly continued in that mission with this year's Dinner Dance and Art Auction.

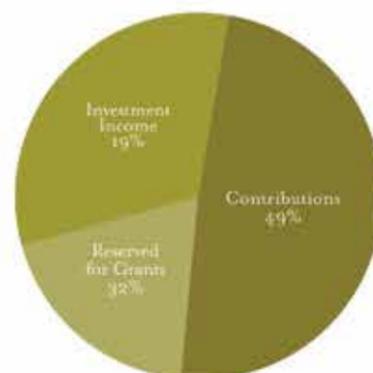
Financials

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, New Harvest Foundation's financial position remained solid during the unsettled economic times of 2010. A strong cash position allowed the foundation to continue to operate debt free. Management and general administrative expenses decreased 12% over 2009, freeing funds available for grant giving; and the endowment fund continued to grow. With a growing donor base and a sound financial footing, the New Harvest Foundation is poised to increase grant giving and support the LGBT communities for years to come.

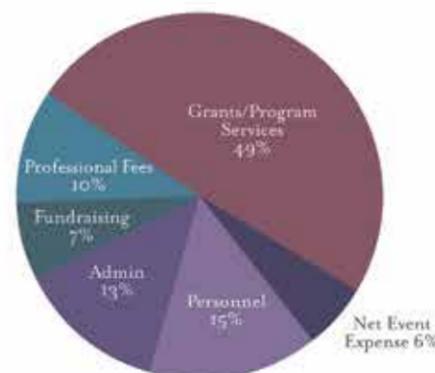
Financial Position



Income



Expenses



Planned Gifts

Planned giving is an additional source of contributions. We are grateful for three benefactors who designated New Harvest in their wills. The first was Henry Dudek, who was one of the founders of New Harvest. The second was Bill Miller, who had served on the Board and offered his excellent photographic skills to the organization. In December of 2010, we were notified of a bequest from Dr. Mark Hansen which NHF received in 2011.

All of us are indebted to these persons who gave of themselves and whose commitment to justice continues beyond their life. New Harvest is willing to discuss with you arrangements for preparing a will that reflects your wishes to have your influence continue beyond your lifetime. Please contact us to help define your legacy of support for the LGBT communities now...and for future generations.

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feature



Good Family
Linda S. Balisle summons memories and weaves together varied life experiences to define what makes a family.

for 31 years I've represented children and adults whose families are either being put together or falling apart. For the LGBT community I've worked in the courts and legislature to establish rights of children of LGBT parents to continue their relationship with both if their parents break up. So far, the courts and legislature have been unwilling to give legal status to children and their LGBT parents as "family." The convenient legal designations "married," "biological or adoptive parent" or "relative" eliminate the need to identify the substantive characteristics and components of a family. In fact, once a family is legally recognized, there is no need to demonstrate anything about the actual relationships to qualify for more than 1000 state and federal benefits



Out Professional and Executive Network

member profile



name:
Karin Wolf
title:
Arts Program Administrator
employer:
Madison Arts Commission, City of Madison

OPEN is proud to feature Charter Member Karin Wolf. Karin is on the Board of Directors and has served as Secretary. As the City of Madison's Arts Administrator, she helps OPEN fulfill their mission by integrating the arts into their planning. She is always pleased to see and help OPEN hire musicians and other artists for their events as it not only provides OPEN members with a richer experience, it helps support Madison's creative class as well.

"OPEN has connected me with some amazing individuals. These are people who really make a difference, promoting equal rights citywide and serving as leaders in their own professions." –Karin Wolf

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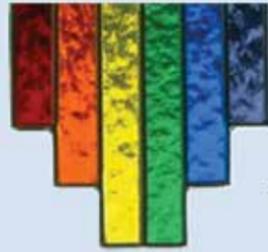
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available to married couples and their children.

Most people don't know that it is the children who benefit the most from a family's legal protections because they are automatic dependents, heirs, and beneficiaries of substantial benefits and protections, and have absolute rights to contact with both parents absent a finding of "unfitness." Few legal benefits are available to children of LGBT parents. In fact they are the only children who are "non-marital" children by operation of law. Yes, these are terms of art, but our U.S. Supreme Court said 40 years ago that "non-marital" children were to be treated the same as marital children. There are many ironies and tragedies related to this fact. One of the ironies is that the LGBT parents often want to be married and to have their partners adopt their children so they have all the benefits granted to children of heterosexual parents.

A tragic irony is that many LGBT parents had to leave their own families once they came out, and need, more than most, to create their own families. The legal limitations on this often are simply re-victimization of cast-out LGBT teens and young adults.

A short introduction: I was raised in the South, except for 2½ years in Brookfield, Wisconsin. I thought I would be a writer and journalist. I moved many times growing up, living in towns from 6 months to 3½ years. Fully identifying as



I don't really know if those of us who lived the AIDS epidemic so closely will fully recover in our lifetime.

a lesbian came later in life, in my 40s after my son left for college. Frankly, it was the first time I had no obligations to anyone but myself and my work, and I had finally started writing again.

Life events, both small and monumental, have been the best gauge of who my family really is. Many of these events arise, at least in part, from my Southern upbringing. I have to look at what it was like to live in the midst of the terrible things that happened in the South of the 1950s and '60s and to remember what I personally witnessed that made me a mystery to myself for too long. I remember that "which family you came from" determined how you were treated. I remember learning how to talk to anyone without saying much. It seemed there were roles to play more than lives to live. I discovered there were serious rules and expectations, which, if you had to be told, it was too late. You weren't a member of the larger family community.

Where I grew up, most people seemed to approve of or were too afraid to speak against law enforcement's extreme measures to control people who look different than "we" do. When the nightly news flashed film of vicious dogs and fire hoses aimed at black people, I didn't hear any criticism of it, except sometimes from my mother—"It's just not Christian." Instead, even in kindergarten, I heard friends' parents, a Sunday school teacher, and neighbors talk as if they knew the "white folk" involved and sympathized with them, supported the use of dogs

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and fire hoses, and expressed no objection to the occasional murder. I was scared.

What went on inside the homes of families I knew, including my own, could also be frightening to a child. I have observed that when people think that the world outside their home is a scary place, they put up with a lot more dangerous and unnerving behavior inside their homes.

I've had the privilege of listening to thousands of people talk about their families, what they desperately want to preserve, what they desperately want to escape. But it is the personal experiences I've lived that integrate all I know about what I consider to be a good family.

I finished high school and started college in Columbia, South Carolina, where Fort Jackson was a major employer, as well as the place where young men—boys really—trained and left for Vietnam. It was also where these young men returned in body bags. While in high school, the college demonstrations against the war were met with the same measures used against blacks during the peak of the civil rights movement.

In 1970, the collision of Old South and New South had begun. As part of the Old South traditions, I had to sign into the dorm by 10 p.m., no boys were allowed in the rooms, and attendance at sorority mixers required white gloves. I knew most who turned out to be gay men because I dated them all. While some sexual behavior be-

tween women occurred it was part of "sexual experimentation" and had nothing to do with relationships.

At the same time, there were signs of a New South ... Many students did not want to be considered racist, corporations began moving their headquarters south, and members of USC's nationally ranked basketball team were primarily from New Jersey, with no interest in learning the unspoken rules of racial relationships.

So why was I still stuck, unable to relax into myself, unable to be satisfied with the sex, drugs, and rock and roll of my classmates? I now realize that I had learned too well to hold myself in abeyance out of fear. But my increasing panic attacks persuaded me to leave a full scholarship and the South behind.

I left in the middle of my college sophomore year with my closest friends from high school, Tony and Betsy, wondering why. I landed in Madison in January 1972, and have remained in the area ever since. I started building my own family, some of whom remain in my life today.

But the South kept coming to me. My South Carolina high school friend, Tony, moved to Chicago soon after I married and had my son. Tony had come out before arriving in Chicago and happily created a family of choice and a party guest list of 146 of the handsomest professional, educated gay men in Chicago. I was one of a few women in his family of choice. During this time, the letters from his mother consisted primarily of Biblical quotations damning him to everlasting hell. When I got a divorce in 1980, Tony's mother changed her focus, suggesting that Tony and I get married—a long time Southern "solution" to the "bi-sexual" problem in certain families. Her hopes were dashed when, in 1982, Tony found out he was HIV-positive.

The following decade taught us much about our families. Tony's mother became an activist in the AIDS Quilt and other supportive activities. She demanded and received support from her South Carolina Mormon congregation. My family regularly asked about Tony's health and how I was doing. They never suggested I should

keep Tony from hanging out with my son on holidays, and were appalled at the vicious suggestions of others that AIDS was retribution for a dissolute life. Tony and I felt fortunate that our families said all the right things.

When Tony was admitted to the hospital for his last illness, he was visiting his mother in South Carolina. My law partner said, "Of course you have to stay with him; he's part of your history." My parents felt the same way. "Good family" for me meant not having to explain spending two weeks by his bedside and another week planning his funeral.

By the time Tony died in 1993, only four men on his party guest list were alive. You read that correctly—142 of the handsomest, brightest, most successful gay men in Chicago were buried between 1982 and 1993. It was this experience—the funerals, the memorial services, the weekends at emergency rooms—that few outside of the LGBT community talked about. Many lesbians and mothers were caregivers. We were exhausted. My high school friend, Betsy, was a caregiver in South Carolina, unique among mothers in Columbia. Unlike the widely discussed horror of the growing death toll in Vietnam in the late 60s, my experience from 1982–1993 with so many excruciating deaths was rarely discussed outside a small group of friends.

Even now, it seems impossible to convey to younger members of the LGBT community what it was like. It's ancient history to them. I don't really know if those of us who lived it so closely will fully recover in our lifetime. I worry that seeing AIDS as a "chronic and treatable" disease may encourage behaviors that will recreate the nightmare of the 1980s and 90s when there were sometimes several funerals in a week.

A few years after Tony's death, I told my parents, who had separated after a 40-year marriage, that I was only dating women. My mother wanted to know what my father thought. My father asked me how my business was going. If others had opinions about it, they blessedly kept them to themselves.



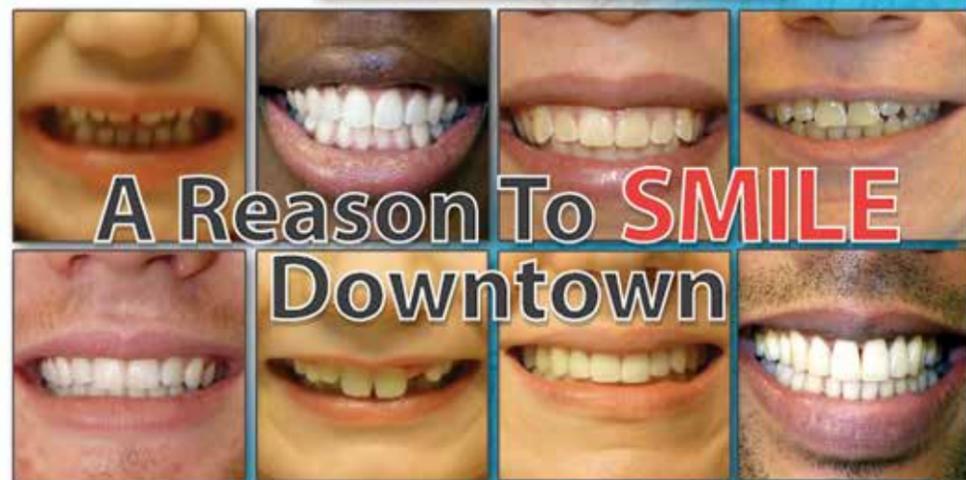
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On one of my father's visits to Wisconsin, I introduced him to my new partner. He was polite, but later asked my brother why she was always with us. My poor brother had to explain it to him. My father told me, "I don't like surprises." I reminded him I had told him I was only going to date women. He said, "I didn't know it meant that." But he quickly said, "But I still love you. Your family is here for you." He added, "And if you change your mind again, I'll still love you."

But there was fallout and it took time to heal. At the second Christmas of this relationship, my father sent me and my partner a Christmas card with two checks. Her check was for the same amount as mine, just as he did with my siblings and their spouses. I was stunned.

My father was born in a tent city in south-east Oklahoma in 1928. By sheer grit and intelligence, he worked his way through school and up the corporate ladder to a national executive level. I knew what money meant to him. I broke down. I called him even though I was still crying to tell him how much it meant to me. He was silent a moment, then said, "Well it has a lot to do with how I feel about you."

Good family. My partner and I attended the wedding of Betsy's middle son in a small, wealthy, white community in South Carolina. It was a country club wedding, and we were the only gay couple attending. While the Electric Slide is meant for lines of people and is easy to blend in, slow dancing is an announcement of your intimate relationship. When my partner insisted on slow dancing, I refused. I couldn't begin to explain it all to her in that moment, why, unlike the other weddings where we had slow danced, this was different.

Betsy, who is married to an Episcopal priest, took my arm and said, "If you don't slow dance with her, I will." I decided to dance. We went to the dance floor, closely wrapped as all the other couples on the floor. We did it, no one got shot, and I didn't die. I did go out to the car and cry. I lived to tell the tale.

Once again, Betsy was good family. Like many who left the South, I now think about the things I miss. The year-long flowers and plants, the music, the slower pace, the different rhythms and lilts of speech patterns and language, and the daily mix of people of color with white people. Despite the continuing racism, many southerners have taken a page from the North and learned to moderate their race-re-

lated language and behavior in public. For those of us who are still so easily re-stimulated by our past in the South, these changes make it easier to simply be there. But I'm not moving back.

I do like to visit, though. Recently my current partner Cindy and I joined my brother, his wife, my niece, her husband, and our in-laws in Memphis for my niece's art show. Betsy drove over from Hot Springs, Arkansas—her new home with her husband. On Beale Street we filled ourselves with great food, great music, and sober history lessons taught in remarkable photo exhibits. At one of the outdoor Delta Blues venues, a ribald and fabulous woman blues singer, Ms. Zeno, approached women in the audience with the question, "How do you know you are a woman?" Most said, "because of my man," "I just know," and the like. When she got to my partner, Cindy smiled and said, "Because I love women." Ms. Zeno's face rearranged for a split second be-

fore she said, "No one ever said that before." Then Ms. Zeno pulled it together and said something unprintable that caused everyone to howl. I looked around at my family and Betsy laughing hard with Cindy and me, and thought—really good family.

These days, my farm in Wisconsin allows me the intimate connection with land I learned growing up in the South, visiting my great-grandmother at her Oklahoma farm, and spending summers with relatives who lived in Wyoming's mountains. The bedrock at my farm here is only 25" below the surface, allowing me to feel the presence of so many who have come before. Few, if any, of the people who lived here long ago looked like those of us here now. Feeling their presence makes the area feel less homogeneous, more reflective of the world. It comforts me.

When my 35-year-old son Sam met Cindy, he took several opportunities to talk with her one-on-one as well as hang out with us as a couple. He told me later, after finding her smart and funny with a great heart, that she was "a very welcome addition to our family."

I treasure and respect his mature and measured assessment of her before he drew a conclusion. But I will always fondly remember one of our early conversations about me being a lesbian. He was about 20. It was the week before Madison's Pride parade. I asked him, "Do you want to join us in the Pride parade?" He looked at me and said, "It's not my party, but you gotta do what you gotta do."

Now, that's family. ■

I couldn't begin to explain it all to her in that moment, why, unlike the other weddings where we had slow danced, this was different.



From Left: Paul Lorentz, James Candler, Leon Candler, and Stewart Candler

THE Adoption OPTION

LGBT parents are changing the world one child at a time—through their adoption of children who need a stable home and by setting examples with their intentional parenting.

When Rita Mae and Elizabeth began dating, Elizabeth was already pregnant with their first child, Charlotte. Several years and two states later, they are the proud mamas to two little girls—Rita Mae later gave birth to Maxine—both from the same donor dad.

James and Paul had always been around children, and they adored their nieces and nephews. One day, James announced that he wanted them to take foster parent classes together, and two weeks later they were contacted about a potential match. That first match was Stewart, who immediately adopted them as his dads. Their younger son, Leon, rounds out their family of four.

These stories represent just a sampling of the ways in which LGBT people are creating families through adoption. Anne Johnson of Children and Families First helps people interested in adopting to explore their options and find agencies that can meet their needs.

"Many out-of-state and religiously based adoption agencies will not work with LGBT couples," she says. "Some won't work with single parents either."

Anne provides home study services and then helps couples find the out-of-state agencies that do work with LGBT families. She also assists a family if a local birthmother comes to the agency requesting an LGBT family for the placement of her child.

Another option is adopting through the State Special Needs Program. This program includes infants and children who are removed from homes where parents have not been able to provide their children with adequate care due to issues of drug and alcohol abuse, criminal behavior, mental illness, or abuse and neglect.

"These children may or may not have physical special needs but often have emotional and behavioral challenges," Anne says. "This program is subsidized by the state, so there is no cost to the adoption and parents often receive an on-going subsidy to care for the children even after the adoption is finalized."

Anne says that there are good and not-so-good aspects to adopting through this program.

"I have heard that a very popular place for the state to recruit foster and adoptive families for the special needs programs is at gay pride events,"



Rita Mae Reese with Maxine Reese Perry, and Elizabeth Perry with Charlotte Reese Perry

she says. “The state knows that LGBT couples are often in a really good place to be parents through adoption because their choices for love and family have always had to be so conscious and so brave. They have the emotional wherewithal to handle the issues of grief and loss and not fitting a particular mold that comes with creating a family through adoption.”

But here’s the catch:

“The state seeks out LGBT prospective parents, yet Wisconsin does not allow LGBT families to marry and have the same rights and protections as straight families. I think our policy makers need to take a close look at the hypocrisy in that,” Anne says. “We ask the LGBT community to care for our most vulnerable children and then do not give them legal and financial support.”

Perhaps the most common adoption path is to have the home study done here in Wisconsin, and then find a birthmother match through out-of-state agencies that place with LGBT families.

Two-Parent Adoption

Anne says sometimes LGBT families are fortunate enough to be matched with a birthmother who lives in a state where they can both adopt and can both be listed on the birth certificate, such as Illinois. Sometimes they are matched with a birthmother who lives in a state where only one of them can finalize the adoption, but a second, two-parent adoption is done later in Wisconsin.

And, of course, lesbian couples can choose to create their family through the use of known or non-known sperm donors, and then do a two-parent adoption to make both mothers legal parents.

RITA MAE REESE & ELIZABETH PERRY When Elizabeth set out to become a mom, it was with the intention of raising her child on her own. She feared

what could happen if she inseminated with a known donor, so she opted for the use of a sperm bank. Her first baby died only a few days after he was born. Elizabeth grieved, but felt determined to try again. When she met Rita Mae, she had already inseminated. By the time they began dating, she knew she was pregnant. When she told Rita Mae, they both knew that it was “right” and that they would raise the child together. In San Francisco, Rita Mae was able to adopt Charlotte with no complications and very little cost.

When Rita Mae gave birth to their second daughter from the same donor, it was not so simple or affordable. They had moved to Wisconsin. Anne Johnson was very supportive during her home visit, but the legal situation in Wisconsin makes LGBT adoption difficult.

Anne says, “Because I have care and compassion for the barriers they are facing, I try to be as supportive, empathetic and non-invasive in my LGBT home studies as possible.”

Elizabeth and Rita Mae enlisted the services of Madison attorney Christopher Krimmer to help them navigate the legal system so that Elizabeth could successfully adopt Maxine.

“I see my role as taking what is a family-in-fact and providing them with the legal options to become a family under the law. Unfortunately, without some

affirmative steps on their part, the rights of the non-biological parent are quite limited,” Christopher says. “Unlike married couples, the gay and lesbian couple must take legal action to establish their rights as a family. It is unfair but reality.”

In order for Wisconsin lesbians to adopt their partner’s biological child, the biological mother must first terminate her parental rights, and then the couple performs a two-parent adoption. The legal argument and

procedure is not settled law and not all judges will grant them.

“It is not uncommon to be in court watching a judge grant parental rights to the non-biological parent and both parents shedding a tear. The fact that their family is being ‘legitimized’ by the court as a true and equal family is quite emotional and rewarding,” Chris says. “This legal acknowledgment builds on the foundation of their family and strengthens the family dynamics.”

And, Elizabeth and Rita Mae gain strength from one another.

“Child rearing has been great,” Elizabeth says. “We are a good mix of parenting styles. I am a goal-oriented overachiever, and Rita Mae is open-minded, sensitive, and calm.”

Rita Mae adds that they have same ideas about parenting and what a family is. “We really respect each other and work things out between one another and with the kids. And we have the same pace about things: we love to walk around the block, make tea, and draw pictures. That’s pretty much what you will see us doing.”

Rita Mae’s mother, Maxine, lives with them as well. Baby Maxine was named for her grandmother, and both girls’ last names are “Reese Perry.”

Open Adoption

Anne views LGBT people as being more open-minded when it comes to defining family. “My experience has been that LGBT couples have a more open notion of what family is, therefore they make the best clients for open adoption—they have less hang-ups and fears about having a birth family involved in their lives,” she says.

Anne says that perhaps this is because LGBT people know they will never have a “traditional” family, so they have different expectations and fewer idealized perceptions about how their family will look.

JAMES CANDLER AND PAUL LORENTZ When James and Paul began their fostering certification, they knew they wanted to stay clear of infants and babies. They caught flack from friends and family for taking on “damaged goods” by adopting a child who had been living in the foster system after having a rough home life. Stewart’s human services file did read “like a nightmare,” according to Paul. But that didn’t dampen their resolve.

“We’ve never viewed Stewart and Leon as damaged goods. Prejudice works both ways, actually,” Paul says. “These folks who made bad choices in their lives were very warm and welcoming toward us.”

Paul was referring to Stewart’s birth family. When they were undergoing the process of adopting Stewart, several members of his family came to James and Paul’s home to check them out.

“We had strong allies going forward in the birth family. We were mutually supportive, always focusing on what was best for Stewart,” James says.

That support extended toward Stewart’s birth parents. James and Paul accompanied Stewart’s birthmother in court and witnessed her moving statement in favor of them adopting her son. Her plea was so strong and sincere that Stewart’s birthfather reversed his negative stance and relinquished his rights.

“It was heartbreaking, but it felt good that they trusted us,” James says.

When Paul and James began the process of adopting their younger son, Leon, they had contact with his birthmother, too. Leon was coming to them after having been raised by his birthmother until he was five, then fostered by a straight couple. He always envisioned that he would eventually return to his birthmother.

Paul says, “When Leon moved in, he said: ‘Why don’t you guys have moms?’—meaning wives. It worked in our favor that neither of us were

moms, since he was so close with his mom and was having trouble letting go of the idea of returning to her.”

“It wasn’t that I wasn’t with a mom with Paul and James, but just that I wasn’t with my mom,” Leon says. Now he needed to learn to trust that they would be there for him long-term.

“I made the mistake of thinking that Paul and James would pass me on like my last foster parents had, so I acted out and didn’t give them a good first impression,” Leon says.

Trust was an issue for Stewart, as well. “Adults take for granted that kids inherently trust adults and believe they are looking out for them,” Paul says. “With both boys, there was a strong sense of the opposite: adults not only don’t care, they at best are merely incompetent, and at worst they are out to hurt/abuse kids.”

Stewart recognizes now that he can trust, and has advice for other children in foster care awaiting placement: “I knew at some point things were going to work out. When you are placed in a family, just say to yourself, ‘I’m going to make the best out of this and not worry what’s next. I’m just going to live my life now,’” Stewart says. “Ask yourself if the people you are placed with are respectful and do they care about you.”

He goes on to give advice to children being placed with LGBT parents. “For kids who have a problem with gay parents, remember they are not trying to get you into their lifestyle. What matters is do they respect you, do they care, are they fair?” he says. “To me, it was never an issue. I just said, ‘Okay, this is how they live.’ What’s so different?”

Paul and James have learned and grown right alongside their sons. “We discovered a massive well of strength. Parenting has challenged who we are, and has challenged us as a couple,” Paul says. “We have had a lot of support from our families. They adopted these boys, too, and we all have learned about each other through this experience.”

James says, “It has made us stronger as a couple. We get told we did a wonderful job as parents, but people don’t give a lot of agency to the boys for how well things are going.”

Both boys have had very little notice from their Sun Prairie classmates about the fact that they have gay dads. In the rare case that he is asked about it, Leon says, “So what if they are gay? There are lots of people who are. Get a life.”

“It’s not been smooth or easy, but it has been rewarding,” says James. “I would bring in more children. I would encourage people to do it. There are a lot of great kids right in our backyards that need a home.”

Anne emphasized that infant adoption is getting harder and harder to do. “It is becoming more expensive, wait times are becoming longer, and there simply are fewer babies available for adoption,” she says. “Less than 4% of women facing a crisis pregnancy in the U.S. will make an adoption plan for their child. Most choose to terminate the pregnancy or raise the child themselves—or ask a family member to raise the child. With changes in international adoption, adopting an infant through an international program is all but impossible. Therefore, there is an ever-increasing demand for infants within the U.S.”

The silver lining is that there are children who are being adopted that otherwise wouldn’t be.

“Because of the shortage of infants, the focus is shifting to adopting children who are older or have special needs,” Anne says. “What a great outcome for those children. The new world of adoption is challenging people to walk the walk that parenting is really about wanting to make the difference in the life of a child and change the world one child at a time.”

—Virginia Harrison

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feature



One Hot Chick

Milton "Chick" Sherman and his daughter Elena defied sex and gender roles in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.



There is a fetching picture of young student Milton Sherman, nicknamed "Chick," with a lovely companion preserved from the late 1930s. Were they part of an unofficial gay club or social circle at UW-Madison? That is what

his daughter, Elena Sherman, believes.

Her father grew up in New York City, but with some scholarship support for his gymnastic skill, and another small scholarship from his mother's labor union, Milt was able to attend UW-Madison. He graduated in 1940.

Milt served in the Army Air Corps during World War II and met Elena's mother in 1946 when Elena was already three and a half. He would adopt Elena when she was 8. Later, when Elena Sherman came out as a lesbian, her father said he knew since she was a young child. His positive response and questions about lesbian life was quite different from her mother's reaction, who thought she was just going through a phase.

While in the Air Force, Milt was perforce closeted. Elena recalls he was almost discharged from the military, possibly for homosexuality, but the discharge process ended when he got married. This she learned from overheard conversations.

Milt was an artist and performed on the road as a magician. When Elena went on the road with him at age 12 as a stage helper, she often cross-dressed. Milt would dress her as a young

boy since travelling with a son was safer and easier to sort out than travelling with a daughter. Her father also would do drag parts in charity productions and was part of the Chicago Stage Guild. Clearly mixing up gender roles and cross-dressing had a tradition in the family.

After her father died, Elena came across photos that had been tucked away that helped her understand his life before his marriage to her mother. They appear to document the gay life Milt had led in Madison in the late 1930s.

While in Madison, Milt was deeply involved with *The Daily Cardinal* as a frequent editorial cartoonist. He also contributed other pieces like book reviews and brief reviews of shows in town.

Milt Sherman was the only one on staff at *The Daily Cardinal* to break the silence on what he termed "homosexuality." The late 1930s was a time of general reticence on sex issues. The lack of information and a thirst for knowledge was

After her father died, Elena came across photos that helped her understand his life before his marriage to her mother.

exhibited when, in April 1938, *The Daily Cardinal* reported 500 men jammed into Tripp Commons at the Memorial Union, and more than 300 milled around the entrance, for a lecture entitled "Anatomy and Physiology of Sex" given by Dr. E. L. Servinghaus of the Wisconsin General Hospital (now UW Hospital). The offering was an unusual lecture series under the sponsorship of the house presidents' council. Dr. Servinghaus noted, "Sex knowledge is difficult to obtain because of an

accumulative taboo against it." The second lecturer in the series, Prof. Howard Becker, advocated "sticking to the conventions." Becker elaborated, "taboos of society can be broken, but they can never be broken lightly. The closer you can stay to these conventions, the happier you will be."

When Milt Sherman, in December 1937, wrote his review of the book *Serenade* by James M. Cain, he did not yet have the benefit of Prof. Becker's advice but the campus atmosphere was likely the same. Sherman noted in his review that the central character, a baritone in the opera, had his vocal qualities eradicated by "unnatural love." Once they are restored by the love of a "3 peso" Mexican prostitute, there is a danger of backsliding to "homosexuality." But his once and putative lover is stabbed to death, ending the threat. Sherman characterized the book as a "swift kick in the pants of the aesthetically minded moralist." He concluded, "*Serenade* will give our ever-present blue noses just the chance they've been waiting for to dust off their old stove-pipe lids and go around waving umbrellas in peoples' faces. But if you like to read shady stories about shady people in shady corners, don't pay any attention to the blue-noses."

Other photos include a series that show a young man identified as Dave in whom her father was interested. She recalls her grandmother referred to Dave as "the pretty boy." Milt Sherman identified him on the back of one photo as his "handsome friend." In some photos Dave is dressing up in women's clothes. Elena presumes her father, with his theater experience, helped with the make-up for Dave's transformation. Whether this was for a quiet date or perhaps for a Haresfoot performance can only be conjecture. Haresfoot was a long UW theatrical tradition where men played women's roles and performed as chorines. The slogan was "all our girls are men, yet everyone is a lady." Dave was in Haresfoot productions for two years as part of the female chorus. However, the clothes in the Sherman photos do not match the performance costumes shown in The Badger yearbook nor *The Daily Cardinal*.

It is good to know there are people like Elena who are preserving the hidden history of early gay life in Madison. ■

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

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About the Model
 (and our cover artist)

JULIET DARKEN IS A
 FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR AND
 MADISON NATIVE. SHE HAS
 RECENTLY SIGNED WITH THE

ALEXANDER POLLARD ILLUSTRATION AGENCY AND HAS
 FRAMED FINE ART AND PRINTS ON DISPLAY AT
 HATCH ART HOUSE ON MADISON'S WILLIAMSON
 STREET. RECENT PROJECTS INCLUDE DESIGN OF
 THE BARTELL THEATRE'S SEASON POSTER AND
 BROCHURE, AN EDITORIAL PIECE FOR CORPORATE
 REPORT WISCONSIN, AND CREATION OF A LOGO
 FOR ZURI CRAFTS (LOCATED IN CHICAGO, IL, AND
 NAIROBI, KENYA). IN HER OPINION, THE MOST
 IMPORTANT THING FOR PEOPLE TO LEARN IS HOW
 TO COMMUNICATE, AND SHE ENJOYS ADDING
 HER PERSONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE TO THE HUMAN
 CONVERSATION. SHE LIVES IN THE WIL-MAR
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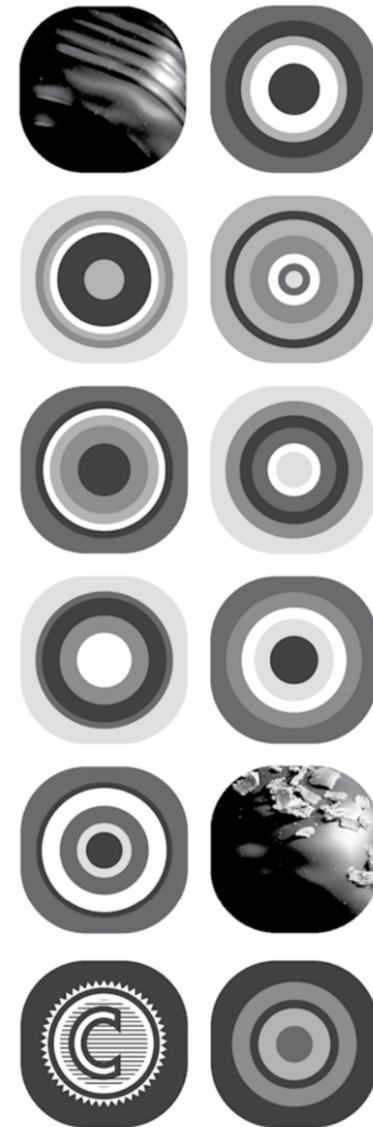
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Family Law Update

What has changed and what do those changes mean for Wisconsin's LGBT families? **Michele Perreault** of DeWitt Ross & Stevens reports.

Recently, both legislative and case law changes have impacted the way we form families, dissolve relationships, add children in our lives, and protect our families.

Forming Legal Relationships

In response to the Constitutional Amendment banning same sex marriage or a status "substantially similar" to marriage, the Wisconsin Legislature passed legislation creating domestic partnerships with basic, but important, legal protections for our families. While not as comprehensive as marriage, these



equately address dissolution of relationships. However, Wisconsin courts protect unmarried people (gay or straight) who live together and acquire assets together, even if they are not registered domestic partners. Partners who contribute to the acquisition of assets, financially or through other services that increase the value of property or the ability of one party to acquire property, can receive a fair division of that property. If, for example, the parties live in a house titled in one party's name, but the other party contributes to the mortgage, cares for children so the other party can work, or in some other way contributes to the accumulation of wealth of the couple, that person should receive a fair share of the property acquired during the relationship. Because this is a specialized area of the law, it is important to seek advice from an attorney who has experience representing gay and lesbian clients.

Legal Protections for Families with Children

For many people, the most important legal protections are those for children. Wisconsin law is inadequate with regard to protecting the children of LGBT parents, and recent court decisions have made some methods of legal protection even more tenuous.

Two methods of forming protections for children have recently come under legal scrutiny: parentage orders and adoptions where one legal parent (either through birth or through adoption as a single person) terminates his or her parental rights so that both parents can adopt as "single adults."

PARENTAGE ORDERS In a recent court of appeals decision (Christian R.H.), the court held that "parentage orders" are void under Wisconsin law. However, the court also held that if parties had relied on such orders for some time, in that case more than four years, courts may prevent one party from trying to get out of the effect of the order. Thus, if you have such an order from four or more years ago, the courts may protect your legal status. If the order is more recent, you may not be protected. Going forward, such orders provide no protection to parents and should not be relied upon.

ADOPTIONS Adoptions, via the method described above, are also being challenged in

Wisconsin. Recently, one circuit court held that such adoptions are not legal, and one held that the process was legal. The court of appeals decided not to decide, finding that whether the adoption was legal or not, a party could not come back more than seven years after agreeing to the adoption to "undo" the adoption (*Christian J.W.*).

Where does that leave us? Until the Supreme Court addresses the validity of adoption directly, we do not know whether this process is legally sound. However, previous Supreme Court decisions in 1991 (Z.G.H) and 1994 (Angel Lace) suggest that this method would not likely be upheld if challenged. As a result of those decisions, most circuit court judges do not grant adoptions in this manner, and many attorneys advise against such adoptions.

LEGAL GUARDIANSHIPS Despite those problems, we do have a way to secure important legal protections for children. While they do not offer the full protections our families will receive when (not if) the law changes to permit same-sex adoptions, legal guardianships are simple, effective, and much less costly alternatives to the methods described above.

If one parent has secured legal rights through childbirth or adoption, the other parent can be granted legal guardianship over the child. Guardianship confers important rights and obligations, including the ability to be involved in school or medical appointments and decision making. Most insurance companies will cover a child if the covered parent has guardianship. Employers often honor guardianships in the same manner as adoptions, permitting time off or providing benefits equivalent to those of full legal parents.

Guardianships are not the equivalent of adoption, especially with regard to full legal protections in the event of the dissolution of a relationship. However, an attorney experienced in establishing guardianships for same-sex couples should include additional provisions to guardianship orders to help protect parents to the greatest extent allowed for under the law.

Where To from Here?

As the above analysis makes clear, the legal progress for LGBT people is two steps forward, one step back. But we are moving forward, slowly but surely. We do have tools today to help provide significant protections, and we continue to fight in court and in the legislature for full legal protections for our families. ■

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

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Attorney Christopher Krimmer, BALISLE & ROBERSON, S.C.



A legal advocate for the LGBT community for over 13 years and an adjunct professor of Sexual Orientation and the Law at Marquette Law School, Attorney Krimmer will address:

- The **five essential legal documents** that every couple should consider and leave the seminar with four of them!
- What are **Partnership Agreements** and who needs them?
- **And Baby Makes Three:** Protecting the Children of LGBT Families

David Lacocque, PsyD, Psychologist

Stephanie Graham, PhD, Psychologist



Leading therapists specializing in LGBT dynamics, Dr. Lacocque and Dr. Graham will address:

- **Success Strategies** for LGBT relationships
- Are LGBT Relationships Truly **Different from Straight Relationships?**
- An Internet Check-Up: **Pitfalls and Possibilities** in Your Relationship

Shannon Anderson, Financial Advisor



As a financial advisor for over ten years and a board member of the Fair Wisconsin Education Fund, Shannon is well versed in the unique financial issues facing LGBT couples. Shannon measures success not only on your financial well-being but how confident you are with your future together. Shannon will address:

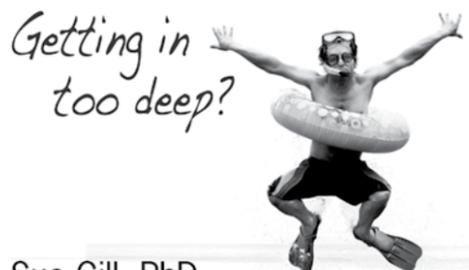
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OUR ELDERS

Acceptance of Gifts

Caroline Werner urges seniors to learn to accept a helping hand and to let go of the ingrained “go it alone” attitude.

I recently had a friend who is older than me call me a “benefactor” to her. It struck me that that’s the reverse of how that term is usually used. Usually it’s the elder who is the benefactor to the younger. It was a compliment to me to let me know that she appreciates how I’ve been able to help her and be a friend to her as she ages. I want to be able to call some young people my benefactors as I age, too.

I enjoy sharing what I know and being of help to seniors (or anyone) I know. I figure that what makes life worth living is the sharing we all do with and for each other. So at



do we have to keep “doing it ourselves” when others are friendly and supportive and want to be available to us?

In the LGBT sensitivity workshops I coordinate through OutReach, we use a short YouTube video entitled “To Serve Me You Have to Know Me.” We are training health care providers to know us in order to serve us effectively and with respect. They need to know about our culture of oppression and about our resilience. We enjoy helping and supporting each other and we also respect those who enjoy and feel safer with their independence.

There comes a time, though, when we age or after a hospitalization at any age, where we may need the help of others. When we’re vulnerable, we need to be able to trust that our life and health will be nurtured and improved with the help of others—maybe complete strangers, as well as our friends.

Recognizing that we have friends and allowing them to be there for us is important for our wellbeing. It’s another step to crossing a bridge as a result of the progress we’ve made, having braved the unknown, and now being able to be out and visible, to the extent that we can trust our surroundings.

As a community, we are beginning to want to learn how to enjoy our new freedom to ask for and expect culturally competent treatment, especially in health care. We need to know we no longer need to do it all alone. Others are willing and able to work with us—not against us. Now it’s time for us to learn how to work with them—and not reject the open hand moving toward us. Are we ready to accept the gift we worked so hard to attain and that we know we deserve?

We may want to think on this as we move into a new year. I’m hearing that being “gay” is less and less of a political issue, that we now have more people in our nation who are gay-friendly. Even the families of our youth and some school systems are more friendly and supportive, compared to what our seniors experienced. Do we feel any more safety, though, to lower our walls and barriers to their offers of support? It depends on the situation and whom we’re talking about. We have to learn how and who to trust. It’s not an easy

process with such a long history of oppression and hatred.

It’s a little safer out there now, hopefully. I want to accept the support; I just have to learn how to do that safely.

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

Gift Ideas

The holidays can be a lonely time for anyone, but especially for those who are more isolated or recently widowed. If you are looking for ways to reach out to a senior citizen in your life, here are some suggestions for lending a helping hand:

- Make or purchase a shawl or throw for them to warm their laps or shoulders.
- Give them a space heater or make a donation to their electric or gas bill.
- Present them with the gift of companionship with visits and/or phone calls.
- Put together a box of goodies including easy-to-cook items and some special treats.
- Get them a maid service for a period of time or commit to helping with the cleaning yourself.
- Give them a coupon book you put together for ways you can help, such as helping with laundry or driving to appointments.
- Take them out for dinner or shopping, or invite them to your house for a meal or get-together.



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Eating In

Personal chefs **Jeanne Benink** and **Angela Trentadue** make home meals easy, nutritious, and affordable.

When the going gets busy, many of us turn to meals out or on the go. This route is often more expensive and potentially less nutritious but there is another option: a personal chef.

I'll also confess that I assumed personal chefs were for classes above the masses, but personal chefs Jeanne Benink, owner of Simply Served, and Angela Trentadue, owner of Stagioni, brought my assumptions down to earth. A personal chef can be convenient, healthy, tasty, and cost-effective.

Because they cook everything from scratch, their food costs stay down. Homemade food can be really affordable as well as being good for you.

Clients seek out personal chefs for both short-term and long-term plans, which are customized to meet individual schedules, special dietary needs, and likes and dislikes. Holidays also present a time to call on help with cooking for parties, extra guests, or to simplify life during a season full of cheer, and often, stress.

"It's like having a magic elf," Jeanne said with a twinkle in her eye.



Angela Trentadue (above)

Personal Chef/Owner of Stagioni
Contact: twoand30@gmail.com, (608) 215-3662

Jeanne Benink (left)

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OUR TASTE

Simplify, Simplify, Simplify

Jeanne grew up on a farm in which her family largely sustained itself on huge produce gardens and she's been working with food since she can remember, she said. Now Jeanne works part-time on an organic farm and cooks with local and organic produce when possible.

"Growing up, everyone knew where their food was sourced from. I don't know what's happened; where along the line good food stopped being a priority. That's one of my goals: to make good food a priority," she said.

Seeing many of her family members suffer from morbid obesity has steeled her resolve to promote healthy diets, and one of her clients even lost 130 pounds during her employment.

"I've seen first-hand what an unhealthy lifestyle does to you, and I feel that the American people have really gotten away from treating food with the importance that it deserves," she said.

She's earned reverence as the "soup lady" among friends for her soups, which she enjoys with her partner at home, snow or shine. She has a special fondness for Indian and Nepali cuisine, which she has fun sharing with clients as well.

"I love making ethnic stuff for people who really don't have a lot of background in it because it opens up all these new avenues for culinary heaven," she said.

'Tis the Season

Angela entered culinary school after earning "an illustrious history degree" from UW-Madison. Why wasn't culinary school her first choice?

"My mom cooked at home all the time and I was like, 'No, I'm never going to do this.' So it's kind of funny. I guess I just had to come to it on my own terms," she said.

"Stagioni" is Italian for "seasons" and plays into Angela's focus on seasonal cooking and her Italian heritage. She takes a nutritional approach to cooking and especially likes to help people use boxes of Community Supported Agriculture produce.

In addition to her personal business, she is also a Culinary Lab Assistant at Madison College and teaches cooking classes at the Willy Street Co-Op.

"I almost think of food as a religion for myself. I kind of joke and say I'm a 'foodist' because I really believe in the power of food and the influence it has on our world, our relationships with people, and our community on so many different levels. I think that my excitement and passion about that comes across when I'm teaching and it comes through in my excitement about the things I'm cooking," she said. —**Marcelle Richards**

Photographed by **Roberto Amezcua**

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Youth Leadership (L to R):
Kathlene Welch
 Youth Musical Director
Michalla Moss
 Youth Dance Director
David Harvey
 Youth Technical Director
Not Pictured:
Margaret Billingham
 Youth Artistic Director

Collective Sol

Last year's **Proud Theater** Youth Directors riff on their experiences leading their peers in this collaborative LGBT and allied youth theater troupe.

We as queer youth often exist in solitude. Under the stage lights, our lives become examples of difference. However, when 20 other youth step out into that same light, when difference is overwhelmed by understanding, we find that we can achieve liberation.

Proud Theater began roughly 12 years ago when a very young Sol Kelley-Jones met Callen Harty. They dreamed up a theater group where youth could create their own performance pieces on queer themes with the mentorship and guidance of adults. Imagine a place where your experiences with discrimination are not only valued and acknowledged, but are used to create art. Imagine knowing that you are never alone. Proud Theater has been that safe and positive social space for many of us.

Kathlene Welch

As Youth Musical Director during the 2010–11 season, I had the privilege of working with the other youth to develop music that painted our struggles and celebrated our successes. The creative process was natural, with lyrics emerging through conversation. After putting much love into our final song entitled “Dreaming,” we all took away a feeling of satisfaction. It’s one thing to create art for personal catharsis, but it is equally rewarding to share your work on a stage. After this year’s shows ended, I took with me a feeling of purpose. My future endeavors will all be seasoned with the compassion and passion that I have gained from Proud Theater.

Michalla Moss

As Youth Dance Director during the 2010–11 season, I was able to portray and bring attention to issues that aren’t often looked at in theater.

The group dance piece pushed people out of their comfort zone to show them they can do whatever they want to on that stage. Whether dancing or anything else, I found that being a big part of Proud Theater means stepping out, being heard, making a change, and having fun doing it.

Margaret Billingham

The first time I attended a Proud Theater rehearsal, I had no idea what I was discovering. I didn’t have any friends in it and, as a nervous freshman in high school, I had only just started exploring my voice and the impact it made. By my senior year (2010–11), I was Youth Artistic Director: writing, casting, and directing a piece that was all my own. In those four years, I not only developed my theater and writing skills; I also found a safe haven that valued self-expression. I gained honest friends and trusted mentors. Proud Theater leaves an intangible mark on everyone it touches. I have seen audience members accept their children for who they are after watching a show; I have been approached in the street to be told a character brightened somebody’s day; and I’ve had friends in the troupe tell me how countless times Proud Theater helped save their lives. Proud Theater also left a mark on me: it molded me into the kind of person who readily takes on leadership roles, who pours passion into all projects, and who feels empowered by sharing opinions.

In Proud Theater we are artists, we are activists, we are teachers, and we are a force to be reckoned with until we know that every youth can feel welcome in their schools, homes, and in the world at large; until liberation comes at birth; and until we find that every citizen is given equal consideration regardless of age, class, race, gender identity, and sexuality. ■

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- Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice
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Photo: GSA for Safe Schools

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Chaz Bono, Keynote Speaker

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