

Perceptions Newsletter

Perceptions Inc. P.O. Box 1525, Midland, MI 48641 (989) 891-1429

Speaker Presentation

February 2004



Let There Be Peace on Earth . . . Let it Begin with Me



These are the words of Joan McCoy, wife, mother, grandmother and peace activist living in Saginaw, MI. Her life's mission is to provide opportunities for those in disagreement to find some area of understanding to end the strife. This was the focus of her recent visit to Baghdad and the Gaza Strip. The biggest obstacle to peace is often misunderstanding and failure to communicate. The news is smothered with pictures and stories about our actions and efforts in war-torn areas such as Baghdad and the Gaza Strip. Rarely do we get to hear the stories or see the horrors that the people who are living lives in the middle of the chaos and rubble experience daily. Often we get so bogged down in the war itself, we forget that there are people on the receiving end of the devastation. Joan came to our Thursday night meeting (Feb 26th, 2004) to try to

give us a glimpse of what the people struggle with every day in order to live and provide for their families. She brought pictures and stories about her contact with people, and she tried to share some of the horror, but tempered it with some laughable moments that people hang onto in these madding times. Those pictures brought sadness and joy. Looking at injured and/or orphaned is the greatest sadness. Looking at how the citizens of those areas find a way to smile despite the ugliness that surrounds them is the most wonderful joy.

Joan wore the veil that women wear and schooled us on its importance to those women who have them as part of their dress. The attitude ranges from pride to a feeling of being punished. While some sects use it to control women, it is not always a sign and symbol of abuse, or a sign and symbol of subjugation, but rather it can be a chance to feel "grown-up".

It was a compelling presentation brought to us by a brave woman. Thank you Joan McCoy

March Speaker

Gina Dominique

In a presentation of art containing historically relevant images of women from Pre-history through the High Renaissance period, Ms Dominique briefly traces how women have historically been imaged. The main focus is on the evolution of imagery of the Christian Marys, most specifically on artistic historical images of Mary Magdalene. The controversy over Mary Magdalene's relationship to Jesus and Christianity via the recently published book by John Brown, "The Da Vinci Code," is what inspired her examination into this topic. Gina Dominique is an Assistant Professor of Art at Delta College.

Opening doors for the Mid-Michigan GLBT Community

Calendar Highlights:

- [Wednesday, March 17th
Bay City Meet &
Greet 7-9 pm](#)
- [Sunday, March 28nd
PFLAG Meeting 2-
4:30 pm](#)
- [Thursday, March 26th
Perceptions General
Meeting 7-9 pm](#)
- [Wednesday, April 7th,
Saginaw Meet &
Greet 7-9p](#)
- [Saturday, April 17th,
Perceptions' Health
Fair 11a-5p](#)
- [Saturday, May 22nd
"Together in Faith:
Journey into
Inclusiveness"](#)

To receive email alerting
about upcoming events,
send your email address
to [PerceptionsSV-
owner@yahoo.com](mailto:PerceptionsSV-owner@yahoo.com)

From the Desk of the Chair Mindy Pennington

Over 1100 Benefits?

You have probably heard about the 1997 General Accounting Office report to the House of Representatives that documented a “collection of 1049 federal laws classified to the United States Code in which marital status is a factor.” I have heard this report quoted often as well, but never looked it up until now. In my search, I found that this report was just updated January 23, 2004. The introduction states:

“We have identified 120 statutory provisions involving marital status that were enacted between September 21, 1996, and December 31, 2003. During the same period, 31 statutory provisions involving marital status were repealed or amended in such a way as to eliminate marital status as a factor. Consequently, as of December 31, 2003, our research identified a total of 1,138 federal statutory provisions classified to the United States Code in which marital status is a factor in determining or receiving benefits, rights, and privileges.”

This report documents laws involving marital status; this is NOT specific to same-sex couples. Of course, heterosexual couples that are not married would fall under these same “unmarried” provisions as well. However, if they want to marry they can just go to city hall, get a marriage license and have a ceremony--and it's legal. Same sex couples cannot. After looking at the GAO report I also checked the Human Rights Campaign website for more explanation. I have listed a few of these discriminatory laws below:

- If you are married and your spouse dies, the surviving spouse inherits the estate tax-free. However, gay or lesbian individuals have to pay significant estate taxes when their partner dies.
- The right to assume parenting rights and responsibilities when children are brought into a family through birth, adoption, surrogacy or other means. For example, in most states, there is no law providing a noncustodial, nonbiological or nonadoptive parent's right to visit a child - or responsibility to provide financial support for that child - in the event of a breakup.
- If you inherit your partner's 401K or IRA, you are heavily taxed on these funds. However, spouses inherit this money tax-free.
- Gay and lesbian individuals are denied Social Security survivor benefits.
- The Family and Medical Leave Act does not permit individuals to take leave to care for a seriously ill partner or parent of a partner.
- Gay and lesbian partners do not have veteran's benefits or disability benefits.
- Lesbian and gay citizens or permanent residents cannot petition for their same-sex partners to immigrate.
- Only married veterans can be buried next to their spouse in a veteran's cemetery.

These are just a few ways in which gay and lesbian couples are discriminated against every day. I urge everyone to contact their government representatives and write their newspaper. When your friends and co-workers joke to you that “at least you don't have to pay the marriage penalty on your taxes” you can say, “Let's talk about that. I can't legally marry my partner. Let me tell you how this affects our life every day.” They will listen. When our friends, neighbors and co-workers understand, laws (and minds) will begin to change.

Mindy





Mark your calendars for April 17th!

On Saturday April 17th, Perceptions, along with BASIS, The Hearth Home, Health Delivery Inc., and the YWCA of Bay County will host a Health Fair from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the YWCA, 3405 E. Midland Road in Bay City. What makes this event so exciting is that it's designed especially for us – the GLBT community! The Health Fair is a free event, and child care for the day is also free. In addition to numerous displays from health care providers, food vendors will also be setup in the gymnasium of the YWCA.

Throughout the day, there will be special 45-minute informational sessions covering the areas of men's and women's health, HIV/AIDS prevention and care, teen issues, substance abuse, and nutrition. Don't forget to bring your swimsuit to this event because the YWCA's swimming pool will be open for all attendees throughout the day.

Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us for this very special, special event.

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Valentine's Dance

The James Township Hall was rockin' the night before Valentine's Day as Perceptions members and many others gathered to dance a good portion of the night away in celebration of love!

Despite the questionable weather, between 60 and 70 people attended, including many people who had never been to a Perceptions event before. DJ Carla played some great tunes, so the dance floor was full most of the evening, except when singer Dana Scott performed some of her old favorites for the appreciative crowd.

Many thanks to Chris Brennan, diedra knox, Jan Timm, and many others who worked so hard to make this such a fun event!



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Women's Issues

The Way of Women Strength

March - Women's History Month

This is the month to celebrate the wonderful, strong, effective ways that women give to themselves, their families, friends, and co-workers. This is the month to bless and honor what women give to this world. While women do powerful things 24/7, let's take a moment to celebrate the 2004 theme "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility" by looking at the honorees for this year:

Congratulations!!!



Sara Buel – Domestic Violence advocate
 Edna Campbell – Athlete/Spokesperson for Breast cancer Awareness
 Jill Ker Conway – 1st female President of Smith College
 Marian Wright Edelman – Children/Civil Rights Activist
 Maxine Hog Kingston – Writer/Peace Activist
 Susan Love – Breast Cancer Research Expert
 Vilma Martinez – Civil Rights Attorney
 Leslie Marmon Silko – Writer/Poet/Educator

While you're marveling over the contributions that these women have made to improve the conditions of women, men, children, families, causes and the like, take a moment to reflect upon your own contribution. Look inward and celebrate your own personal strength and courage. They have not only brought you through your tough times, but have been a solid post for those whom you love and maybe even for those who don't know you. Celebrate your own bright intellect that has improved ways of doing things at home or work. There, you see it! You need not do anything different to inspire hope and possibilities.

Read more on these wonderful women and on Women's History Month at

<http://www.nwhp.org/whm/themes/themes.html>

Please feel free to contribute an article on issues that you have interests in.

. . . diedra m knox

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Coffee Time in Saginaw



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My partner Jeff and I enjoy attending the monthly coffee Meet & Greets sponsored by Perceptions. Jeff and I have lived in the Bay City and Saginaw areas for the past seven years. We found the area fairly void of any sense of gay community, until we started attending Perceptions meetings and the Meet & Greet socials sponsored by Perceptions.

Through the Meet & Greets at the coffee houses, we have met and established friendships with many people from the area. It is a good place to meet new people, share stories, network with people who may share common interests and build bonds that go beyond the Meet & Greets. The attendees bring an atmosphere that is welcoming and friendly. Typically there will also be news of upcoming events or other opportunities for socializing. It is "a good thing" as Martha would say.

Although many of us have been regular attendees, I believe that newcomers are easily brought into the fold and made to feel welcome and comfortable. I know that I have met someone new at each Meet & Greet I have attended. The group is diverse in interests, and with a little mingling and small talk, any newcomer should be able to quickly find common ground and feel at home with the Meet & Greet group.

--as reported by Perceptions Member, Al

V-Ball Fun in Bay City



Volleyball! – What fun it is to wind the week down with friends playing a few hours of volleyball. Volleyball is held most Friday evenings at the Bay County YWCA from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. There is no cost to those who attend. There have been from six to fifteen people participating on any particular evening. We're not a serious crowd, just a group looking for some casual fun and to meet other local LGBTs from this area.

Soon it will be warm again, and we'll enjoy the warmth of the sunshine while we play in the sand courts at Vet's Park in Bay City. Let's not wait until then to start making an effort to work off the winter flab. Let's get ready to hit the sand pits in style when the warmth does arrive.

Join us Friday, March 12th for the next fun filled evening of volleyball.

See you there!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DO YOU HAVE AN EVENT YOU'D LIKE ADDED TO PERCEPTIONS CALENDAR OF EVENTS?

Submit your event to board@perceptionssv.org

Sunday, March 14th, "Same-Sex Marriage Laws" 9:30-10:15 am As part of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship's series of Hot Topics discussion groups, Jackie Anderson, of the UU's Social Justice Committee, will present "Same-sex marriage laws". Located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland

Wednesday, March 17th, Bay City Meet & Greet 7-9 pm This is an informal gathering of the Tri-Cities' GLBT community at Bay City Coffee and Tea, which offers a variety of delicious drinks, sandwiches and desserts.. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. The event is located at 810 Saginaw Street (between Center and 5th Aves.).

Thursday, March 25th, Perceptions General Meeting 7-9 pm Located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland

Sunday, March 28th PFLAG Meeting 2-4:30 pm Located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland

Wednesday, April 7th, Saginaw Meet & Greet 7-9p Crumbs Gourmet Cookie Café, 4882 Gratiot Road. Meet your old friends and make some new ones while eating fantastic baked goods. Enjoy hot and cold drinks in a non-smoking environment.

Saturday, April 10th, The Eighth Annual Michigan Lesbian & Gay ComedyFest Two shows at 6:00 pm and 9:30 pm at Dearborn's Ford Community & Performing Arts Centre located at 15801 Michigan Avenue (just east of Southfield Road) in Dearborn, Michigan. Online Tickets Available at www.comedyfest.org

Saturday, April 17th, Perceptions' Health Fair 11a-5p at Bay County YWCA. Many vendors will be on hand to provide free basic health monitoring. There will be seminars specific for woman and teen as well as men's issues. Anyone attending can workout free at the Y for the day. Swim, use the gym, play ball. More information to come.

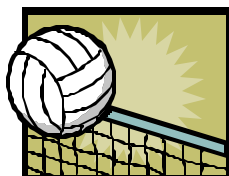
On-Going Programs

HIV+/AIDS support group meets every Tuesday in Bay City from 5:30 pm to 7 pm. Contact Tim Neal at 989.894.2991 for locations for the meetings.



Anonymous and confidential HIV testing is available at The Hearth Home in Saginaw. Gay men who participate will receive a Meijer's gift certificate if they choose to test. Contact Ricardo Bowden or Ric Nelson at 989.753.9011 for further information.

Perceptions' **Volleyball** starts back up Friday evenings in March from 7-9p at the YWCA on Midland Road, Bay City. (Please note there will be no volleyball the evening of March 26th.)



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