

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

Perceptions April Speaker

Curt Bitman

Gay Game Olympian – Figure Skating Competition Gay Games 2002

Curt is a member of the United States Figure Skating Association,
Midland Figure Skating Association, International Skating Union,
International Gay Figure Skating Union

Curt passed his freestyle test to qualify for the Gay Games 2002 in Skate Out
2002

Come out to listen to Curt talk and show video of his experience in 2002 gay
games.

Let's show him our Perceptions Pride in his accomplishments



*Opening doors for the
Mid-Michigan GLBT
Community*

Calendar Highlights:

- Thursday Apr. 24th 7-9 pm Perceptions Monthly Meeting, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Midland.
- Sunday, Apr. 27th 2-4:30 pm PFLAG Meeting, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Midland.
- Sunday May 4th 4-8pm Hearth Home Art Show Fundraiser, Anderson Cultural Enrichment Center, Saginaw.
- Friday May 16th 7-9pm Womyn's Circle, Bay County YWCA.

Hearth Home- A Safe Home For Many

Ricardo Bowden took an opportunity at the March 27th Perceptions meeting to talk about a project he has worked on called hearth Home. His well-paced slide presentation gave us a history, Mission and Goals/Objectives of the AIDS victims support organization.

Working with a limited staff, this organization uses funds, grants, donations and volunteers to provide a safe space for AIDS patients who need help with the increasing difficulties that may arise in their lives due to the disease. These include a food pantry, rides, paperwork, medication support among the many things patients need.

His main topic involved the beautiful artwork of AIDS artist whose work takes the observer through the dark difficult days to the struggle to 'keep on keeping' on' while he can. The art show is being held on Sunday May 4th, 4-8, at Anderson Enrichment Center in Saginaw on 120 Ezra Rust Drive. People may call The Hearth Home (989-753-9011) to arrange for tickets. Perceptions is proud to help get the word out for the benefit of Hearth Home. Your attendance and support will be greatly appreciated.

To receive email alerting about upcoming events, send your email address to PerceptionsSV-owner@yahoo.com

Letter (really) from the Co-Chair – Mindy Pennington

As of this writing, the Chocolate Party has passed and you've probably all visited the gym. I hope you enjoyed all of the goodies; there isn't another big party at Terry's place until July 19. Thanks Terry, for being a gracious host and opening your home to PFLAG and Perceptions members. We will be back at your place in July so you have a few months to clean up the chocolate fingerprints!

A goal for the Board this quarter is for us to provide the members a **template that you can use to write a letter to the editor of local newspapers**. This way, you can use the contact information we have listed below and quickly get a letter to your local paper on a topic of importance to you.

You do have to provide your contact information but I think some newspapers will NOT print your name if you ask. Check with your own newspaper if you are concerned. And, how much you write about yourself is up to you...keep it at an "issues" level or make it personal if you choose--if your writing is more succinct, don't feel like you have to write one this long. Short and long letters get published. For the example below, I have used The Laramie Project production at SVSU to bring to light some GLBT issues in Mid-Michigan. The sections in [brackets] are an explanation of what you can do in your letter. Letters are a great way for the average person to read more about our organization--to hear our side of things instead of the homophobic community's version. You can change minds! See you in the papers.

[insert today's today]

Dear Editor:

[explain why you are writing/your point] I recently attended the SVSU production of *The Laramie Project*. Actors who traveled to Laramie, Wyoming following Matthew Shepard's brutal beating wrote this play. The actors interviewed townspeople to find out how they felt about their town becoming the "hate crime capital" following Shepard's death.

[explain why it's important/relevant] *The Laramie Project* was a brave choice for SVSU's Theatre Department for two reasons. One, because 8 actors were challenged to play several parts each; and two, because of the content. I commend the director, actors, and everyone involved in the production; not only did SVSU bring hate crimes to light in Mid-Michigan (a rural area like Laramie where people think this doesn't happen), but they brought gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, (GLBT) and allied organizations to participate in Talk Back sessions following the play.

[explain how this issue affects you or your community] I participated in the Talk Back session the first night as a member of **Perceptions**, a GLBT non-profit organization serving Mid-Michigan. I told the audience about our organization, and the fact that hate crimes are on the rise in Michigan. Right now, there are two high schools students in Tawas that are victims of vicious assaults, death threats, and daily harassment at school because they are lesbian or gay, only to have the school administration do nothing to protect them.

[make your point again] This kind of hate and fear does exist in Mid-Michigan but we need to end it. Let's hope that programs like *The Laramie Project* continue to create awareness and acceptance in this community.

Sincerely,

Name

address

city

phone number that the paper can reach you during the day

Addresses and email to send Letters to the Editor of your local paper.

Saginaw News
203 S. Washington Ave.
Saginaw, MI 48607
Letters to the Editor:
letters@thesaginawnews.com
<http://www.saginaw-news.com/>

Bay City Times
311 Fifth St., Bay City,
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Letters to the Editor:
forum@bc-times.com
<http://www.bc-times.com/>

Midland Daily News
124 S. McDonald St.,
Midland, MI 48640
Letter to the Editor:
MDNletters@mdn.net
www.ourmidland.com

Huron Daily Tribune
211 N. Heisterman St.
Bad Axe, Michigan 48413
Letters to the Editor:
kniebel@hdtinfo.com
<http://www.michiganstumb.com>

Delta College: *Collegiate*
Letters to the Editor:
colpaper@alpha.delta.edu

SVSU, *The Valley Vanguard*
Letters to the Editor:
jlengel@svsu.edu

Central Michigan University, *Central Michigan Life*
editor@cm-life.com



Opening doors for the Mid-Michigan GLBT Community

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WWW.PERCEPTIONSSV.ORG



PFLAG: History to Safe Schools

What a wonderful presentation by two families each whose daughter came as a lesbian to each of them. The two families each brought a story to share of the determination to support the children they loved. They wanted to find ways to make their children's world a little safer and a little less cramped.

Barb and Rich Kormelink have a daughter whose spiraling world of trying to accept why she was different led to drugs, drinking and lots of self-destructive behavior. Their efforts to help resulted in her treatment and later learning the source of her difference--she was a lesbian. Parents, convinced of all of the negatives society labels onto GLBT, sought answers and information that refuted the generally accepted viewpoint of lesbians/gays. Introduced to PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in a 1989 UU (Unitarian Universalist) Convention in New Haven, they soaked up all of the information available to them that told them the accepted summary of GLBT individuals was false. They held on tight to what they believed their own loved daughter to be and established the now viable Tri Cities PFLAG (<http://www.pflag-mbs.org>) that meets at the UU Church in Midland. The rest is history!

History has a way of repeating itself. Jay and Leisa Crane found themselves unprepared when their daughter courageously brought them her understanding of herself. Determined not to lose a daughter to ignorance or intolerance of others, they called TriCities PFLAG and found a warm, friendly, supportive group who answered their questions and gave them a voice with which to talk with their daughter and assure her she was a member of a loving family and she need not feel ashamed of her life as long as she respected herself and had mutual respect for others. They felt they had received a gift and wanted to give back. It did not take them long to find a place within the group to participate. They looked at information on the Safe Schools Project initiated by the Nation PFLAG organization and took the project in hand. Dow Chemical rewarded their grant application with a large contribution through GLAD (Gay Lesbian Association of Dow). They have worked hard with area school counselors from all of the area schools to drive home the issue of safety for GLBT and questioning youth. Their strategy is to provide education, and information about GLBT students and the issues important to them. By raising consciousness, they hope to insure safety for students regardless of race, ethnicity, culture or sexual orientation.

Perceptions was indeed privy to a wonderful beginning and present of an organization dedicated to providing a safe space for Lesbians, gays and their Parents and Friends. Thank You.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday, April 24th Perceptions General Meeting 7-9 pm, UU of Midland, 6220 Jefferson, Midland Guest speaker is Curt B. who shares his experience as a participant in the Gay Olympic Games. www.perceptionssv.org

Saturday, April 26th Michigan Pride Dinner - Historical film, Silence Auction & Dance at the Radisson Hotel Lansing. \$60 p/p in advance only. 7 p.m. Visit www.michiganpride.org or call (517) 371-8466.

Friday & Saturday April 25th & 26th As a reaction to a planned Detroit area Ex-Gay Conference, several gay/gay friendly groups will hold a rally on Fri Apr 25 at Ferndale's MCC church and witness/protest on Sat, Apr 26 in Canton, MI. E-mail afscgibsonfaith@yahoo.com for details.

Saturday, April 26th Rev. Mel White of www.Soulforce.org Speaks at the Greenfield Presbyterian Church, 2312 Greenfield Rd., Berkley, MI at 7:30 pm. Check out www.tamfs-michigan.org/white.htm info at tamfs-michigan@tamfs-michigan.org

Sunday, April 27th PFLAG Tri-Cities Meeting - 2 - 4:30 pm, UU of Midland, 6220 Jefferson, Midland. Rob Wells the Tawas area student victimized by harassment at school along with Triangle Foundations Executive Director Jeff Montgomery and Triangle Victim Advocates share Rob's story and discuss schools responsibilities and roles in glbt students lives.

May 2nd Womyn's Potluck 7pm Chris & Jan's House in Freeland
Bring labeled dish to pass; tableware and dishes are provided. BYOB; pop and coffee provided. Call (989) 891-1429 for further details or directions

Saturday, May 3rd. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland Presents: **The Althea Rene' Trio**. Ms. Rene tours with an all-female jazz ensemble, "Straight Ahead." 8:30 pm at the UU 2660 Jefferson St., Midland Tickets \$15 Contact: Cassy at cfecht@aol.com Profits go to Unicef.

Sunday, May 4th Hearth Home Gay Art Show and Fundraiser at Anderson Cultural Enrichment Center, 120 Ezra Rust Dr (across Objibway Island,) Saginaw, MI, 4 pm -8 pm, Cost \$10 The Hearth Home is a HIV Prevention/Education and HIV testing center serving the Saginaw/Bay City area. Info: 989-753-9011

Friday, May 16th - The Womyn's Circle - sponsored by the YWCA of Bay County and Perceptions. A low-key "safe space" to talk about coming out, life as a lesbian, and just plain life. From 7:00 pm-9:00 pm. For more information, contact Anita Bowden at the YWCA at 989- 686-4800. <http://www.bayywca.com>

Wednesday, May 21st Perceptions Meet & Greet 7-9 pm -- Our Traditional social monthly gathering at the Bay City Coffee & Tea, 810 Saginaw St., Bay City. This non-smoking coffee house has a variety of drinks, tasty innovative sandwiches, deliciously fresh sushi and desserts for those with a sweet tooth. Come join the fun!

Thursday, May 29th Perceptions General Meeting 7-9 pm, UU of Midland, 6220 Jefferson, Midland Guest speaker is AFSC – American Friends Service Committee. For more info. Click <http://www.afsc.org/>

Wednesday, June 4th Perceptions Meet & Greet – SAGINAW – 7-9pm. Our latest addition to our active social calendar. You asked and we deliver! More details to follow. Mark your calendar!

June 14th – Michigan Pride Parade – Perceptions sponsored float and booth will represent the Mid-Michigan GLBT community at the festival in Lansing. Contact ctlisee@yahoo if you'd like to volunteer to work at the Perceptions booth or ride on the float in the parade.

June 20th - The Womyn's Circle - sponsored by the YWCA of Bay County and Perceptions. A low-key "safe space" to talk about coming out, life as a lesbian, and just plain life. From 7:00 pm-9:00 pm. For more information, contact Anita Bowden at the YWCA at 989- 686-4800. <http://www.bayywca.com>

June 28th – Perceptions Car Scavenger Hunt – A fun filled scavenger hunt to cover the greater Bay City area ending at the Bay County Recreation Area with Potluck and fun for all. Rainbow RV is coordinating a camp out as well.

<http://www.perceptionssv.org/>