

From the Desk of the Chair

Mindy Pennington

In Defense of Marriage: My View

June 2004

Today was Motor City Pride in Ferndale. My partner and I missed this festival last year because we were on vacation. We could not believe how many people were there and the number of booths! We were very impressed that so many in Michigan have a commitment to GLBT rights and freedoms, including the right to marry.

Each June we think about our history as a community and a civil rights movement. As recorded in many history texts, it was the drag queens at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in New York City that had finally enough of the police raids. In June 1969, the police were raiding again and the patrons at the bar didn't back down this time. They fought and a riot ensued. This was the birth of our civil rights movement--when individuals are tired of being harassed, arrested, and taunted. I think we are almost there again with the issue of same-sex marriage. I am tired of waiting!

I can't tell you how my partner and I felt in March when we made our appointment for our marriage license in San Francisco. We tried **not** to get excited before our trip because we were afraid of the disappointment. We arrived in San Francisco on March 9th and went to City Hall on March 10th. We had the paperwork for the time and date: the license was supposed to be granted on March 17th and the wedding could be the same day. We called so many of our friends (straight and gay), and they were incredibly happy for us. We couldn't help smiling and telling the hotel clerks! Then, the next day, the California Supreme Court blocked same-sex marriages as of March 11, 2004. We were crushed.

Last month, Massachusetts became the first state to have same sex marriage sanctioned by their courts. However, they can't marry anyone who lives in a state that the marriage would not be legal. So, we're back to square one unless we want to move there! What is the solution?

We can't wait for some other state to legalize same sex marriage, we need to make it happen here, in Michigan. We live here for a reason--we love our family and friends here, we're happy in our jobs, we like to go "up north" to swim and boat. We should be able to marry in the state in which we reside. Aren't we paying taxes like other people? Are we full citizens? I would say **no** because we are not granted the same rights as heterosexual couples.

The first step is to write your legislators and stop the Federal Marriage Amendment that is floating around Congress. **H.J. Resolution 56/S.J. Resolution 26 states:** *Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.* The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is monitoring this bill and you can link directly to the Michigan supporters to tell them you are **against** this. Go to this HRC page, http://capwiz.com/hrc/issues/bills/?bill=2580901&cs_party=all&cs_status=C&cs_state=ALL, and scroll down to Michigan to see who is a co-sponsor. Email or write them and explain that you think the Constitution of the United States should not be altered to restrict the civil rights of GLBT individuals.

The second step is at the state level. *Citizens for the Protection of Marriage* is a coalition of several anti-gay organizations and they are circulating a petition to get a proposed amendment on the November ballot. The amendment would read: *"To secure and preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children, the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose."* What can you do? Write a letter to your local newspaper. Tell your friends and family NOT to sign this petition.

The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied community is making headway. I heard someone comment on the news that Massachusetts "is like the Berlin wall" and restrictions will continue to fall away. But someone has to stand up and say why our rights are important. **That someone is you and me.**

Mindy



GLBT Supporters Express Support through Decal Campaign

Perceptions has created a door decal which businesses and organizations can now display on the inside of their doors to show their support for the GLBT community. The decals say, "GLBT Friendly" Sponsored by Perceptions www.perceptionssv.org "Opening Doors for the Mid-Michigan GLBT Community" The decal includes the Perceptions logo.

"We feel that this is an excellent way for various businesses and organizations to express their support for our community," says Tom Brubaker, Perceptions communications coordinator. "In the coming weeks we will be developing a distribution system to get the decals out into the 10 counties where our members reside. We hope that our members will patronize the businesses and organizations which are "GLBT Friendly" and tell their friends, family, and neighbors to do the same."

If you would like a decal for your organization or business, please pick one up at a Perceptions meeting or function. Please let us know where you will be having the decal posted so that we can keep track of them as they are distributed in the area.

Perceptions

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Public Service Advertising Campaign To Promote the Positive Image of GLBT Community

If you have not heard already, Perceptions is developing a public service advertising campaign to educate the general public about the important contribution gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons make in our community. This campaign will be in the form of four, 20 second public service announcements for television and cable broadcast, as well as a series of four posters which will be distributed throughout the mid-Michigan area. "We presented the four posters at the May Perceptions general meeting to collect the thoughts of our general membership," says Tom Brubaker Perceptions communications coordinator. "The response to the posters was very positive," Brubaker says. "We are fortunate to have the artistic talent of member Ric Nelson who produced the graphics for the poster campaign. We are hoping to have the posters and public service announcements ready for distribution in our community by the end of July."



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NEWS FROM PFLAG

Scholarships Awarded to Deserving Students

WASHINGTON, May 27 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) today announced the winners of the first annual PFLAG National Scholarships. Students were honored for academic achievement as well as athletics, advocacy, leadership and involvement with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community.

"PFLAG's National Scholarship Program reaches out to GLBT students and their allies by acknowledging their courage and commitment to equality in frequently hostile high schools and hometowns," said Ron Schlittler, interim executive director of PFLAG.

Scholarships were awarded in eighteen states to students from a variety of backgrounds; but each faced wrenching challenges at home, in school and in their communities.

One winner wrote in his application essay that, after coming out to his parents, they "confiscated my car, my phone, my computer. My mother slept most of the day. My sister claimed I had destroyed her life. My father wrote 'I want to die' on Post-It Notes over and over." One awardee was evicted by his family at sixteen years old and struggled to support himself with part-time jobs while finishing high school.

Another winner received support at home, but faced discrimination from an organization to which he had devoted much of his life: "I received a letter from the Boy Scout Council informing me that I was no longer welcome unless my declaration of being a homosexual was 'only a youthful effort to stand out from the crowd.'"

For others, being gay at school brought the weariness of a constant struggle. After years of hearing "dyke" in the hallways, one winner wrote, "Most people are not going to accept who I am and it is probably going to be this way most of my life...I am tired of fighting." And another student wrote, "More kids knew my sexuality than my name. I wanted to be my whole self -- not just 'the gay kid.'"

This year the program awarded nine scholarships of \$2,500, two scholarships of \$1,250 and fifteen scholarships of \$1,000 to help offset college tuition costs.

This year's scholarships were funded by the Palmer B. Carson Trust and the Dow Chemical Company, as well as donations from private individuals. These generous donors bring awareness to high school educators of the support throughout the country for GLBT students.

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Together in Faith Conference

About 350 people attended "Together in Faith", Michigan's first LGBT spiritual conference, on May 21st and 22nd at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI. The conference was planned by AFSC-Faith Action Network (FAN).

Perceptions members Jeffrey Illig, Charles Lisee and Leo Romo attended. Jeff and Leo served in the conference's planning committee and saw the idea evolve into a reality. Attendees learned from about 30 national and local spiritual leaders or groups.

Rev. Mel White, author of "Stranger at the Gate" and co-founder of Soulforce, was a main speaker. Soulforce has 30 chapters nationally and uses non-violence resistance to the church to end anti-gay teachings. "'Soulforce' is the term that Gandhi used to describe relentless non-resistance," White explains. "Fundamentalists have to have somebody to blame, and right now, gay people are set up as the victims of blame." We will not be a victim anymore.

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Tri-County/Thumb Area HIV/AIDS Task Force Announces National HIV Testing Week

"It's Better To Know" is the theme of National HIV Testing Week as the Tri-County/Thumb Area HIV/AIDS Task Force gears up to offer free, confidential HIV testing at several sites across Bay, Midland, and Saginaw Counties during the week of June 21st –

25th. "HIV/AIDS is still a health crisis in the United States, in the State of Michigan, and in

our communities," says Tom Brubaker, co-chair of the task force. "In fact, in the year 2002, HIV infections increased nationwide by 2%. In the State of Michigan there are an estimated 16,200 people infected with HIV/AIDS, with an estimated 310 individuals in Bay, Midland, and Saginaw Counties."

The statistics of infection among young people and African Americans in the United States is particularly troubling. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 50% of all new HIV infections in the United States are among young people under the age of 25 years. According to the 2000 census, African Americans make up 12.3% of the population in the United States. However, they account for 39% of the estimated AIDS cases diagnosed since the beginning of the epidemic. In 2002, African Americans accounted for 50% of the estimated number of AIDS cases in that year.

"It's Better To Know" is a very fitting slogan for this year's National HIV Testing Day because it emphasizes that the sooner a person is diagnosed, the more quickly they can enter into medical treatment thus prolonging and increasing the quality of life,"

Brubaker says. "At the present time one out of three people who are infected with HIV don't know it because they haven't been tested. This national event highlights the importance of HIV testing.

For further information, please contact your local county health departments. In Bay County, call 989.895.4003; in Midland County, call 989.832.6665; and in Saginaw County, call 989.758.3880. Information is also available at BASIS at 989.894.2991 and the Hearth Home at 989.753.9011



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

board@perceptionssv.org

Friday, June 11th – Absolute Pride Comedy Extravaganza 7pm, the Temple Club, 500 E. Grand River Avenue, Lansing. The B-Girlz, Vickie Shaw, Casino & Live Bands. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online at www.michiganpride.org.

Saturday, June 12th - Michigan Pride 16th annual statewide GLBT Pride events in Lansing, including Michigan Pride March, Rally, & Festival. For more information visit MichiganPride.org or see the [Perceptions Pride Page](#).

Saturday, June 12th – Dancing In The Streets: The Official Post Party 9pm-1am, corner of Grand & Turner in Lansing's Old Town. DJ Rob from Tradewinds. NO COVER. Proceeds benefit Michigan Pride! 18 & over only with a two drink minimum.

Wednesday, June 16th - Bay City Meet & Greet 7-9 pm. An informal gathering of the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. Located at 810 Saginaw Street (between Center and Fifth Aves.), the Bay City Coffee and Tea offers a variety of delicious drinks, sandwiches and desserts.

Thursday, June 17th – Dana Scott & Nedra Johnson Concert 8pm (doors open at 7:30) This event is a fundraiser for the Tri-Cities PFLAG chapter. Located at the UU Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland. Tickets can be purchased at Turntable II, 3662 Bay Road, Saginaw, MI or by calling 989-495-9335. \$10 advance or \$12 at the door.

Saturday, June 19th – Grand Rapids Pride 3-9pm, Caider Plaza, downtown Grand Rapids. Event includes vendor booths, music, entertainment, beer tent, shade tent, children's craft time and food booths. For more information, contact The Network at (616) 458-3511.

Saturday, June 26th – Washtenaw Pride Comes To Frog Lake 1-7pm, Frog Island Park at Forest & Huron Sts., Ypsilanti. Admission and parking is free, pre and after parties are 18 and over, with a suggested donation at the door. For more info please contact WRAP by phone at (734) 995-9867, or email at washtenawpride@yahoo.com, or visit www.wrap-up.org.

Saturday, June 26th, 2004: Detroit Together Men's Chorus 8pm at Marygrove College Theater, Detroit. Enjoy the sounds of Motown this summer with the at their 22nd Annual Summer Concert: [Rights, Industry, Motown – Celebrating Detroit!](#) Tickets are now available online at www.dtmc.org.

Sunday, June 27th – PFLAG Meeting 2-4:30 pm. Located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland.

Saturday, July 3rd - Pre-Fireworks Barbeque and Potluck 7pm. Jeff Illig invites everyone to his annual party on the "big night" of the Bay City Fireworks Festival. Join us for a potluck barbeque before walking down to view the fireworks display. You're welcome to hang out at Jeff's afterwards while the traffic thins out. Hot dogs, hamburgers, paper plates will be provided. Bring a dish to pass and a lawn chair or blanket to watch the fireworks. Feel free to bring something else to throw on the grill if you don't care for hamburgers or hot dogs. [1901 South Warner Street](#).

Wednesday, July 7th - Saginaw Meet & Greet 7-9 pm. An informal gathering for the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome. Meet your old friends and make some new ones while eating fantastic baked goods. Enjoys hot and cold drinks in a non-smoking environment! Crumbs Gourmet Cookie Cafe is located at 4882 Gratiot just east of Center Road and behind Edward's Men's Shop. tel: 989-498-4010

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' Fridays 7pm. Vet's Park in Bay City. The nets are across from the Bay County Community Center ([800 John F. Kennedy Dr.](#)), south of the ball diamonds. Bring a friend and join us for some fun, casual volleyball excitement.

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