

Perceptions Newsletter

Perceptions Inc. P.O. Box 1525, Midland, MI 48641 989.891.1429

Montague Event a Total Success

Friday, December 10th went down as one of the largest social events of the year for Perceptions. With well over a hundred people in attendance, the annual Montague Inn fundraiser was a resounding success. Party-goers were greeted by a large array of hors-d'œuvres as they entered the inn and perused the many items that were available in the silent auction. Most items came from local businesses, but several Perceptions members also donated items for the auction. People mingled as they ate, drank and bid. Everyone gathered in the spacious exterior tent to listen to an address by interim-chair, Charles Lisee and volunteer coordinator, Vanessa Marr. The two recognized the efforts of the board members and the many volunteers who make Perceptions the organization that it is. The last minutes of the auction were filled with people shooting from room to room, checking to see that no one placed a higher bid on a favourite item. As guests filtered out of the inn or returned to their rooms, they could be satisfied that not only did they acquire some great new items, but they also helped Perceptions raise vital operating funds for the up-coming year. In keeping with the giving sentiment of the season, Perceptions will also be donating a portion of the proceeds to Shelter House in Midland. Perceptions thanks all who made the event a success. Here's looking forward to December 2005!



The Perceptions volunteers who make things happen!

Volunteer Recognition at the Montague

More than 50 volunteers offered a helping hand to Perceptions throughout 2004, and we had an opportunity to honor them during the Annual Holiday Reception at the Montague Inn Dec. 10. Interim Chair Charles Lisee praised the efforts of the organization's Board of Trustees, who accepted multiple responsibilities solely on a voluntarily basis. Vanessa Marr, Volunteer Coordinator, did a recap of the events in which Perceptions' members participated or hosted during the year before individually recognizing members. Each attending honoree was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation and was included in a group photo. Thank you, volunteers, for working to make Perceptions stronger than ever!

Thanksgiving Potluck

The GBLT community in Mid-Michigan became a little closer on Saturday, Nov. 20th when Perceptions held a potluck and food drive to benefit B.A.S.I.S. The event was held at the Unitarian Church in Midland and was a nice evening for all who participated. The format was a little different than our normal potlucks. We drew a number and then we were seated accordingly. During dinner, we were assigned the task of finding out something about the person sitting next to us that we could share with the group. After a pleasant dinner, we all shared what we learned. It was a good way to get to know each other a little better. Perceptions members did a great job of donating food for the B.A.S.I.S food pantry. Tom Brubaker let us know how much our donations were appreciated. Thanks to all who attended for making it both successful and fun.



Opening doors for the Mid-Michigan GLBT Community

Calendar Highlights:

- Wednesday, December 15th - Bay City Meet & Greet 7:00 - 9:00 pm
- Friday, December 17th - "Friday Night Dinner" 7:00 pm
- Monday, December 20th - Coming Out Support Group 7:00 - 8:30 pm in Bay City
- Sunday, December 26th - PFLAG Meeting 2:00 - 4:30 pm
- Wednesday, January 5th, 2005 - Saginaw Meet & Greet 7-9 pm
- Wednesday, January 12th - Midland Meet & Greet 7:00 pm
- Thursday, January 27th - Monthly Membership Meeting 7:00 pm

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



Friday Night Dinners

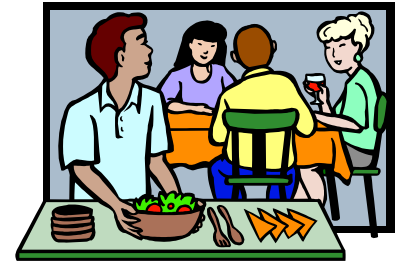
Somewhere, somehow, a new trend has found its beginnings. Who would think that Friday evenings would be a viable time for a gathering of friends and associates for dinner on a weekly basis? One might assume that, of all evenings, Friday, the eve of the weekend; the onset of personal time for many would be an unlikely time to bring people together. But it works.

What began as a gesture to show support for a local gay-owned and operated restaurant, has become an anticipated weekly event where area restaurants extend their hospitality and we demonstrate our financial support and the potential of GLBT purchasing power. It is a win/win situation.

Our members have enjoyed such venues as The Savoy Grill, Trappers, Hello Sushi, Alex' Greek Kitchen, and Pasong's Cafe. At each and every restaurant the owners and management have expressed welcome delight at our presence and extended invitations to come again. Pasong's, who typically close at 6:00 p.m., remained open especially for our group, giving us use of the entire facility. We've been treated well.

The gatherings have ranged in size from 12 to 26 people and have been comprised of various members and guests, depending on the venue. Every Friday dinner has been a unique adventure of its own, as the make up of each group, the different settings, and the cuisine provide a new and interesting atmosphere each week.

If you have not joined in on any of the Friday night dinners, make it a point to treat yourself to this pleasurable experience. Perceptions sends out those infamous "Yahoo Reminders" to those who are on the listserv, posts the dinner times and locations in the events column at PerceptionsSV.org, and offers discussion of each event in the Perceptions Forum. Although requested but not required, it is strongly suggested that if at all possible you RSVP your intentions for these events to enable the hosts to properly prepare.



Coming-Out Support Group Realigns

On November 8th, Perceptions launched our **Coming Out Support Group**. The meetings have been well attended, always maintaining a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. The environment is conducive to sharing and exploring what individuals are managing in their lives. Great support has been exhibited amongst the attendees and confidentiality is always at the forefront.

The group initially met every Monday however we have since gone to every-other Monday from 7-9 p.m. We also discovered that our discussions lead to more issues than the coming out issue alone. Our discussions boil down to LGBT issues at large and because of that, we decided to re-title the group. The new title is **GLBT Support Group**. Many of our conversations come back to the issue of "Coming Out" but we didn't want to limit our focus when the need of the community is sometimes more than "coming out".

Whether you come to support others, gain support in certain areas of your life or enjoy the experience of learning about others, there's something for everyone. Contact info@perceptionssv.org or call 891.1GAY for meeting location.



Letter from the Chair

A Reflection of the Past, a Peak at the Future

Dear Friends and Members,

I write this as we compute the final tally on the Montague Inn Holiday Party and Silent Auction. Thank you to everyone who supported the event in one way or another.

What a year this has been! Starting with the beginning of '04, we were in Lansing talking to State Representatives and Senators to defeat passage of the bill to define marriage as between one man and one woman. We won that battle. We continued the year with many social events including those hosted by Perceptions' members. By July fourth weekend, hate monger Gary Glenn and his misinformed followers were gathering signatures to put the marriage issue on the ballot for the November election. I can still remember speaking with Mindy Pennington from her cell phone as she chased Gary Glenn down in Vet's Park. I thought then and I think know, *WOW*, this woman is raising the bar for all of us. (What a loss to see Mindy go.) So the signatures were collected, the election was held and Proposition 2 passed. Our Constitution will be amended on Friday, December 17th to state "the union of one man and one woman shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage **or similar union for any purpose**". We are already beginning to see the ill consequences of the passing of Proposition 2. We knew this is exactly where the right wing planned on taking this. We all know that truth wins and each and every one of us are willing to fight for the truth. There is an organized, statewide initiative that is assembling a community platform in the continued pursuit of freedom and equality.

As we look into '05 we are faced with endless opportunities to rise above. The year starts with board elections at our January 27th meeting. There are many specific roles and responsibilities the organization needs to fill in order to remain a viable organization. In addition to board seats, there are projects, committees and events to plan and participate in. This organization is a community organization. It consists of and operates through and by the community. With the support and encouragement from the community, every initiative Perceptions has ever executed has been successful. Whether it was from members, local businesses or the media, we've been encouraged by the openness exhibited by all. It is with this involvement and support that the organization will continue to grow and rise above.

So while your enjoying the holidays and making new memories, give a thought about how you might give back to the community in 2005.

May your holiday be filled with peace, love and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Charles Lisee

Interim Chair



Perceptions

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Perceptions Hosts Online Community Forum

The newest feature on the Perceptions web site is our Community Forum. Community Forum is a place where you can share bits of information, news and your own personal views with others from the GLBT and Allies community of the Saginaw Valley region and beyond.

Anyone with access to the internet is able to read the messages posted in the Community Forum. Before you can reply to a message or post your own, you must go through a simple registration process. You will need to create a user name and password. Choose something easy to remember because you will need this user name and password each time you return to the Community Forum. Or, you can make it even more convenient by setting up your computer to remember your user name and password and automatically log in for you each time you return.

Once you register, you can create a profile that other Community Forum users will be able to view. You may share as much or as little information about yourself as you would like. You will be able to set up links so other users can simply click to send you an email or an Instant Message via AOL, Yahoo, or MSN. You are also able to communicate with other Community Forum users by sending private messages. If the recipient isn't logged into Community Forum when you send a private message, it will be delivered the next time he or she logs in.

When entering the Community Forum, the starting point is the Forum Index. Currently the index has seven *categories* listed, among them are topics such as "Perceptions Events," "Local Concerns," and "Marriage Equality/Civil Unions." Each category may be broken into multiple *forums*, further distinguished by subject matter. And once you open a forum, you may see multiple *topics*. New categories and forums can only be added by the site administrator or a moderator. Every user can choose between replying to an existing topic (to continue the thread) and adding a new topic when they post. If you would like to see a new Category or Forum added, simply contact a moderator.

It is our hope that you will use the Community Forum often by both reading posts and replying with your own personal comments and thoughts. Several of our members have posted captivating and relevant news articles. You are encouraged to reply with your personal opinion or commentary. There's an announcement in the Michigan Proposal 2 forum where people can coordinate car pools and other plans for the "Bringing Light to the Darkness" candle light vigil at the State Capitol. One user has shared information about OutQ, GLBT satellite radio available on Sirius or on the Internet. The Community Forum will be what you make of it. Log in today at www.PerceptionsSV.org.

Advocacy Update

Although Nov. 2 could be dubbed "Black Tuesday" with the passage of Proposal 2, members of the local and greater LGBTQA community are working hard to brighten the lives of those potentially affected by the antigay constitutional amendment. On Sunday, Dec. 5, about 45 activists gathered at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland for a regional Call to Action designed to not only allow participants to express frustration over the election results but also to devise and implement strategies to demonstrate opposition to Proposal 2. Leo Romo and Jackie Anderson organized the three-hour-long event. Charles Lisee and Jeff Illig served as emcee and facilitator, respectively.

Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz of Between the Lines answered questions from the audience and provided insights on the news media's coverage of LGBT issues. Additional discussion topics included the need to promote local community involvement, increase interaction with other progressive organizations, and create programs to enhance our communication skills.

Friday, Dec. 17 marks the official "Day of Mourning" that the Michigan constitution will be amended to discriminate against LGBT people. In recognition of the event, Michigan Equality and other committed human-rights organizations will participate in an anti-Proposal 2 rally and candlelight vigil entitled "Bringing Light to Darkness: Looking Forward" on the steps of the Capitol Building in Lansing. The event is scheduled from 6:30–8 p.m. Perceptions is organizing a carpool that will meet at the Tittabawassee Rd. Applebee's and depart for Lansing at 4:45 pm. If you are a rider in need of a driver or a driver in need of traveling companions, please sign up on the Perceptions Forum or e-mail Vanessa Marr at vlmarr@netzero.net. The carpool announcement is under the "Michigan Proposal 2" thread. Hope to see you there!

If you cannot make it to Lansing on the 17th, please make plans to join the proposed demonstration at the state Capitol on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2005, the day the Legislature convenes. The goal of the rally is to demonstrate to the Legislature, and to the public (through local, state, and national media) the extent of opposition to Proposal 2's inclusion in the State Constitution. A huge turnout would make a powerful statement that we will not passively accept the attempts to increase discrimination against our community. Organizers hope to have black armbands with pink triangles for all participants to wear, and encourage anyone who cannot attend the demonstration to wear an armband on Jan. 12 in solidarity with the protest. If there is an interest in the practice of civil disobedience, there will be regional training sessions before the demonstration. Details regarding the time of the event will be given to Perceptions members as soon as they become available.

Perceptions' Board of Trustees

Perceptions' Board of Trustees is comprised of volunteers who donate their personal time to manage the organization. Our bylaws allow for up to 15 trustees. The current board is accepting nominations until December 20, 2004 for people to serve on the 2005 board. To submit a nomination for consideration, send an email to board@perceptionssv.org or contact an existing board member. Your nomination will be strictly confidential.



A nominating committee of the current board of trustees will prepare a slate of nominees from the list of submitted nominations and other recruits. In compiling the slate of nominees, the nominating committee strives for diversity among the nominees. The slate of nominees will be presented to the donor members for rejection or ratification by ballot at the annual meeting on January 27, 2005. Board members are typically elected to three-year terms, with the term of one-third of the board expiring each year. This year we have one-, two-, and three-year terms available to accomplish the staggered terms.

The officers of Perceptions are currently designated as a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a financial coordinator, and a secretary. Other officers may be elected by the board of trustees. The chairperson, vice-chairperson, the secretary and the financial coordinator will serve for one-year terms but there is no limit to the number of terms, consecutive or otherwise, for which an individual may be elected for any office. All officers will be elected by a majority vote of the board of trustees at the conclusion of the annual meeting.

The board of trustees appoints a six-member executive committee. This committee, to the extent provided in our bylaws, has and exercises the authority of the board of trustees in the management of Perceptions.

This year's board has identified several additional roles that need to be filled in order to carry Perceptions forward in 2005 and beyond. Many of these roles will be filled by a trustee, but there are opportunities for other volunteers to take on these positions. The responsibilities of each of these roles are outlined on the web site. Take a minute and read through them and see if there's an area where you could put your talents to use for Perceptions. The list of roles we will need to fill is: Business Liaison, Communications Coordinator, Speakers Bureau Coordinator, Data Base Administrator/Information Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Development Director, Financial Coordinator, Programming Chair, Outreach Coordinator, Social Coordinator, Advocacy, Youth Coordinator, Ally Coordinator, and Secretary.

Help make Perceptions a stronger organization by becoming involved, either by serving as a board member or by volunteering in another capacity.

Perceptions

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WWW.PERCEPTIONSSV.ORG

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Submit your event to info@perceptionssv.org

Wednesday, December 15th - Bay City Meet & Greet 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Join our informal gathering for 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.

Friday, December 17th - Day of Mourning This is the date that the Michigan State Constitution is to be amended per Proposal 2, officially adding discrimination to our state constitution. Plans are under way for a candle light vigil at the state capitol from 6:30 - 8:00 pm. www.michiganequality.org

Friday, December 17th - "Friday Night Dinner" 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions members on Friday nights for dinner at a local eatery. Each week we meet at a different restaurant for food, fun and conversation. An email is sent through our Yahoo Group every week to announce the week's venue. Sign up for our email list on Yahoo Groups, email info@PerceptionsSV.org or call 989-891-1GAY.

Saturday, December 18th - Detroit Together Men's Chorus Holiday Concert. Join DTMC at this lighter holiday concert to inspire and motivate you around the holiday season. The concert will be performed at 8:00 pm at the Clarenceville High School Auditorium, located at 20155 Middlebelt Road in Livonia, Mich. It is on the west side, between Seven and Eight Mile Roads.

Monday, December 20th - GLBT Support Group 7:00 - 9:00 pm in Bay City. The environment is conducive to sharing and exploring what individuals are managing in their lives. Great support has been exhibited amongst the attendees and confidentiality is always at the forefront. Whether you come to support others, gain support in certain areas of your life or enjoy the experience of learning about others, there's something for everyone. Contact info@perceptionsSV.org or call 989-891-1429 for meeting location.

Sunday, December 26th - PFLAG Meeting 2:00 - 4:30 pm. Located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6220 Jefferson, Midland.

Wednesday, January 5th, 2005 - Saginaw Meet & Greet 7-9 pm. Join our 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

Wednesday, January 12th - Lobby Day at the Michigan Capitol As our elected lawmakers return to Lansing, take time to let them know that ending discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is an important issue to you.

Wednesday, January 12th - Midland Meet & Greet 7:00 pm. Espresso Milano, 137 Ashman, downtown Midland. 989-832-3222. This event will repeat on the second Wednesday of each month.

Thursday, January 27th - Monthly Membership Meeting 7:00 pm. Members will elect the 2005 Board of Trustees at this meeting. Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland, 6220 Jefferson Ave. For more information, contact Perceptions.

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 at 989.753.9011 for further information.

Friday Night Dinner. Join Perceptions members on Friday nights for dinner at a local eatery. Each week we meet at a different restaurant for food, fun and conversation. An email is sent through our Yahoo Group every week to announce the week's venue. Sign up for our email list on Yahoo Groups, email info@PerceptionsSV.org or call 989-891-1GAY.

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