



# PERCEPTIONS Newsletter

March/April 2006 Volume 5, Issue 2 PO Box 1525, Midland, MI 48641 989-891-1429

## King, Shepard Inspire Us to Make a Difference

*Vanessa Marr*

Although they lived their lives worlds and generations apart, Coretta Scott King and Judy Shepard were connected on many levels. While bound by tragedy—each losing a loved one through acts of hatred—they summoned the strength to combat the forces of intolerance and pushed for social change.

Their causes were also connected: King, like Shepard, strongly supported equality and justice for LGBT citizens. She fervently held this position until her death earlier this year at age 78. Two days after Coretta's passing, Judy visited mid-Michigan and gave a passionate presentation entitled "Tragedy and the Consequences of Hate." For those in attendance, this was no plea for sympathy from a grieving mother—it was a call to action. Amongst other things, she urged the audience to vote as a means of fighting against injustice.

In celebration of Women's History Month, we should look to these "heroes" as sources of inspiration to create change in our own communities. Whether it is providing suggestions at a monthly Perceptions meeting, attending a Friday dinner, or volunteering at an event, there are opportunities for you to be a part of something more.

As I prepare to leave this organization to work near Detroit, I am mindful of the trails blazed by women who have gone before me: Audre Lorde, Rosa Parks, and now Ms. Coretta. I am also mindful of the direction my life has taken since coming out three years ago. It is the most empowering thing I could have ever done for myself and my family. My hope is that you use your voices to not only find the strength within, but also to be a source of inspiration to others. *Thanks, Perceptions!*



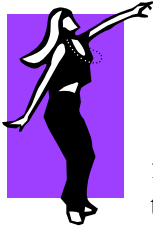
Judy Shepard talks with Perceptions Board Member Aaron Brown and Saginaw Valley State University administrator Mamie Thorns during her visit to the campus Feb. 1.

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## Perceptions Makes Valentine's Dance Sweeter!

*Troy Rhyan*



A fabulous time was had by all who attended this year's Valentine's Dance, which was held in Frankenmuth at the Black Forest Brewhaus in their Meyer Banquet Room on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The atmosphere was festive, the appetizers delectable, and DJ Karla kept the people movin' on the dance floor. The change of venue again this year was a good experience. We hope to see all of you at next year's soiree. We would like to extend special thanks to the volunteers who assisted in decorating the facility. Your P-bucks are on the way! We appreciate your contribution!

## Out of the Closet: Items Needed for Charity Yard Sale

*Alan Shinaver*



We're having a sale again this spring to help raise funds to sponsor the second mid-Michigan area A.I.D.S. Walk. This year's sale will be held on the same weekend as the Freeland Walleye Festival Community Garage Sale which will be the weekend of Friday April 28, 2006. We will be accepting clean, useable, goods for the sale starting a week prior.

Start a bag, a box, an area of the basement where you can collect items to be donated to the sale. Last year's sale raised \$500.00 to allow Perceptions to be a sponsor for the walk. Without your donations last year, we would never have been able to make such a generous sponsorship.

The sale will be held at Alan's place on Midland Road again this year and he will be looking forward to volunteers to help in the set up, tear down, pricing, selling, socializing, eating etc... It was a great time last year and this year should prove to be another wonderful time.

So, dates to keep in mind: the week of April 21 – 27 to drop off donations, the weekend of April 28-30 for the sale (social event of the season) and September 30, 2006 for the actual AIDS Walk event at Veteran's Memorial Park in Bay City. Mark your calendars; make a sign to hang on your refrigerator; stick post-it notes all over your house or apartment; whatever it takes to remember this worthy event.

E-mail [Alan@perceptionsSV.org](mailto:Alan@perceptionsSV.org) for more information, to volunteer, to set an appointment for dropping off goods, or to offer assistance or suggestions.

## It's Never Too Early to Plan for Pride!



June is Gay Pride Month. There will be several celebrations across the state, including Motor City Pride in Ferndale on

Sunday, June 4. Michigan Pride Inc. ([www.MichiganPride.org](http://www.MichiganPride.org)) sponsors the one Pride event that is operated for the benefit of the entire state of Michigan. The statewide GLBT March, Rally & Festival will occur in Lansing on Saturday, June 24.

Organizers are hoping that more than 15,000 supporters of GLBT Civil Rights will March to Michigan's Capitol steps to draw attention to the urgent needs of our community. The March is a symbolic, empowering and fun aspect of the Pride weekend. Participants will line up at noon at Riverfront Park and step-off at 1:00 pm in route to the GLBT Civil Rights Rally at the Capitol. The Pride Festival runs from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm in Lansing's Riverfront Park and features live entertainment, an open-air bar, vendors, and informational booths.

In the past, Perceptions has participated by entering a float in the March and by having a booth at the Festival. Although we've had a good time building the float, it's also a lot of work. Unless somebody or a group steps forward to organize building a float this year, we will be scaling back a little. We plan to have a group march together behind the Perceptions banner. The Michigan Pride Committee will furnish additional banners to carry with the names of the communities we represent. We hope that many Perceptions Members and Friends

will march with us and proudly wear their Perceptions T-shirts. We also plan to have a booth at the festival and this year, we may share our space with other Tri-City area GLBT organizations. We will be looking for volunteers to help set up, tear down, or work a shift in the booth. We hope that by sharing the booth space, we will find additional help to keep the booth attended.

The Michigan Chapter of Rainbow RV ([www.RainbowRV.com](http://www.RainbowRV.com)), the nation's largest Gay and Lesbian camping club, will be camping in the Lansing area for Pride weekend and would like to extend an invitation to any Perceptions Member or Friend to camp with them. For more information, contact the Michigan Chapter representatives, Dean ([UDdriver@charter.net](mailto:UDdriver@charter.net)) or Tim ([BayCityTim@yahoo.com](mailto:BayCityTim@yahoo.com)). You will need to make advanced reservations to secure a camp site.

We hope that you will participate in Michigan Pride as a marcher, volunteer, or even just a spectator or festival attendee. Information will go out later telling you where and when to meet to march with the Perceptions group. Tim will be in Lansing all weekend with the Rainbow RV group and has volunteered to act as Site Coordinator for Perceptions during Pride weekend, so if you like to help out by working in the booth or in any other way, contact him at [Tim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Tim@PerceptionsSV.org).

If you have additional comments about our involvement with Michigan Pride, send an email to [Pboard@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Pboard@PerceptionsSV.org).

## Buying for Equality: HRC's Consumers Guide

*Rob Cummings*

When you grocery shop, do you think about GLBT issues? Would you consider changing where you get your prescriptions filled if your current pharmacy doesn't support GLBT equality? What if the petroleum company that owns the gas station where you fill up actually rescinded their GLBT employees' domestic partner benefits, would you go to another gas station? I hope you answered "yes" to these questions. As a **huge** consumer group with an estimated \$610 billion in buying power, GLBT individuals matter.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) published its ranking of consumer-related companies' Corporate Equality Index (CEI) scores in 2005. This buyer's guide informs GLBT consumer which retailers and consumer goods companies support our community. Companies received a CEI score of zero to 100 based on, among other things, whether or not they offered domestic partner benefits, included sexual orientation and gender identity in their non-discrimination policies, supported GLBT causes, and offered diversity training that includes sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The higher the score, the more supportive the company is to the GLBT community.

Want to compare some retailers and consumer products companies?

<b>Company (CEI score) - Products</b>	<b>GLBT Supportive</b>	<b>Company (CEI score) - Products</b>
<b>Kroger (57)</b> – groceries	<=====	<b>Meijer (14)</b> – groceries & general merchandise
<b>Target (86)</b> – general merchandise & groceries (in some markets)	<=====	<b>Wal-Mart (57)</b> – general merch. & groceries (in some markets)
<b>Rite Aid (29)</b> – pharmacy	=====>	<b>Walgreen's (100)</b> – pharmacy
<b>Coca-Cola (71)</b> – beverages	=====>	<b>PepsiCo (100)</b> – beverages & snack foods
<b>SC Johnson (100)</b> – household & cleaning products	<=====	<b>Clorox (57)</b> – household, cleaning & laundry products
<b>Whirlpool (100)</b> – appliances	<=====	<b>Maytag (29)</b> – appliances (includes Jenn-Air products)
<b>BP (100)</b> – gasoline	<=====	<b>ExxonMobil (14)</b> – gasoline (rescinded domestic partner benefits in 2005)
<b>Ford (100)</b> – automobiles	<=====	<b>GM (86)</b> – automobiles

Sources: The HRC's buyer's guide and CEI report are available on their website at [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) under "Publications"

## **Treasurer's Report**

*Rob Cummings*

The Holiday Party was a successful end to 2005 for the organization. Over 130 friends and members attended and raised a profit of \$3,800. Overall, the organization ended the year with a total net profit of a little over \$4,000. So, the Holiday Party is an extremely important event for us! Thanks again to the volunteers who helped plan this event and to those who donated the great silent and live auction items.

In early 2006, the board finalized the budget for this year. Perceptions is offering expanded member benefits, such as discounts on admissions to Perceptions-sponsored events and Perceptions merchandise, without an increase in the annual membership fee. Members are encouraged to take advantage of these special privileges.

The board is committed to managing our finances while providing the most benefit to our membership. We do our utmost to find the best venue at the best price. Our event admission prices cover our costs (sometimes!) to host the event – we do not profit from the ticket prices. We feel it's more important to make the admission prices as affordable as possible so more of our membership can attend.

So far, 2006 looks to be another great year for us. We danced the night away at the Valentine's Dance and indulged in delicious desserts at the Chocolate Party. The board looks forward to reporting back to you a successful 2006.

## **GOOD-BYE AND THANK YOU, VANESSA!**

*Rob Cummings*

Vanessa Marr, Social Coordinator and Newsletter Editor, is leaving Perceptions after three years. She accepted a Community Liaison position with Affirmations (the GLBT community center in Ferndale) and will be moving in March. Vanessa spent countless hours preparing the newsletters, working on Perceptions' Ferndale and Lansing Pride celebrations, Unity Day in Bay City, Womyn's Circle and countless other things. The Board wishes to thank Vanessa for her enthusiasm, community spirit and energy in helping make us the strong organization we are today.

While her friends on the board will surely miss Vanessa, the board's commitment to the mission, vision and membership of Perceptions is strong. We will continue to work together to further this organization's image and the positive effect the GLBT community can have.

## *Calendar of Events*

**Wednesday, March 15th - Bay City Meet & Greet** 7:00 to 9:00 pm. An informal gathering of the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. [Gypsies](#), located at 510 Third Street offers a variety of delicious drinks, sandwiches and desserts. If attendees are interested in having a reading done, please contact Marianna at Gypsies, 892-5105, by noon the Tuesday before. Quarter sandwiches and salads will be available; if attendees are interested in having additional food ready for them at Gypsies from Jack's Deli, they may call Jack's at 893-6931 by 4:00 pm Wednesday. Jack's will have their food will be ready for pick up at Gypsies. *Have an opinion about a location for the Bay City Meet & Greet?* Use the [Online Forum](#) to weigh in.

**Friday, March 17th - "Friday Night Dinner"** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions members and friends this week at the [Savoy Bar & Grill](#), 127 S. Franklin St., Saginaw. If you plan to attend, RSVP to Alan@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm on Friday. Read about previous dinners in the [Online Forum](#). If you're a registered Forum user you can also offer your review of a dinner or post suggestions for future venues. Sign up for our email list on [Yahoo Groups](#) to be notified of future venues..

**Tuesday, March 21st – Womyn's Circle** 7:30 - 9:00 pm. This program provides support to Tri-County lesbian women and facilitates community awareness projects in partnership with Perceptions and PFLAG. It has provided safety and help to many women and their families experiencing hostility, abuse and isolation. The free, confidential support group sessions are facilitated by Mary Jo Hall, MSW, CSW, ACSW. Meets at the YWCA located at 3405 Midland Rd. in Bay City.

**Thursday, March 23rd - Perceptions Monthly Membership Meeting** 7:00 pm. Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland, 6220 Jefferson Ave. For more information, contact [Perceptions](#).

**Friday, March 24th - "Friday Night Dinner"** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions members and friends this week at [Maria's Authentic Mexican Restaurant](#), 6090 State St., Saginaw. If you plan to attend, reply to Alan@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday. Sign up for our email list on [Yahoo Groups](#) to be notified of future venues.

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

**Friday, March 31st - "Friday Night Dinner"** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions members and friends this week at [Brooklyn Boyz Pizzeria](#), 612 E. Midland St., Bay City. If you plan to attend, reply to Alan@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

**Tuesday, April 4th – Womyn's Circle** 7:30 - 9:00 pm. This program provides support to Tri-County lesbian women and facilitates community awareness projects in partnership with Perceptions and PFLAG. It has provided safety and help to many women and their families experiencing hostility, abuse and isolation. The free, confidential support group sessions are facilitated by Mary Jo Hall, MSW, CSW, ACSW. Meets at the YWCA located at 3405 Midland Rd. in Bay City.

**Wednesday, April 5th - 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. **New Location!** [Bambi's](#) by Java Dave's, 4632 State Street, in the Green Acres Plaza.

**Wednesday, April 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.

**Tuesday, April 18th – Womyn's Circle** 7:30 - 9:00 pm. This program provides support to Tri-County lesbian women and facilitates community awareness projects in partnership with Perceptions and PFLAG. It has provided safety and help to many women and their families experiencing hostility, abuse and isolation. The free, confidential support group sessions are facilitated by Mary Jo Hall, MSW, CSW, ACSW. Meets at the YWCA located at 3405 Midland Rd. in Bay City.

**Wednesday, April 19th - Bay City Meet & Greet** 7:00 to 9:00 pm. An informal gathering of the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. [Gypsies](#), located at 510 Third Street offers a variety of delicious drinks, sandwiches and desserts. If attendees are interested in having a reading done, please contact Marianna at Gypsies, 892-5105, by noon the Tuesday before. Quarter sandwiches and salads will be available; if attendees are interested in having additional food ready for them at Gypsies from Jack's Deli, they may call Jack's at 893-6931 by 4:00 pm Wednesday. Jack's will have their food will be ready for pick up at Gypsies. *Have an opinion about a location for the Bay City Meet & Greet?* Use the [Online Forum](#) to weigh in.

**Saturday & Sunday, April 29th & 30th – Perceptions Charity Yard Sale**  
Timed to coincide with the Freeland Walleye Festival and Community Yard Sale, Perceptions 2nd Annual Charity Yard Sale will once again benefit the Bay City/Midland/Saginaw AIDS Walk. We'll be looking for donated items to sell, volunteers to sort donations and work during the sale, and of course, shoppers. If your interested in helping, contact [Alan@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Alan@PerceptionsSV.org).

**Mission statement:**

Our mission is to provide superior educational programs, networking opportunities and services for the well being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and their community.

**Vision statement:**

Perceptions is mid-Michigan's leading resource for enriching and empowering Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and their community.

## Contact Us!



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