

The Rainbow Press

a newsletter from PFLAG of Fargo/Moorhead
Promoting support, education, and advocacy throughout the region
<http://www.fmpflag.org>

Vol. 7, No. 4

June 2002

FM PRIDE event scheduled for June

The 2002 Fargo-Moorhead PRIDE event will kick off on Friday evening, June 7. Festivities continue through Saturday and Sunday. For an up-to-date, complete listing of events, please visit PCCC's website at www.pridecollective.com

Friday, June 7

8:00 p.m. All-Ages Dance and Drag Show, 309 Broadway, Fargo

9:00 p.m. Dancing at the I-Beam, 1021 Center Ave., Moorhead

Saturday, June 8

10:30 a.m. Pride Festival in the Park, Gooseberry Park, Moorhead (entertainment, sports, food vendors, organizations)

3:00 p.m. Ellis performing, Gooseberry Park

9:00 p.m. Pride Dance at the I-Beam (bar opens at 8 pm)

9:00 p.m. All ages Bonfire riverside near Oak Grove (bring your own beverages & snacks, some seating provided)

Sunday, June 9

12:00 noon Multi-denominational Church Service, Gooseberry Park

1:00 p.m. Brunch in the Park, Gooseberry Park Main Shelter

Fargo/Moorhead PFLAG will have a table at the festival. If you would like to volunteer your time or provide a pan of bars, contact Kari Sorenson or Cindi Brown.

IT'S A BOY

We're thrilled to share the news of the birth of Jacob Richard T, son of Karen T. and Fern B. Jacob was born at St. Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes on Saturday, May 4 at about 11:00 pm. Jacob was 19 1/2 inches tall, and weighed 7 pounds and 11 ounces.

He and his moms are doing great - he's already been to worship at Houglum twice, and visited Mom Karen's workplace. Welcome, Jacob Richard - we're glad you're here! And congratulations Karen and Fern from all your friends at FM PFLAG!!!

**Check out Fargo/Moorhead
PFLAG's web site at:**

<http://www.fmpflag.org>

**You'll find lots of great information plus
many links to other sites!!**

**F/M PFLAG
will hold its
annual
meeting on
June 24 at
7:00 p.m. at
the Cross
Way Center.**





These are my unsung heroes

Unsung Heroes.....that's what I'd like to use my space to talk about this issue.....God knows, the gay and lesbian community have an abundance of heroes....our children.....some of whom are articulate, strong, aggressive, and open.....who stand up for themselves and their right to just be who they are, who refuse to be second-class citizens, who fight to be included in the same rights that are afforded their heterosexual counterparts - job security, marital amenities, acceptance in the armed forces.....and then, and then.....some of whom are quieter, but just as strong, just as determined, just as indomitable, and just as determined to be included in those rights.....children of ours who just want to live together, love together, have permanence, make a home, care for each other, raise a family, be who God made them, and celebrate and enjoy life.....those are the gay and lesbian community and its allies' unsung heroes.

Because our society values "family" in the context of its present definition, the gay and lesbian couples who find each other to be soul mates, and make the emotional and spiritual commitment to be a family, are required to constantly "prove" the validity of their union to a largely cynical and homophobic public. The first few years of any commitment between two people heterosexual/married, heterosexual/unmarried, gay, or lesbian is a period of great adjustment, but if a gay couple splits, if a lesbian couple has frequent arguments, if in either case they separate temporarily or permanently, professional gay-watchers will immediately attribute the trouble in the relationship to sexual orientation. Why is that? Trouble in heterosexual marriages is not attributed to the fact that one of them is a man and one is a woman.

Some of my gay and lesbian friends have indulged in short-term relationships; some have made commitments that came apart in the end (like many marriages), and some have made a long-term commitment that continues still.

The short-term relationships are always held up by a homophobic society as the norm - the proof that gay and lesbian people are, by nature, promiscuous. (I hope no one ever learns the details of my first few years post-high school, while I was still escaping from under the Fundamentalist Thumb.....I could be blackmailed in several separate counties in Nebraska and Minnesota.)

The commitments that come apart do so for all the same reasons that heterosexual marriages fail. Sometimes people stop loving each other; sometimes people never did love each other, but stay together to prove that they do, in an effort to satisfy the watchers (whose business it really isn't).

My heroes are the people who find love, and stay together, even when society makes it incredibly hard for them to manage it - even when the society that "values" family denigrates the family ethics of gays and lesbians, and makes everything that comes naturally to heterosexuals difficult for them to acquire - things like mutually owned property, the right to have children, beneficiary rights, spousal deathbed/hospital visitation rights, and inclusion as a family at social functions. My heroes are the Fern and Karens and the Valerie and Dianes.....may they live long and love long, and may society someday recognize and value their lasting relationships as much as it values lasting marriages; value them for what they really are: true love, and true commitment.



The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and 362 admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love heterosexuals. It's just that they need more supervision.

-Lynn Lavner

Our Mission

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families, and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure civil rights. PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

PFLAG of Fargo/Moorhead

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- Co-Vice Chair Cindy and Marshall B.
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- Treasurer Allan N.
- Auditor Raydon W.
- Historian Betty W.

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- Glenn A.
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- Sherry C.
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- ND - Raydon W.
- MN - Jack O.

Professional Issues Representative:

- Betty W.

In addition to the officers and staff listed above, other leaders and contributors wish to remain anonymous.

The Rainbow Press is published quarterly by PFLAG of Fargo/Moorhead to provide information to supporters and interested individuals. Any comments or news ideas are welcome and should be sent to:

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Meetings are held the second Sunday of each month from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM at Cross Way Center, 1420 Crossway Dr., West Fargo.



Futile was my search for exciting new reading or film for this issue. If I struggled to read or watch something, it behooves me not to recommend it.

I stumbled across a poem to share that I found in my daughter's NDSU Family Living class textbook (*Marriage & Family; Diversity & Strength* by David H. Olson & John De Frain). It clicked - especially in light of the recent FM YMCA controversy.

1999 by Gerhard Neubeck

The family of yore
is no more.

Tradition is upended
when the family is blended.

There is the single mother,
unwed couples living with one another.

A single father doing his bit
rearing by himself his little kid.

There is the same gender marriage
not exactly the thing that went with
carriage.

Children adopted from many places
of many nationalities and races.

Divorced mates remarrying
and carrying
on like they never split
and making it.

Yes, this new world indeed is brave.
Great Grandpa and Grandma
are turning around in their grave.

No matter how far in
or out of the closet
you are, you still
have a next step.
-Author Unknown

I want to come back someday

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, *Lincoln Journal Star*, May 8, 2002, Lincoln, Nebraska (reprinted by permission of the author)

Hi, my name is Angela Clements. Some know me as a small-town girl from Elmwood, NE. Some know me as the young woman who was profiled in the *Lincoln Journal Star* on National Coming Out Day in October 2000. Some know me as a passionate activist who mobilized students in protest against Initiative 416. Others know me as a candidate for president of UNL's student body. Still others know me as the Truman Scholar who has been subsequently featured by the university in their recruitment campaigns.

A lifetime of living in Nebraska has provided me with extraordinary blessings ... and heart wrenching frustrations. It is the later that has served as a motivating force in my decision to leave Nebraska exactly two days after I graduate on May 11th. I am moving to Washington, D.C., where I will serve as the Resident Truman Scholar at the Truman Scholarship Foundation. After that, I will attend law and graduate school, studying international human rights law, hoping to pursue my dream of a more equitable, more human, more loving world.

My stubborn will tells me to stay here and "do the work that needs to be done." My gut tells me to leave, not because of my sexual orientation, but because I cannot thrive, cannot find spiritual peace in this persisting climate of hate, fear and ignorance. It's not that I think all Nebraskans are homophobic, it's that the ones who are homophobic have enormous amounts of power and have an unscrupulous desire to impose their religious standards on a state constitution. To Al Rikowski and others in the Nebraska Family Coalition who say I have "chosen" to self-identify as a lesbian, I simply say this: self-labels only become necessary when an oppressor wishes a group of people to retreat into invisibility and shame.

I want to come back someday, Nebraska. I want to see your fabulous sunsets and want to live with good-natured people. I want to help build a better state. I want to live in the place my family has called home for five generations. Will you hold out a welcoming hand? If so, just let me know.

Until then, you are in my prayers.

Angela Clements, Lincoln



National wedding registry

Finally.....it's here! A national wedding registry for the gay and lesbian community! Business owners can advertise their goods and services, and couples, family and friends can check out the website, use the free services and resources.

Registry for couples is free, and there is a directory of local GLBT-friendly professionals. The toll-free phone number is 1-866-251-1564, or you can e-mail rainbowwedding@yahoo.com.

The website is:
www.rainbowweddingnetwork.com.

If you prefer to write, the address is Artistic Ventures, Inc. P.O. Box 17596, Asheville, NC 28816

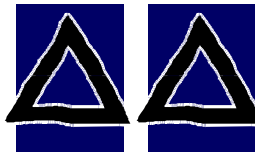
Here's a question for you.....

Why is it that Rosie O'Donnell (or any other gay parent in the media spotlight), is assumed to represent all gay parents, but a parent who is heterosexual (say Andrea Yates, for example), is never assumed to represent all straight parents??.....to read more, click on the link at <http://www.familieslikemine.com/insight/index.html>



IN THE NEWS...

by Guest Columnist
Kari S.



Around the World.....



Prison rules have been reformed in England and

Wales, allowing gay

partners to be classified as close relatives. The reform will mean that it will be easier for gays to visit their partners in jail, according to Martin Narey, the Prison Services Director General. In addition, gay prisoners who are in a relationship with other inmates at a different prison will now be allowed to apply for "inter-prison visits." Narey said the Prison Service hopes the move will encourage stability in the lives of gay prisoners. "Prisoners who leave prison and return to a stable relationship, whether with a same-sex or opposite sex partner, are five times less likely to re-offend, and so maintenance of those relationships in prison is of great importance," said Mark Leech, the Chief Executive of UNLOCK, the national association for former offenders. He went on to say the move was "a significant step for the Prison Service on the road to equality."



Brazil's President has endorsed a proposal to

legalize same-sex unions. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso urged the Brazilian Congress to pass legislation that has become bogged down in committees. It is the first time that Cardoso voiced his approval for the bill. The legislation would permit the transfer of property and extend pension and health benefits to gay and lesbian couples. Canada, France, Germany and Australia, among others, recognize varying forms of same-sex unions, while in the U.S. only the state of Vermont recognizes a level of same-sex partnerships, and guarantees most of the same rights and responsibilities as heterosexual couples. In April of 2000, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to offer full legal marriage for same-sex couples.



Russian gays, wearing concentration camp uniforms with pink triangles attached,

demonstrated in Moscow on Friday, April 26, 2002, to protest against legislation that would make gay sex punishable by jail terms. The People's Deputy Party introduced a bill in the

Duma that would amend the criminal code, making sex between two men or two women a criminal offense punishable by up to five years in prison. Homosexual sex was decriminalized after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Proposing the reinstatement of the law, the head of the Deputy Party parliamentary group, Gennady Raikov, said homosexuality was "an abnormality, and abnormality should be punishable by law." The measure is reportedly backed by Dmitry Rogozin, head of the Duma's International Relations Committee, but a wide range of politicians have angrily condemned it. The concentration camp uniforms were aimed at making explicit the comparison with Nazi Germany, which forced Jews in countries under its control to wear yellow stars, and gays to wear pink triangles. The Nazis executed more than six million Jews, gays, Gypsies, and Communists. "The penalization of homosexuality existed during the authoritarian regimes of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany," said rally organizer and head of the liberal Radical Party, Nikolai Kramov. "It's only left now...to demand the re-establishment of the death penalty for homosexuals to be completely in line with Hitler's ideas."



Taiwan has dropped its ban on gays serving in the military

police, just days after newspapers said the country was putting the regulation in place. Defense Minister Tang Yiau-ming told government lawyers that the ban against military police candidates with "sexual orientation impairment" would be dropped, because "the military preserves the security of all citizens, including homosexuals." The military never said why the ban was necessary, but Tang told lawmakers that, until 1994, gays were barred from the military because they were believed to be ill or mentally unstable. About 10,000 military police guard important government and military installations on the island.



Religion.....



More than 100 demonstrators gathered on

Sunday, April 28, 2002 in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New

York, to protest recent remarks made by Roman Catholic leaders about homosexuality and gay priests. The peaceful protest was sparked by an April 21 sermon from Monsignor Eugene Clark, who told Manhattan parishioners that homosexuality was a "disorder" and that gay men should not be allowed into the priesthood, but protesters also focused on the perceived attempt to blame gay priests for the sexual abuse scandal that has shaken the church. Chanting "We won't be your scapegoat," the GLBT demonstrators stood in the rain outside the cathedral following the 10:15 a.m. liturgy at which Cardinal Edward Egan usually presides. Both Egan and Clark, however, were not present at the time. After the protest, several leaders spoke against targeting gay priests as the way to address the current scandal. Mary Louise Cervone, president of DIGNITY/USA, the nation's largest gay and lesbian Catholic group, said, "Threatening to purge the priesthood of gay men is a way for church leaders to deflect attention from the real moral crisis in the church; that is, a culture of secrecy, conspiracy and lies by priests, bishops and cardinals that has disgraced the very institution of Catholicism." She also accused the hierarchy of practicing "spiritual violence against GLBT people." The Pope, meanwhile, recently met with U.S. Cardinals about the sex abuse crisis that has intensified in recent months. While the speculation was that they would suggest screening gay seminarians as a way to address the crisis, there has been no confirmation that this was discussed. A few attendees at that meeting, however, made widely publicized remarks suggesting that gay priests were the source of the problem.




Health.....




Bisexuals are more likely than straight or gay


people to develop mental health problems, according to an Australian study published Wednesday, May 1, 2002. After a three-year study of 4,824 young and middle-aged adults, researchers discovered that participants who identified as bisexual had the deepest feelings of anxiety, depression and negativity. Reporting in the May issue of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, the study's authors said, "It is possible that having neither a clear heterosexual nor homosexual orientation is an important stressor, in addition to the social pressures of

having a different sexual orientation than the majority.”


 Contradicting a decade-old assumption about lesbian health, a new study suggests that lesbians don't face a much-higher risk of breast cancer than their heterosexual sisters. "It's reassuring," said Susan Cochran, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), who reported similar results in her own recent study of lesbian health. "There's not a breast cancer epidemic among lesbians - at least we can't find evidence of it." Researchers at University of California San Francisco (UCSF), recruited lesbians over the age of 40 to take part in their study. They focused on 432 lesbians who had sisters willing to participate. The researchers wanted to compare the health of siblings who grew up in the same environment and shared many of the same genes, according to study author Suzanne Dibble, co-director of the National Center for Lesbian Health Research at UCSF. Childbearing reduces a woman's risk of breast cancer, and doctors suspect that lesbians may be prone to develop the disease because they aren't as likely to have children as straight women. Lesbians face other risk factors, both as a result of having fewer mammograms than straight women, and being less likely to schedule annual gynecological exams. Cochran has found that lesbians smoke and drink more than straight women; they are also more likely to be overweight. Dibble calculated that lesbians had an 11.1 percent risk of developing breast cancer in their lifetime, compared to 10.6 percent risk among their sisters. While that may not seem like a noticeable difference, it means that 110,000 out of 1 million lesbians would develop breast cancer, compared to 106,000 of 1 million of their heterosexual sisters. By contrast, a study from the early 1990's suggested that lesbians faced a breast cancer risk 2-3 times higher than straight women.


 Scientists who scrutinized the immune systems of HIV patients have confirmed a long-standing suspicion: the deadly virus targets the very cells programmed to attack it. The findings could help in the design of effective HIV vaccines, and also raise a caution about "drug holidays," during which HIV patients are temporarily taken off intensive drug therapy in the hopes of boosting their

natural immune response against the virus. Researchers studied immune system cells in the blood of 12 HIV-positive people. They found that the CD4 cells that specifically target HIV contained two to five times more HIV than the other cells. The findings could have implications for efforts to produce an HIV vaccine; Daniel Douek, the study's lead investigator, said that the findings suggest that a more effective vaccine would elicit a strong response of both the HIV-specific cells and the body's CD8 white blood cells—killer cells not infected by HIV—while also rallying anti-HIV antibodies. Researchers also found that patients temporarily taken off drug therapy as part of a clinical trial, had HIV levels that rose significantly. That spurred a corresponding surge in HIV-specific cells, which, in turn, gave the virus more potential targets. They concluded that therapy interruption should be very brief to prevent the rebounding of the virus.

 **Youth and Schools.....**
Petalinga California—The Boy Scouts of America have adopted a resolution dated February 6, 2002, in which gays and atheists are deemed unfit and unacceptable role models for scout youth. Although the Boy Scouts have had an unwritten policy concerning gays, this is the first time in their 92-year history that it has become an actual resolution. The resolution came about in response to the many individual Scout Councils who are calling for change within their organization. These councils were fighting to maintain their right to choose their own membership and leadership, even if this included leaders and scouts who happened to be gay. But the new resolution strikes down local authority and autonomy and in effect says that parents and volunteers cannot be responsible for choosing the best leadership for their own children. "...the BSA values cannot be subject to local option choices," the resolution reads, "but must be the same in every unit..." "It is ironic that the BSA core value of respecting diversity is not practiced within the organization," said Scott Cozza, president of Scouting for All. "And it is a shame that the BSA National Office is turning a deaf ear to its own members." Scouting for All, and their supporters who struggle for human rights, salute the bravery of the councils in standing up to the National Office. "It is no small thing to risk getting kicked out of an organization you love," said

Steven Cozza, 16-year-old co-founder of Scouting for All. But denouncing bigotry and prejudice is really what the Scout Oath and Law are about. These councils recognized that, and did the right thing," he concluded. "If the BSA wants to continue to symbolize bigotry," said Scott Cozza, "let it do so, but without the support of Americans and individual Scout Councils who oppose bigotry and discrimination. To this end, our organization will continue to work for change by asking the United Way to adhere to their anti-discrimination standards, and by asking that public schools not allow the BSA to recruit in our schools until they include all of our children in a democratic fashion.

 Superior Court Justice Robert MacKinnon ruled that a 17-year old Toronto student, Marc Hall, could take his boyfriend to the prom. MacKinnon stated that the section of the Canadian Constitution that gives certain protections to the Roman Catholic school system does not mean the school can do whatever it wants in the name of religion. When Hall was buying his prom tickets in the Toronto suburb of Oshawa earlier this year, he was told by the principal of Monsignor John Pereyma Catholic Secondary School that the Catholic church could not permit a same-sex date at the prom. The Durham Region Catholic School Board backed the principal, and Hall decided to go to court. John Fisher, the executive director of the national GLBT rights group EGALE, said the decision "has signaled that when institutions accept public funds, they accept to follow public regulation. One of the most important of these regulations is the requirement of nondiscrimination."

 In Louisiana, a gay couple has been barred from going to their high school prom. The ban comes on the heels of the Toronto gay couple who successfully fought a Catholic school board in the city to attend their school's prom. Cy Scott, 18, and his date, Paul Alexander, were stopped at the door of Robert E. Lee High School near Baton Rouge, even though they had already paid for their prom tickets. Officials of East Baton Rouge Parish said there is an unwritten rule that same-sex couples will not be admitted to proms, either as friends or in relationships. The school has since issued a letter urging high school principals to, in the

continued on page 6

future, sell tickets to school functions to all couples, regardless of sexual orientation. The reasons for the change, according to the letter, are "potential legal problems" and "alleged discrimination."



Legals and Legislation.....



The state of Minnesota and union leaders reached an agreement May 21, that will keep pay and benefits flowing to about 50,000 state employees whose contracts the legislature failed to ratify this session. They signed a new contract that is exactly the same as the one they negotiated last fall; at the same time, they reached an agreement that insures workers are paid and have benefits for the next month, or until the contracts take effect. During the interim period, workers will keep the same health benefits that they have had since the beginning of the year. Wages will revert to those in the old contracts that ran from 1999-2001, but workers will get a bigger check in July to make up the difference. Union officials said they thought they had worked out a deal with lawmakers last week to avoid such a move, but the agreement fell through. The only ones who won't be covered under the bridge-agreement, are the gay and lesbian partners of state employees. They'll lose their insurance benefits for that month, unless they pay the premiums themselves. The same-sex insurance coverage is the provision that kept the contracts from being approved by lawmakers. The house and senate held a session-long staredown over ratification of the labor agreement, with the DFL-controlled senate favoring the contracts, and the GOP-led house opposing them. The contracts ended when the session ended, without a resolution. About 86 state employees have applied for same-sex benefits, and the Department of Employee Relations estimates the cost at \$185,000, out of contracts totaling 225 million. "Its a little bit hard for me to understand that a cost of \$185,000 for 85 people is worth the expense, energy, resources, confusion, and fear that this action by the legislature - by the House - has created." said Jim Monroe, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. Although the agreement takes care of most employees, one group is likely to have a rough month: Payroll, said Pete

Benner, Executive Director of Council 6 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees - state government's largest union. "I think it's going to be chaos on the payroll clerks." Benner said.



Dallas gay and lesbian residents now have an ordinance in place to protect them from discrimination. Community leaders have been fighting for it for the past 20 years. Four other Texas cities have nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation. The Dallas ordinance prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations, housing, and employment. Violation of the ordinance is a Class C misdemeanor, which is punishable by fines of \$200 to \$500. Up until now, only gay city employees were protected by Dallas' employment laws. Now, employers with more than 15 workers would be required to comply with the ordinance. State and federal offices and religious organizations are exempt.



A bill granting limited rights to same-sex couples in Connecticut passed both legislative chambers, and is awaiting the governor's signature to become law. The approved measure would allow domestic partners to make medical decisions, determine death arrangements and visit each other in hospitals and nursing homes. Members of the activist group "Love Makes a Family" drafted the measure, which is a compromise from earlier civil union and domestic partner bills, and doesn't specifically mention same-sex couples. The bill covers any two people over the age of 18, but it's provisions apply to gay and lesbian couples. Governor John G. Rowland has reportedly said he will sign the measure.



A group calling themselves the Alliance For Marriage is aiming to amend the U.S. Constitution to bar the legalization of same-sex marriage. The "Federal Marriage Amendment" will be introduced in Congress with the help of two-term Mississippi Democrat, Ronnie Shows and five other House members. Led by attorney Matt Daniels, the group was founded in the summer of 2000, ostensibly to fight for a range of policies designed to strengthen families - particularly African-American. However, the group has since set its sights on attacking same-sex marriage, proposing a two-

sentence amendment to confine marriage, and "the legal incidents thereof" to one man and one woman. While amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, requiring a supermajority of 66% approval in both houses, and ratification by three quarters of the states, marriage activist Evan Wolfson warns that the more immediate threat "is the opportunity it presents to stigmatize and assault gay people, put our allies and politicians to the test, and skew public debate if we fail to engage."

Milestones and Miscellaneous.....



Frank Moore, a painter and AIDS activist who helped create the red ribbon design that became an international symbol for AIDS awareness, died of complications from AIDS on Sunday, April 21, at a hospital in Manhattan. He was 48 years old. Moore was one of the first members of Visual AIDS, and he was instrumental in forming the group's Red Ribbon Project in 1990. The project launched the overlapping red ribbon, which was worn on lapels and has become recognizable worldwide as a representation of the struggle against AIDS.



The National Rifle Association's annual convention in Reno, Nevada, degenerated on Sunday, April 28, into a session of gay-bashing, with one commentator referring to anti-gun talk show host Rosie O'Donnell as a "freak" for her recent admission that she's a lesbian. During a two-hour panel discussion attacking the media for distorting the views of gun-rights proponents, all but one speaker took an opportunity to slam gays and lesbians—including O'Donnell—in some manner. Derogatory, gay-bashing comments by the panelists and their moderator, former "Dallas" star Susan Howard, brought applause and laughter from a crowd composed mainly of middle-aged hunting and shooting enthusiasts.



**The only queer people are those who don't love anybody.
-Rita Mae Brown**

A letter from “Jen’s Mom”

In case you don't believe PFLAG has an enduring necessity, read the following letter to Phoenix PFLAG from “Jen’s Mom” (as she wants to be identified), reprinted with her permission.

Dear PFLAG-Phoenix,

I almost attended the Central Phoenix meeting last night, but I couldn't. I needed to say “thank you,” but it's too hard just now. You gave me an incredible gift, and you need to know.

A year and a month ago I attended my first PFLAG meeting, in tears, just days after our only daughter shared with me, and then her dad, that she is gay. I located the meeting by calling the hotline and talking with Boots Reed, who steered me toward the meeting that very night, and who made me promise that I would call back, even if I chose not to attend. I went, and picked up some materials, including [your PFLAG pamphlet] “Our Daughters and Sons,” and went to the “first timers” break out and couldn't say a word (too many tears), and read the materials cover to cover. On pages 14 and 15 were three letters that talked to me:

1. “I hit a point where I was feeling sad and thinking about what would I say when people asked, “How is Gary?” And then it occurred to me: Gary's fine. I'm the one who's not. And once I reached that point, it was easier...as we met Gary's friends, we found them to be wonderful people and realized that he's really part of a pretty terrific community. So what's the problem? It's society's problem. That's when we figured we were over the hump.”

2. “I was teary-eyed for three months off and on. But we've always had a pretty good relationship. It has never changed from that. We never had an instant's question of our love for him, and we both assured him immediately that we loved him. And since then, our relationship with our son is strengthening because we have a bond simply because we know what he is up against in our society.”

3. “I have to tell you, there are so many pluses now. You begin to recognize what an incredible child you have to share this with you and to want you to be a part of their lives...[Look at] the trust that has been placed in your hands and how much guts it took to do that.”

I didn't realize until January 28th how valuable that gift, the gift of comfort, of acceptance, of no more crying for Jen's gayness, was. That's the date our beautiful, talented, passionate, happy 27-year old daughter passed away from a rare seizure disorder.

For a year we laughed and enjoyed and treasured her, in all her facets, and now we treasure her friends and their memories and pictures and laughter.

And I took her [picture] with me to the Gay Pride festival and walked in the sunshine among the beautiful people and looked, unsuccessfully as it turned out, for a “Mom Knows” button, which I didn't pick up at that first meeting...

Thank you. You never know the lives you touch, and how important the touch may be.

Jen's mom

A message from Rainbow Families

1. Kids ages 11 & up March tall in the pride parade. Join other teens and preteens in creating a memorable spectacle that wows the crowd every year at the Pride Parade. Make friends and learn an amazing skill. Stilt in the Pride Parade on June 30. Preregister NOW by calling 612-827-7731.

Stilting is a skill that takes cumulative practice to learn and build up physical endurance for the parade. Plan to practice a lot at home in the weeks before the parade, in addition to attending at least two out of three group lessons. Parents are encouraged to assist with practice. Cost: \$15, plus \$50 refundable deposit for stilts. Scholarships available.

Stilting Instruction & Practice: Wednesdays June 5, 12, and 19 from 7:00-8:30pm. Must attend 2 out of 3 sessions at Loring Park in Minneapolis. Meet at the southwest corner of the park, across from St. Mark's Cathedral.

2. Come build stilts together for our youth! Sunday, June 2, 1pm-4pm, 4720 Dupont Ave. So. in Minneapolis. Bring those power tools! Call 612-827-7731 for more information or to RSVP.

3. Acrobatics workshop Saturday, June 29, 2-4pm Walker Art Center Auditorium for kids ages 5-15. Kids, bend your body and stretch your imagination! The renowned LAVA dancers from New York will build from the ground up with a unique combination of dance, acrobatics, trapeze, and circus techniques, and give you the roots of movements to help you soar.

The LAVA Dancers with choreographer Sarah East Johnson are in town to perform at the ever-popular Dyke Night at the Walker June 27-29. The acrobatics workshop is appropriate for kids ages 5-15. Limited to 30 kids. FREE, but reservations required. Call 612-375-7622 today! (A copresentation of the Walker Art Center and Rainbow Families, made possible by generous support from the Pew Charitable Trusts)

4. LGBT Family Weeks sponsored by COLAGE and Family Pride Coalition. Saugatuck Mich.: July 6-13, 2002, Provincetown Mass.: August 3-10, 2002. For info: www.familypride.org or www.colage.org

Family Week is a special gathering created by Family Pride Coalition and COLAGE for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) parents and youth & adults of all ages with LGBT parents. Individuals and families join us from all over the US, some people have come from as far as Sweden & China. It's a fabulous opportunity to meet & hang out, workshop & discuss with hundreds of other folks with similar families!

Family Week Events, Workshops, & Activities: Beach BBQ, Whale Watching, Teen Bonfire, Sand Castle Building Contest, Provincetown Family Dinner & Dance, Bagel Brunch, Hikes, Movies, Crafts, and Special Guests, and more.

Sample Discussion & Workshop Topics: For Teens: Spirituality/Religion, Schools, Activism, Media Work, Multiracial Issues, Coming out to others about having LGBT parents. For 9-12 year-olds: Dealing with school and friends, Sharing stories about our families, Getting involved with COLAGE. For Parents: Advocacy for family issues, Raising our children, Building community with other families.

Important Upcoming Dates to Remember by Betty W.

ADDRESSES:

Cross Way Center: 1416 Crossway Drive in West Fargo

PCCC (Pride Collective and Community Center): 116 N. 12 in Moorhead E-mail: pridecollective@hotmail.com

SOHR (Sexual Orientation and Human Rights): 900 Lake St. in Detroit Lakes (Congregational Church) E-mail: sohr@hotmail.com, phone 1—800-800-0350, ext 524

Atomic Coffee: 15 4th St. S. Moorhead

June 2
Rainbow Recovery AA group meets at 2 pm at PCCC

June 4
SOHR, 5 pm business meeting, 6:30 Discussion and Support - bring a sack lunch

June 8
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am
Soulforce Protest at St. Louis Southern Baptist Convention, June 8-12
First annual F/M Gay Pride Festival begins - see detail of events elsewhere in this newsletter

June 9
PFLAG meets at Cross Way Center - 4pm -6 pm (3 pm business meeting)
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC

June 15
Transgender Support Group meets at PCCC, 3 pm-5 pm
PCCC is open noon - 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

June 16
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC
Straight Spouse group meets - call 235 SEEK for details

June 18
Spousal Support Group meets, 3 pm-4 pm at Cross Way Center

June 22
PCCC is open noon until 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

June 23
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC

June 24
F/M PFLAG Annual Meeting at Cross Way Center, 7 pm

June 29
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am
Minneapolis Gay Pride Festival, June 29-30

June 30
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC

July 2
SOHR, 5 pm business meeting, 6:30 discussion and support - bring a sack lunch

July 6
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

July 7
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC

July 13
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am
3rd Annual Party at Donna and Penny's house - 1243 Lake Avenue in Detroit Lakes details: 218-847-3823 or E-mail pendon@lakesnet.net

July 14
Annual Houglum Lutheran Church Pig Roast 10:00 service, roast pig and potluck to follow. Houglum is a Reconciling in Christ congregation details: 218-483-4760
PFLAG meets at Cross Way Center, 4 pm-6pm (3pm business meeting)
Rainbow Recovery AA meeting (closed) at 2 pm at PCCC

July 16
Spousal Support Group, 3 pm-4 pm at Cross Way Center

July 20
Transgender Support Group, 3 pm-5 pm at PCCC
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am
PCCC is open noon until 5 pm

July 21
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC
Straight Spouse Support Group, call 235-SEEK

July 27
PCCC is open noon until 5 pm

Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

July 28
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC

August 3
PCCC is open noon until 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

August 4
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC

August 6
SOHR, 5 pm business meeting, 6:30 discussion and support - bring a sack lunch

August 10
PCCC is open from noon until 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

August 11
PFLAG meets at Cross Way Center, 4 pm-6pm (business meeting, 3 pm)
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC

August 17
Transgender Support Group, 3 pm-5pm at PCCC
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative at Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

August 18
Straight Spouse Support Group, call 235-SEEK
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC

August 20
Spousal Support Group, 3 pm-4pm at Cross Way Center
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm

August 24
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative, Atomic Coffee, 9:30 am

August 25
Rainbow Recovery AA (closed), 2 pm at PCCC

August 31
PCCC is open noon to 5 pm
Coffee and conversation bar alternative, Atomic Coffee at 9:30 am

September 27-29
National PFLAG Conference in Columbus, Ohio