

A PUBLICATION OF
THE LESBIAN AND
GAY FAMILY
BUILDING PROJECT

Pride and Joy Families

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2

WINTER 2006 - 2007

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Family Portrait Project Travels to Upstate NY

This winter, Pride and Joy Families and all families with LGBT members will have a great opportunity to document their family stories in a unique way. The Empire State Pride Agenda Marriage Ambassadors are traveling throughout the state helping all families use their creativity to show their family pride and their commitment to equal rights.

Photo scrapbook events will take place in Binghamton and Syracuse and will include free family photo opportunities for everyone, a chance to tell your family story and materials to create a scrapbook page showing your family together. Families can take their page home and may choose to also have a copy made for the Pride Agenda's Scrapbook Album— a collection of our pictures and stories that will be used to represent us when advocating for equal rights for our families.

Family Portrait Project

a photo scrapbook event

Sunday January 21 3:00-5:00pm in Binghamton
February date TBA in Syracuse

Tell Your Family Story and Make a Change.

Who Are We?

The Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project is funded by a grant from the New York State Health Department and works to help LGBT people in New York State build and strengthen their families. Our network of Pride and Joy Families groups provides social and educational activities and a sense of community to LGBT parents and their children.

The Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project

124 Front St

Binghamton, NY 13905

607.724.4308

www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org



Excerpts from “State of the Movement”

a speech given by Matt Foreman of The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force at the Creating Change Conference in Kansas City, MO November 10, 2006

“The agenda and vision that we must proudly articulate is that yes, we intend to change society.”

In 1970, not a single law protected lesbian, gay and bisexual people from discrimination. Today, 18 states—representing 40 percent of the U.S. population—protect LGB people from discrimination.... In 1990, not a single law protected transgender people from discrimination. Today, nine states—covering 22 percent of the U.S. population—protect transpeople. Yes we still have a long way to go, but we are catching up rapidly.

.....as we lift our heads up to think and see bigger, we have to be sure that our agenda, our vision, is more than editing the existing dry pages of law books and personnel manuals. More than surviving in the way things are, but thriving in a new world.

.....The floor of our agenda is, of course, that every gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender person is protected from discrimination — no matter where they live or work. But our vision insists that companies like Wal-Mart — that, yes, prohibit discrimination — cannot be allowed to make billions and billions of dollars every year while leaving one out of six of their employees with no health insurance at all.

....The floor of our agenda is a country where a woman’s right to choose is inviolate and people’s sexual lives are their own business. But our vision is a country where sexual freedom is seen for what it is—a fundamental human right.

....The floor of our agenda is that all of us can serve openly in the military, but our vision is a country where none of the lives or limbs of our soldiers—whatever their orientation or identity — are wasted as fodder to advance empire and economic interests.

....The floor of our agenda is that queer and questioning kids are protected from bullying and harassment. But our vision is a country where race and class no longer dictate the quality of a kid’s education, gay or straight.

....The floor of our agenda is the demise of anti-gay industry and putting an end once and for all to their use of us and our families for cynical culture wars and political gain. But our vision is also to put an end once and for all to the scape-goating of any group of people for political gain, and that certainly includes people of color and immigrants.

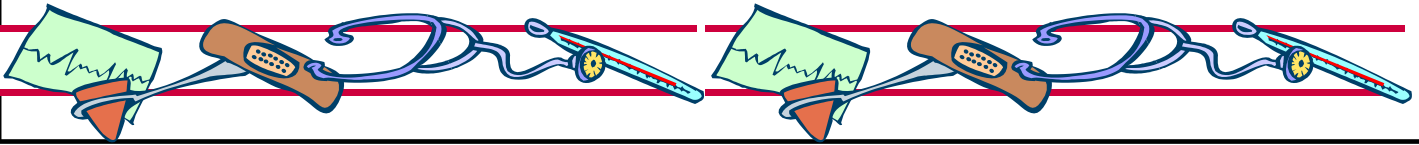
....And finally, the floor of our agenda is, of course, unequivocally fighting for and winning the freedom to marry—with as Evan Wolfson says, all of its rights, responsibilities and social significance.

...But our vision is a country that not only honors and respects the amazing and wonderful diversity of the families we have built against tremendous odds, but a country that honors and respects the reality and the diversity of *all* American families.

Some countries recognize same-sex marriage, namely the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Spain and South Africa. Israel recognizes same-sex marriages performed in other countries, but does not perform them. In the United States, same-sex marriage is currently considered unprotected by the U.S. constitution, and is banned in the majority of states, either constitutionally or by statute. It is currently legal in the State of Massachusetts but only for their residents and residents of Rhode Island.

Source: wikipedia

Our Healthy Families....



Immunization: Why vaccines are so important to safeguarding health

Immunizations protect you and your community from serious disease threats. Understand the risks of under immunization and learn what to do if you have concerns about vaccine safety.

Immunization is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and your children against infectious disease. By stimulating your body's natural resistance to disease — thereby creating immunity — vaccines are your first line of defense against the likes of polio, measles, mumps, rubella, influenza, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Were it not for the widespread use of vaccines in the U.S., a far greater number of deaths would occur during childhood and many more people would be living with chronic and often crippling after effects of disease.

What immunization can achieve

The immediate result of immunization is the prevention of dangerous, potentially life-threatening infectious illnesses. The long-term goal of an immunization program is the complete eradication of a disease. If you're like most people, you trust the advice of your doctor. You've probably weighed the risks and benefits and believe that immunization — for yourself and your children — is the right thing to do. Furthermore, you understand that having your children vaccinated also helps protect others. It's true that a small number of people shouldn't be vaccinated — for example, those who may be allergic to a vaccine ingredient — and remain susceptible to the disease. These individuals depend in part on others who have been immunized not passing the disease on to them.

Still, a number of children in the United States are missing one or more recommended immunizations. This may be due to inconvenience, missed appointments or forgetting when the next shot is due. Or it's possible that some who lack access to health care aren't aware of clinics that might be available to them. It may also result from parents misunderstanding the risks of not immunizing.

The risks of disease outbreaks

In some respects, immunization programs have been a victim of their own incredible success. Because many vaccine-preventable diseases are now uncommon in the United States, you may feel less urgency about getting yourself or your children immunized. You might never have known of a case of diphtheria, polio or tetanus. You may feel that stringent levels of cleanliness and sanitation are enough to control disease. And you may feel that simply living in a highly vaccinated society protects you. However, these reasons are insufficient. Only after a vaccine is used widely is there a significant drop in the incidence of any vaccine-preventable disease. In fact, many infectious diseases that have virtually disappeared in the United States can quickly reappear. That's because the germs that cause the diseases still exist in other parts of the world, making a new outbreak in the United States only a plane trip away. Travelers can unintentionally carry disease into the United States. From a single entry point, an infectious disease can spread quickly, particularly among those who are unprotected.

To view and download a personalized printable vaccination schedule for your child, visit:

<http://www2a.cdc.gov>

Like the rest of America's seniors, elderly LGBT people have additional challenges and needs. Lesbian and gay seniors, however, are five times less likely to access needed social services than the non-gay senior population. One reason: in a survey of 24 federal Area Agencies on Aging that serve seniors, 46% said that LGBT seniors would not be welcome at senior centers if their sexual orientation were known.

Source: www.lgbtfunders.com

What I learned in Kansas City

by Claudia Stallman

“Creating Change” is a conference for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community leaders and activists held annually by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. After wanting to attend for years, I finally got there in November. Here are some of the things I learned on my trip:

Kansas City is in Missouri (there’s another one in Kansas but don’t let that confuse you).

Fifteen hundred is a lot of queer people, not all of whom like to be referred to as “queer,” by the way. We are disabled people, APIs (Asian/Pacific Islanders), feminine MTFs (male-to-female transgender people), masculine FTMs, old lesbians, young bisexuals, parents, and any other identity or combination of identities that you can name.

It is wise to read your airplane itinerary carefully and well in advance of your departure date. This will ensure that you don’t miss your return flight (like I did). This sort of thing is important to your partner, whom you have left at home for 4 days and 3 nights with your 2 children (but who’s counting?).

According to the last Census, fewer than one quarter (23%) of US children are being raised by both their biological mother and father. So much for the traditional nuclear family.

In a recent study of LGB youth, 76% reported that they aspire to be parents. Wow!

It’s not enough for health and human service providers to be gay-“friendly;” they need to be gay-qualified. That is to say that they understand the unique conditions and concerns of LGBT people, for example, that lesbians tend to put off gynecological care; that we are all subject to minority stress to one degree or another; that we may be reluctant to “come out” unless the provider has created a safe environment that invites us to do so, etc.

Cigarette smoking kills more people than HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides and murders combined. According to a recent study, LGBT men smoked 50% more than the general population, and LGBT women smoked almost 200% more than the general population (www.lgbttobacco.org).

LGBT adults and our children are agents for social change. Simply living as an openly gay person and being a parent changes the world. (And imagine the impact of all those conversations about our families with pediatricians, teachers, and neighbors!)

We cannot achieve equality for LGBT people by ourselves or in a vacuum. And we shouldn’t try. We must find causes in common and join in coalition with others who work for reproductive and sexual freedom. The far right lumps together LGBT marriage/parental rights and abortion rights as common threats to traditional family values. Maybe it’s time we paid attention to that (check out www.MappingOurRights.org).

And finally, I think it’s time we see ourselves as part of a larger movement for human rights and social justice. (See State of the Movement Address, on page 2)



“It’s not enough for health and human service providers to be “gay-friendly”, they need to be “gay-qualified”.”



Kids With LGBT Parents in Newsweek



The other kids in grade school talked about family life. Camping trips with Dad, hanging out at the mall with Mom. Kyle Michaels kept quiet. Nobody would understand. Not in her Texas suburb of Cedar Park.....Now a

high-school freshman, Kyle no longer keeps secrets about life inside her two-story red-brick home.....

The October 18, 2006 issue of Newsweek features *At Home in Two Worlds*, the honest and positive portrayals of several adolescents and teens with LGBT parents. The article

"I felt like I could talk about my family, and everyone would get it."
Emily, age 14 about attending Family Week in Provincetown, MA

addresses the isolation that the kids sometimes feel, as well as their pride and love for their families.

The theme that runs through the text is one of community building. Each child remembers the life changing moment when they realized that they were not the only kid with LGBT parents. Issues of bullying, name calling and coming out are also addressed.

To read the entire article, visit the Newsweek website and search for *At Home in Two Worlds*.

Dear Ari,

www.PrideParenting.com

Arlene Istar Lev, LCSW,CASAC writes a column on the Pride Parenting Website that addresses all types of issues that LGBT-led families may encounter on their journey. Her most recent is *Tired of the Charade*. Read it at www.prideParenting.com.

Vince's View at www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org

Vince Sgambati, a former teacher and continuing writer has been hard at work with his candid, oftentimes humorous column about what it's like for two gay men to raise a daughter .

The newest is called *GOP Munchkins*:

Vince's View can be found at www.PrideandJoyFamilies.org

Before Jack and I decided to become parents, we had not only been out for a number of years, but also active in local politics. However there's out and then there's OUT.....read more at www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org

Vince Sgambati lives in Syracuse with his partner, Jack, of 30 years; their daughter, Mona; his mother, Millie; their dogs, Dusty and Gertrude; and a guinea pig, Lightning. Vince, Jack and Mona are active Pride and Joy members.



Is Your Kid's School "Welcoming?"

From *Gay Parents/Straight Schools* by Virginia Casper

What makes a school "gay-friendly" or welcoming of lesbian- and gay-headed families? There are many intangible influences that may be hard to measure at first glance, such as the quality of the teachers, administrators and staff. But there also are a number of concrete steps that some schools have taken to demonstrate their commitment to inclusiveness that you should be able to find out without much difficulty. To date, most efforts to promote inclusiveness have focused on promoting the safety and welfare of lesbian and gay students and, to some extent, employees. In comparison, the *children* of lesbian and gay parents have received significantly less attention. But, generally speaking, school policies designed to counter prejudice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people should also contribute to a better environment for our families, even though they may fail to address some of the specific issues of concern to gay and lesbian parents.

What follows are examples of gay-friendly policies and practices currently in place in some schools. Very few schools have taken all of these steps. But it is worth determining whether your child's school has taken any of them. It also is worth finding out the last time such policies were enforced. Some schools have policies on paper only. But even if that is so, remember that they can help if you ever need to fight a discriminatory action.

Non-discrimination employment policies

A school that has passed a policy explicitly guaranteeing that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers and other employees will not be discriminated against on the basis of sexual or gender orientation has taken an important step toward creating a welcoming climate.

(continued on page7)

Bored?



Youth Groups are Forming!

In Binghamton, Syracuse and Rochester

Hang out and have fun with other kids with families like yours.

For more information about Pride and Joy Youth groups please call (607) 724-4308 or check out the Pride and Joy listserv



Is Your Kid's School Welcoming? cont.

Without such a policy, teachers and other staff members may be so frightened of losing their jobs, whether they are lesbian or gay, or merely afraid of being perceived as such, that they:
Refuse to stop anti-gay harassment or name-calling when they hear it;
Refuse to help students who want assistance in forming a gay-straight alliance; and
Refuse to include gay and lesbian people or issues in their classrooms.

Anti-Harassment Policies

A policy that explicitly prohibits anti-gay harassment lets students, parents, and staff members know that homophobia will not be tolerated. Some people argue that such policies are not required: that a general anti-harassment policy is good enough. But it is, in fact, critical that such policies specifically include the words "anti-gay" or "sexual orientation" because only this makes it clear that homophobia is just as unacceptable as racism, sexism or religious bigotry. And only this will persuade some teachers and staff members that they have a responsibility to confront anti-gay name-calling or harassment when they witness it.

Gay-straight alliances

There are currently more than 800 gay-straight alliances [*editor's note: there are currently over 3000 gay-straight alliances*], or GSAs, at high schools nationwide, according to the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network. GSAs are official student groups that provide a place for gay, straight and questioning students to:

- Discuss lesbian and gay issues.
- Address their concerns about homophobia in school or at home.
- Augment their studies with information about the life, history, and culture of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

In addition to providing a safe forum for students to talk, these groups also help improve the broader school environment. As official student groups, GSAs are eligible for all the benefits accorded other school-sponsored organizations, such as the chess club or debating society's to school funding for events, the right to meet on school property, and the permission to publicly announce club meetings and activities. These privileges help send a message that there is, indeed, a place for lesbian and gay people in the school community.

Inclusive language in school publications

Filling out a form that says "mother" and "father" can be particularly irksome to lesbian and gay parents. As a result, some schools have redesigned their forms to include non-gender-specific terms, such as co-parents. Some also have taken steps to ensure that announcements in school announcements, papers, and assignments that students bring home, do not reflect narrow assumptions about the child's family structure.

Resources for students

Students who are questioning their sexuality, or simply curious about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, may be uncomfortable talking about these topics with their parents, teachers or peers. That is why it is important that schools have resources available in the library or counseling offices. It also is important that students be able to access these materials in a confidential manner. For example, students are much more likely to pick up a book that is on a bookshelf or a pamphlet freely available in a counselor's office than something kept behind a reserve desk.

Inclusion in the curriculum

From children's first years in school, when classes often take "the family" as their curricular focus, right through high school, there are many moments when lesbian and gay issues are appropriate and relevant to





Map Your Rights

Some of the most fundamental American values are the ability to live healthy lives, select our intimate partners and decide what medical action to take with regard to our bodies. Any one of these things may very well depend on where we live.

Mapping Our Rights shows viewers where in this country states promote equal access to comprehen-

sive sexual and reproductive health services (like contraception) and in which states pharmacists can impose their beliefs on their customers. It shows which states support marriage and parenthood for all, and where those things are simply a privilege for some. And it shows where women may have access to safe abortion services without unnecessary restrictions and where they must travel

long distances, cross state lines, endure waiting periods and pay hefty prices.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force along with Sister Song Women of Color Reproductive Health and Ipas ask you to explore Mapping Our Rights at :

www.mappingourrights.org

And see how your state policies rank can be compared to others.

“Not only a safe forum for students to talk, Gay Straight Alliances improve the broader school environment...they send a message that there is a place in the schools community for lesbian and gay people“

Is Your Kid’s School Welcoming ? (cont.)

the curriculum. For example, lesbian and gay authors and historical figures can be included in English and history classes; and the lesbian and gay movement, itself, can be germane to civics and social studies courses.

Unfortunately, relatively few schools have yet included gay and lesbian people and issues in the curriculum. But students stand to gain significant advantages in those schools that do. For example, the children of lesbian and gay parents can see themselves as part of the larger world, instead of seemingly left out of it; and all students can develop a better understanding of the diversity of our society.

A workshop on how to start a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) was held in Binghamton on December 7th. Three youth and adult panel members shared their experiences with starting and sustaining GSAs in two area high schools: Greene and Chenango Forks. Speakers described the obstacles they faced in trying to launch their GSA clubs and also the unexpected sources of support they found. Fourteen people attended the workshop, which was sponsored by the Broome LGBTQ Youth Coalition.

A full day conference on Safe Schools, patterned after the successful “Teaching Respect for All” Conference held in Syracuse last March, will be held in Binghamton on Saturday, April 14, 2007. Students, teachers and other school personnel, parents and interested community members are invited to attend.

For more information about the Broome LGBTQ Youth Coalition and its programs, call Claudia Stallman at 607.724.4308 ext.21

