



A PUBLICATION OF  
THE LESBIAN AND  
GAY FAMILY  
BUILDING PROJECT

# Pride And Joy Families

*Helping LGBT people in New York State build and strengthen their families.*

Volume 4 Issue 3

Winter 2008

*Winter  
Walk  
Sunday  
January 20  
1:00-3:00pm  
Corbett's Glen  
Rochester*

*See Calendar for details*

## **Pride and Joy Splash Party!**

**Saturday January 26**

**2:00-4:30pm**

**Shanateles Community Center**

*See calendar for details*



### IN THIS

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- Politics and Kids
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### 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 provides social and educational activities and a sense of community to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) parents and their children.

The Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project

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[www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org](http://www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org)

Claudia Stallman, Project Director

Karen Armstrong, Project Outreach Educator

Loren Couch, Consultant

Do you have an idea for an event? Email us at [www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org](http://www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org)

Hi Friends,

My old friend came in to town for the holiday and stopped by my house with her 5 month old son. He was incredibly adorable and she was incredibly fretful. I don't remember her ever being a worrier, but motherhood changes all of that. She was so nervous about his every sound, movement, and snuffle, that it started to make me crazy. Then I reminded myself that I used to stay up all night to listen to my tiny daughter breathe. (I even kept a flashlight on the nightstand so if I couldn't hear her, I could watch her chest move up and down). Parenthood and love can make you pretty kooky.

A long time ago I vowed that no matter how many kids I had and no matter how old they got, I would never be that know-it-all-mom, the one who says things like, "oh that's nothing", with a swagger (or "wait until you hit the terrible twos" or "when they start teething" or "driving" or whatever). As a new mother I was always grateful for the wisdom of seasoned mothers, who always seemed to be unstoppable even if they were only a few months ahead of me on the journey. But first-time parents--shell shocked, sleep deprived, insecure--are especially susceptible to the bravado of vet moms, and to the sense of foreboding that seems to lurk around every developmental corner.

Which is why I hold one fleeting encounter in particular near to my heart. I was out with my first born when she was just a few months old. I was in line at the grocery checkout and she was fussy and past nap-time. The woman behind me struck up a conversation with me. After asking how the feeding and sleeping was going, she said, "I have teenagers, and I swear it gets better and better all the time." She added, "They just become these really amazing people." Whenever I wonder if certain behaviors, good and bad (from "Mine, Gimme!" to "Your eyes are beautiful momma"), are passing or permanent, I find reassurance in this exchange from ten years ago. In my experience, every stage of parenting is both easy and hard, in completely different ways. In the beginning you offset inconsolable crying with newborn snuggling and portability. Later, maddening defiance is balanced by brilliant conversation. And so I keep learning.

Author and therapist Ari Istar Lev recently came to a Binghamton and Syracuse to speak. Same Sex Parenting: The Issues Explained was a look at what LGBT parenting is all about from a parent and therapist's point of view. It was intended to give service providers a heads up about our families and how important it is to know we are out there in the world living everyday. I learned a great deal and was inspired by Ari's honest and candid stories about being a mom of two African-American boys.

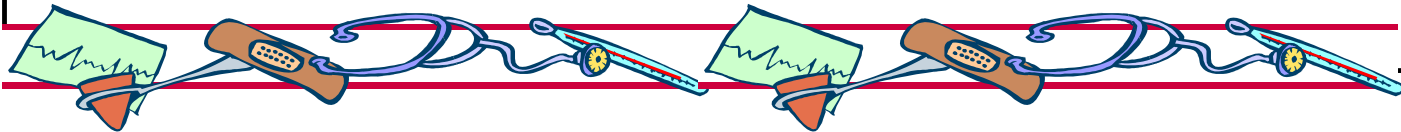
Our Back to School Issues discussions took us around the state to hear from many parents and teachers about what the school climate is like for our kids today and how we can talk to schools about being more inclusive of our families. I listened to parents who have kids older than mine and took notes and plan to use much of the information now and in the school years in the future.

The Pride and Joy events offer me the same kind of reassurance that I got from that woman years ago. It makes me feel that I am not alone on this crazy trip. I know that others are with me, succeeding, failing, doing too much, doing too little, and learning all the time. I hope you will get a chance to come to an event soon, it's fun, and you can't help learning a few things too.



*(My 5 year old son Ethan at a recent Pride and Joy Family Dance in Ithaca.)*

## Our Healthy Families....



### Read it Before You Eat it

Confusing food labels and misleading health claims on packaging are enough to turn the average trip to the supermarket into a head-scratching endeavor. In her book, ***Eating Between the Lines***, food writer Kimberly Lord Stewart separates the truth from the marketing ploys and gives grocery shoppers the information they need to make the healthiest choices aisle by aisle. Some highlights are:

#### In the produce aisle:

As a rule, organic (look for the USDA Organic label) fruits and vegetables are best, but some commercially grown ones, including kiwi, bananas, broccoli, peas, corn, onions and avocados, are fine because they absorb less pesticide residue than other produce.

#### In the cereal/cracker aisle:

The healthiest choices have at least 5 grams of fiber, no more than 5 grams of sugar, and at least 3 grams of protein. Seek out products with whole grains such as barley, buckwheat, oats, rice and bulgur, and avoid those with trans fats and high fructose corn syrup.

#### At the fish counter:

Check for the “seafood safe” label; these fish have been tested for mercury and PCB levels.

#### In the dairy case:

Look for milk without antibiotics or growth hormone (rGBH). This applies to both organic and non-organic milk.

With just a little more careful reading and paying closer attention to what food labels actually say, you can make sure you are giving the healthiest choices to your family.

**Good Read**



If your child has food allergies, ***Let's Eat Out! Your Passport to Living Gluten and Allergy Free*** by Kim Koeller and Robert La France can be a lifesaver. The authors guide those who are sensitive to the ten most common food allergens (corn, dairy, eggs, fish, gluten, peanuts, shellfish, soy, tree nuts and wheat) through more than 175 actual restaurant menu items representing a range of world cuisines, from French and Italian to Indian and Thai. Tips, ingredient lists, questions to ask about preparation, plus ideas for at home meals, snacks, breakfasts, and more, round out this comprehensive book. And there are pictures too. Bon Appetit!

## EMPIRE STATE PRIDE AGENDA



### The New York State Legislative Scorecard

See where New York State Senators and Assembly members stand on Marriage Equality, GENDA and The Dignity for All Students Act.

[www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org)



The Family Equality Council (formerly Family Pride Coalition) is the national advocacy organization committed to securing family equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer parents, guardians and allies. Their work consists of strategically linked initiatives—broad in scope, but simple in vision—love, justice, family, equality.

## Host a House Party for Family Equality!

**When you host a house party for FEC, you'll:**

- educate people in your community about family equality,
- encourage community members to stand up in fight for equality by joining our organization,
- help us raise the funds we need to secure equality and
- network with LGBTQ parents, allies and friends in your community.

**find out more at: [www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)**

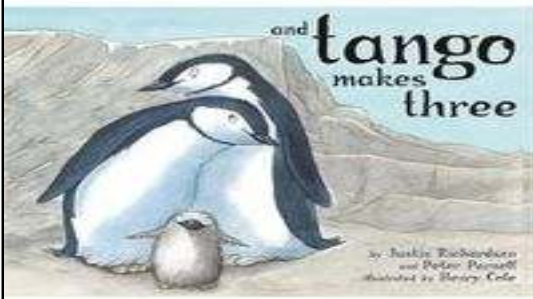
### Vince's View

*"A game played at a baby shower I recently attended required each guest to change a baby doll's diaper while watching football on television. I slipped out of the living room..."*

**Read More at [www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org](http://www.PrideAndJoyFamilies.org)**



Vince Sgambati's writing will appear in two forthcoming anthologies to be published by Haworth Press – ***Donors and Dads: True Stories of Gay Men and Fatherhood*** and ***Queer and Catholic***. He lives with his partner of 31 years, Jack; their 11-year-old daughter, Mona; and several furry friends.



*Need a New Bedtime Story?*

## ***And Tango Makes Three***

*And Tango Makes Three* is a 2005 children's book written by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson and illustrated by Henry Cole. The book is based on the true story of Roy and Silo, two male Chinstrap Penguins in New York's Central Park Zoo who for a time formed a couple.

The pair were observed trying to hatch a rock that resembled an egg. When zookeepers realized that Roy and Silo were both male, it occurred to them to give them the second egg of a mixed-sex penguin couple. Roy and Silo hatched and raised the healthy young chick, a female named "Tango", together as a family.



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## ***"Hairspray"***

***Pride and Joy Families Movie***

***Sunday February 3, 2008***

***Sean and Loren's Home***

***in Binghamton***







# *The Pride and Joy Buzz*

## **Back to School in Syracuse and Binghamton**

Our **Back to School Issues Workshops** brought together LGBT parents, plus a few other interested community members, on two Sunday afternoons in September to discuss the unique needs of LGBT-led families in schools. Forty-four (44) people, including 23 adults and 21 children representing 19 families, attended in Syracuse and 31 people (21 adults, 10 children from 12 families) came to the event in Binghamton. The adults listened to and talked with a panel of Pride and Joy parents (and one grandmother) who offered useful suggestions on how to make schools more inclusive of LGBT-led families. The message to parents was to be as “out” as is safe for you and to be proactive by talking with your child’s teacher and principal to introduce your family. All attendees were given concrete suggestions and tools to help make their schools safe and welcoming, including a resource list and articles. While the adults engaged in discussion, the children enjoyed supervised activities in a separate room. Everyone came together for a light communal dinner at the end of the 1 ½ hour session. Thanks to everyone who made the BTS events so successful, particularly our panel members in both cities, and also to Kathleen in Syracuse for reserving the church and taking such good care of all the kids who came.

## **Fall Family Dance in Ithaca**

Forty-seven (47) people, including 21 adults and 26 children, attended the **Fall Family Dance** at the Common Ground in Ithaca on Sunday afternoon, October 14<sup>th</sup>. Of the 12 families that attended, 7 were new to the Pride and Joy network (and we hope to see more of them at future events). Thanks are due to Doug Miller, owner of the bar, who once again graciously opened up his space to us with kid-friendly food and a great DJ, all for \$5 per family!

## **Lunch and Learn Workshops in Syracuse, Binghamton and Rochester**

**Same-Sex Parenting: the Issues Explained**, a Lunch and Learn training seminar sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project, is aimed primarily at professionals who work with LGBT-headed families. However, a good number of Pride and Joy Families network members also attended in all three cities. The series speaker is Ari Istar Lev, LCSW, CASAC, a lesbian mom, social worker, family therapist, and educator specializing in working with LGBT families in Albany. A total of 69 people attended the 2 hour session, including community members and service professionals, from the following locations: Syracuse (18 attendees), Binghamton (38), and Rochester (13). Professionals included therapists, guidance counselors, educators, social work students and others. The sessions received excellent reviews for Ari’s engaging and accessible style, and also the often humorous anecdotes she shared from her personal and professional lives. Loren Couch, gay dad from Binghamton and a new consultant to the Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project, also did a great job of producing the events, from managing the AV aspects to working with catering staff to make sure everyone got a delicious, hot lunch. Thanks to Ari and Loren! Next stop: Albany on January 11, 2008.

## **Thanksgiving Feasts in Syracuse and Binghamton**

Thanks to Ann and Mary in Syracuse and Dorian and Marian in Binghamton for hosting Pride and Joy Families Thanksgiving Feasts in their communities. Each of these families opened their home and provided the main event (the turkey, of course), while the rest of us brought the trimmings. Karen provided great family entertainment at the Binghamton event with her Thanksgiving Trivia Game. It was the kids against the grown ups and, needless to say, the kids won. In Syracuse, 25 people attended (9 families), including 13 adults and 12 children. In Binghamton, we had 32 total (9 families), with 16 adults and 16 kids.

## **Also in Syracuse**

Thanks to Claudia K. for holding a meeting on the Syracuse University campus in October to discuss starting a **COLAGE** (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere) group! Please let us know if you’d like more information.

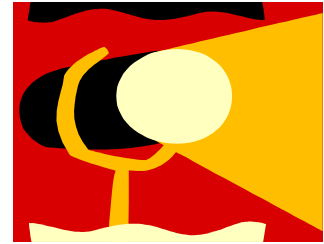
## **Also in Binghamton**

We had a recent success in our ongoing effort to provide special programming for the children in our Pride and Joy Families: 6 children, ages 7-11, representing 4 families, attended the American Red Cross’ **Home Alone Safely Course** on Sunday afternoon, October 28<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Karen for meeting ahead of time with the course instructors and talking with them about LGBT-led families and for doing a great job on production.

Recorder: Claudia Stallman, Director, Lesbian and Gay Family Building Project

# **Our Spotlight Family.....**

## **The Kerr Family of Ithaca**



**P&J: Who is in your family?**

The Kerrs: Julie, Erin, Montana (2 1/2), dog-Phoebe, 2 cats-Simon and Hunter

**P&J: Describe some of your family's favorite activities.**

The Kerrs: We love going to the local elementary school's playground or walking the dog together. We make a point to eat dinner at the table together most evenings, though dinners usually turn into dance parties. Trips to Barnes and Noble to play with the train and read books. We read about 10-20 books a day!

**"Watching children dance makes your soul take flight."**

**-The Kerr Family**

**P&J: Where did you go on your last family vacation?**

The Kerrs: In May 2007, our family went to California for a 2-week trip to celebrate Julie's grandmother's 102nd birthday which is a family reunion every year. We visited San Diego, Santa Maria and Pismo Beach. We also took a mini vacation in October to Vermont for foliage and visited Stowe, Montpelier, Burlington and Brandon.

**P&J: Who in your family is most likely to sleep late?**

The Kerrs: Erin - A.K.A. "She who has a special relationship with the snooze button"

**P&J: What was your family's favorite Pride and Joy event?**

The Kerrs: The dances at Common Ground in Ithaca are the most fun - watching children dance makes your soul take flight.

**P&J: Is there anything else you would like us to know about your family?**

The Kerrs: Not that we can think of. :)

**Do you want to go sledding or ice skating this winter with other Pride and Joy Families?**

**Watch for Dates and Times on the listserv...**



## Talking Politics to the Kiddos

by Barbara Barry, LMSW

So a little while back, a well known female US senator running for president came to Binghamton University. My mother picked up my 10 year old daughter and took her to see the potential presidential candidate. Now, the event was fairly closed off but my mother used her wiles to break through the secret service and score some seats. Needless to say I was aghast at the outcome. Not that my mother broke several federal laws and could have been deported to Guantanamo Bay. I've gotten used to that. I was upset because my daughter's response to the whole thing was to claim that it was boring. I was thinking about punishing her but decided that perhaps I should try to understand how her two parents had failed to make her into a political animal.

I would like for my children to have passion for certain things. It's OK with me if they do not care about sports or computers or reality TV. It is important to me that they care about history, politics, the Constitution, reading, and being aware of the world around them (the whooooo world). With that, I would like to offer some advice on how we can talk to our kids about politics without browbeating or boring them. After all, we come from unique families and I disagree wholeheartedly with those who would propose they are not interested in politics because it does not affect them personally. Of course it does. The personal is the political and further, I am one of these touchy, feely people who believe that what happens in Detroit, or Baghdad, or Darfur has everything to do with all of us. I would also like to make clear that for many of us the issue of politics can be a little uncomfortable and sketchy for us. Many of us come from privilege and status whether we recognize it or not. We have the resources to be able to deny the economic disparities around us and can use these resources to protect us from discrimination. At the same time, we are certainly discriminated against and denied rights as LGBTQ people. An interesting quandary, but certainly one that can be good discussion when talking to our kids about how the political is personal. So here are some pointers on talking to your kids about politics and trying to make them interested:

1. **Always keep things simple and age appropriate.** It is true when talking to them about the birds and the bees, drugs and alcohol, and politics. You don't need to discuss the politicizing of medical issues like abortion and stem cell research with your five year old. At the same time, I think it is very appropriate to talk to your 8 year old about the fact that you and your partner cannot get married if you wanted to and that there are people in the world that think it is very wrong that you would get married
2. **Be honest and upfront.** Don't sugarcoat things and never be condescending. My partner sometimes admonishes my long diatribes about states' rights, the Civil War, the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment and what this all has to do with equal protection under the law. Do my children understand what I am talking about—probably not—do they sense that what I am saying is important and I have passion for it—I think so. No matter how young your kids are you should refer to things as they are. When you see a mountain gorilla call it that, don't refer to it as a monkey-wonkey.
3. **Make sure your kids have a sense of what you think, and do, and know.** Tell your kids what you are reading. Tell them what you do for a living and why. I work in child welfare and my children know a great many things that most adults are unaware of. Talk about events at the dinner table. One of our understood family rules is that voting is not optional—for any of us. I take all my children to the polling places and into the booth as we pull the lever. I don't know whether the vote actually ever gets counted but at least my children know I am trying.
4. **Never, ever, ever involve yourself in a negative, confrontative argument with another person over politics.** Nothing will turn your children off to politics more than this and furthermore it is uncivilized and uncouth. Don't get me wrong. If Uncle Ed refers to another racial, ethnic, or sexual identity group of people with a derogatory term please correct him and walk away. But this has little if anything to do with politics. Getting into a shouting match with your brother in law about whether a single payer health care system is socialized medicine is a waste of time and simply upsetting for everyone.
5. **Make politics connect to the real world.** When you are recycling and taking out the garbage talk to your kids about the landfills, and global warming, and sustainable living. When I am filling out my taxes, I explain to my kids what a privilege it is to be able to pay taxes and that we as citizens are responsible for where that money gets spent. When my daughter does the cancer walk, we talk about stem cell research and insurance companies and cigarette companies.
6. Finally, don't shy away from sensitive topics. During the 9/11 period I found myself watching some shows about those events. It was interesting that my 2 year old sat down with me to watch a show about the actual collapse of the two twin towers. For him this was not yet a tragedy nor was it an actual memory that he would ever have.

I believe that we owe our children an understanding and appreciation of the political world. Only by raising a generation of citizens that see themselves as levers rather than cogs can the world become a better place.