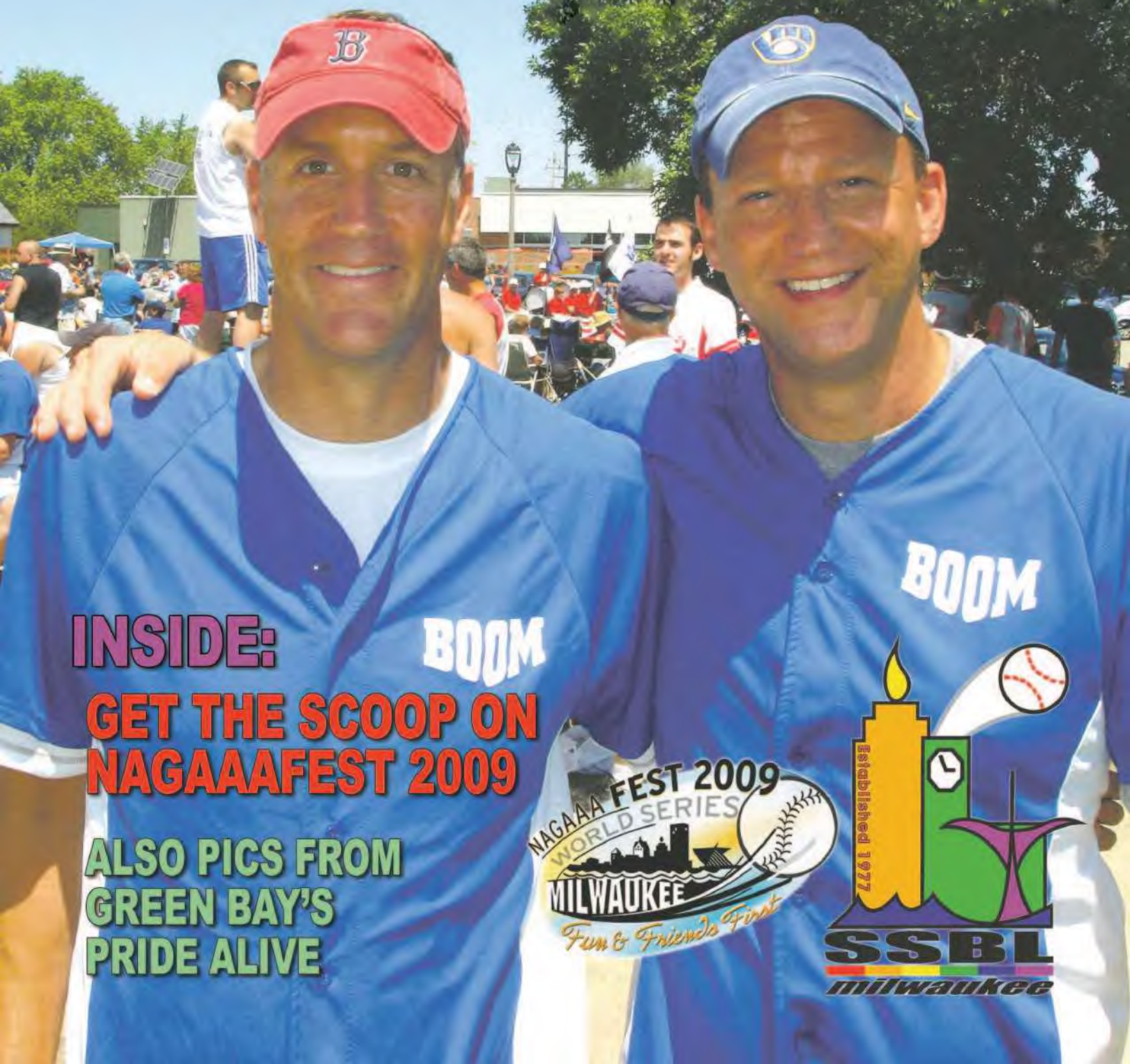


QUEST

Volume 16 Issue 11

July 16 - 29, 2009



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WISCONSIN DOMESTIC PARTNER REGISTRY SET TO OPEN AUGUST 3

Expected "Family" Group Challenge May Delay Start

By Mike Fitzpatrick

Madison - Starting Monday, August 3, committed same-sex couples in Wisconsin will be able to sign a declaration of domestic partnership at county clerk offices and gain the limited security of 43 legal protections. The registry and legal protections became a reality with the signing of the state's biennial budget June 30 by Governor Jim Doyle here. However the start date may be delayed by a court challenge from the group that successfully advocated for the state constitutional amendment banning same-sex civil unions and marriage.

From what is known thus far about the domestic partner registry process, same sex couples will start at their County Clerk's office and apply for the domestic partnership registry. Applicants will need to present an ID, a certified copy of their birth certificate, proof of address, and a fee.

The fee is expected to be similar as that for marriage licenses in Wisconsin. Termination of domestic partnership applications are also expected to cost the same as partnership registrations.

Shortly after Governor Doyle signed the budget, staff at the LaCrosse County Clerk's office advised representatives of the LGBT Resource Center of the Seven Rivers Region that the county's fee will be \$70. However Fond Du Lac County County Clerk Lisa Freiberg told the Wisconsin Radio Network that she will seek a \$90 fee. State Department of Vital Statistics are expected to set informational meetings to go over the specifics of registry process with county clerks offices by the end of July.

The two individuals must be at least 18 years old, and members of the same sex. They must also share a common residence, not be nearer of kin than second cousins, and not be married or in another domestic partnership.

If either party has been married before they will need a copy of their divorce decree. If either party has been in a prior domestic partnership before they will need proof of termination of the partnership when applying.

Following the application process there will be a statutory five day waiting period, that in some cases, may be waived for an additional fee. After the waiting period the couple will need to take their document and file it with the Register of Deeds. There is

no cost to file a domestic partnership registry. However, to obtain a certified copy there will be a standard fee for the first copy and a lesser fee for each additional copy. Couples typically will need to provide certified copies of the registered domestic partnership to obtain benefits from third parties such as hospitals, employers and so on.

Once registries are established in each county statewide, domestic partnership in Wisconsin will be a legal status that provides same sex couples who register as domestic partners with limited legal protections. A significant number of the protections involve inheritance and survivor protections. A surviving domestic partner can inherit from the estate of domestic partner who dies without leaving a will.

Probate courts will be able to award a surviving partner the couple's home and vehicles that are titled in the name of the deceased partner, and personal and household items of the deceased partner. Transfers of a deceased partner's assets can also pass to the surviving partner without probate if the total value is less than \$50,000.

Surviving partners can receive death benefits if the deceased partner was killed in a work place accident, with special benefits if the partner was a police officer or firefighter. Survivors also can get victim compensation if the deceased partner was injured or assist a law enforcement officer.

Surviving partners can sue for a partner's wrongful death. Also surviving partner can consent to organ donation or autopsy for their deceased partner.

Domestic partnerships can also cover employees in registered partnerships who are covered by the state Family Medical Leave Act. They may take up to two weeks off per year to care for a domestic partner with a serious medical condition.

Registered domestic partners will also obtain privileges in medical settings. Partners will be able to visit their sick partner, admit an incapacitated partner to a health care facility, share a nursing home room, and access each other's mental health records if one or the other is institutionalized. The benefits apply to a broad range of medical facilities, including hospitals, hospice facilities, group homes, and skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities.

Among other protections: A partner in a registered

relationship can prevent his or her partner or former partner from testifying against the person as to private communications that may have occurred during the partnership. Also, transfers of real estate between domestic partners are exempt from the real estate transfer fee. Transfers of car and boat titles are also fee exempt for registered partners.

While encouraged that the state's new domestic partnerships are a beginning step to simplifying the recognition process for same-gender couples, advocates for gay marriage equality were quick to point out that that privileges provided by Wisconsin's registered domestic partnerships will not take the place of stronger legal documents such as separately executed financial and health care powers of attorney, disposition on death authorizations, signed HIPAA-compliant releases of authorization, and other similar documents.

Fair Wisconsin has also issued a request for any couple who encounters difficulty in registering for a domestic partnership to contact their Madison office by phone (at 608-441-0143). Fair Wisconsin staff will be able to assist with additional legal resources, though they cannot give specific legal advice. The statewide LGBT civil rights organization also encouraged DP registrants to plan to "look your best" and expect to be contacted by reporters if they elect to register the first day the registries become available.

Despite the fact that it was included in a larger bill, the domestic partner protections and registry marked the first time that lawmakers in any state with a constitutional gay marriage and civil union ban has passed benefits for same sex partners in a committed relationship. Budget Committee Co-Chair and openly gay Madison Assembly Representative hailed the budget's DP measure as "a historic development that will make a difference in the lives of thousands of gay and lesbian families across the state."

"No longer will committed, long-time partners be treated like legal strangers to each other," Pocan said in a prepared statement.

Fair Wisconsin's Katie Belanger also viewed the bill as historic. "This makes Wisconsin the first state in the Midwest to legislatively enact protections for same-sex couples - putting the state whose motto is "Forward" back on a progressive track towards full equality," she said.

Julaine Appling of Wisconsin Family Action, the lobbying arm of the Wisconsin Family Council, berated the Governor and the legislature for "ignoring the will of the people" in passing the budget with

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the DP benefits package included. "This social experiment will cost taxpayers millions and is an end-run around a constitutional definition of marriage passed by nearly 60% of the voters in 2006," Appling - who herself potentially may be eligible to register for a domestic partnership - wrote in a press release.

The Wisconsin Family Council earlier had announced the organization had joined with the James Dobson-founded Alliance Defense Fund to challenge the domestic partner provisions in the budget if passed. No formal action has been since the budget became law but is expected shortly. No court action to enjoin the registry had occurred at *Quest's* deadline.

Interestingly, the May 2009 Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) memorandum on the domestic partnership registry countered Appling's claims that the registry would produce a type of "look alike" marriage. The LFB cited a memorandum from one of Appling's chief collaborators in the amendment's creation, former Assembly Speaker John Gard (R-Peshtigo).

According to Gard's 2006 memo on Assembly Joint Resolution 66, the bill that created the Constitutional civil union and marriage ban, the amendment "does not prohibit state, local governments of other private entities from setting up their own legal con-

struct to provide particular privileges or benefits, such as health insurance benefits, pension benefits, joint tax return filing, hospital visitation, etc. as those bodies are able and deem appropriate."

"As long as the legal construct of the state does not rise to the level of creating a legal status 'identical or substantially' to marriage (i.e. marriage, but by a different name), not particular privileges or benefits would be prohibited," the memo continued.

Legal experts note that when courts review challenges to new laws to determine if they violate "the spirit of the law," they utilize "legislative intent" memos created in the process of legislating the already-passed laws. Court watchers expect that not only Gard's memos but also Appling's numerous public pronouncements that the 2006 amendment would not prohibit limited domestic partner protections will play heavily in the defense of the domestic partnership registry.

The same-sex partner protections and registry were among several non-policy items included in the budget bill. Other notable policy changes in the budget will require all licensed Wisconsin drivers to carry auto liability insurance, police will be able to pull drivers over for failure to wear their seat belts,

insurance companies must provide coverage for mental health and autism treatment, and state workers will have to take 16 days off without pay.

Several other contentious policy items - driver's ID cards for undocumented resident aliens and changes in liability law - failed to make the final version of the budget bill sent to the Governor's Mansion to be by Doyle. Another policy item originally proposed in Doyle's initial budget proposal, a statewide smoking ban in public places including taverns, was removed, revised and passed separately last May.

In all the Governor used his veto pen 81 times to trim the final bill. One of his changes utilized the now constitutionally-banned "Frankenstein veto." Doyle struck words from three sentences to create a new sentence altering the timing, committee make-up and scope of a state study on institutions caring for the mentally retarded. Doyle's budget director Dave Schmiedicke noted the change could have been created by a legally correct veto and pledged to work with the legislature to correct the error.

Quest will continue to update information on Wisconsin's domestic partner registry and any legal challenge to it both online on its QNU Breaking News page available at: www.quest-online.com

GREEN BAY MAYOR LAUDS PRIDE ALIVE FESTIVAL

Green Bay - Bright cloudless skies, temperatures in the low 80's and accolades from the city's mayor made for a picture setting for the second year of northeast Wisconsin's revitalized LGBT community celebration Pride Alive at Joannes Park here July 11.

"We're blessed to be in a community that embraces and accepts diversity," Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt told the crowd of about 200 early birds at the festival's Noon opening ceremony. "At the end of the day, we all want the same things." Schmitt was the only elected official who spoke at the brief kick-off, though Assembly Representative Jim Soletski (D-Green Bay) and several other local officials were present for the Mayor's comments. Former Brown County Executive Nancy Nusbaum was also on hand though she was serving as a volunteer at one of the festival's three Welcome stations.

The festivities kicked off earlier in the day with the first-ever Pride Alive Five 5K Run/Walk. Eighty runners and walkers stepped off at 9:30 AM on a route through that led them to the Cora Vanderperren Trail and eventually back to the festival site. Proceeds from the event benefited Golden House Domestic Violence programming, the GLBT Partnership of Harmony Cafe and the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters Institute.

Pride Alive organizers estimate the total attending this year's festival at 3,100. Counting the additional events held between July 8 - 12 that began with a stand-



ing room only crowd at the "Safeguarding Our Lives" legal issues workshop, the total attendance for the pride events surpassed 3750 people.

"At 2:30 Saturday afternoon our attendance was 50% above last year's so I knew we were going to have a great year this year," Pride Alive co-chair Andrea Schultz told *Quest*.

Attendance may have been boosted by heavy media coverage mid-week that tied the legal issues workshop to the recently enacted Wisconsin Domestic Partner registry. Coverage of the event and follow-ups were the lead stories on several evening news broadcasts locally June 8 and 9.

The domestic partner issue certainly attracted the first-ever anti-gay protesters in northeast Wisconsin pride history which dates back the Alive With Pride picnic in 1995. Wisconsin Marriage Defenders, an Oshkosh-based religious extremist group active since the 2006 amendment battle, imported a number of hand-made placard carrying members to pace peacefully along Baird Street adjacent to the park.

The group's blog claimed "around 20" protesters were present at the "sodomite family festival," though *Quest* counted less than half that number at any given point during the four and half-hours they picketed. The group also complained that

though they "heavily recruited from Green Bay area churches" they found only one or two takers and "now consider the Green Bay area Baptist churches to be queer-tolerant, after five fruitless years of trying to get them to lend a hand."

The group's anger might have also been elevated by Pride Alive co-chair Andrew



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DeBaker's encouragement to the crowd to "go and thank them for expressing their opinion - and while you're there introduce yourself to them, introduce your partner, your family and tell them about your everyday lives." The protesters also might have been miffed but the 50-60 volunteers from local gay-affirming churches, fellowships and other religious groups who staffed over a half-dozen of the more than fifty vendor booths at the festival.

As last year, a good portion of festival visitors were straight families with children who mixed seamlessly with LGBT folks of all ages, sizes and shapes. Children's activities were conducted by employee volunteers from area Starbucks.

Food vendors offered everything from chai tea, eggrolls, to kabobs, cheesecake on a stick and pizza to more traditional summer festival fare: hot dogs, brats, kettle corn and watermelon. The hot day saw the ice cream vendor sell out early and repeated runs for festival beverage tent workers for more bottled water.

Entertainment on the festival's two performance stages included WAMI-winning rocker Ronnie Nyles, Chicago's fiery party band Pulsation, children's singer-storyteller recording artist Tom Pease, former Timbuk3 guitarist Pat MacDonald, Minnesota's quirky Good Asian Drivers, improv comedians, hula hooping demonstrations and karaoke singers. All of the entertainment led to the "Texas BBQ-flavored" comic styling of Vickie Shaw, who had the crowd in stitches with her tales of zip-lining through the rain forest with her life partner Sergeant Patch on an Olivia Cruise celebrity excursion as well as her take on the Biblically-endorsed scheduling of gay pride events: "Don't you remember what it says right there...? 'Pride cometh before the Fall!'"

Lead sponsor for this year's Pride Alive was again Rainbow Over Wisconsin, the northeast LGBT community foundation that sponsored pride events from 1995-2003. Other major sponsors included Adagio Dance Studio, Arketype, Hotel Sierra, Kimberly-Clark, Oneida Bingo & Casino, Positive Voice, Quest and Starbucks.

At the closing brunch and awards program at the Hotel Sierra on July 12, clearly exhausted co-chairs DeBaker and Schultz announced the "work for Pride Alive 2010 will begin soon - like next month."

Editor's Note: Please enjoy more Pride Alive photos in color on other pages of this issue!

Below & Right: Andrew Debaker presents checks to area non-profit organizations partnered with this year's pride event at the awards brunch Sunday.

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GOVERNOR DOYLE TO RECEIVE OUTREACH COURAGE AWARD

Madison - Governor Jim Doyle will be the recipient of the 2009 Courage Award at the OutReach Annual Banquet to be held at the Monona Terrace Convention Center Friday, July 17.

The Courage award is given annually for a unique or profound accomplishment advancing equality for LGBT people. Governor Doyle is receiving the honor for his successful effort to include a statewide domestic partnership registry and selected benefits in the recently passed state budget. His leadership makes Wisconsin the first state in the Upper Midwest to grant such benefits.

Additional annual awards are given for the man, woman, ally, organization and volunteer of the year. OutReach's Woman of the Year for 2009 goes to Jane Boyd, a long time lesbian activist, for her pioneering work in starting and maintaining Lizards, a social network for lesbian-identified women over 30. The group has been in existence for decades, and focuses on potluck dinners to build a sense of community, particularly for rural women.

The 2009 Man of the Year is Gary Hollander, the Executive Director of Diverse & Resilient, a Milwaukee-based LGBT capacity building organization. Through his leadership and passionate work of over 25 years, Mr. Hollander has made a significant and on-going contribution to underserved groups, LGBT community centers, state-wide public health, and individual well-being.

The Saturday Soft Ball League (SSBL) is the 2009 Organization of the Year. This award goes to a business, non-profit, or community group that makes a notable effort toward the advancement of LGBT equality and quality of life. SSBL, Madison's first LGBT-inclusive sports organization, has a history of not only promoting social interaction through its baseball events, but also of building community through co-operative support of other LGBT sporting leagues and raising money for deserving groups in the greater Madison area.

Jeanne Marshall will receive the 2009 OutReach Ally of the Year. This award goes to a person that does not identify as LGBT, and has shown substantial private and public support for LGBT people and causes, during the past year or over the course of their life. Ms. Marshall has a long and proud resume on behalf of the LGBT community, including an extensive role in the AIDS Network ACT Ride, Proud Theater, OutReach, First Congregational United Church of Christ, and AIDS Memorial Quilt Project.

Roger Hansen has been selected as the OutReach Volunteer of the Year for 2009. This is an award for extraordinary service and commitment to OutReach in a volunteer capacity over a period of time. Mr. Hansen's long and intensive involvement in our Speaker's Bureau and coming out support group facilitation demonstrates the impact that one volunteer can have on many lives.

Two special recognition awards will also be presented. Donna Wess and Linda Lenzke will be honored for their determined work in building the most successful women's' group in OutReach history, Women4Women. A Special Recognition Award will also be presented to William Wartmann for his outstanding philanthropic activity, especially to LGBT community groups. In addition to his long time and generous support of many local LGBT organizations such as GSA for Safe Schools, OutReach, Frontiers,

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and New Harvest Foundation, Mr. Wartmann has also been a substantial benefactor of arts, health, religious and ethnic organizations in our area.

Special Recognition awards are given selectively by the OutReach Board of Directors for contributions by individuals, groups, and entities that contribute significantly to the quality of life of the LGBT communities.

OutReach Awards Banquet is the Madison-based community center's primary annual fundraising event. It showcases the services of OutReach and honors the contributions of individuals, community members, and organizations that support the organization's mission "to promote equality and quality of life issues for LGBT people".

For more information on or to order tickets for the 2009 OutReach Awards Banquet Dinner, please call Harry or Steve at 608-255-8582 or email at harrys@lgbtoutreach.org.

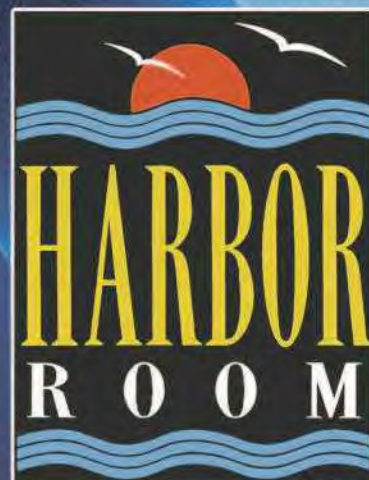
CHIPPEWA VALLEY PRIDE SET FOR AUGUST 15

Eau Claire - Chippewa Valley Pride will be Saturday, August 15 here at Riverview Island Pavilion off of Riverview Drive on city's north side. The day-long picnic will run from 11:00 AM. to 5:00 PM. The event will feature a cook-out, vendor booths, volleyball, boating, and swimming.

"I realize CV Pride is now the same weekend as Madison," LGBT Center board member Chis Iannone told *Quest*. "Chippewa Valley has traditionally been the third weekend in August. We always figured not competing with the La Crosse was the first and foremost important thing."

Chippewa Valley Pride weekend will also see the Second Annual Ice Cream Social and Boat Ride fundraiser to benefit the LGBT Community Center of

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the Chippewa Valley. Shifts will once again be created to offer attendees camaraderie, an ice cream social, and a boat ride on the Chippewa River. Last year's event raised \$450 for the Community Center.

After being down for several months, the LGBT Community Center of the Chippewa Valley's website (www.thecentercv.org) has returned to the web and was recently updated to include pride information.

AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER ANNIE B. SHOWCASES MILWAUKEE ARTS

"The rest of the country is always wondering, 'Where is the next big "scene"?' Milwaukee always makes the lists, somewhere behind Seattle, Atlanta, or Austin. We don't really care because we know Milwaukee has truly great talent. People leave for the coasts and the majority return because Milltown is real, significant, influential, supportive, and we know how to party! Artbeat will solidify this, and bring well-deserved exposure to this great artistic cauldron. We are used to working without national attention because no one thinks you can be a fabulous artist AND live in Milwaukee. Artbeat is setting the record straight, we are grateful that Annie's willing to have our backs, putting us out there. We're great artists because we live in Milwaukee. It is cold though, I'll give ya that!" -Alisa Strautmanis, Artbeat Artist

Milwaukee - Milwaukee Artbeat is a non-profit organization befitting youth arts programs in Milwaukee. The showcase series was designed as a unique community event to build awareness for the cause of Artbeat - bringing arts to the area's youth, inspiring them to find the artist in themselves. Artbeat hopes to bring to light the role of arts in personal growth, self-expression, catharsis, general well-being and cultural influence, and to share with our community the rich arts community we are blessed with



Milwaukee Artbeat:
Kai De Vicious, Alisa, Darlin Nikki, and Scott Berendt

here in Milwaukee.

Hosted by local singer-songwriter & award-winning television producer Annie B. and local free-style rapper Nick Ramsey, the series highlights five different artists of all types, from thespians to film makers, sculptors to songwriters, all tied together by a unifying theme. The featured artists share their work, and Annie & Nick speak to them about their inspirations, their ideas, and their journeys as artists. Annie told *Quest* that the event as "more an exploration than an arts showcase; it's an exploration of art and artist."

Milwaukee native Annie B. left the area in 1992 for a degree in psychology, but found her heart was in a different place. She worked with her first band in the mid 90s to find her sound as an artist, while also working with Sierra Nevada Cable Access Television to gain experience as a television producer. She won a W.A.V.E. Western Access Video Excellence Award in the late 90s for a piece educating young people about dating & domestic violence, but music remained her #1 passion.

Annie came up with the idea of ArtBeat after living on the road and "discovering the many great indie artists out there." The idea was to create an interview show featuring these musical artists; their music, and their stories. That project proved too big

for her, as she continued to juggle her life on the road with gigs and other promotional efforts.

"Milwaukee Artbeat is a great way for us to discover many great artists we are blessed with here locally, and that's important; for us to recognize that you don't have to be in the biggest galleries, or spun on the radio 6 times a day to be producing amazing work," she said.

Nick Ramsey provides a "yin" to Annie's "yang." Annie is excited to be working with him: "You may hear him bust a flow at anytime during the show - his quick-witted spunk adds a fun dynamic to what we're doing," she said.

The next Milwaukee Artbeat Show is on Friday, July 31 at the Hide House, 2625 S. Greeley St. Doors open at 6:30 PM and the show starts at 8. An \$8 donation includes a glass of wine and appetizers provided by Café Centraal in Bay View. July's show features the following artists: burlesque dancer, special effects & make-up artist Kai De Vicious; award-winning singer-songwriter-drummer Scott Berendt; spoken word & visual artist, poet and photographer Darlin Nikki; and actress, martial arts & photographer Alisa Strautmanis. Info on additional featured artist & gallery artists can be found by visiting the group's website at: www.MilwaukeeArtbeat.org.

"BIG NIGHT OUT" AUCTION SEEKS TO RAISE \$25,000

Milwaukee - The Milwaukee LGBT Center's annual "Big Night Out" fundraiser will get an early kick-start this year with the online auction returning for a second year in August. Online bidding will begin at 109 AM CDT on Saturday, August 22.

The goal this year is to raise \$25,000 to support the diverse programs and services that the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center provides to the community. Among the programs benefitting from the auction are: Project Q, the Anti-Violence Project, the center's HIV prevention & testing, breast health for LBT women, the Spiritual Wellness series, financial security programming, environmental awareness workshops, the David Bohnett CyberCenter, the center's LGBT community library and the community breakfast program.

Auction organizers will regularly add items to the catalog for center supporters to preview as the auction date approaches. Weblinks for the auction will be announced shortly.

Donations of auction items are now being solicited. Contact Patrick Price, Director of Philanthropy at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center by phone at 414-292-3065 or by email at pprice@mkelgbt.org to receive an auction donation form. The last day the center can accept donations is Friday, August 14.

The online auction is part of the center's annual Big Night Out gala, to be held this year on Saturday, September 12. The event will take place at the Woodland Dreams Ballroom of Potawatomi Bingo Casino and will start at 5:30 P.M.

RSVP SETS OPEN AUDITIONS FOR JULY 18

Milwaukee - RSVP Productions has announced open auditions for its upcoming two-show season at the Milwaukee Gay Arts Center, 703 S. Second St. on July 18 between 2 - 6 PM.

In total, RSVP Artistic Director Raymond Bradford is looking for "20-70" actors for the 2009-10 season, many of which are smaller, "bite-sized" roles. The auditions offer an opportunity for aspiring local actors looking for their first time on stage.

"It's kind of a rare occasion when I get to see an audition announcement at the same time as I'm finding out about the shows in question," Bradford said, noting both plays had their world premieres in New York just last year.

RSVP will stage what most likely will be the Milwaukee premiere of "The New Century" a comedy by Paul Rudnick, who also penned "I Hate Hamlet." Having debuted just last year, the show is a series of shorts that tie together at the end. Acting opportunities abound: the proud mother of three gay kids bragging about them at a LGBT parents' meeting, a flamboyant older gay man who has been driven out of New York by younger gays not wanting to have themselves associated with a walking cultural stereotype, and a cake decorator who has lost her son to AIDS. The show is scheduled to run in November at the MGAC.

Auditions will also be held for Henry Meyerson's "Fresh Brewed: Tales From The Coffee Bar." First produced in 2008, "Fresh Brewed" is a series of sketches all taking place at the same coffee house. There are eleven dialogues taking place here over the course of the show - a few of them actually having to do with caffeine. The show is a parade of brief comic dialogues that should be fun and relatively low impact on individual actors as they are all relatively brief. RSVP's "Fresh Brewed" is set to be staged in May 2010.

For more information about the July 18 auditions, call Raymond Bradford at 414-272-5694.

NAGAAAFest Preview

Gay Softball World Series comes to Milwaukee, Aug 29- Sept 7

By Paul Masterson

NAGAAAFest is in the offing. The 33rd gay softball world series takes place in Milwaukee from Saturday, August 29 to September 7. It will be a spectacular community event rallying a full spectrum of participants and players to make Milwaukee proud.

150 teams and over 3,500 players, fans, and friends will converge on Milwaukee from across the United States and Canada for the world's largest annual gay sporting event. In the spirit of the City of Festivals, the Milwaukee Saturday Softball League (SSBL) and the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance (NAGAAA) are proud to present NAGAAAFest 2009. In addition to a stellar softball tournament, NAGAAAFest will be a series of events, celebrations and parties for the entire community.

NAGAAA Village: For the week of games and parties, most of the visiting team members and fans will call **NAGAAA Village** home. NAGAAA Village consists of city's finest accommodations: the Double Tree Milwaukee City Center, Hilton Hotel Milwaukee City Center and Hyatt Regency. With their central downtown location, the hotels are within minutes of Milwaukee's gay nightlife in the Historic Walker's Point district. NAGAAAFest's guests will also have easy access to restaurants, bars, clubs and entertainment venues in East Town and the Third Ward. Milwaukee's museums, theaters and shopping are just minutes away. An official NAGAAA trolley will transport visitors in old Milwaukee style.

The Games: Play begins Monday, August 31 & continues through the Championship games on September 5.

Field complexes are located in Wirth Park, Brookfield; Wilson Park, Milwaukee; New International Sports Park, Sturtevant; and Roman "Doc" Gonring Athletic Complex in Quaa Creek Park, West Bend. Each complex offers players and fans all the amenities with food and beverage concessions.

The Party: Although NAGAAAFest's focal point is softball, after the games team members and fans deserve a party. The NAGAAAFest committee has put together an outstanding line up of events to honor, entertain and dazzle their guests.

Before the games begin, in a collaboration with Cream City Foundation and community sponsors, NAGAAAFest offers a relaxing day of golf and dinner. **Golf Fore Equality**, a fund raising event, takes place on Saturday, August 29 with registration at 11:30pm. Proceeds benefits Cream City Foundation's work to create a fair and respectful community for all. For information see <http://www.creamcityfoundation.org/golf.htm>

On Monday, August 31 at 5:30pm, the week's special events kick off with the **NAGAAAFest Opening Ceremony** at Henry Meier Festival Park's Miller Stage. The ceremony consists of the formal welcome of the 150 teams from all over the United States and Canada. Headliner entertainment include Thelma Houston, Niki Haris, Martha Wash, Larry Edwards as Tina Turner.

The Milwaukee LGBT community is invited to attend and greet the thousands of player as well as enjoy the entertainment. Over 5000 players, officials, fans and public are expected at this event. Admission will be free for players and a nominal charge for fans and the public.

Since the mid-1980's the gay softball world series has

hosted a fund raising talent show. Its original purpose was to support the grass roots effort to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Now other LGBT non-profit organizations are included as beneficiaries.

In true SSBL-Milwaukee fashion, the **NAGAAAFest Charity Talent Show** will be a particularly grand affair and will take place in the venerable Historic Pabst Theater thanks to sponsorship by BESTD Clinic. This event is also open to the public. Players will entertain the audience and there will be special surprises to make for an unforgettable experience.

The tournament brackets will be displayed at the conclusion of the Talent Show inside the Pabst Theatre.

On Thursday, September 3, NAGAAAFest visitors and locals alike are invited to partake in a **Taste of Milwaukee** on Milwaukee Avenue as guests of the East Town Association and SSBL. Restaurants will offer a full spectrum of culinary delights. SSBL will even be serving up roast corn on the cob!

In conjunction with Jazz in the Park, the lower east side's Thursday summer tradition, a **Taste of Milwaukee** will surely give NAGAAAFest guests another night to remember.

The **Hall of Fame Induction Dinner** also takes place on Thursday. The NAGAAA Hall of Fame was established in 1997 by a group of "Old Timers". Its mission is to provide a historical perspective and to perpetuate the history of gay softball and the Gay Softball World Series. Each year veteran softball players are elected to the Hall of Fame to honor their long years of service to NAGAAA and their community.

During NAGAAAFest a special **Hall of Fame Exhibition** will be on display in the Milwaukee Gay Arts Center and open to the players and public.


For those "lucky" enough not to have to play softball on Friday afternoon, September 4, SSBL officially invites those teams on a **Loser Cruise**, a scenic tour of the Milwaukee River, the harbor and Lake Michigan. They'll enjoy spectacular views of the Milwaukee Art Museum and the city skyline. A cash bar is available to drown the agony of defeat.

NAGAAAFest Street Bash takes place on Friday, September 4 in historic Walker's Point at National Avenue and 2nd Street. Beer tents, bars, dozens of food and merchandise vendors and two stages with live music will fill this famous intersection in the heart of Milwaukee's gay entertainment district. Attendance is expected to reach 4,000.

Following the championship games on Saturday, September 5, 2009, the **NAGAAAFest Closing Celebration** will be held at Harley-Davidson Museum. Featured performers Kristine W and Chad Michaels as "Cher" will provide the 3000+ anticipated attendees with a memorable conclusion to NAGAAAFest.

This is far from just an awards ceremony; it's a chance for players, fans, friends and the entire LGBT community to celebrate a successful tournament. SSBL won't let NAGAAAFest go out without a "bang", in more ways than one! Participants can tour the history of the American classic, Harley-Davidson, cheer on the winning teams, and be blown away by yet another great celebration.

Sponsors: The sponsors make NAGAAAFest possible. Corporations, businesses, organizations and individuals contribute through in-kind and significant cash donations. This year's national sponsors include Aquafina,



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Local sponsors are the Cream City Foundation's Joseph R. Pabst LGBT Infrastructure Fund, BestD Clinic, La Cage, Exciting Events, Spring City Trolley and the Wherehouse.

In addition, Woody's, Kruz and Boom, along with field sponsors M's, MO'NA's Out and About and Rock Bottom Restaurant Brewery as well as daily excursion sponsors Fluid, Triangle and Nut Hut round out the list of NAGAAAFest underwriters.

NAGAAAFest needs YOU!

Volunteer! An event of this size requires man- and womanpower to accomplish. There are lots of roles for individuals and organizations to play. Volunteers are needed for a myriad of roles from field support to hospitality. Go to the NAGAAAFest website www.series2009.org and click on the Volunteer page. There you'll find details of what, where and when your talents are needed.

"BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE" ON THE MENU JULY 18

Eau Claire - Saturday Night at the Movies returns to the LGBT Center of the Chippewa Valley on Saturday, July 18 with a showing of "Better Than Chocolate."

Two attractive young lesbians, Maggie and Kim, meet in Vancouver, develop a passionate romance then move in together. Meanwhile, Maggie's well-meaning but naive mother Lila gets divorced and decides to move to Vancouver and join the household.

Soon after, Lila is befriended by Judy, a transsexual about to undergo a sex-change operation. Complications ensue as the conservative Lila learns the truth about Maggie, Judy, and their diverse group of friends. Discussion will follow the movie for those interested.

Doors will open at 7:15 PM, with the movie starting at 7:30. Admission and popcorn are always free. Beverages and movie snacks are also available to purchase. For more information about the event, visit the LGBT Center's website at: www.thecentercv.org.

3RD ANNUAL LA CROSSE PRIDE RIDE JULY 18

La Crosse - The third annual La Crosse Pride Ride Bicycle Ride and Picnic will be held Saturday, July 18 from 10:30 AM - 3 PM at the La Crosse River State Trail Head. Registration for the ride will be from 10:30-11 AM and the cost is \$20 per ride with a trail pass and lunch included. Riders are asked to raise donations for the La Crosse Pride Picnic and the cost of ride will come out of the donations riders collect. Families are encouraged to bring the kids as children 12 and will ride for free.

The 7 mile ride will begin at 11 AM at the La Crosse River State Trail Head, just off Hwy. 16 on Cty. Road B (on the left). Following the conclusion of the ride there will be a Family Picnic at Veterans Memorial Park in West Salem. The cost for those wishing to attend the picnic only is \$3. A Raffle to benefit the Pride event will also be conducted with tickets available for \$1 each or six for \$5.

Ride organizers have also decided to separate the annual motorcycle ride, historically held concurrently with the bike ride. The motorcycle ride will be held on the morning of La Crosse pride on August 22.

Forms, directions and a map for the La Crosse Pride Ride are available at co-sponsor River Trail Cycles, 200 N. Holmen Drive in Holmen, at the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl St. in La Crosse or online at: lacrossepride.us - click on the events page for more details and a PDF of the ride package.

BEST IN THE MIDWEST?

MILWAUKEE'S CREAM CITY FOUNDATION

Milwaukee - The Cream City Foundation (CCF) has been awarded the "Best in the Midwest" for 2009 by GreatNonprofits.org's Pride Choice Awards. The contest, held during Gay Pride Month last June, asked people to submit reviews and ratings about nonprofits serving the LGBT community.

The contest was sponsored by two websites that focus on charitable giving - GreatNonprofits, GuideStar and and the East Coast-based gay news and commentary blog Queerty. The results provide surprising insights into the diversity of organizations that are considered effective and important by volunteers, donors and stakeholders of the gay and lesbian population.

Over the course of Pride Month, more than 32,000 people visited the GreatNonprofits website, and 736 reviews were posted about more than sixty LGBT organizations.

"Perhaps the best reward is hearing statements stating that CCF 'is leading the charge to help influence and change the society how the LGBT individual is looked upon and respected,'" CCF Executive Director Maria Cadenas said. "It is heart-warming and energizing seeing how our daily efforts for over 25 years make a huge impact in our community."

CCF has taken a strong leadership role in a philanthropic strategy that focuses directly on creating a strong and welcoming community for all - regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. As part of their efforts, they have funded a billboard campaign showcasing local LGBT families and their supporters, GayNeighbor.org and focused its grantmaking and leadership in helping to address homelessness issues among LGBT youth.

"Our approach comes from the belief that philanthropy has an immense influence on creating respectful communities through change - including the elimination of homophobia and gender identity discrimination," CCF Secretary Marion Araujo said. "To realize how this work is valued and regarded by community members is inspiring."

Founded in 1982, Cream City Foundation has funded over \$600,000 in an effort to strengthen the LGBT community. To learn more about Cream City Foundation and find out how to create your own legacy please visit www.creamcityfoundation.org.

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New on DVD by Glenn Bishop "Ready? OK!"



As a student of gay cinema for far more years than he has fingers and toes, Glenn shouldn't be (and isn't) surprised that coming-of-age films continue to take a place of prominence. Such extraordinary films as "Beautiful Thing,"

"Get Real," Gus Van Sant's "Mala Noche," "Lilies" as well as both "Mysterious Skin" and the controversial "Totally F*cked Up," by Gregg Araki, all come quickly to mind.

So, should Glenn start to be worried that the lads yearning to be out and proud seem to be getting younger and younger? Two recent releases, "Whole New Thing" and "Wild Tigers I Have Known," for example, both offered sexually precocious 13 year-old protagonists.

Let Glenn take a moment to ponder that last phrase: sexually precocious 13 year-old protagonists. Yikes.

Throwing caution to the wind, Glenn tossed "Ready? OK!" into DVD player.

In a proverbial nutshell, "Ready? OK!" is a blessedly chaste, dysfunctional family comedy about single mom Andrea (Carrie Preston) struggling, as best she can, to raise her engaging son Josh (Lurie Poston). To Andrea's dismay, Josh isn't your typical 10 year-old. Nope. Josh's burning desire is to join the cheerleading squad at the Catholic school he attends. One afternoon, in best

Lucy Ricardo fashion, Josh contrives to join a pep rally, proudly wearing a button of his favorite varsity wrestler; Josh likes Mike.

Duh! Thwarted again by the ever vigilant Sister Vivian (Tara Karsian, excellent).

Promo materials indicate that director/screenwriter James ("29th and Gay") Vasquez used his own failed attempt to participate in his Catholic School's pep rally whilst in second grade as inspiration.

Living as he does in Normal Heights, which is presumably just a hop, skip and a jump from Big Eden, Josh actually has a pretty easy go of it, especially for a little boy who, when given the assignment to dress as his favorite person in religious history, chooses Maria Von Trapp from "The Sound of Music." Explains Josh to his bewildered mother: "She tried to be a nun. I thought Sister Todd would have gotten a big kick out of my appreciation for the sisterhood."

Glenn imagines young actor Lurie Poston, following the release of "Ready? OK!," will be home-schooled until his friends and classmates have a chance to exorcize from their collective consciousness the image of Lurie donning the

Buy it, Rent it or forget it

Despite its cringe worthy DVD cover art, "Ready? OK!" offers a surprisingly warm and appealing story of a plucky little boy who, despite the strict gender conformity of his school and his stressed out, all too oblivious mom, remains determined to be true to himself. On occasion Josh might have to take it on the chin (or to the eye) but has on his side both his supportive, "artistic" neighbor Charlie (Michael Emerson) as well as his un-failing belief that "a positive attitude, determination and a whole lot of moxie are all key factors to success!" Go Josh! If director/screenwriter Vasquez is all too often prone to veering into "ABC Afternoon Special" territory – a disturbingly common trend in cinematic stories such as this – "Ready? OK!" nevertheless manages to offer a positive message about acceptance, perseverance and second chances.

Just the facts...

"Ready? OK!" runs approx. 93 minutes and is in English. Available on DVD with a SRP: \$24.95 DVD extras include Audio commentary with director/writer James Vasquez, blooper reel, trailer plus a behind-the-scenes featurette. All about the film @ www.readyokmovie.com Fans of the popular television show, "Lost" will recognize Michael Emerson here as Josh's gay neighbor, Charlie.

adorable little dirndl. Not that there really is any way of guessing how long that might take. Graduate school, perhaps?

As Josh continues on his quest to earn enough money for the Normal Heights All-City Winter Cheer Camp, mother Andrea's life is crumbling around her. First her happy little household is thrown topsy-turvy with the arrival of her ne'er do well twin brother Alex (John G. Preston), an entrepreneur of dubious distinction: he sells personal treasures (i.e. rummage) from the boot of his rundown auto. Then poor, frazzled Andrea is sent adrift when her prima donna boss fires her after a community beat segment goes horribly wrong. The final straw for Andrea is the realization that maybe, just perhaps, oh no, it couldn't be that her son is – gasp! – "artistic?"



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DIVERSION OF THE DAY Community Events Calendar

Friday, July 17

Triangle (Milwaukee) Summer Funker with DJ's Al Dubbz & Carla Starla 10-2am

Saturday, July 18

ICON (Kenosha) Miss ICON 2009 Fundraiser show

JACK (Milwaukee) Runway Project 11pm

Madison Gay Video Club "Fashion Victims (German w/subtitles)" (dir. Ingo Rasper, 2007) "Cockstalker" (Lucas Ent, dir. Mr. Pam, '09) 8 PM, www.mgvc.org, 608-244-8690

Midtowne Spa (Milwaukee) Pornopolooza buy or sell old or new DVD's 1-5pm

North Central Rainbow Club: Pot Luck lunch at 1pm. Bring a dish to pass! All are welcome to join in the fun--bi & gay. No one under 21 years old. Call for more info on events and how to get to Terry's house out of Dorchester, Wisconsin. (715) 654-5044

Triangle (Milwaukee) Position Impossible! Retro Games & Softball fundraiser

Sunday, July 19

Fluid (Milwaukee) Italian Bingo! 4pm Seats fgo fast so come early!

Thursday, July 23

The ROOM (Milw) 5th Year Anniversary Party! 8pm Drinks specials, Miller Beer, Food

Midtowne Spa in (Milwaukee) BESTD clinic doing FREE 30-minute HIV testing 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

RAVEN's (Appleton) Free, confidential HIV testing 8:00-10:00PM

Friday, July 24

Harbor Room (Milwaukee) 9th Anniversary Party and the Mr Harbor Room contest meet n greet 6-10 pm. Meet the judges and the contestants. Music by TY King.

Saturday, July 25

ICON (Kenosha) Midwest Heartbreakers, a Vegas Style all male revue.

Harbor Room (Milwaukee) 9th Anniversary! Mr Harbor Room Contest @ 11 pm Music by TY King

Sunday, July 26

Harbor Room (Milwaukee) 9th Anniversary Patio Cookout and beer bust. Celebrate with Mr Harbor Room 2010 Music by TY King

Wednesday, July 29

Triangle (Milwaukee) VIP Patio Party (see bartender fro more info & invite)

Thursday, July 30

The ROOM (Milw) Margarita Night 8-10 pm with Paul

Saturday, August 1

The Milwaukee LGBT Center LGBT Community Breakfast with a program on Gender Diversity. Learn how you can support the trans community. Breakfast at 9:30am

Tuesday, August 11

Midtowne Spa in (Milwaukee) BESTD clinic doing FREE 30-minute HIV testing 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Friday, August 14

Napalese (Green Bay) Argonauts Club Night 9pm

Friday, August 21- Sunday August 23

Argonaut & Castaway's Joint Run at the Farm in Hilbert

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(414) 276-8787
www.creamcitychorus.org

Cream City Squares
(414) 445-8080
djdilges@execpc.com
www.lagsdc.org/creamcity

Front Runners
(414) 332-1527

GAMMA - Milwaukee
PO BOX 1900 Milw, WI 53201
(414) 530-1886
gamma@milwaukeeegamma.com
www.milwaukeeegamma.com

Holiday Invitational Tournament
PO BOX 899 Milw, WI 53201 (414) 881-8071
director@hitmilwaukee.org
www.hitmilwaukee.org

Harmony Cafe
233 E. College Ave., Appleton 54915
920-734-223
www.harmonycfe.org
www.myspace.com/harmonycfe

Men's Voices Milwaukee C/o U.C.C.
2717 E. Hampshire St. Milw. 53211
(414) 861-5526
www.mvmchorus.org

Miltown Kings
www.myspace.com/miltownkings

Metro Milwaukee Tennis Club
3957 North 81st Street
Milw, WI 53222 (414) 616-3716
Moenell@MSN.COM
www.milwaukeeetennis.com

Milwaukee Gay Arts Center
703 S 2nd Street
Milw, WI 53204 (414) 383-3727
milwgac@yahoo.com

Milwaukee Pride Parade
P.O. Box 070177
Milw, WI 53207 414-607-3793
www.prideparademke.org

PrideFest
PO BOX 511763 Milwaukee, 53203
(414) 272-3378 www.pridefest.com

Saturday Softball League
2333 N 56th Street Milwaukee, 53210
(414) 350-7147
www.ssbilmilwaukee.com

Shoreline Country Dancers
2809 E. Oklahama Ave Milwaukee, 53207
info@shoreline-milw.org
www.shoreline-milw.org

Wisconsin Gay Hockey
(414) 202-5874
wigayhockey@wi.rr.com
home.wi.rr.com/wigayhockey

Women's Voices Milwaukee
315 W Court St Milwaukee, 53212
(414) 534-5645

LGBT Service and Advocacy Organizations

Center Advocates
315 W Court Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 271-2656
www.centeradvocates.org

Charles D Productions
315 W Court Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 263-9999
charlesdprodinc1@sbcbglobal.net
www.charlesdprodinc.com

Connexus
1240B East Brady Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Cream City Foundation
759 N. Milwaukee, Suite 212
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 225-0244
director@creamcityfoundation.org

Diverse And Resilient
1240B East Brady Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 390-0444
director@diverseandresilient.org
www.diverseandresilient.org

Fair Wisconsin
122 State St Suite 309
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 441-0143
www.fairwisconsin.org

FORGE
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Milwaukee, WI 53201
www.forge-forward.org
info@forge-forward.org
414-559-2123

G/L Community Trust Fund
PO BOX 1686 Milw, WI 53201
(414) 643-1652
glcentermil@aol.com
www.glcommunitytrustfund.com

Galan Club
315 W Court St Suite 201
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 276-6936
mail@galanoclub.org
www.galanoclub.org

Gay/Bi Fathers Support Group
c/o Outreach, 600 Williamson St,
Madison, WI 53703
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for location & dates email Jim at
doolguy@charter.net

Gay Youth Milwaukee
PO BOX 090441
Milwaukee, WI 53209
(414) 265-8500

Gemini Gender Group
PO BOX 44211
Milwaukee, WI 53214
(414) 297-9328

**Human Rights League-Political
Action Committee (HRL-PAC)**
PO BOX 510407
Milwaukee, WI 53203
(414) 319-9863
www.hrl-pac.org

Lesbian Alliance
315 W Court Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 272-9442
lamm@milwpc.com

LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin
1456 Junction Ave. Racine, WI 53403
ph: (262) 664.4100 fax: (262) 664.4101
info@lgbtsewisc.org

Log Cabin Republicans
PO BOX 199 Milw, WI 53201
(414) 755-1954
membership@lcrwi.com

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center
315 W Court Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 271-2656
www.mkelgbt.org

Pathfinders
1614 East Kane Place
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 271-1560
info@tccmilw.org
www.tccmilw.org

PFLAG Milwaukee
315 W Court Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 299-9198
pflagmilwaukee@hotmail.com

PFLAG Racine/Kenosha
PO BOX 580058
Pleasant Prairie, WI 53158
(262) 694-2729
pflagkenosha@aol.com

Positive Direction Milwaukee
(414) 461-5894

Positive Voice
PO Box 1381,
Green Bay, WI 54305-1381
(920) 435-4404
info@pvinc.org www.pvnc.org

Project Q
315 W Court St. Milw, WI 53212
(414) 223-3220
kurt@projectq.org
www.projectq.org

Queer Program
PO BOX 090441
Milwaukee, WI 53209
(414) 265-8500
queerprgrm@aol.com

Queer Zine Archive Project
2935 N. Fratney St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
qzap@qzap.org
www.qzap.org

Rainbow Over Wisconsin
702 East Wisconsin Avenue
Appleton, WI 54911
www.rainbowoverwisconsin.org

SAGE Milwaukee
1845 North Farwell Suite 220
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 224-0517
email@sagemilwaukee.org

Transgender Aging Network
6990 N Rockledge Ave
Glendale, WI 53209
(414) 540-6456
loreecd@aol.com

UWM LGBT Resource Center
UWM Union WG89 P.O. Box 41:
Milwaukee, WI 53201
(414) 229-4116
jrmurray@uwm.edu
www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/LGBT

**Wisconsin Rainbow Alliance
of the Deaf**
P.O. Box 353 Hartland, WI. 53021
www.wiscrad.org

LGBT Neighborhood Associations

Bay View GAYS
(414) 482-3796
bvgsresident@bvgsays.com
www.bvgsays.com

Washington Heights Rainbow Association
(414) 258-8834
washhtsrainbow@aol.com
www.washingtonheightsrainbow.org

Wauwatosa Rainbow Association
(aka Rainbow Fireflies)
(414) 774-9470
tosarainbow@yahoo.com

LGBT Social Groups

Argonauts of Wisconsin
PO Box 22096 Green Bay, WI 54305
www.argonautsll.org
argonews@sbcbglobal.net

Black and White Men Together
P.O. Box 80395 Milwaukee, WI 53208
(414) 461-5359
bwmtmilwaukee@aol.com
www.bwmtmilwaukee.org

Bear Club 4 Men
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www.bc4m.com

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(414) 331-3744
bc4men-alan@sbcbglobal.net
www.bc4men.info

The Brunch Club
jennieragland@wi.rr.com

Castaways
PO BOX 1697
Milwaukee, WI 53202

**Dodge County Gay/Bi Men's
Social Group of Wisconsin**
http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/DCGMSG/
dcmgs@yahoo.com

Femme Mafia Milwaukee
www.myspace.com/femmefamiamke

Great Lakes Harley Riders
PO BOX 341611
Milwaukee, WI 53234
bootedhog@aol.com

Men (MenEnjoyNudism)
P.O. Box 0631 Milwaukee, 53207

N.E.W. Brotherhood
PO Box 12793 Green Bay, WI 54307
www.NEWBrotherhood.org

Rainbow Families c/o PFLAG
315 W Court St. Milwaukee, 53212
mkerainbowfamilies@hotmail.com

LGBT Welcoming Churches

Angels of Hope MCC
3607 Libal St. Green Bay, WI
angelsofhopemcc.org
aohmcc@netnet.net
920-983-7453
Appleton service at
UCC Chapel 724 E South River Dr.

Church of Atheism
206 Vine St. Eau Claire, WI 54703
(706) 593-2686
church_of_atheism@yahoo.com
www.freewebs.com/churchofatheism

First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee
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www.uwmilwaukee.org

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www.arcw.org

Brady East STD (BESTD) Clinic
1240 East Brady Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 272-2144
bestd@execpc.com
www.bestd.org

**Children Service Society
of Wisconsin**
1212 S 70th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 453-1400
jane.ottow@cssw.org
www.cssw.org

**The Counseling Center
of Milwaukee**
2038 N. Bartlett Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 271-2565
info@tccmilw.org
www.tccmilw.org

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Madison, WI 53703
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(608) 255-0018 (fax)
www.lgbt Outreach.org

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11. Kati Perry - Waking up in Vegas
12. Kaci Battaglia - Crazy Possessive
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The Dating Diet by Anthony Paull **Lights, Camera, Dildo!**

Mind you, it's supposed to be a festive, yet relaxing dinner with friends. No one expected there to be a tragic break-up on the menu. Much like life, it just sort of happened. It's the typical story; someone might have cheated on someone else, there might have been pictures, and there might have even been a dildo involved. Still, we won't go into details because we're here to eat, and that's clearly a no, no when it pertains to demonstrating good table manners.

So if you'd care for a visual, imagine a busy, dimly-lit restaurant filled with patrons fancier than the pricy diamonds on Park Avenue. Of course, the entrees are divine, except no one is pressing calories to their lips, unless you count vodka, the other major food group. But who needs food? People make up the beef of this story. And tonight, there are fifteen in our party. Think gay mafia with their finest in female friends, seated at a stretched wooden table in a seafood setting, marked with Asian accents.

Me, I'm all about the chopsticks. And I'm wondering what it would feel like to have them needling my asshole, but I can't say a word of it, because everyone is glued to Jeffrey, and I don't want to bring up assholes tonight, because everyone thinks he is one. Why? Well, because he recently cheated on his partner, Thomas, who found a number of pictures of naked men on Jeffrey's computer.

Now, don't think ill of Jeffrey. He's a professional photographer, and these naked men were just clients, he informs us. The dildos up their asses – they were merely props!

Of course, no one dares to challenge him. That's because everyone is trying to be fabulous, and who wants to ruin a perfectly good martini with a messy topic like cheating? Besides, we're all close with Jeffrey and Thomas, and no one wants to take a side.

Well...except for Steve, who seems to love a good controversy.

You see, Steve's *that* friend who *loves* to stir the pot and watch the bunny rabbits boil. Yes, he's done it all twice, and he thinks that gives him permission to help friends during the 'break-up' process by planting advice in their ears. Sadly, his advice isn't always good though. Like tonight, his advice to Jeffrey is to fuck another guy.

Yes, *that would make everything better!* Dr. Phil, eat your heart out!

The trouble is Jeffrey is in such a cloud that he doesn't realize bad advice when he hears it. So he just grunts, wallowing at the table, feeling awful about his actions because he's still in love. Tying with his sashimi, he confesses that he's worried about Thomas.

"You don't need to worry. He's not your problem anymore. You broke up," Steve states.

"So what? That doesn't mean I don't care about him. Where is he?" Jeffrey inquires.

Ask and thou shall receive, I think. That's because faster than a bird blink, I see Thomas heading toward the table. Looking glum, yet shiny in a silver tie, he reaches the group, greeted by a mournful hug from a girl.

Totally appalled, Steve slams a bit of wine and glares at me. "Did you invite Thomas? How could you do this to Jeffrey? They JUST broke up."

"Don't look at me. I didn't know he was coming," I state. "Give me a break. You want the drama for your column!" Steve exclaims.

Overwhelmed by the commotion, Jeffrey jets out

for a cigarette break. The second he's gone, Steve sets sights on Thomas. "Are you stupid? Are you trying to ruin Jeffrey's night? You should be off fucking another guy. What are you doing here?"

"I invited him. He's MY friend," a girl snaps.

Hence, the drama of the evening begins. Steve is arguing with Thomas. I'm mad at Steve. The girls are mad at Steve. So the dinner party splits up, and we call it a night, before driving away in different directions. Of course, Steve says he was just *trying* to help.

"By telling them to fuck other people? That's not what they need to hear!" I yell at him in the car.

"So what? Should I pretend that everything is FINE like the rest of you?"

And for the moment, I don't answer. I suppose

that's because as a friend in this situation, I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do. To me, breaking up is a form of death, and when I attend a funeral, I have a hard time communicating what I'd like to say. So I observe. And when I lay eyes on Jeffrey and Thomas, what I see is two people who care deeply for each other trying to make right of a situation gone wrong. Like today, Jeffrey posted a frantic love poem to Thomas on the Internet, and he's sending flowers to Thomas at work. And though Thomas is hurt, he tries to keep a level head, though I'm certain it's hard. So if don't rush to their aid with unsolicited advice, I'm sure they know it's not because I'm pretending everything is fine. Instead, it's because I believe they have it under control. And if not, as a friend, I welcome their call, and if I can't talk, I'll do better – I'll listen.

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ASK THE IRREVERENT UNCLE BARBIE Your Intellectual Whore

(An effervescently gay advice columnist)

Disclaimer: Although the author of this syndicated column holds a doctorate in clinical psychology, the tongue-in-cheek advice given is for entertainment only and is not a substitute for therapy. Barbie responds to all emails...whether you deserve it or not. Send your questions to Uncle Barbie at: askunclebarbie@aol.com

The Answer Is Blowing in the Wind

Dear Uncle Barbie,

I have a female friend in the National Guard who is serving in the Middle East. I am very worried about her. I do not know if I am more worried about her because she is a girl or because she is my friend. I have been friends with her since high school. She is supposed to come back home after doing a tour of duty for a year. But the way things are going, who knows if that promise will be kept? Maybe she will have to stay longer. I email her all the time but have not received any replies, so I sent her a few postal letters. However, I have not received even one correspondence from her. I want to know just one thing from you. What can I do to stop worrying?
Signed, Peace Maker

Hello Peaceful Person,

There are many, many people in this area (and throughout the country), who feel the same way you do. Perhaps you can take some comfort in knowing that you are not alone. I cannot help but wonder if we are making things better or worse. It seems as if we are making enemies faster than we can kill them. On a personal note, I have a brother in the military, as well. Several months, after he was sent over to the Middle East, he emailed me and told me that, for the first time, he took a human life. He did not give any details; however, I could tell that he was quite shaken up by the situation. I know that my brother is a very sensitive person--he has been his whole life. I remember, even as a child, he would come into the house crying because he found a dying butterfly. I can only imagine how traumatizing it must be for him to have killed another human being.

I am assuming that he was in a situation where he either had to kill the enemy or be killed. Nonetheless, I'm sure it takes its toll on his conscience--tying to rationalize it in his mind.

Many years ago, I accidentally ran over a puppy dog with my car. I still can picture it in my mind. The memory replays over and over again. How much more psychological stress would it be if it were a person? I believe all of the soldiers (male or female) need personal therapy to debrief

from the war when they get back. War leaves a devastation of psychic rubble in its aftermath. To help you lessen your worries about your friend, try talking with other people who are also worried about their loved ones who are actively serving in the military. We can all lean on each other for emotional support. Worrying is a passive waste of energy. Do something positive with your energy.

Peace Out, Barbie



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