

The Rainbow Times

Your LGBTQ News Source in Western MA, Southern VT, and Northern CT

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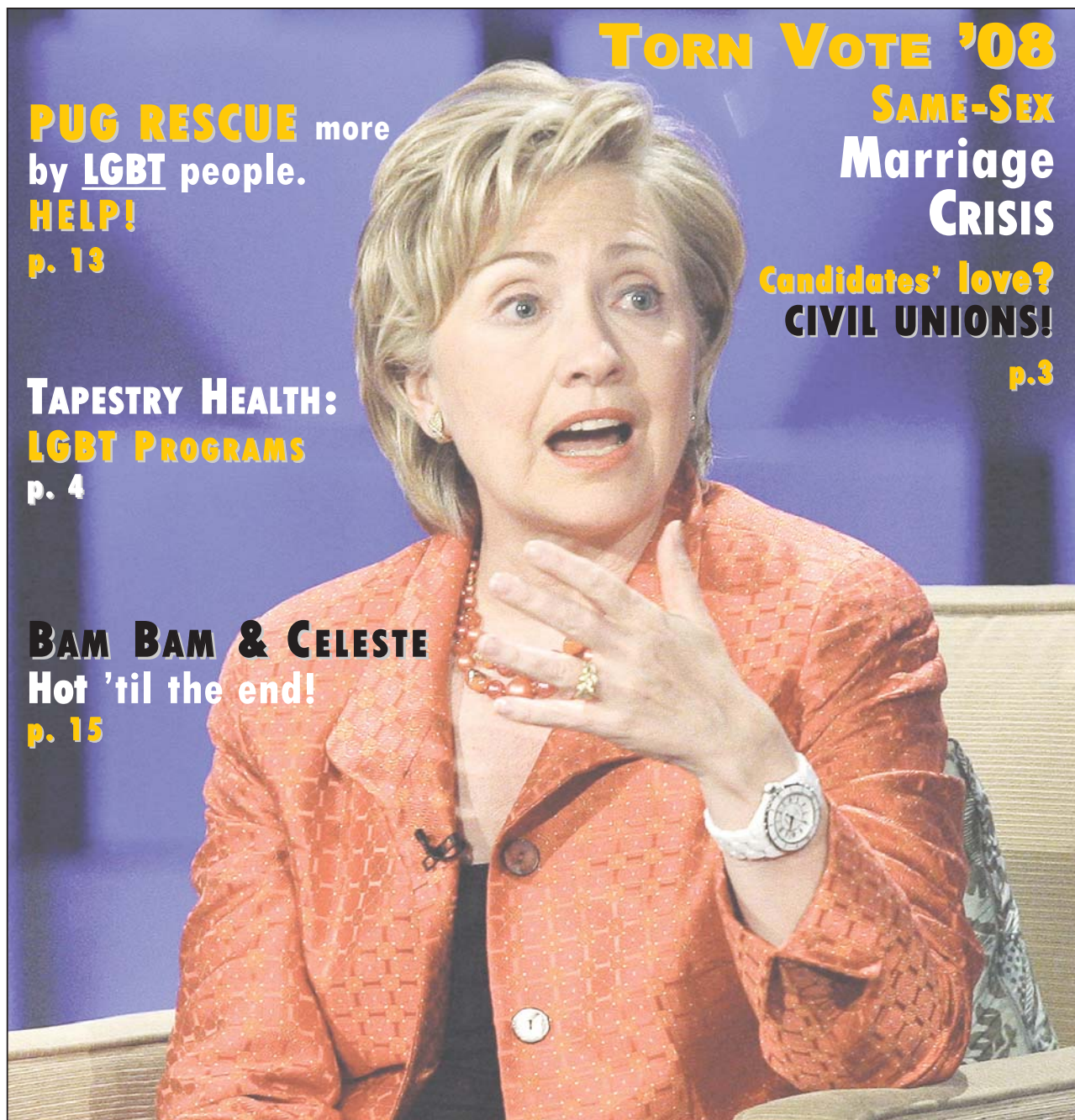
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Opinions

Dump the 'T': They're dragging us down anyways

By: Jane Hammel/TRT Columnist

Oh dear, the latest anti-discrimination, hate-crimes bill which includes gender identity got pushed aside by our wimped-out, impotent, "all bow to the White House" Congress. Surprise, surprise ... call me the Uber-cynic, but I never thought this bill would even make it to the floor. The fact that the Democratic presidential contenders are behind this bill (hell, Joe Biden even co-signed it!) didn't stop it from getting stomped on. Frankly, I think it's just lip-service to get the queer vote.

But that isn't the issue that concerns me the most, or just pisses me off, if you must know. There are some very loud voices coming from the LGBT family? These voices are calling for the elimination of Transgender in the fight for gay-rights. (And really, isn't it just LG? When was the last time you read an article about Bi's?)

Let's take Robin Bodiford, as an example; from the *Miami Herald*. She's a lesbian "whose law practice almost exclusively represents gay clients. She spearheaded groundbreaking ordinances in Broward County to protect gay rights and allow same-sex couples to register as domestic partners." But I call her a Transphobe. Here's why: She and other political veterans fear that adding "gender identity and expression" to the ordinance will jeopardize hard-won rights already on the



JANE HAMMEL

always proceeded carefully and slowly to make sure that when we fight for our rights, we keep those rights," Giorgio said. "It makes little sense to secure transgender protections only to watch them get repealed six months later." You can read the complete article at www.miamiherald.com/418/story/192445.html

This isn't the first time that a gay voice has called us excess baggage. In 2004 Chris Crain of the Washington Blade wrote the definitive article on this issue claiming that the then proposed ENDA bill had been "Trans-jacked". Kudos for that catchy phrase but you're still a Transphobe, Chris. It is a must-read: <http://washblade.com/2004/8-13/vieweditorial>.

Here's the part that gets me into trouble personally ... I don't always disagree with that sentiment. Ouch! That was a big

Love, Rights...and the Rest of It

By: JM Sorrell
TRT Columnist

Love is an art, yet it is effortless. Art is a labor of love, and yet the artist creates art from a spiritual and viscerally creative place rather than as a structured task.

Have you walked through the Northampton Court House grounds to experience James Kitchen's lawn sculptures? They are unique, unconventional, and accessible. I have wondered who he was over the last few weeks. He is a tall, unassuming artist living in Chesterfield. Just the other night, I caught him cleaning the sculptures and asked if he was the artist. He responded, "Guilty as charged." He was humble and genuinely appreciative of my appreciation. His work is also at the Michelson Galleries on Main Street.

I finally got to see the Leonard Baskin exhibit at the Smith College Museum of Art (the free admission is 4-8pm the second Friday of every month). Never mind the academic, critical response that confirms what a great and unique artist he was. This man loved women. You can feel it. His images of women are haunting and almost reverent. Go and see Medea and Her Sisters before the exhibit is dismantled on September 9th.

Since James Kitchen told me about his reception at Michelson, we moseyed down there. I found the Dr. Seuss lithograph of my dreams (from The Star



J.M. the JP

Bellied Sneetches) that I can't afford, some of Kitchen's smaller sculptures (suitable for inside the house), and in the old bank safe part of the gallery—a photography exhibit by Leonard Nimoy (yes, Mr. Spock). It is a series of fat women—sometimes clothed and nude images as well. There is text that explains his intentional celebration of this body image as opposed to the conventional notion of the Size 0 or 1 model as an ideal. May he live long and prosper.

Oh, to be a lesbian in a community where male artists thrive sans the misogyny of popular culture. Now if only this were Ireland, where creative artists (writers, visual artists, and composers) do not pay taxes. The Irish know that artists feed our souls and keep us alive whether or not we "own" their art. It is hard to imagine the world without it.

* J.M. Sorrell is a Justice of the Peace. She has always felt a deep appreciation for all forms of art, and she wishes our government supported and valued it as other countries throughout the world. JM has no formal art education, but she is constantly delighted and surprised by how visual art and music move her.

books." Bodiford and political consultant Richard Giorgio booked a room at the Gay and Lesbian Center to sound the alarm. "We've

tomato! Hold on ... please! There's a cheesy movie out right now in which Adam Sandler plays a straight man pretending to be gay. The promo clip shows him and his "partner" in a grocery store and the partner begins to throw a box of tampons into the cart. Adam shouts "we're supposed to be gay, not transsexuals!" That's offensive in so many ways but it does send out the real message that Transgendered folk are very different from those who are defined by their sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the majority of people, gay or straight, still don't get it! Thanks to Gerry and Maury the masses think that we're all perverted drag queens. (Not that all drag queens are perverted.) I see most drag queens as gay-male entertainers who love to mock women to the cheers of mostly other gay men, which does support the often expressed gay opinion that male-to-female transsexuals are just gay men in denial. Stereotypes, you say? Hah! You missed me! The sad fact is that the "stereotypes" get all the press! It's a hard fight, yes indeed, to be accepted for just who you are. "Straight" America says to Gays ... "Yes, we accept you as long as you all look like those gorgeous hunks on 'Queer Eye.'" And, to the Lesbians they say: "Yes, we accept you as long as you all look like those gorgeous babes on 'The L Word'" and, the Gays to the MtF's: "yes, we accept you as long as you all look like Lypsynka and make us laugh." Ow! I

didn't see that coming!

It's very hard to accept that which you do not understand, so how do we bring about this understanding? What if I handed you a thick book claiming "These words are the inspired teachings of the Supreme Transperson and should be accepted without question and all Trans-folk hence shall be known as the 'Truthseekers' "You'd tell me to go f**k myself, that's been tried already, or Ouch! Throw another tomato! This is a tough crowd. How about "Take a Tranny to Lunch Day?" A little nosh, a little chat, we get to know each other, it couldn't hurt, right? Well, for one thing, some of us can be so depressing you'd be on your third Margarita before the appetizer arrives.

But this must be done, regardless! Otherwise, how are we going to be able to fight side by side for civil rights if some of us suspect the other of sabotaging the cause?

The current and growing acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in our society didn't happen overnight. It's been a long, grueling, step by step struggle and make no mistake, Trans-folk have jumped on a band wagon that was long in motion. But let me end by posing this ... even if the situation existed where it would be politically and logically expeditious drop "gender identity and expression" from the currently stalled hate crimes bill, Wouldn't it be better in the long run to educate and create a consensus among us all as to "Why" and not just dismiss the "T" for being a "drag"? Or, you might just be Transphobic. Now, help me clean up this mess?

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I'm aware of a few drop points in NoHo but I am from West Springfield. Needless to say I am not in NoHo everyday. How can I learn of where else you distribute your papers to?

Regards,

Michelle Myers, Hartford, CT

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: The Rainbow Times has a rack in front of the downtown Springfield Post Office. Also, we have several drop points closer to you than Northampton. Those distribution points will be updated on our website soon.

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to say great coverage on the Visible Vote 2008. I checked your website when I got home from work at 2 a.m. to see if by chance, anything was there about the debate. Not to my surprise, I found The Pony Express & a story was up under the breaking news section. Really, great job with staying on top of it all.

Thank you,

Rita J. LeBlanc, Greenfield, MA

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Thank you for your kind words, Rita. We do the best we can, especially when it comes to our Breaking News stories. Glad you got the scoop!

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Dem. presidential candidates address gay rights

By: Michael R. Blood/AP Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP)—U.S. Democratic presidential contenders faced pointed questions on gay marriage and the basis for sexual orientation in a forum that forced candidates to confront politically touchy issues that have vexed a nation.

Former Sen. John Edwards found himself discussing whether he is comfortable around gay people—he said he is. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson appeared to struggle with a question about why people become gay or lesbian. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton ended up defending the record of her husband, former President Bill Clinton, on gay rights.

"We certainly didn't get as much done as I would have liked," the New York senator said. "But there was a lot of honest effort."

Six of the eight Democratic candidates answered questions last Thursday on gay rights at the two-hour forum co-sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign, a gay-rights group active in Democratic politics, and Logo, a gay-oriented cable TV channel that aired the forum live.

Organizers said it marked the first time that major presidential candidates appeared on TV specifically to address gay issues. The candidates appeared one at a time in an upholstered chair on a Hollywood studio set and took questions from a panel that included singer Melissa Etheridge.

The candidates underscored differences with Republicans on gay and lesbian



Presidential hopeful Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-NY, during her speech at the Visible Vote '08: A Presidential Forum in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles last Thursday, Aug. 9, 2007. The event, co-sponsored by cable channel Logo and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues.

rights, but leading candidates also faced aggressive questioning on their reluctance to embrace marriage for same-sex couples.

All of the Democratic candidates support a federal ban on anti-gay job discrimination, want to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy barring gays from serving openly in the military and support civil unions that would extend marriage-like rights to same-sex couples.

A majority of Americans oppose nationwide recognition of same-sex mar-

riage and only two of the Democrats support it—former Alaska Sen. Mike Gravel and Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, both longshots for the nomination.

Barack Obama belongs to the United Church of Christ, which supports gay marriage, but Obama has yet to go that far.

"If we have a situation in which civil unions are fully enforced, are widely recognized, people have civil rights under the law, then my sense is that's enormous progress," the Illinois senator said.

In a campaign dominated by the Iraq war and terrorism, the forum provided unusually probing talk about issues that alternately touched on questions of tolerance, morality and religion.

Clinton said she made a mistake in March when she steered around a question on whether homosexuality was immoral. She was asked about it after Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he considered homosexual acts immoral and similar to adultery. He later said he should have not expressed his personal views. Clinton later issued a statement saying she did not think being gay was immoral.

"It was a mistake," Clinton said. "I

should have put it in a broader context."

Clinton was cheered by the crowd when she alluded to the prospect for change at the White House in the 2008 election. Edwards argued that Democrats must speak out against discrimination coming from the Republican right wing.

Unless you speak out against intolerance, it becomes "OK for the Republicans in their politics to divide America and use hate-mongering to separate us," Edwards said.

Etheridge, speaking to Edwards, said she had heard he once said he felt uncomfortable around gay people—an assertion contained in longtime political strategist Bob Shrum's book "No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner."

"I'm perfectly comfortable," Edwards said. "I know where it came from. It came from a political consultant. And he's just wrong."

Richardson skirted a thorny debate on homosexuality.

When asked by Etheridge whether "homosexuality is a choice or is it biological?" he said, "I don't see this as an issue of science or definition. I see gays and lesbians as human beings."

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Queer Justice & Health

Q: Can I be my grandmother's legal guardian?

By: **Jennifer Dexter***
TRT Law Columnist

Dear Queer Justice:

My grandmother broke her hip and is therefore currently in the hospital. A person at the hospital has mentioned that they are going to get a guardian for her. What is a guardian? Can I stop the process? Can I be the guardian?

—Sandy, Westfield

Dear Sandy:

A guardian is an individual who is appointed by the court to make decisions regarding medical care. A guardian can be the guardian of the person or the person and the estate. If you grandmother has substantial assets (a house, money, stocks, etc) the person appointed will be

the guardian of her person and estate.

This means that this person will be responsible for making all medical, personal and financial decisions for your grandmother. If your grandmother does not have any assets then the guardian will be the guardian of the person only, meaning they only have to authority to make decisions regarding medical treatment, housing or nursing home placement, etc.

Massachusetts General Laws chapter 201 governs guardianships and conservators. This statute defines the role and



Atty. Jennifer Dexter

authority of the guardian. Hospitals have attorneys on hand who deal with finding guardians for disabled persons. The hospital will provide what is called a Medical Certificate and a Treatment Plan to the attorney. These are affidavits signed by a doctor spelling out why this person is unable to make decisions on their own and how the doctor purposes to treat the person. The attorney in turn files a petition to appoint a guardian. If the court approves the petition then a guardian is appointed. A temporary guardian is appointed at first. If the condition which is causing the inability for the person to take care of her/himself persists, then the guardian can become the permanent guardian.

If you are willing and able, you can serve as the guardian. A family member

is usually preferred to serve as guardian, but if a family member is unwilling, then someone will be appointed by the court.

**Attorney Jennifer L. Dexter earned a B.A. in Psychology from The University of Central Florida. She moved to Massachusetts to attend law school at The Western New England College of Law in Springfield, Mass. She is a member of the Massachusetts Bar and has a Solo General Practice in the Pioneer Valley Area.*

The information contained herein is intended for educational purposes only and does not represent legal advice. Should you need legal advice, please contact an attorney.

If you have legal questions that are unanswered, or if you would like to know more about a specific topic, then send your questions to: queerjustice@comcast.net.

Tapestry Health: Many services for the LGBT community

By: **Lindsay Wilson/TRT Reporter**

Tapestry Health may be well-known for their family planning services but, the non-profit organization also has many programs geared towards the LGBT community since its beginning.

"Even with the programming, at the time, was focused on women's and reproductive health, there has always been a strong sense and value that the needs of all individuals, particularly those in the LGBT community, need to be served," said Hutson Inniss, Vice President of Community and Organizational Development.

Tapestry has three federally funded

programs which offer many services to the LGBT community. One of the programs, Among Men for Men, funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a five-year project that gives access to substance abuse treatment and provides effective HIV prevention. According to Inniss, the project focuses on gay and non-gay identified men, particularly of African American and Latino descent. The project has five staff members and is based out of Tapestry's Springfield office, though it covers all of the Western Massachusetts area.

Inniss, who previously served as Tapestry's director of LGBT and HIV services, said that staff members provide outreach activities and will "go to area bars and different locations where gay and bi-sexual identifying men tend to hang out." These activities are often sponsored in collaboration with either the state or with other programs and agencies' staff members will



often take a mobile van out and provide HIV testing and STD screening right at the bar.

"We're really thoughtful about that," said Inniss. "We want to make sure that the service is provided, that there is access to it, that it's appropriate and that people are making informed decisions. We're very much in collaboration with the businesses and owners who we have a very strong relationship with."

The Tapestry Health Web Site explains that the Among Men for Men program also provides access to reproductive health needs, HIV & STD testing, support for substance abuse issues, free hepatitis A & B vaccinations, and a drop-in center that provides regular social and educational events.

Another program is the Western Mass Men's Health Project (MHP). Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, this program provides HIV prevention specifically to men who have sex with men. The program is also based out of the Springfield office, but care is provided in all four counties of western Massachusetts.

"We provide the training, the support and the guidance of how to have normal conversations about it instead of having an educator come in and talk," he said.

Another program offered by Tapestry Health is the Breast Health Initiative, part of the Women's Health Network, which provides screening for breast and cervical cancer.

"There is a great need to focus on health needs with the community in general, but particularly lesbian and bisexual women because there hasn't been, until recently, a lot of focus work," said Inniss. "As an organization that works with

women and is women owned and led, we absolutely feel we need to support lesbian and bi-sexual women and their health."

The services provided by Tapestry, according to Inniss, are acceptable and welcoming for people of the LGBT community, and we strive really hard to create that welcoming environment.

"We work hard with forms we have control over to make sure that they are inclusive and welcoming, and for those forms that we don't have control over, we advocate very strongly for a revision ... to ensure that we are including in that particular case, transgendered individuals," said Inniss.

Tapestry has sponsored youth dances, Pride events and has worked in collaboration with GLAAD. They have also worked with Mass Equality and have provided support for the recent same sex constitutional amendment.

"We can do this only with the support of the community; we're a non profit organization. Much of Tapestry's funding comes from contracts and grants. The work that we have done in the past and hope to continue to do can only be done with the support of generous community members," said Inniss. "We're really trying to be responsive to community needs. We do what we can as allies. We're not specifically an LGBT organization but we feel that we're part of the community, many of our staff, many of our management members identify as gay or lesbian bisexual and we want to make sure that people know that we're here, and that we're available."

Tapestry Health has been involved in services for the LGBT community since it began as a family planning center in 1972. For more information: log on to <http://www.tapestryhealth.org/> or call 800-696-7752.

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TRT's Back to School Guide

- **Financial Aid** • **Legal Issues**
- **Scholarships** • **Inclusive Schools**
- **Local Schools** • **Registration & More**



'I can't afford college' & other financial aid myths

By: **Rose Rennekamp***

College application season is in full swing. Parents and college-bound students are filling out forms, editing college admission essays, and checking their bank accounts. Students worry about getting a rejection letter, but some parents may worry more about what they will do once their son or daughter is actually accepted.

There's a lot of information out there—both good and bad—about paying for college. I want to clarify a few of the less-than-true statements you may have heard.

Myth #1: You can't afford college, or you can't afford the college of your dreams.

Many students and parents see the tuition price, cost of college dorm life, and the price of textbooks and say there is just no way they could ever afford it. Let's face it—college is expensive! It's the largest single investment many families ever make. However, two out of three students get at least some financial aid to help make college more affordable. College-bound students can receive a combination of grants, loans, scholarships, or work-study jobs to help reduce the cost of college. So don't ignore a college just because of its "sticker price." If a college has higher tuition, students



often can get more financial aid to help cover the extra cost. For example, parents with incomes below \$40,000 aren't expected to contribute to the cost of their child's education at Harvard.

Myth #2: You have to be very poor, very smart, or uncommonly talented to qualify for financial aid.

Financial aid comes in many forms—college grants and scholarships, which you don't have to repay, and loans, which you do have to repay. There is need-

based aid for students who come from lower income families, and merit-based aid for students who excel in athletics, drama, debate, instrumental music, community service, and many other areas. You will find financial aid and grants from a number of sources: the federal government, state government, the college or university itself, a parent's employer, and many other organizations. When students take the time to discover all of the possibilities, they can be surprised at what offers for aid they may receive. One good source for information is <http://studentaid.ed.gov>, where you can get Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid. The guide is also available in print at many public libraries and schools or by calling 1-800-433-3243.

Myth #3: You can get more free college scholarships by paying someone to search for you.

Scholarship scams are everywhere. Beware of any group or individual that guarantees a scholarship if you pay a fee. In 2003, the Federal Trade Commission found 12 of 53 Web sites marketing scholarships had what it called "dubious claims." There are many very good, FREE scholarship sources to help you avoid scams—check out www.fastweb.com or www.finaid.org.

Myth #4: My child will pay for college herself, so it doesn't matter how much money I make.

Most need-based financial aid is based

on parents' income and assets. Most schools require students to fill out the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, in order to qualify for financial aid. That form asks for income information similar to what you need for your income taxes. You can find it by logging on to www.fafsa.ed.gov. After submitting the FAFSA, students receive a report that shows how much the government expects you to pay towards your child's education. If you're not ready to actually file the FAFSA for financial aid yet, you can get an estimate of your expected family contribution by going to www.act.org/fane/.

Myth #5: You can wait until you get accepted to a college before worrying about financial aid and grants.

Most financial aid is doled out on a first-come, first-served basis. Since most college students will search for some type of financial aid, you shouldn't wait too long to get started. Looking for financial aid is probably not the way that most college-bound teens want to spend their free time. But a little work now can go a long way in paying for an education tomorrow.

**Rose Rennekamp is the vice president of communications for ACT. She is a mom and has a master's of education in guidance and counseling. For more college and career-planning information, visit www.act.org. E-mail Rose at AskRose@act.org.*

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Registration open for free college prep class at HCC

Course targets adult learners who want to finish up where left off

HOLYOKE — Registration is now taking place for a free, 14-week college preparation course that begins September 10 at Holyoke Community College, 303 Homestead Avenue.

For more information or to register, call (413) 552-2852 or email edrefyuss@hcc.mass.edu. Space is limited to 16 slots.

Co-sponsored by HCC and the Community Education Project, the course covers reading, writing, math, study strategies and computer skills for adult learners who earned a GED or who graduated from high school at least 5 years ago. Classes are taught in English and meet Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Spanish language counseling and free PVTa bus passes will be available.

Graduates of the course who are interested in continuing on to college will receive help with the financial aid and admissions process.

Holyoke Community College is the Commonwealth's oldest community college, serving almost 9,000 students annually in more than 80 associate degree options and 42 certificate programs, and over 4,000 in noncredit and workforce development courses. The college has the highest transfer rate of any community college statewide, holding articulation agreements with more than 27 colleges and universities. Recognized for its Honors Program, distance learning curriculum, learning communities, and service to students, HCC has recently opened the Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development.

Legal Guide Regarding LGBT Issues in Schools

This year, a consortium of national organizations, with leadership from the National School Boards Association (NSBA), published a resource document to help schools address legal issues surrounding students' sexual orientation and gender identity in the fall of 2004.

Aimed at school policy makers and administrators, "Dealing with Legal Matters Surrounding Students' Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" provides practical guidance on schools' legal rights and responsibilities with respect to students, school programs, and curriculum. Using a Q&A format, it addresses such questions as: What are your legal responsibilities as a school leader when it comes to student-sponsored clubs such as a Gay-Straight Alliance? What should



you do if you learn students are being harassed because of their sexual orienta-

tion? Also included are resources for additional information.

In addition to NSBA, participating organizations are: American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, American School Counselor Association, Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Independent Schools, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Education Association, National Student Assistance Association, School Social Work Association of America, and United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries.

"Dealing with Legal Matters Surrounding Students' Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" is available free online. For more information, visit: www.glsen.org.

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, now in its 10th year, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for ALL students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on GLSEN's educational resources, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

Friendly campus: A guide for counselors advising LGBT Students

By: GLSEN

Out and applying?

The question of whether or not to be out on one's application does not have a simple answer. While it would be amazing to think that every person involved in the admissions decision-making process is sensitive to LGBT issues, this is probably not the case. A student may want to research a particular school's climate on LGBT issues before deciding to be out on their application, and may even decide to not

alumnus/a in addition to (or instead of) an Admissions Officer, they should gauge this accordingly since some alumni/ae may not be as understanding of LGBT issues as other alumni/ae or an Admissions Officer. If applicable, the applicant can tell the interviewer about the process of forming or leading the school's gay-straight alliance (GSA).

The essay:

Discussing a challenge one has overcome, or one's greatest achievement, is a very common application essay ques-

it online at www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/292-1.PDF.

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, now in its 10th year, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for ALL students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child

learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on GLSEN's educational resources, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

"It is extremely important that colleges/universities take measures to ensure an inclusive and safe environment for LGBT students so that students can achieve their full potential."

—Kelly Costello, 19, American University, Washington, D.C.

apply at all based on what they find.

If a student's LGBT identity is significant to their personal development, extracurricular activities and/or academic integrity, and the school appears to be LGBTfriendly, mentioning this may be advantageous. If they decide to be out, here are some suggestions on ways to do it appropriately.

The interview:

The purpose of the interview is to learn more about the applicant as a person. If the student is interviewed by an

tion. The student might consider writing about the experience of "coming out" to family and friends and the personal insight gained as a result.

Activities:

If the student has been a member of the school's gay/straight alliance (GSA) or a local LGBT group, include it in a list of activities. Explain why one's involvement in an LGBT community is important.

To view this article in its entirety, visit

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Tips on creating an Inclusive School Prom

Prom is a special time of year, but unfortunately, the memories gained from a prom aren't always balloons and ball gowns for everyone.

Prom (n): a formal dance held for a school class toward the end of the academic year [syn: promenade].

Every year, as millions of students around the country prepare by finding dresses and tuxes, renting cars or planning after-parties, thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are left waiting for it all to be over. All too often, memories gained from proms by LGBT students range from facing harassment and discrimination, feeling alienated and/or forced to take a date other than their partner, or even sitting at home alone, missing out on the activities all together. Others, usually living near a more progressive city, instead attend LGBT community proms, specifically held to provide a safe and inclusive place for all students. And while such LGBT events can be empowering events in their own right, they often can't compensate for the feeling of isolation felt from not being able to share in their own school's prom. Even more important, though LGBT community proms can be found in most major cities around the country, the majority of LGBT students continue to find themselves left without.

Then, there are inclusive and safe proms—ironically unique—that welcome and embrace all students, regard-



less of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Though exceptions, and not the rule, they're becoming more common, and students are leading the way.

So what makes a safe and inclusive school prom? Of course, a prom can only be as inclusive as the students who attend it are, but here are some steps other students have taken, are taking, or would like to see taken, in order to create safer, more inclusive and more respectful school proms. Check in your school who you'd need to work with to have the following done, either through a prom committee, the school administration, or the entire school district.

Prom Policies

Work to ensure that policies are inclusive of same sex/gender and non-partnered couples. This way, students can

attend with anyone they wish, or alone, regardless of another's sex/gender.

Dress Codes

Work to ensure that dress codes are inclusive by allowing students to adorn the prom attire of their own desire, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Prom Activities

Find other activities or celebratory ceremonies to conduct other than the naming of a prom king and queen, as this alienates students who may not fit the traditional heterosexual King and Queen roles. Some tactics include numerous, self-nominated "kings" and "queens," with each category open to anyone, regardless of gender identity, and not paring the groups afterwards as "couples." Other groups have found other fulfilling activities and awards events such as "best

dressed," which allow for more students to fully participate.

A Night Without Hate Pledge

Upon picking up their prom tickets, at the prom entrance or in school during the month before the prom, students sign a pledge towards creating a safe space for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Chaperone & Staff Training

Discuss with, and provide trainings for, staff and chaperones who'll be supporting the prom event, ensuring they understand and will treat all students equally, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or that of their partner.

Is your school discriminating against LGBT students? Won't allow same-gender partners to attend? Won't allow you to express your gender identity in a way that's comfortable for you, or in a way you desire? You can do something about it!

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, now in its 10th year, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for ALL students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on GLSEN's educational resources, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

On our next TRT ... with more pages!

- Bam Bam & Celeste Addendum (racial commentary by JM Sorrell)
- Domestic Violence in the LGBT Community
- Transgender Initiative Program from HCC
- Regional (Connecticut page) & National LGBT Resources

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HCC info sessions help students sign up for fall 2007 semester

Placement testing, registration, and financial aid information available

HOLYOKE—It is not too late to sign up for college. During the month of August, Holyoke Community College will host four information sessions to help prospective students apply, enroll, and figure out financing for the fall semester.

On Aug. 15, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Aug. 18, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., HCC will host **Registration Express**, a drop-in session that will offer placement testing, applica-

tions, and registration for fall classes. Testing times are limited. For more information, call (413) 552-2321 or email admissions@hcc.mass.edu.

On Aug. 14, 6:30 -7:30 p.m., HCC will host an interactive online chat that covers financial aid, scholarships, payment plans and the real cost of college attendance.

To participate in this session, log on to <http://hcc.edu/sfs>.

On Aug. 22, 6:30-7:30 p.m., the college will host another financial aid services seminar on campus in the Frost Building, room 309. No reservations are required for either session. For more information call (413) 552-2150.

Gay Best Sellers*

1. Bam Bam & Celeste
2. Whole New Thing
3. Follow My Voice
4. Rick & Steve: Season One
5. The Masseuse
6. Times Have Been Better
7. Dantes Cove Season 2
8. Available Men
9. Queer AS Folk: Season 5

*By wolfevideo.com

Lesbian Best Sellers*

1. The Gymnast
2. The L Word: Season 4
3. Desert Hearts 2-Disc...
4. Puccini for Beginners
5. Mango Kiss
6. That Tender Touch
7. Claire Of The Moon
8. Loving Annabelle
9. Just The Two Of Us
10. Lesbian Sex & Sexuality

*By wolfevideo.com

Welcome
back
students,
from the
TRT staff!

NSCS sheds new light on experiences of LGBT Students

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, (GLSEN), announced findings from the 2005 National School Climate Survey (NSCS), the only national survey to document the experiences of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) in America's schools.

"The 2005 National School Climate Survey reveals that anti-LGBT bullying and harassment remain commonplace in America's schools," said GLSEN Founder and Executive Director Kevin Jennings. "On the positive side, it also makes clear that inclusive policies, supportive school staff and student clubs, like Gay-Straight Alliances, all relate to reduced harassment and higher achieving students."

Key Findings of the 2005 National School Climate Survey include:

The Scope of the Problem:

- 75.4% of students heard derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school, and nearly nine out of ten (89.2%) reported hearing "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" - meaning stupid or worthless- frequently or often.

- Over a third (37.8%) of students experienced physical harassment at school on the basis of sexual orientation and more than a quarter (26.1%) on the basis of their gender expression. Nearly one-fifth (17.6%) of students had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation and over a tenth (11.8%) because of their gender expression.

Academic Engagement, Aspirations and Achievement:

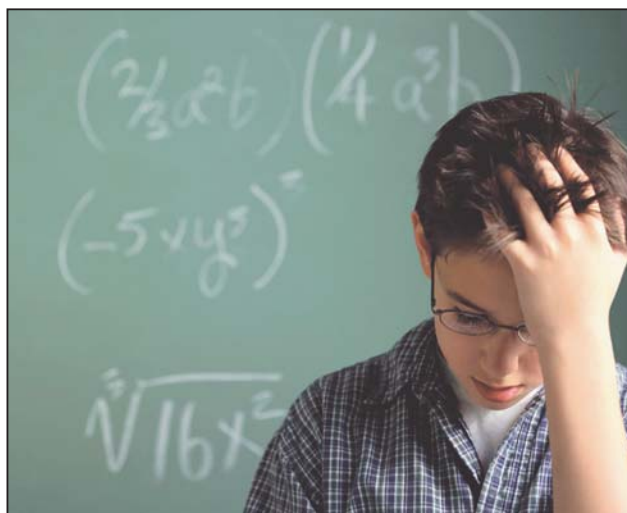
- LGBT students were five times more likely to report having skipped school in the last month because of safety concerns than the general population of students.

- LGBT students who experience more frequent physical harassment were more likely to report they did not plan to go to college. Overall, LGBT students were twice as likely as the general population of students to report they were not planning to pursue any post-secondary education.

- The average GPA for LGBT students who were frequently physically harassed was half a grade lower than that of LGBT students experiencing less harassment (2.6 versus 3.1).

Positive Interventions and Support:

- The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including greater sense of safety, fewer reports of missing days of school, and a higher incidence of planning to attend college.



- Students in schools with a GSA were less likely to feel unsafe, less likely to miss school, and more likely to feel like they belonged at their school than students in schools with no such clubs.

- Having a comprehensive policy was related to a lower incidence of hearing homophobic remarks and to lower rates of verbal harassment. Students at schools with inclusive policies also reported higher rates of intervention by school staff when homophobic remarks were made.

Only nine states and the District of Columbia have comprehensive anti-bullying laws that specifically address bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and only three of these laws mention gender identity. Nine other states have "generic" anti-bullying laws that do not specifically define "bullying" or enumerate categories of protected classes such as sexual orientation or gender identity. The remaining 32 states have no laws at all. The NSCS found that both states with "generic" anti-bullying laws and states with no law at all had equally high rates of verbal harassment. States with inclusive policies that specifically enumerate categories including sexual orientation and gender identity, however, have significantly lower rates of verbal harassment (31.6% vs. 40.8%).

"These reports from LGBT students echo recent reports from the larger population of students in the United States," said Joseph Kosciw, PhD, Research Director for GLSEN. "In a recent national study conducted by GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 62.5% of secondary school students reported that other students were

called names or harassed at their school on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, which was very similar to the 64.1% of LGBT students in the NSCS who reported experiencing such harassment."

GLSEN's National School Climate

Survey is the only national survey to document the experiences of students who identify as LGBT in America's secondary schools and has been conducted biennially since 1999. This year's survey includes responses from 1,732 LGBT students between the ages of 13 and 20 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data collection was conducted through community based groups and service organizations, from April to July 2005, and online from April to August 2005. The complete survey and additional information about methodology and demographics may be obtained by calling GLSEN's Communications Department at 212-727-0135 or by visiting www.glsen.org.

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on our educator resources, research, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

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GCC students take on Humanities through Hip-Hop

GREENFIELD—If you think Hip-Hop is just music, Carlos 'REC' McBride has a few lessons to teach you. This fall Greenfield Community College is offering a humanities course called "These Are The Breaks: A Critical Analysis of the History of Hip-Hop Culture and its Social Impact."

"We are not just talking about music, but how this phenomenon manifested post-civil rights era through the rebellion of urban youth in the Bronx with very little resources or opportunities," said McBride, who designed and teaches the course.

The course covers the history of Hip-Hop, how it originated and the culture and art forms that surround it, including graffiti and writing, the music of DJs and MCs, and the b-boys and b-girls, also known as break dancers. It was first taught this spring, and there was so much interest in it, that the class was overloaded.

The class uses selected readings, films, documentaries, videos, music, guest lecturers, poets and current events to better understand the socio-political elements that shaped Hip-Hop.

McBride, 37, is working on a doctorate of education in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His focus in the program is on critical pedagogy and social justice in Hip-Hop "culture." McBride says he uses quotation marks around culture, because it is up for debate in his class whether it is indeed a culture



or not. He has also given talks on graffiti art in major U.S. cities and will present this September in Montréal Canada at the Latin American Studies Association conference. He is also working on his personal project called TRGGR, a new grassroots and academic journal of independent thinking and expression focused on Hip-Hop music, culture, education and politics.

"A lot of my work focuses on how we can use elements of Hip-Hop 'culture' to generate critical literacy in classrooms, primarily with youth from marginalized communities. We infuse different elements into the classroom, to develop a pedagogy that would allow the youth to

develop their own narratives that ultimately challenges dominant discourse," McBride said.

McBride grew up in Hip-Hop culture and is of African-American and Puerto Rican heritage. He is originally from Passaic, New Jersey, but lived much of his life in Springfield, Massachusetts and Brooklyn, N.Y., but now lives in Amherst.

McBride dropped out of high school after the ninth grade and becoming a parent at an early age. He seemed to be heading toward a downward spiral in life when he got a second chance. Through the Learning Tree program in Springfield, he was able to move back into the world of education and eventually went to Hampshire College as a James Baldwin Scholar and then to the University of Massachusetts for graduate work.

McBride became associated with GCC as a New Perspectives Fellow, where he came up with the concept and design for the course.

Leo Hwang-Carlos, associate dean for humanities, said the course is offered through the Humanities 108 series, which offer surveys of the humanities through specialized topics.

"You can access art, history, music, philosophy, literature — all through the context of what Hip-Hop culture is and what constitutes Hip-Hop as a movement and social phenomenon and musical style," Hwang-Carlos said.

He said this is a course that would appeal to a lot of different kinds of people.

ple.

"What really intrigues me about Hip-Hop is its roots in the protest movement — it's a social movement that talks about culture history and the human experience and those are universally vital things to the humanities," Hwang-Carlos said. "And while it might seem on the one hand something that is non-traditional, its roots are steeped in the very things that build our music and literature; the way we write our history."

The GCC course is set up for anyone who enjoys learning about culture. But, McBride said students can also use this course as a way to discuss and think about their own struggles and oppressive situations in the context of the larger society. "A lot of the students are going through intense life struggles — having multiple jobs, grappling with past addictions, dealing with family death, trying to understand their own identities and the way they fit into their own communities," McBride said.

"Hip-Hop speaks about overcoming obstacles, breaking boundaries of class, race and culture, and overcoming oppression. These speak to people regardless of skin color or ethnic nationality," Hwang-Carlos said.

For more information on this or other GCC Humanities Courses, please contact the Humanities Division at 775-1220, or contact McBride about this course at cecmc@gmail.com

Gay/Straight Alliance Action Kit: Five Ways to Be An Ally

In the wake of changing marriage amendments, immigration laws, and anti-bullying policies in schools, your Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) may be looking for ways to make an impact on the feelings and actions of students at your school.

Reports of harassment and violence in our nation's schools towards students and teachers who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT), non-English speaking, of color, and students with disabilities, are as common as proms and pep rallies. According to the 2005 National School Climate Survey, nearly

20% African American and Latino students felt unsafe at school because of their race and nearly 60% of African American and Latino students felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation.

Thus, it is clear that bullying and harassment is not only still prevalent in many schools, but these factors are compounded by race, sexual orientation, and other factors.

GSA's and other student clubs are composed of a variety of students of varying races, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, socio-economic statuses, and religions. The work to end anti-

LGBT bias in schools is one that is connected to the experiences and realities of many communities. Thus the importance of allies is paramount.

GLSEN has many resources for GSAs on these issues and we have compiled additional information here on Five Ways to Be An Ally. Let us know what you are already doing or plan to do.

Five Ways to Be an Ally and Fight Hate and Harassment in Our Schools:

1. Know your rights! The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) enforces five Federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in education programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance. These laws prohibit discrimination on the bases of race, color, and national origin, on the basis of sex, on the basis of disability, and on the basis of age. While not officially protected, federal resources include information and suggestions on preventing and responding to discrimina-

tion based on sexual orientation. FMI: www.ed.gov/ocr/racenational.html

2. Document and report harassment and hate crimes! Using federal, state, and local school district laws that protect students you and your gay-straight alliances (GSAs) can document and report harassment, discrimination, and/or hate crimes.

Hate crime Network. Survivors who contact the Hate-Crime Network receive support from a victim advocate who offers advice and refers them to local resources. In addition, survivors can also choose to receive anonymous messages of support and hope from network volunteers. FMI: www.hate-crime.website-works.com/

The U.S. Department of Education has resources to help in following established procedures and creating a policy if your school district does not already

See GSA on p. B-7

Increase the visibility of Latina lesbians and bisexuals!

Participate in an interview based research study

Participants receive \$20.00 for their time. All information is confidential.

For more details call 860-933-8082 or e-mail katie.acosta@uconn.edu

Rainbow Report Card: How does your child's school hold up?

The Rainbow Report Card has been launched the Family Pride Coalition.

According to their website, www.familypride.org/reportcard, the Rainbow Report Card is "an interactive tool that generates custom recommendations for your family's situation with the goal of making your school experience better, safer and more inclusive of LGBTQ parented families. The recommendations are based on your school's policies, practices and overall environment. No two schools are alike; the Rainbow Report Card recognizes these differences by custom tailoring recommendations and strategies to each parent or guardian's situation. The Rainbow Report Card celebrates all loving families by ensuring safer and more inclusive schools."

The Rainbow Report Card is not a survey. Though this tool was made with LGBTQ parents in mind, it works well for any progressively minded parent.

Currently, the Rainbow Report Card is



in its beta version and the Family Pride Coalition is seeking feedback for any suggestions or improvements for the second version. Find out if your child's school has the resources to meet your family's needs. For more information: <http://www.familypride.org/reportcard/>.

GSA from page B-6

have one. For more information, visit: www.ed.gov/pubs/Harassment.

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee also has a template for reporting discrimination. For more information about this, visit: www.adc.org/legal/claimreport.PDF

3. Educate yourself! You and your GSA can learn about hate and the experiences of other communities.

Amnesty International USA has developed LGBT-specific resources for the USA and worldwide. For more information, visit them online at: www.amnestyusa.org/outfront/index.do.

The GSA Network in California has developed some resources in addition to an outline for discussing media and stereotypes.

For more information, visit: www.gsanetwork.org/justiceforall/tips.htm.

Teaching Tolerance has many resources to examine hate and bias. Their website can be located at: www.tolerance.org/10_ways/index.html

4. Make connections! Whether you have students involved in your GSA that come from working class back-

grounds or from wealthy families, or students that are Asian, White, or African American, take the opportunity to invite all students to talk about their experiences and participate in your group. Discussions about multiple identities can also be useful for the work that GSAs plan to do. Remember there is beauty in our differences and strength where we overlap.

5. Be visible! You and your GSA can show your stance against all hate and discrimination by wearing stickers, buttons, or t-shirts with anti-hate and anti-violence messages. Your GSA can also make posters or show in other ways your support for bias-free education for every student. Be creative!

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GCC

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- Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- A Introduction to Special Education
- English Composition I: Expository Writing
- English Composition II: The Impact of Language
- English Composition II: Exploring Literature
- British Literature I
- Western Civilization to 1500 A.D.
- History of the American People Since 1865
- Women in American History
- Introduction to Human Services
- American Politics
- Principles of Psychology
- Human Growth and Development
- Principles of Sociology

Classes in Northampton

- Art History II
- Human Systems
- English Composition I & II
- American Politics
- Principles of Psychology
- Abnormal Psychology
- Principles of Sociology
- Elementary Spanish I

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Passive Solar Technology

Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Introduction to Photovoltaic (Solar Electricity) Technology

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- Holistic Approach to Hypoglycemia & Diabetes
- Sleeping Well Without Drugs
- Self-Care to Health Care: Be an Effective Healthcare Consumer
- Art & Film for Seniors
- Handmade Gifts for the Holidays
- Advanced Beginners Salsa
- Quickbooks for Small Business
- Writing Funny
- Arts in Their Pants: Helping Kids Put to Words What's Bugging them w/o Going Buggy Yourself

Workshops in Northampton

- Ideas & Inventions to Market
- How to Get Debt Free
- Journeyman Electrician
- Socially Responsible Investing
- Journeyman Plumber
- Blacksmithing

Workforce Development

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Point Foundation Announces Scholarship recipients

A total of 38 LGBT students receive scholarships from growing foundation

Corporate Sponsors include: Time-Warner, HBO, and MTV.

Los Angeles, CA— Recently, the Point Foundation, the nation's largest publicly supported organization granting scholarships to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students, announced the beneficiaries of its named scholarship program. The prestigious honors will be given to students representing the largest number of scholarships ever awarded in Point's six-year history. The named scholarship program allows individuals, organizations and corporations to provide substantial support to Point in the name of an individual or organization and to demonstrate a public commitment to Point's vision of valuing education, leadership and diversity.

"The sponsors of these scholarships—from Joanne Herman to the Matthew Shepard Foundation to HBO—are all demonstrating a deep commitment to providing Point Scholars with adequate resources to achieve their life goals," said Chris Fritzen, Point Foundation's Development Director. "We are proud of our partnerships with each of the sponsors of the named scholarship program, whether the specific scholarship honors the life of an individual or represents a public demonstration of a corporation's commitment to respecting diversity," Fritzen concluded.

"Time Warner is proud to be one of the first corporate sponsors of Point Foundation's groundbreaking work," said Dan Osheyack, Vice President, Philanthropic Initiatives. "Our commitment to education and diversity are both served well by our partnership with Point, and we hope that others will join us in supporting the important work the organization is doing to ensure the future of a new generation of leaders."

The recipients of the 2007 named Point Scholarships are:

THE CASEY SAKIR POINT SCHOLARSHIP

Shaun Kasperbauer, New York University was the recipient of this scholarship. The Casey Sakir Point Scholarship is awarded to a student planning a future in the fields of design, fashion or the arts. Casey Sakir worked as a professional interior decorator in Phoenix, Arizona, before he was tragically killed in a car accident in 2004. In 2007, the Phoenix community joined with Casey's friends and family to honor his memory. In an effort spearheaded by his close friends Joe Bushong, Chad Christian, Ron Valdez and Thomas Martin, the Casey Sakir Point Scholarship was established.



THE ELSIE DE WOLFE POINT SCHOLARSHIP

Johnathan Harrison, Pratt Institute, New York was awarded this scholarship. The Elsie De Wolfe Point Scholarship is awarded in honor of Elsie De Wolfe, considered by many to have been the First Lady of American decorating. The Elsie De Wolfe Foundation is a private, non-profit foundation dedicated to advancing the study and appreciation of the decorative arts in the United States. Through its Board of Directors in Los Angeles, the Elsie De Wolfe Foundation funds museum exhibitions, lectures, and scholarships, as well as other projects directly related to the decorative arts.

THE HBO POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Daan Erikson, New York University was the recipient of the HBO Point Scholarship. The HBO Point Scholarship is awarded to a creative and dynamic individual who intends to pursue a career in the media.

THE JONATHAN D. LEWIS POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Brandon Kneefel, Pennsylvania State University was awarded this scholarship. The Jonathan D. Lewis Scholarship is awarded to exemplary individuals who show great promise as future progressive leaders. Mr. Lewis is the founder of Jonathan Lewis & Associates, an independent design, development and project management consulting firm.

Among his many philanthropic ventures, Mr. Lewis is a founding member of Project YES, a Miami based diversity-training program for corporations, city governments and other large entities. His current philanthropic efforts focus on mentoring and developing youth organi-

zations that encourage political involvement and leadership development programs that will inform and inspire a new generation of progressive leaders. Mr. Lewis also worked as an Executive Producer along with Russell Simmons, Kenny Edmonds and Tracey Edmonds to produce and distribute a compilation album by top hip-hop and R&B artists to help raise voter awareness and encourage young people to vote.

THE KEVIN HUMMER POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Michael Semensi, Williams College is the recipient of The Kevin Hummer Point Scholarship. The Kevin Hummer Point Scholarship was established in memory of Mr. Hummer to help someone who grew up feeling isolated due to being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Mr. Hummer was born in 1962 and was raised in Arizona and Palm Springs. He spent his adult life in Los Angeles, where he made his living as a print designer and was seen by many as an arbiter of taste. After fighting cancer for two and a half years, Kevin died in 2006 at the age of 43. In the final years of his life, he spent much time contemplating what to do with all he had accumulated and how to create something meaningful to leave behind.

After learning about Point from a friend, Mr. Hummer established the scholarship in order to help others become who they are meant to be despite facing early lives of isolation.

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Mark Cornelsen, San Francisco State University was awarded this scholarship. The Matthew Shepard Point Scholarship was created to honor Matthew Shepard's commitment to service and equality.

Along with the monetary award, the scholarship entails membership on the Matthew Shepard Foundation's Youth Advisory Council. Through this vital role, each scholar will be educating their peers and the public about the dangers of hate and the importance of embracing diversity. Though Matthew Shepard's life was cut short by hate, he lived his life with a deep desire to help others and a sincere hope that all people would be treated with understanding, compassion and acceptance. In a fitting tribute to

Matthew's life, dreams and beliefs, this scholarship helps some of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community's future leaders and role models receive the college education they need to help make this world a better place.

THE MERLE ARONSON POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Gregory Payton, Columbia Teachers College was awarded this scholarship. The Merle Aronson Point Scholarship provides annual support for one scholar and was created by Ms. Aronson's family and friends to honor her memory.

THE MTV POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Benjamin Ancher, New York University

The mtvU Point Scholarship is granted to a selected scholar who attends a school affiliated with mtvU. Both LGBT and non-LGBT students are welcome to apply.

THE NORMAN BLACHFORD POINT SCHOLARSHIP:

Allan Acevedo, San Diego State University was granted this scholarship. The Norman Blachford Point Scholarship is dedicated to supporting a scholar from the area of San Diego, California.

THE TIME WARNER POINT SCHOLARSHIPS:

Aaron Arnold, University of Pittsburgh Brittany Bjurstrom, Wellesley College and Jacob Weldon, Columbia University are the recipients of The Time Warner Point Scholarship.

The Point Foundation is the nation's largest publicly-supported organization granting scholarships to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students of merit. Point provides financial support, leadership training, mentoring and hope to LGBT individuals who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Prospective donors and potential applicants can learn more about the Point Foundation and Point Scholars at www.pointfoundation.org.

Pug Resue of New England: Saving one pug at a time

By J.M. Sorrell*
TRT Writer

I contacted Tammy Cooper, one of the hard-working Board members of PRONE, because it seems that LGBT people are owned by pugs in disproportionate numbers. Our community loves and rescues animals of all sorts, and it is good to be reminded that we can offer homes to these little buggers—not in the puppy (expensive!) stage, but in the adult stage, when these guys know and appreciate a good thing. This is when they are housed-trained and they can acclimate quickly to a loving household.

Some readers may not be familiar with the history of pugs. They are one of the oldest breeds in existence. Ancient Chinese documents place them around the time of Confucius (700 BC). After the day's sport, the bigger dogs followed the master's chariot, while these little pugs were carried in the carts (this explains much today!).

In 1572, having been introduced to Europe, William the Silent (the King of Holland), was awakened by the pugs he



Bodie, 13 years old is waiting for a person who will love him as much as he will love them. Photo: JM Sorrell

had pugs throughout their lives.

The pug goes by many names in various cultures and languages. The English call it a Dutch Mastiff. It is called a Mopshund in the Netherlands, and a Ha Ba Gou in China.

In an exclusive interview with Tammy Cooper, she explains how you and your family can make a new addition, much easier than you may think.

JM: Tammy, can you briefly describe how you came to be involved in PRONE?

TC: I used to do rescue on my own. I rescued dogs from pet stores, having worked with a veterinarian who is a friend. Instead of returning them to puppy mills to be put down, I found homes for these dogs (all small breeds) for about five years.

I kept getting pugs and I became nervous about placing them on my own. I was not charging adoption fees and there were too many pugs and not enough contacts. I called PRONE and started fostering pugs right on the spot. This was five years ago. Fortunately, my husband likes pugs, too.

JM: Tell me about foster care and adoption. Who takes pugs for foster care and who adopts them?

TC: Almost always, people who already have one pug of their own and who are dedicated to the breed are descriptive of the homes who offer foster. Our web site, pet finder, pug socials, and word of mouth are the ways people find out about adoption.

The joy of owning senior dogs or "oldies but goodies," as we like to call them, is important to us. Also, we do need something we call permanent or long term foster homes. This means that the pug is unlikely to be adopted due to age or health issues but still needs a place to live out it's golden years or simply to have someone willing to provide the care needed.

Permanent/long term fostering is an interesting set up because PRONE still owns the pug but the foster home gets the joy of having them long term. PRONE does provide for medical care for these pugs. But, the medical care has to be

approved by the PRONE Board of Directors. Regular stuff [such as] shots, heartworm prevention, etc., does not have to go through a major approval process, but surgeries (dentals, bladder, orthopedic, etc.) do need approval. In my experience this has almost never been an issue. Also, in some cases, the pug may find a home. This can be upsetting to the foster care provider if they were hoping to keep the pug forever. Of course the foster home can always adopt that dog.

JM: What are the most important requirements for a good pug home?

TC: Humans who are compassionate and willing to commit to the dog. Decisions should not be based on finances, and it should not be a home where people are away for 12 hours a day. That's why they are given up.

JM: What if the pug is not happy with the placement?

TC: If anything goes wrong, it is stated in the adoption contract that you give the pug back to PRONE or find a suitable placement. If you are showering them with attention, they will be happy. They are not useful for anything other than companionship.

JM: Am I buying into sexist thought or is it true that the male pugs are lazier, easier, and less demanding than the female pugs?

TC: I think that's very accurate.

JM: Do you get many calls from LGBT homes?

TC: Yes, I don't know why, but lesbians and gay men love pugs. This is a curious phenomenon.

JM: What makes pugs unique from other breeds?

TC: Character. They have a lot of it. Their pushed in faces are human-like—they are very funny.

JM: Do you know of other breed-specific rescue organizations that you respect and recommend?

TC: Yankee Golden Ret Rescue; Pets in Need/Dracut, MA; Pug Rescue of Central NY.

JM: Finally, why do we enjoy the obnoxious traits in pugs that we would despise in humans? (ie: has to be first in line, plugged ears when not interested in listening, dominant over any other dog, insistent and stubborn to get his/her way, force us to rearrange where we sit based on their arbitrary choices)?

TC: There's something about the way they look at you. They are bred just to be companions. They will not want anything more than you—other than food, perhaps.

Foster homes are a huge priority [for PRONE]. PRONE is averaging 125+ dogs per year and there are only 10-12 foster homes. Tammy and her husband, Rob, have 6 fosters, as do other homes.

Good dog ownership is important. PRONE spends \$291.94/dog on average.

Some dogs may cost up to \$2,000 because of eye surgeries, hip operations, etc.

The average adoption fee is less than \$200, so PRONE relies on donations. Last year, they made \$22,000 in adoption fees, but spent \$39,000 on pugs.

Funding for PRONE comes from their newsletter, their annual Pug Social (this year on October 7th at the Spencer Fairgrounds/rain or shine), and donations.

For more information, please visit the PRONE web site at: www.pugrescueofnewengland.org. Also, you may call Tammy at (617) 549-9607 if you live in Massachusetts or Connecticut and you are interested in fostering or adopting a pug. Call Kate Nichols at (603) 887-3227 if you live in Vermont.

Pug Rescue of New England was founded in 1982. One of its founding members, Doris Aldrich, lives in Western Massachusetts. The organization works well because of a large, diverse, and dedicated team of pug lovers.

**JM is smitten by Sydney, the 7-year old pug who obtained her just one year ago from PRONE. Previously, she adopted Wheezer at age 9, and he lived to the ripe old age of 16.*



Sydney, a PRONE success story Photo: JM Sorrell

The Night Owl

Central & Western, MA

Blu
105 Water Street
Worcester,
Massachusetts

Club Car
64 Water Street
Worcester, MA

DIVA'S
492 Pleasant St.
Northampton, MA

Hob Knob
234 Chestnut Street
Springfield, MA

The Pub
382 Dwight Street
Springfield, MA

MB
40 Grafton Street
Worcester, MA

Sin City
350 Worthington Street
Springfield, MA

Connecticut

Triangles
66 Sugar Hollow Road
Danbury, Connecticut

Chez Est
458 Wethersfield Ave.
Hartford, CT

Polo Club
678 Maple Avenue
Hartford, CT

168 York Street Cafe
168 York Street
New Haven, CT

Bar
254 Crown Street
New Haven, CT

Gotham Citi Cafe
Church & Crown Streets
New Haven, CT

Partners Cafe
365 Crown Street
New Haven, CT



Jaz, Vegas and Kramer await a good foster home.

carried everywhere just in time to avoid being assassinated.

In 1688, the pug became the official dog of the Dutch royalty—the House of Orange. As Prince William ascended his throne in England, his pugs attended the ceremony wearing orange ribbons.

These great opportunists seemed to have attached themselves to nobility all around the world, having made their way to the Royal Courts of Europe long before the Communist Party condemned pet dogs in China as a bourgeois luxury. Their court jester status is intact today, as they are comic in appearance, faithful, eager, affectionate, and good-natured.

Legend has it that Josephine had a pug named Fortune, and when she married Napoleon Bonaparte in 1796, he refused to let the pug come up to their bed. The pug bit Napoleon, and Josephine announced that if the dog could not stay in bed, neither would she. Napoleon conquered much, but the pug won that particular battle.

Over the last century, pugs remain in royal courts. Queen Elizabeth is known for her corgis, but she also has pugs as companions. Princess Grace and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor loved and

LGBT Announcements

TRT PRIDE Calendar

SENIOR CITIZEN'S BOWLING LEAGUE; Mondays at 12:30 p.m. - Canal Lanes, Route 5, Southampton.

SOCIAL GROUP FOR LESBIANS; We always meet on the first and third Friday's of the month. For information call 413-687-2065

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC) is NOW available without a prescription at all Tapestry Health Services sites. (413) 586-2539.

CAFE & CONVERSATION; Every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.; Northampton Council on Aging, NCOA; 240 Main St., Suite 1; 587-1228

MATURE LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP; Group for women 55+ meets monthly at the Northampton Council on Aging at 240 Main St., at 6 p.m.; second Monday of each month.

DISCUSSION GROUP FOR LESBIANS 40+ meets every Wednesday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Stonewall Center at UMass. Topics chosen by group consensus the previous week. This is a warm and welcoming group of intelligent women. Information email to: JBGGreenize@aol.com

OLDER LESBIAN DISCUSSION GROUPS; Amherst/NoHo Area. New members accepted on space-available basis. If enough interest, new groups may form. FMI: 413-247-3257 or 413-253-3049.

MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP; Any male 18 or older; an opportunity for men to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings about life's journey. Support group not a therapy group. Free. Every Tuesday, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Brattleboro, VT. FMI: 802-258-3914.

LADY TATIANA'S LATIN NIGHT THE HOTTEST LATIN NIGHT; Every 3rd Saturday of each month at The Chez, 458 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, CT; 860-525-3243.

Summer Sip: A Sexy, Summer Cocktail Party to benefit The Human Rights Campaign; August 18; 4-6 p.m.; Home of Ann Maguire & Harriet Gordon; 79 Commercial St.,

Provincetown, MA; Ticket Price & Info: \$100

BUTTERWORTH BOYZ BBQ, SWIMFEST & GAMES: August 18; 1 - 6 p.m., Butterworth Farm, Royalston MA. An afternoon of food, fun, friendship, games - and swimming. Poolside at Butterworth Farm in Royalston, MA. Bring food, drink, and friends to share. Grille on site; we'll provide condiments, etc. Directions are at www.mensprogram.org, or call Alex or Howie at 254-4444. No calls to Butterworth, please. Also, we love pets, but please leave yours at home. Children welcome but must be supervised by you. **RAINDATE OF SUNDAY, AUGUST 19th.** If in doubt about the weather, call the Men's Program telephone at 254-4444, ext. 112, for an updated message. Also okay to call Celt at 978-249-0350 or Allen at 978-249-7612 on the day of event.

AVALON SATURDAYS with SUPERSTAR DJ MIKE CRUZ: Aug. 18, 2007 10:00 p.m., 15 Lansdowne St. Boston; The party continues at the biggest weekly gay dance event in the East Coast. Avalon Saturdays welcomes SUPERSTAR DJ MIKE CRUZ! Doors 10pm, 21+. Please arrive early to avoid lines.

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT: August 19; 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Meeting in Brattleboro the third Sunday of every month. Open to anyone whose identity or expression doesn't fit neatly into the gender binary, including transpeople of all sexual orientations/identities, transgender(ed), transsexuals, FTMs, MTFS, non-op, pre-op, post-op, crossdressers, bi-gendered, genderqueer, and questioning. Confidentiality guaranteed. Not a Men's Program event. FMI contact Benjamin Robin: robin@benjamin-robin.net

BOOK CLUB: August 23; 7 p.m.; the Menspace. Our August book is ROUGH MUSIC, by Patrick Gale. Advance word - September's book will be HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?, by Ethan Mordden. Call Curtis for more information, 254-2400.

SPIRITUALITY: 7 p.m. at the Menspace; August 24; Open discussion of men's spiritual-

ity/practice of techniques. Come with an open mind and willingness to share.

3rd ANNUAL VERMONT BEAR FILM FESTIVAL: August 25th Tree Frog Farm, Guilford; FMI: www.vtbearfilm.com; contact Dave at dave@vtcabin.com for directions and early reservations.

JEANIE TRACY THE VOICE BEHIND CHA CHA HEELS: 8/17; The Chez Est; 860-525-3243.

KAYAKING; August 19; 11 a.m.; Retreat Meadows, Brattleboro, VT; w/Brad Banks. Kayaking at the lovely Retreat Meadows, with lots of places to explore. No phone calls; fmi: goldnwolf@surfglobal.net

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT; 8/19; 5:30-8:30 p.m.; meeting in Brattleboro, VT, the third Sunday of every month. Open to anyone whose identity or expression doesn't fit neatly into the gender binary. Confidentiality guaranteed. Not a Men's Program event. FMI contact Benjamin: robin@benjaminrobin.net

VT BEAR FILM FEST: 8/25; Yo ho ho! There be pirates amongst us! Search for Gray Beard's treasure, WOOF it up at the "Bears Gone Wild" Carnivale and enjoy a day full of short, feature and documentary films. FMI: www.vtbearfilm.com

JOIN EMAIL GROUP FOR LGBT PARENTS in the Pioneer Valley area at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lgbt_parents_pioneer_valley/ for exchanging information, chatting about our families, and organizing get-togethers and play-dates.

DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE U R QUEER? Call The Rainbow Times, 413-204-8959.

ACTORS! SINGERS! DANCERS! ADULTS! Children (4-12th grade)! *Greene Room Productions* is holding the 2007-2008 Season Audition August 20-24, 27-30, & September 1-4 24-30. Audition for "Monster Gala Half-time Show," "A Christmas Cabaret," "The Last Five Years," and "Holes." Auditions are by appointment only! Call (413) 668-7284 for scheduling! FMI: www.greeneroomproductions.com

Submit your non-profit calendar event* to calendar@therainbowtimesmass.com

*Certain restrictions apply. Small for-profit events/groups, 35 words or less, are considered for a small fee. Large/for-profit events are not considered. All submissions appear online.

Dems from p. 3

Richardson later elaborated in a statement issued by his campaign:

"Let me be clear—I do not believe that sexual orientation or gender identity happen by choice," Richardson said. "But I'm not a scientist, and the point I was trying to make is that no matter how it happens, we are all equal and should be treated that way under the law."

When Kucinich was asked whether there was anything on the agenda for gay and lesbian rights he did not support, he paused and said, "All I can say is, keep those contributions coming ... and you'll have the president that you want."

In a statement clearly aimed at the leading Democrats in the field, he said his support for same-sex marriage was "a question of whether you really believe in equality."

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese, who was on a panel posing questions to the candidates, said in a statement, the forum "was an important night in the fight for equality."

"Unfortunately, we have more work to do," Solmonese said. "The overwhelming majority of the candidates do not support marriage equality. While we heard very strong commitments to civil unions and equality in federal rights and benefits, their reasons for opposing equality in civil marriage became even less clear."

Of the eight Democratic candidates,

Automotive Q & A

By: Stephen M. Lewis
TRT Auto Columnist



Stephen M. Lewis
President, Steve Lewis Subaru

Q: My power windows (except the drivers) all of a sudden stopped working. How could they all stop working at the same time?

A: This is a very common occurrence. Many people are unaware that most vehicles are equipped with a window lockout switch, located at the master window control switch on the driver's door. If the lockout switch is inadvertently depressed, this will cause the passenger front and both rear door window switches to stop functioning. Simply push the lockout button and the windows will function normally. This feature is primarily used for child safety.

Q: My check engine light on the dashboard is lit. Is my vehicle safe to drive?

A: Yes, in most cases. A check engine light can mean several things. The check engine light coming on is much like a security alarm in an office building. The same alarm goes off and the same warning lights flash whenever security is breached. Which floor, which door or why the alarm is sounding has to be investigated by security personnel before they can decide what to do. The same basic concept applies to the check engine light. Always check to make sure that the gas cap is tight as this is a common reason for the light to come on.

Q: My brake light on the dashboard is lit. Is my vehicle safe to drive?

A: Yes. The reason the light is on is because the brakes are wearing and the brake fluid in the reservoir is low. It is best to schedule an appointment to check the wear of the brakes. As long as the brakes are not going, the vehicle should be safe to drive.

If you have an automotive related question, e-mail it to stevelewis@subarumail.com or call 413-584-5355.

This column is intended for informational purposes only. If you have an automobile problem, or you need a repair, please consult your mechanic.

two did not attend, Sens. Joe Biden of Delaware and Chris Dodd of Connecticut.

LOGO, a cable channel available in about 27 million homes, wanted to hold a second forum for Republican candidates but Republican front-runners showed no interest, channel officials said.

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Court says gay couples can't file taxes jointly in NJ yet

By Geoff Mulvihill/AP Writer

MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. (AP)—New Jersey now grants gay couples the same state benefits that married heterosexual couples receive, but that does not mean they can file their tax returns jointly for the 2006 tax year, a court ruled last week.

In a unanimous ruling, a three-judge appeals panel affirmed the state's position that the benefits—at least regarding tax returns—did not start until Feb. 19, when gay couples were allowed to join in civil unions.

Roslyn Quarto and Judith Prichason went to Canada, where gay marriage is legal, to wed in 2003. The next year, they registered as domestic partners in New Jersey so they could receive the limited benefits the state was allowing them.

Last October, the state Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey had to extend to same-sex couples all the rights that married couples are granted. But the court left it up to lawmakers to work out the mechanism for doing that.

The Legislature decided to enact civil unions, which are essentially marriages in all but name and which previously in place in only Vermont and Connecticut.

Under New Jersey law, Quarto and Prichason were considered to be in a civil union because they are legally married in Canada.

They asked the state if they could file a joint income tax return as a symbolic measure—even though it would mean paying the state an extra \$411.

The state Division of Taxation said no, reasoning that their union was not recognized in the 2006 year and that it could be hard administratively to deal with more couples filing jointly.

The couple sued, saying it was not the law that gave them the right to file joint tax returns, but last year's state Supreme Court decision.

The court, in an opinion by Judge Jack M. Sabatino and a separate concurring opinion by Judge Edwin H. Stern, disagreed and said that ruling the other way might mean many couples could amend their previous tax filings and ask the state for refunds.

It appears the case affects only one year's worth of tax returns for couples like Quarto and Prichason.

In court papers, the state has said it would accept the joint filings from couples with civil unions for the 2007 tax year.

Oregon couples bump up against limits under PERS rules

SALEM, Ore. (AP)—Conservative activists have argued that the domestic partnership law approved by the Oregon Legislature this year is the equivalent of allowing gay couples to marry.

But retired teacher Barbara Pinkerton wouldn't agree.

Pinkerton recently broke up with her partner, and tried to remove her "ex" as a beneficiary of her state pension benefits, to no avail.

Instead, the Public Employees Retirement System Board has ruled that her former partner must retain survivor's rights to PERS benefits.

That's because, under the PERS board's reasoning, Pinkerton and her partner were never legally married, and only married couples are allowed to remove a beneficiary from their state pension, after a formal divorce. Gay couples do not have the right to a legal divorce.

For all others—gay or straight—"once you opt for an option, you're stuck with it," Dave Fidanque, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, told The Statesman-Journal newspaper.

For Pinkerton, that means she'll get lower monthly retirement checks, because some money is kept in reserve should she die before her beneficiary.

Pinkerton's case is now on appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals, said Brian Boyd, a spokesman for Basic Rights Oregon, the state's leading gay right group.

California, which has authorized domestic partnerships since 2005, is granting equal pension rights to same-sex couples, Fidanque and Boyd said.

The entire debate may be moot if a group of conservative Christians has its way. Critics are gathering signatures to

put the domestic partnership law on the ballot, along with a companion law banning discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people.

If they gather enough valid signatures for the referendum, the two gay-rights laws will not go into effect, pending a statewide vote in November 2008.

Bar owner refuses voluntary interview in discrimination case

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona. (AP)—A Scottsdale bar owner named in a discrimination lawsuit has refused to be interviewed voluntarily under oath by the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

"If the Attorney General's Office wants to talk to me, they need to serve a subpoena," said Tom Anderson, owner of Anderson's Fifth Estate Night Club.

The dispute centers around transgender patrons and the use of the club's restroom facilities.

Last year, Anderson asked Michele deLaFreniere and some other patrons to leave the night club because they "freaked out" women customers by using the women's rest rooms.

When the transgender patrons tried to use the men's room, they complained that male patrons harassed them.

"It was determined that the safest course for the protection of all was to exclude these particular individuals because their conduct was creating tension at the night club," Anderson said.

DeLaFreniere said it was a matter of discrimination and filed the complaint. DeLaFreniere, 52, has lived as a woman since 2004.

Anderson's attorney Chuck Kelhoffer said the bar owner is accused of discrimination on the grounds of sexual stereotyping. The argument has been used primarily in employment cases, according to Kelhoffer.

Anderson said that he has no bias against transgender individuals, but could not afford to put in a third rest room just for transgender patrons.

The cost of fighting the discrimination

case could be high.

Anderson said he has launched a legal defense fund to fight the charges.

Lost and Delirious: A movie review

By: J.M. Sorrell/TRT Writer

This Canadian gem of a film (2001) is now distributed on DVD by Lion's Gate in the United States. It is based on the novel *Wives of Bath* by Susan Swan. It is set at a girls' boarding school and was filmed in Lennoxville, Quebec on the Bishop's University campus in the summer. It won a Genie for "Best Achievement in Cinematography."

The director is Léa Pool.

The narrator of the film, played by Mischa Barton, is a shy girl named Mary. She is new to boarding school, her arrival precipitated by the death of her mother. Dad is busy and fails to stay connected. Mary rooms with Paulie (Piper Perabo) and Tori (Jessica Paré)—two rebellious and interesting young women who are also lovers.

One may expect this to be just another coming of age story, where the adults ruin the lives of the girls when their lifestyle is discovered; however, this particular film has considerably more depth. It deals with the ramifications of homophobia in unexpected ways, and allies surprise us. Gender identity and stereotypes are themes.

You will recognize Mimi Kuzyk and Jackie Burroughs, who play the primary adult leaders of the school. Each of them has played in numerous supporting roles in American film and television. Their characters are not your standard fare.

The soundtrack is eclectic and woven into the film well, with performances from Ani DiFranco, Violent Femmes, Cowboy Junkies, and the Muungano National Choir.

This film is retailing for \$11-20. I rented it from Netflix. Online, it is available in a bundle with *Better than Chocolate*, which is one of the best all-time Canadian lesbian films. Supporting your local, independent vendor is another option.

CT Neighborhood Organizations

AIDS Testing: www.guardinhealth.org

Gay Father's Group: (203) 938-2881/Hartford
Community Center: (860) 724-5542/CT Freedom to *Marry Coalition:* (203) 791-9553/Love Makes a Family: www.inf-cl.org (860) 525-7777/Married **Lesbian Support Group:** tricolor@aol.com (203) 430-9227

Married Men's Bisexual Support Group of Hartford: (860) 264-5605/Metropolitan Community **Church of New Haven:** (203) 397-2312/New Haven **Gay & Lesbian Center:** www.nhglcc.org; (203) 387-2252

PFLAG Danbury: www.pflag.org; (203) 797-4743/Connecticut's Kids: (203) 256-8414
Senior Lesbians Happily at Play (SLAPHAPS): Kathy (203) 929-8113

True Colors CT: www.ourtruecolors.org; (888) 565-5551/National

Runaway Switchboard: (773) 880-9860/Connecticut **Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF):** 135 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-860.247.6090 **Info, and Referral program:** (800) 479-2949 or Greater Hartford 524-0601 - Statewide women's rights organization working to end discrimination and hate crimes; provides free legal information and referral to the LGBT community.

XX Club (Twenty Club): Rev. Cannon Jones - 45 Church Street Hartford, CT 06141-0387 - (860) 646-8651 - Provides knowledgeable info., and ongoing peer support to transsexuals. 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month, 2-5 p.m.
connecticut View (cTVIEW): A transgender social and support group for the TV, TG, TS, CD, both male and female. Monthly meeting in New Haven as well as e-membership, and more. A no dues club, with all the frills; www.transgender.org/ctv/



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QEntertainment

'Bam Bam and Celeste' quakes with queer quirkiness

By: Ginger Harris*

Margaret Cho and Bruce Daniels star in Bam Bam and Celeste, a quirky tale of friendship and perseverance that brims with hilarity while addressing the unpleasant realities of prejudice and ignorance.

Bam Bam (Daniels) and Celeste (Cho) are best friends who fit a classic description: put-down, small-town outcasts who talk about leaving but never do. From high school in the late 1980s to present day, the pair catch heat from their intolerant neighbors and peers, including their arch nemesis, prom-royalty-turned-style-guru Jackie and Ryan. From the salon where they "maintain mullets," the friends dream of a better life. Driven by the conviction that there must be more out there for them, the duo decide to seek the advice of a spacey psychic, whose "clairvoyance" takes them on a zany road trip to New York City to be contestants on Trading Faces, "America's favorite makeover show." The chance discovery of a kindred spirit on the other end of the phone line gives the pair an edge, and soon they're on their way to realizing their dream.

But the drive is no walk in the park. Celeste and Bam Bam encounter opposition at every turn, from racist gas station workers to a gang of homophobic hicks. The insults are brutal; subtlety is lost on every one of their foes, especially once they reach the studio and confront their high school enemies, whose high-end salon has garnered them enough acclaim

to serve as judges of the makeover contest. With the help of Celeste's slightly off but supportive mother Mommy (also played by Cho), and a host of friends they meet along the way, the pair remain undaunted in their quest for a shot at stardom, and discover that their friendship, and each of them, is stronger than they knew.

Bam Bam and Celeste has all the charm of a lighthearted comedy with a focus on real-life injustice and the plight of the underdog. It mixes heavy issues with outrageous side-splitting humor and manages to pull it all off with minimal out-of-place corniness. Skillful cinematography coupled with a fitting soundtrack add smoothness to a limit-pushing storyline, and the ability of the protagonists to maintain an even keel in the face of the most difficult kind of resistance is inspiring, indeed. Director Lorene Machado brings out the very best in the cast, achieving an air of whimsy in every scene that is sustained even in times of confrontation. This movie's one-liners are priceless, with the humor touching on every manner of stereotype and poking fun at some of the more unpleasant aspects of modern society. Cho's signature wit shines in scenes where her aggressors taunt her for her ethnicity and fashion sense, a hilarious originality she also brings to her alternate character, Mommy.

The film is one of several collaborations between Cho and Machado, with Cho contributing as producer and screenwriter.



The team's collective ambition with the film was to "have some fun and hold up a mirror," and Bam Bam and Celeste succeeds brilliantly in this effort. In it, racism and prejudice abound in absurd proportions, but in order to sustain the overall outrageousness of the film, that's exactly the treatment it needs. Audiences may find themselves squirming in their seats at the brutality of some remarks, but the fact that a reaction is warranted shows how out-of-place such discrimination is in a society that allegedly celebrates the individual.

Bam Bam and Celeste is a great trip. It employs just the right amount of outlandishness to make social commentary

enjoyable on screen, for a change. The "if it's different, it must be wrong" mentality is all-too-familiar in contemporary America, and this film puts an original spin on the classic quest to learn to love who you are in spite of what others have to say about it. The empowering final message is the perfect culmination of the personal journeys of two delightful misfits, who learn through adversity that your true friends come through for you when you really need them, and that to feel truly beautiful, you have to be true to yourself.

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