

our lives



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A business 10 years in the making comes of age

Surrounded by Marriage Equality

Fair Wisconsin's grassroots plan for achieving it here

The Shamrock's Second Chance

Why **Bob Mahr** stepped in to save his community bar

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

SIXTH ANNUAL LOVE ISSUE



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plus



Richard Wagner profiles State Assemblyman Lloyd Barbee, an early champion of LGBT rights and marriage equality.

Jillian Garcia & Amy Kjeldahl

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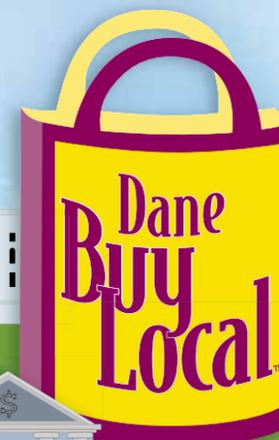


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Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

Patrick Farabaugh
Publisher / Editor-in-Chief
 Emily Mills
Editor
 Kelly Murray
Copy Editor

Contributing Writers
 Katie Belanger
 Jeanne Benink
 Robert Mahr
 Roxanne Meyer
 Connie North
 Will Van Roosenbeek
 Richard Wagner
 Caroline Werner
 Karin Wolf

Editorial Facilitators
 Linda Lenzke
 Tim Lom
 Ryan Petty

Contributing Photographers
 Eric Baillies
 Ian DeGraff
 Timothy Hughes
 Wendi Kent
 Tami Lax
 Beth McConnell

Business Manager
 Matt Jelinek

National Advertising Sales
 Rivendell Media Inc.

Webmaster
 Josh Meyers

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JANUARY 2014

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(Top row, L-R) Christian A. Real Merino, Jhonatan Real Merino, Laura Ranalletta and Baltazar De Anda-Santana and (bottom row, L-R) Mayra DeGraff, Diego Campoverde-Cisneros, Blanca Merino Ramos and Less Stoval

This publication celebrates diversity in the Madison area. It will come with your January *Madison Magazine* and will also be available online and at select pick-up locations listed below.

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The Love That Connects Us



Ah, love is in the air. Hundreds of stories of love fill the pages of this issue, in fact—from couples already decades into their relationships to those still brand-new. I want to give special thanks to everyone who contributed their stories to these pages, and those who filled out our joint survey with Fair Wisconsin. The LGBTQ tapestry is made up of many different and often impossible-to-categorize approaches to love and family, of course. We've had to work hard to carve out our own spaces in life, and should be right-

fully proud of the many ways in which we've succeeded. The couples survey is just one piece of that puzzle, but it's an important and highly visible one—not only does it show the wider world the sheer number of LGBTQ couples that exist and thrive (often in spite of discriminatory social and political climates), but it also provides crucial role-modeling to those people just coming out of the closet, coming to terms with their sexuality, who might not otherwise ever be exposed to the rainbow of healthy, rewarding possibilities that exist for folks like themselves.

Love also obviously includes our close friends and our chosen and blood families, as well as our furrier companions. Love can mean passion for your line of work, food, or an activity. All of those stories and more can be found in these pages, and I hope they

provide as much inspiration and insight for you as they have for me in editing them.

It's been especially heartening to see the community rally behind the resurrection of the Shamrock Bar & Grille. New owner Bob Mahr writes an excellent account of why and how he decided to throw himself into taking over and revitalizing this cornerstone of the LGBTQ social scene in Madison, and the enormous outpouring of support from others that helped make it possible. It's a great example of our community coming together to save something that's played such a vital role in so many of our lives.

I'd like to make special mention, too, of the Our Issues article by Connie North. Our community has been shaken by too many suicides over the years (one is too many)—but the last several months have been especially difficult. Connie does a great job of talking both about how we can all be better advocates for those who are suffering, as well as how to battle those demons when they affect us directly. For those of us who enjoy relatively stable home and work lives, it's absolutely crucial to remember and support those members of our families and communities who are struggling, and often overlooked or even ignored, but who are just as deserving of our love and help as anyone.

Tell someone today that you love them. Give someone a hug. Never wait. We have precious little time on this Earth, so fill it with as much good as you're able. Choose your life.

Emily Mills
Editor



Tami Lax – photography, Our Taste
When not spending time at her two Madison restaurants, Harvest and The Old Fashioned, Tami can be found documenting her life through photography. Her passion for photography rivals her passion for cooking. It started at an early age when Santa brought Tami her first Kodak Instamatic Model 814 in 1969. She's "that person" at every family gathering. Tami's camera is always over her shoulder or close by. Favorite subjects are family, food, and travel. She loves how a photograph captures a moment, and her obsession is capturing that moment that is otherwise gone forever.



Eric Baillies – photography, Shamrock Bar & Grille feature
Eric has worked together with Patrick Farabaugh since the first year of Our Lives magazine, documenting many stories and organizations including GSAFE, Fair Wisconsin, New Harvest, and the AIDS Network. He uses real-life images to help organizations and local businesses document their work to spread their message and familiarize the public with who they are. Come spring, Eric will be taking to the streets with a portable darkroom to shoot tintypes in a creation of old vs. new. Portraits, buildings, and odd objects will be his subjects, bringing one of the oldest developed forms of photography to Madison in a new way. Please see his website to contact Eric with any interest in having a tintype made: Ebaillies.com



Katie Belanger – Our Rights
Katie has extensive experience in Wisconsin politics, campaign and nonprofit fundraising, and grassroots organizing. Katie joined Fair Wisconsin as the legislative director to shepherd Wisconsin's first pro-fairness legislation in over two decades, domestic-partnership protections, through the 2009-2011 biennial budget process. In July 2009, Katie became Fair Wisconsin's executive director and now serves as president & CEO. Prior to joining Fair Wisconsin, Katie was the deputy campaign and program director for Advancing Wisconsin, one of the largest state-based voter contact and issue advocacy organizations. Katie also served Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin as both campaign finance director and PAC director. Before transitioning to fundraising, Katie was the scheduling director for Governor Jim Doyle. Katie currently serves as the board co-chair for the Equality Federation, the strategic partner to state-based LGBT advocacy organizations advancing equality in the communities we call home.

Letter to the Editor:

Just complimenting you for the article about JoCasta Zamarripa. I also read all the other articles, and as an individual who has promoted cultural competency and cross-cultural communications for over 30 years, I found the article by Kristen Petrosius impacting because of her candor, thoughtfulness, and passion. We are all translators to one another's experiences and lives. It is wonderful to find folks who take the time to be humble but forceful, and vulnerable but up-front. We all need to understand that culture and knowledge are much more complex than holding hands and singing songs! Thank you to her and to you!

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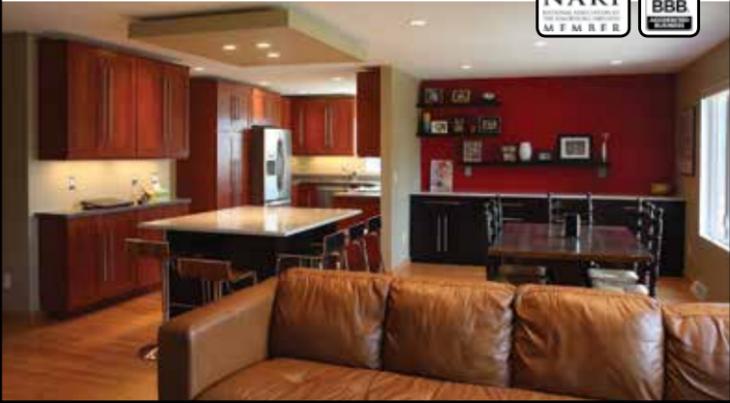
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Kate Bornstein is a performance artist and playwright who has authored several award-winning books in the field of Women and Gender Studies, including *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and The Rest of Us*, and *My Gender Workbook*. Her 2006 book, *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws*, propelled Kate into an international position of anti-bully advocacy for marginalized youth, earning her praise from civil rights groups around the globe.

Kate's books are taught in five languages in over 200 colleges and universities around the world. She lives in New York City with her girlfriend, three cats, two dogs, and one turtle, in whose company she wrote her new memoir, *A Queer and Pleasant Danger: the true story of a nice Jewish boy who joins the Church of Scientology, and leaves twelve years later to become the lovely lady she is today.*

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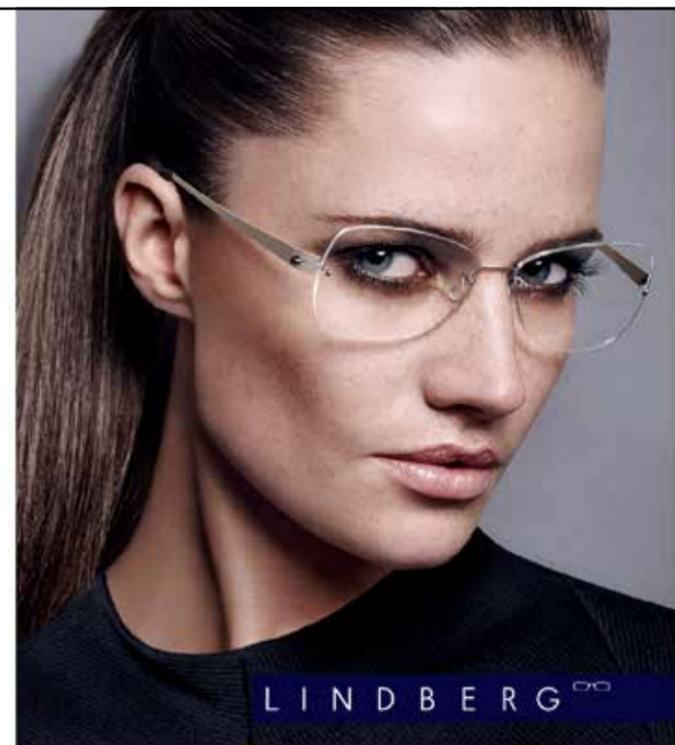
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OUR ARTISTS

The Born Creative

Through her art, **Janis Senungetuk** found a life's work and a lantern to guide through adversity.

In an artist statement posted near her work at the OPEN group show at Absolutely Art and Café Zoma last November, Janis N. Senungetuk wrote, "Eleanor Roosevelt stated that 'the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.' From the age of three, when I declared that I was an artist, I have kept that dream alive."

When Janis was three years old, so the story goes, a neighbor asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. "I am an artist," Janis declared. Being an artist was not some career track she was planning on pursuing as an adult; it was core to who she was, who she had been, and who she would be. She was, if you will, born that way.

Janis began "formally" studying art when she was seven years old and took classes at the Kansas City Art Institute. She later received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she graduated with honors. She went on to get her Master of Arts and Master of Fine Arts from Northern Illinois University in printmaking and drawing. It was in 1980 while pursuing her master's degree that Janis first developed vision problems. Her eyes tired easily, and once-vibrant colors were suddenly fading to gray.

The first doctor she consulted misdiagnosed her condition, believing that her sight was merely strained from the intensity of her work. When her vision continued to worsen, she went to a specialist, who diagnosed her with diabetic retinopathy. He was able to stop the disease's progress, but unfortunately, permanent damage had already been done. Much to her relief, a later surgery was able to return color vision to her right eye, though she remains legally blind in the other. Vision impairment, however, never stopped Janis from being who she is as an artist.



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Photo by Ian DeGraff

In fact, in 2007 Janis was awarded the Madison Arts Commission Signature Grant, the highest award the City offers to an artist to create a new body of work. She used the funding to put together her solo exhibition *Bold Visions*, hosted by the Wisconsin Council of the Blind in December of that year. *Bold Visions* highlighted Janis's fine art nature photography, composed of computer-manipulated images. The higher contrast and heightened colors enhance the clarity so that sight-limited viewers can still perceive the images and enjoy the work.

Though Janis has long been an activist for LGBTQ equality and social justice, her politics have never made it into the subject of her work. Perhaps her persistence to keep making art despite numerous health and economic challenges is in and of itself a sort of politicized stance. Making work about the beauty of the natural world and of life that celebrates light, nature, and the colors that she never takes for granted has always served as a respite from the difficulties of existence. She enjoys creating work that affirms these simple pleasures and she is happiest when sharing them with others.

A few years ago, Janis completed a certificate in social media at MATC. Then, to help other artists market and promote their work, she started a consulting business called JNS Creative Vision that develops social media solutions for creative businesses. At this point in her life, she is most concerned with sharing the knowledge she has garnered over the past 30 years, enjoying time with Sue, her partner of 31 years, visiting with her daughter, Jennifer, and her grandchildren, and being in the garden. She wants to collaborate with other artists, contribute positively to her community, and of course, continue being an artist for as long as she lives.

For more information about the artist, visit:
<http://nussbaumsenungetukstudio.blogspot.com>



Karin Wolf is the arts program administrator for the City of Madison Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development and the Madison Arts Commission. Her freelance arts writing has appeared in *Sculpture Magazine*, *Public Art Review*, and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

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member profile



NAME:
Cedric Johnson
TITLE:
Annual Giving
Coordinator
EMPLOYER:
Madison Children's
Museum

Cedric Johnson is an active member of OPEN's external committee, planning the annual dinner. After stints in advertising and public relations, he now puts his skills to work for the nationally recognized and locally beloved Madison Children's Museum in financial development. Outside of the museum he stays busy with the local creative scene, cycling, music, and is eager to volunteer with GSAFE in the coming year.

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Finding Her Place

Cindy Crane talks about her journey through a life of faith, and the LGBTQ in Faith Communities conference she helped to organize for February.

First off, please tell us a bit about yourself: Who are you, where are you from? How did you come to be doing the work that you're now doing?

Religion has always been a part of my life. Early experiences I had with contemplation and dialogue between religions while living in Japan influenced my spiritual path and sense of calling. I value learning from other practices and deepening my faith within my own tradition. I was ordained into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Early in my ministry, I questioned whether acting on my same-sex attractions would negatively affect my relationship with God. As I discerned that the real sin I encountered was in the cultural prejudice against LGBT people, and not my sexual orientation, I began to come out to more people. But that eventually meant leaving my profession.

Being an activist helped to carry me through my exile from the ministry. I joined a movement that helped ELCA clergy and churches to practice ecclesial disobedience. I moved from feeling afraid that I was sinful and of being exposed to being grateful for people tolerating me as lesbian to knowing exclusion of LGBT pastors was wrong. I had a voice in challenging the rules.

I came to Madison from the Twin Cities in 2004. Southern Wisconsin feels familiar. I grew up in Milwaukee until age 14 and attended high school in Adams.

In Madison I have worked largely in secular nonprofits but continued my connections with the church. St. John's Lutheran Church invited me to be an interim pastor during Rev. Ken Smith's sabbatical. The experience helped me decide to return to the clergy roster after the ELCA changed its rules about pastors in committed same-sex relationships in 2009.

Recently, for the first time since leaving the ministry, I received a full-time call as a pastor doing advocacy work for the church beginning in January.



Why did you decide to organize the LGBTQ in Faith Communities event / why is it important for the community?

I still meet LGBT people who say they aren't religious but then reveal that they have a complex related to religion or contradictions they haven't resolved. It was with this in mind that I started a small venture, Seekardia.

My experiences with LGBT people and religion were confirmed at the very successful Dialogue on Sexuality LGBTQ conference that OutReach LGBT Community Center organized in 2012. The next year, I asked OutReach Executive Director Steve Starkey if they were going to organize a conference again. He said they welcomed my offer to coordinate efforts with OutReach as a partner. Also involved on the planning committee are Rich Fluechtling (First Congregational United Church of Christ), Kris Hallisy (Trinity United Methodist Church), and Rabbi Bonnie Margulis (Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice)

What are some of the challenges you think are specific to LGBTQ people in faith communities?

Many LGBTQ people, while exploring which community strengthens their spiritual path, also need to ask which ones are welcoming to them as a sexual minority and question what communities mean by being "open." Is a community open on a local level but not on a larger organizational level? Is a religious body open, but not certain individual communities within it? Is a religious community open to LGBTQ at all leadership levels? Is a community only open to parts of the LGBTQ acronym? If it isn't as open as it could be, do you have a voice to help create change there? Where are you moved to be in the midst of all of these questions?

For some there is the issue of choosing between an open community that doesn't reflect their tradition and one that isn't very open to LGBTQ people but for them is more meaningful in its religious practice.

What do you hope will come of the event, both for yourself and those who attend?

We want to make our welcoming religious communities more widely known to LGBTQ people in our area and the voices of LGBTQ people more known to religious groups. We would like to use this event to learn from one another in various faith traditions about what it means to be open to LGBTQ people. What can each of us offer? What more can we learn?

We would like to use this event to learn from one another in various faith traditions about what it means to be open to LGBTQ people. What can each of us offer?

What are the specifics of the event, and how can people get involved/find out more?

"LGBTQ in Faith Communities: There Is a Place for You" will be held on Sunday, February 16 at Union South in Madison from 1 - 5:30 p.m. Our keynote speaker

will be the dynamic Rev. Everett D. Mitchell, of Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Church. We'll also have a diverse panel discussion, engaging workshops, and a resource fair. The cost is \$15, or \$5 for limited income. You can pay at the door. We also welcome sponsors. If you're interested in reserving a table or being a sponsor please go to www.seekardia.com or contact me with questions at consult@seekardia.com. The deadline for sponsorships is January 31.

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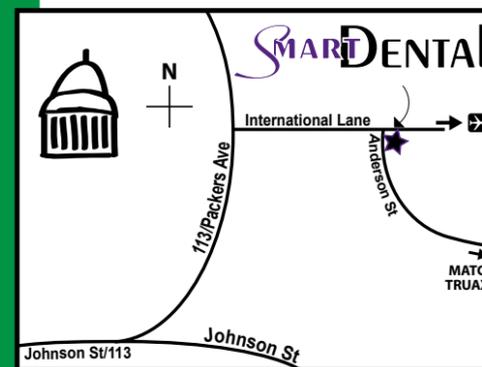
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Roar

Madison duo **Lion's Mouth** find their voice and their purpose through a unique musical experience

When I listen to the playback of my last take, my anxiety bursts into excitement and relief. Sinking deeper into the studio's cushy couch, I'm struck by the feeling that everything is coming together. After years of hard work and false starts in an unforgiving industry, Lion's Mouth feels like coming home.

My name is Chelsea Z., and I've been playing guitar and writing music for about seven years. As a self-taught singer and guitarist, I have traveled the country as a solo musician. After years of being on my own, I was feeling the need to create something different. Then, by chance, I met Sara.

Sara Wexler went to Lawrence University in Appleton, the same small town where I'd grown up. As I cut my teeth at open mic nights



and local cafes, Sara was playing in multiple groups with college friends and ensembles. Oddly enough, we played the same venues and even with the same musicians and never met each other. Years later, we finally did meet at an ice cream shop in Madison. After discovering that we both played music and that we both kept our spare change in empty nut jars, we decided to play some music together. We met up in a rat-infested basement that

became our practice space. It was apparent from the start that our styles were intense and unique, but they somehow seemed to fit.

Sara has a phenomenal sense of rhythm and time to which wayward singer/songwriters like myself have paid little mind. As we began rehearsing in our friend's basement, Sara and I argued over whether tempo is a rule or a mere suggestion. A mix of confusion, awe, and frustration ripped through me. This might be a tough practice, I thought. This clashing of backgrounds and musical tastes (she loved the Smashing Pumpkins and I was obsessed with The Clash and Top 40 pop) has led to our fair share of head butting, but what comes out is amazingly raw and intuitive.

Both Sara and I strive for honesty. We love both music and have an unwavering respect for the power it can hold. When I write lyrics to a song, they are searching, personal accounts. Lyrically, I like to talk about what I know. Sara has an amazing ear for dynamics, and when she adds her spark, the songs take on a life of their own. They become a fierce wall of sound. People are often surprised because they expect

us to be quiet and polite. We're just girls playing instruments, after all. As women in the music industry, we often find ourselves in rooms full of men. I'm not saying this is a bad thing, but historically speaking, the music industry has been a boys' club, and we hope to be part of the movement that will change this. We battle with the usual assumptions made of women drummers and acoustic guitarists. We hear comments such as "I've never seen a chick play like that" or "You're pretty good for a girl!" on a frighteningly regular basis. We are driven to change the way people think about women as musicians. When we take the stage, we are bold and relentless.

Each of us grew up in small towns where gays were closeted, so even the thought of being gay wasn't an option. It was this lack of visible LGBTQ role models that led us both to feel completely out of place. With no one around to pave the way, coming out was a journey that we each took alone. In many ways, playing music allowed us to finally be authentic and connect to others.

Within Lion's Mouth, we hope to become the role models we wished we had when we were young. We want to write music that is true to ourselves, no matter how angry, sad, or silly we come off. We express ourselves fearlessly in the hopes that our music will make people feel less scared and alone.

As I sit in this Chicago studio, listening to the playback, I feel a surge of pride and excitement. The drum beats and acoustic guitars are cascading through the speakers. Sara is tapping her foot and making goofy faces after every run-through. My fingers are sore from playing electric guitar parts over and over again. The energy that our live performances have become known for is finally taking the shape of an album. In this moment, I feel like it's all clicking into place, and I can't wait to write the liner notes. fromthelionsmouth.net

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OUR STORYTELLERS

What Transpired

Learning to write our trans* and queer memory images
with **Lynda Barry**.

"but paper and ink have conjuring abilities of their own. arrangements of lines and shapes, of letters and words on a series of pages make a world we can dwell and travel in." —**Lynda Barry, *What It Is***



Madison is fortunate to be the working home of Lynda Barry, award-winning artist, cartoonist, and author. She was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin; grew up in Seattle; and was educated at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Lynda moved to Chicago, where her comic strip, Ernie Pook's Comeek, was picked up by the Chicago Reader. There, she began writing and publishing illustrated novels, adapting work for the stage, and teaching.

Lynda credits her mentor, Marilyn Frasca at Evergreen State College, with teaching her the writing techniques that appear in her book, *What It Is*, a graphic novel, memoir, and workbook that is the basis for many of her art and writing workshops. In 2012, Lynda was named artist in residence at the Arts Institute at the University of Wisconsin and in 2013 was made assistant professor of interdisciplinary creativity through the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery and the UW-Madison Department of Art.

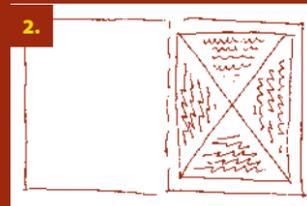
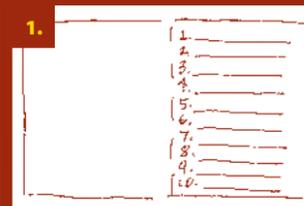
I attended a two-session writing workshop at the Image Lab in the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery in November 2013, entitled, *What Transpires? A Trans and GenderQueer Writer's Workshop*. Applicants to the workshop answered an 11-question application and were never asked to self-identify. In true Lynda Barry fashion, we were asked questions about our childhood, our dreams, what we found to be weird and how we preferred to express ourselves.

A dozen of us, including Lynda and an associate professor of history, gender, and women's studies, responded to writing prompts, guided meditations, and used Lynda's tools to identify memory images, write for seven and a half minutes, and share our stories, both personal narratives and fiction. When others read, we didn't make eye contact; instead we focused on drawing a spiral, like tuning in to a radio show. Lynda positioned herself at the readers' knees and acknowledged their work by simply saying, "Good, good!" We never discussed our work or our gender identities. We let our writing tell our stories.

Lynda's creativity and writing tools from the workshop are shared here. She encourages others to freely use techniques and those found in her book, *What It Is*. The following personal narrative was written by a workshop attendee, S.A. Halkyard, and was a response to a memory prompt about automobiles. —**Linda Lenzke**

I am so excited to stop driving! I am not driving, but being driven, even better to stop being driven. And the anticipation of approaching the Indian Souvenir Shop on the border has kept me eager all day. I rush ahead of my parents. It is desert highway twilight and I am afraid the store will close, just now as I finally arrive. We come twice a year, when our wandering takes us over the Arizona border. I pull open the heavy glass door, pause, I

What transpired in Lynda Barry's image lab writing workshop



1. List of 10 things in response to the image prompt. Choose one memory to write about.
2. Draw a border in the right hand page. Make an "X" in the middle. During the guided meditation, write what comes to mind.
3. Skipping every other line, write your memory narrative for 7.5 minutes. When listening to others read, draw a spiral on the left hand page of your composition book. It's like tuning into a radio program.

don't know where to begin! I traipse the aisles searching for the perfect treasure: there are beaded bags, carved soapstone birds, leather moccasins, two headed rattle snakes, cicada casings, tiny knives and arrow heads and wooden arrows. There are also plastic cars and small fake plastic food. Finally I find what I have been dreaming of without knowing it: a whole scorpion the size of my seven year old fist, suspended in a glass, no, clear plastic bubble, its tail curled over, ready to strike. I shiver. I almost can't touch it, it's so terrifying. I call mom over, ask if there's any way it can still sting me? No? Is there poison in the bubble? No? Okay, then I wants it! The bottom is flat and covered in felt so it lies like a tiny museum of my run-ins with nature.

I am thinking of the scorpions who crawl up the through the bathtub drains. Always check the shower in Arizona. I am thinking of the one I found lingering in the women's room at the mining camp in California. It made me have to use the men's room. Even though no one was there but me and my dad, escorting me and holding the flashlight because it was very late at night. It was ever so thrilling to see the men's room. And it was necessary. There was a scorpion. Dad came in when I started screaming. We didn't kill it, I don't think, just let it be. I was almost sad that the one in the plastic bubble was totally dead. It looked so fierce. So unknowable.

S.A. Halkyard hails from the Wild West, and currently lives on Madison's isthmus. S.A. writes and illustrates young adult science fiction and fantasy, post apocalyptic alt. historical fiction, and tales about cats.

Linda Lenzke lives in Madison and has been writing poetry, personal narratives, comedy, and spoken-word monologues for the past 30 years. She is a founding member of LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers. To read more of Linda's work, visit her blog: mixedmetphorsohmy.com.

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Camp Bingo: Red Carpet Bingo
January 26, Sheraton Madison

Kick off the season with an afternoon of campy bingo-hall fun, hosted by Cass Marie Domino and Michael Bruno and featuring special guest callers WISC's Mark Koehn and Susan Siman. Doors open at 1 p.m. and the first ball is called at 2:30 p.m. Proceeds benefit AIDS Network. aidsnetwork.org/camp-bingo



5th Annual OPEN Dinner
February 6, Overture Center

The annual Out Professional & Executive Network awards and dinner return to the Overture Center for an evening of good food, catching up with friends, networking, and speeches from community leaders. openmadison.org



Wisconsin LGBT Leadership Conference
February 7-9, Hyatt Regency Milwaukee

The conference works to build a more skilled and connected network of LGBT and allied leaders who are empowered to achieve and protect LGBT equality in their local communities across Wisconsin. wilgbtleadership.org

ORGANIZATIONS

A representative sampling

AIDS Network
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 252-6540
aidsnetwork.org

Alianza Latina
facebook.com/alianzalatinamadison

Bowling Out Loud
beckwith.matt@yahoo.com

Dairyland Cowboys & Cowgirls
dcandc.org

Fair Wisconsin
203 S. Paterson Street, Madison (608) 441-0143
fairwisconsin.com

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg

Gay/Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)
122 E. Olin Ave., Madison (608) 661-4141
gsafe.org

Gay Softball League
badgerlandsoftball.com

Gay Volleyball League
madisongayvolleyball.com

Hermanos Latinos
sneal@aidsnetwork.org

Lez In Color Yahoo Group
LezInColor@yahoo.com

Lez Talk Yahoo Group
leztalkmadison@yahoo.com

Madison Gay Hockey Association
madisongayhockey.org

Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby
minotaursrugby.org

New Harvest Foundation
newharvestfoundation.org

Out Professional and Executive Network (O.P.E.N.)
openmadison.org

OutReach Community Center
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 255-8582
lgbtoutreach.org

PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(608) 848-2333
pflag-madison.org

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus
perfectharmonychorus.org

StageQ - Madison's Queer Theater
stageq.com

UW - Madison LGBT Campus Center
800 Langdon St., Madison (608) 265-3344
wisc.edu/lgbt

Wisconsin Rainbow Families
wirainbowfamilies.com

Love & Food

Drawn by the appeal of a legally recognized marriage, **Kiera Mulvey** and **Mary Saunders** also found a loving, accepting community across the border in rural Iowa.



Never in a zillion years would I have imagined hopping the rainbow over to Iowa to tie the knot. Nothing personal against Iowa exactly, but prior to moving to Madison, everything I knew about Iowa came from Field of Dreams. Madison was supposed to be the bubble; Wisconsin the liberal oasis of the corn and soybean landscape. Little did we know that minutes before moving here, Wisconsin would ban gay marriage and hand the baton of sanity to its neighboring states to embrace our dignity and welcome our families.

Thanks, Iowa. In our six years in Madison we've taken advantage of the domestic-partner benefits provided through UW-Madison, jumped through the mini-hoop of the state registry, and enjoyed a welcoming, open, supportive community of LGBTQ friends. We didn't plan to get married. In fact, even after we got married I can really say we hardly planned. However, things changed when our son was born last June. Wisconsin's discriminatory laws and institutional homophobia now demanded a place at our table, and the legal post-DOMA climate was just the right temperature to incubate our impulse.

Our wedding, despite our nine sweet years together, happened in a flash of highly unromantic motivations. We decided to get hitched for the tax benefits, for the layer of protection for our son—oh, and also to celebrate our love and commitment.

But what started as a business transaction took on a life of its own when a couple of our best pals invited themselves along for the ride. That took us out of the courthouse and onto the Internet to surf our options for a Decorah location that would be a good fit for our growing, motley crew. Through a series of happy accidents and a desire to keep our weekend low-key, we found the Pepperfield Project.

Without even knowing it, we had walked into an arrangement that was so "us" we couldn't have dreamed it up if we tried. Pepperfield and its founder, David, are deeply committed to good food, good people, and the many synergies that evolve from mixing the two.

Mary and I (and many of our whopping 13 guests) have dedicated our professional and personal lives to good food and the systems that create it. Pepperfield is a non-profit educational retreat center dedicated to celebrating growing, cooking, and enjoying real food. As our guest list outgrew the mattresses, couches, and guest rooms at Pepperfield, David activated his dynamic community of neighbors to host our friends. Liz down the lane put up some friends in her own home, and his "industrial lesbians," so named for their love of powerful machines, hosted another two couples. We were truly embraced by this community in rural Iowa.

Our weekend was full of good, fresh food from the farm, laughter, friends, and hand-ground coffee all served piping hot and family style in the warm sun of the south-facing windows. Through a strange, sweet, surreal twist of fate, Mary and I celebrated all the things we truly love about each other and our community of friends in the perfect place.

We certainly had a gay old time.

GET LISTED To see your event on this page, be sure to post it on our community calendar ourlivesmadison.com

17 PLAN YOUR YEAR

- March**: New Harvest Dinner
- March 30**: AIDS Network Camp Bingo
- April**: AIDS Network's Red Ribbon Affair
- April 8**: Conference on LGBT Homelessness
- May 2**: OUT at the Symphony
- May 10**: GSAFE Leadership Conference
- May**: GSAFE Celebration of Leadership
- June 6-8**: Milwaukee PrideFest
- June**: FruitFest
- August**: ACT 12: Wisconsin AIDS Ride
- August 10**: OutReach Pride Parade
- September 12**: OutReach Banquet
- October 12**: GSAFE's Walk/Run/Eat

Masquerade Ball benefit for OutReach, January 4, Best Western Enjoy a night of Victorian dress and masks at this ball to benefit the Madison OutReach Center, 7-10 p.m. at the Best Western at 2424 University Ave. lgbtoutreach.org

Fire Ball VI: Gods & Monsters, January 25, Majestic Madison The biggest, freakiest night of the winter returns to the Majestic for a night of tasteful debauchery: Enjoy burlesque, fire performers, aerial acrobats, drag, and the spectacle of an audience dressed to the nines. majesticmadison.com

28th Annual Frostiball, February 1, Overture Center Downtown Madison's annual evening of fancy dress, dancing, and food returns with an evening featuring great entertainment from the Dick Judson Orchestra and local jazz musician Doug Brown. Live performances by the Fred Astaire Dance Studios of Madison will also take place throughout the night! An array of delectable hors d'oeuvres and desserts as well as complimentary champagne, wine, beer, soda, and coffee drinks will be served. downtownmadison.org

Apple Pie America with Madison Symphony Chorus, February 2, Overture Center Director Beverly Taylor and the Madison Symphony Chorus survey the surprising diversity of American choral traditions spanning the centuries. Feel the beauty and power of 160 uplifting voices as the Symphony Chorus brings these song traditions to life! madisonsymphony.org

LGBTQ in Faith Communities: There Is a Place for You, February 16, Union South This conference, presented by Seekardia and OutReach, aims to explore the interface between LGBTQ people and faith communities. It is an extension of the 2012 Interfaith Conference and will feature speaker the Rev. Everett D. Mitchell of Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Church, a resource fair, a panel discussion, and breakout groups. lgbtoutreach.org

AIDS Network Camp Bingo: Zombie Bingo, February 23, Sheraton Madison The undead take over this installment of Camp Bingo, featuring guest callers NBC15's Christine Bellport and Leigh Mills. Do you have the braaaaains to play? Doors at 1 p.m. and the first ball is called at 2:30 p.m. aidsnetwork.org/camp-bingo

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Responses were collected through a collaborative survey e-mailed to both the **Fair Wisconsin** and **Our Lives** mailing lists. Sign up for either (or both!) at FairWisconsin.com and OurLivesMadison.com.



Photo by Maureen Cassidy

Bill and Ron Strelow-Dunn

2 YEARS // What we value most in our relationship is our love and commitment to that relationship. We both believe it is important to support each other as individuals and as a union of two souls with unconditional love for each other. These values build a foundation that supports and nourishes our relationship.

Our foundation is a key in working through conflict when it arises. We understand that conflict is a normal part of a growing relationship. When conflict arises, we focus on listening to each other and acknowledge each other's feelings and perspective. We don't focus on who's right or wrong, but rather on meeting each other's needs and not just our needs as individuals. Then we let go. If we feel like we're still carrying something, we talk through it until it's resolved. We also have a little ritual we do almost every morning where we remind each other of why we are together and how it feels to be together, and share a memory of our journey together. A relationship is a journey to be savored like walking through a forest full of fall colors. Listen, observe, and reflect: Love is a beautiful thing!

APPLETON

- 49 Beverly & William Armstrong*
- 20 Jackie Calhoun & Diane
- 15 Rachel Crowl & Helen Kramer
- 14 Rose Hammond & Brenda Rivet**
- 11 Julie Konik & Christine Smith**
- 10 Sara Rabideau & Samantha Tassoul**
- 9 Jeff Amstutz & Chad Hershner**
- 9 Sally Masters & Chris Zingler**
- 7 Kathy Flores & Ann Kendzierski**
- 3 Brandi Alonzo & Amber Flores
- 3 Jana Dumke & Susan Richards
- 3 Stacey Dudley & Sheri Mealy**

ARENA

- 3 Linda Balisle & Cindy Crane

ASHLAND

- 9 David & Teege Mettill**

BALDWIN

- 3 Sarah Cleveland & Amanda Tomczak

BARABOO

- 13 David & Ryan Berahn**
- 6 Teri Sonsalla & Lisa Turner**
- 3 Kasandra Brown & Kelly Kopisch

BARRON

- 8.5 Daniel Djubenski & Brandon Litwiller**

BAYSIDE

- 19 Leon Laufer & Nathaniel Walker
- 9 Jeff Evans & George Marek

BEAVER DAM

- 25 Phillip & Sonia Utterback*

BELLEVILLE

- 24 Brian Thompson & Ken Cameron**
- 14 Lynda Boyce & Thomas*

BELOIT

- 3 Joseph Hernandez & Robert Markin

BOSCOBEL

- 38 T.J. Meehan & Larry Ortt**
- 8 Jennifer Johnson & Brenda Larson**

BRISTOL

- 17 Lori & Robert Hawkins*

BROOKFIELD

- 13.5 Lynn Carlson & Lisa Rouskey**

BROOKLYN

- 29 Carlene & Rick Bechen*

BROWN DEER

- 35 Ann & Dennis Griffin*
- 21 Lys Buck & Liz Yoon**

BURLINGTON

- 8 Steven Mayo & Jarod Pobst

CAMBRIDGE

- 40 Mim Jacobson & Marian Korth
- 35 George Gay & Brian Soper

CAMERON

- 4 Kristine Gotch & Jennifer Holm

CHIPPEWA FALLS

- 11 Jason Bennett & Dan Hardy**

COLFAX

- 12 John Graykoski & Woody Songne**

COLUMBUS

- 3 Thomas Nonn & Lin Won*

COON VALLEY

- 5 AJ Johnston & Don Schuh**

COTTAGE GROVE

- 24 Karen & Preston Baker*
- 14 Deb Fruit-Gaines & Sheila Jacobson-Gaines**
- 7 Lori Van Himbergen & Michelle Melsby**
- 4 Carlos & Perry Edge-Gross**

CUDAHY

- 12 Megan O'Keefe & Crystal Silkwood
- 8 Jennifer & Ruth Conrad-Proulx

DARIEN

- 1 Traci Lebow & Ashley Robinson

DE PERE

- 6 Nancy & John Nusbaum*

DEFORREST

- 17 John & Susan Ellickson*
- 12 Holly Anderson & Colleen Marsden

DELAVAN

- 8 Gaia Lenz & Laura Lenz-Perkins

EAST TROY

- 8 Lindsay Demara & Wendy Millard

EAU CLAIRE

- 40 Jon & Kathy Kurshinsky*
- 39 John Peterson & Arturo Santos**
- 38 Carol Schumacher & Virginia Wolf**
- 13 Chuck Schwie & Travis Welke**
- 12 Lisa Herrmann & Jane Schley**
- 3 Adam Leszczwicz & Justin Terlecki
- 3 Lauren Miller & Amy Younger
- 2 Nancy Coddington & Libby Smith

- 1 Johnny Beaulieu & William O'Connell

EDGERTON

- 6 Mandy Ingram & Sarah Korpi**
- 1.5 Jori Conca & EJ Sommerfeld

EVANSVILLE

- 5 David Elliott & Patrick Reese
- 4 Margaret Kucera & Holly Scheuren**

FITCHBURG

- 25 Anne Hecht & Diane Olsen**
- 24 Susan Cary & Vicki May**
- 19 Michele Perreault & Stephanie Spoehr**
- 16.5 Catherine Briggs & Marty Fox

- 14 Cindy Byczek & Kristin Fiore**

- 12 Lindsay Raftis & Alicia Stevenson**

- 11 Katie Belanger & Jason Sidener*

- 5 Jill Muenich & Laura Webster**

- 3 Russ Faulkner & Breianna Hasenzahl-Reeder

- 3 Ryan Crose & Steven Heller

- 2 Elise Kleist & Kaylen York

FOND DU LAC

- 15 Brian Beyer & Randy Resop

FORT ATKINSON

- 7 Jennifer Parrish & Cheryl Stinson

FOUNTAIN CITY

- 18 Beth Cherne & Cindy Killion**

FOX POINT

- 43 Ross Draeger & Robert Starshak**

FRANKLIN

- 7 Brittany Hinson & Ashley Sorenson
- 3 Gracie Limbach & Riva Murdock

KEY

- Couples are listed by the number of years spent together.
- Bold text indicates couples registered under Wisconsin's Domestic Partnership Registry.
- Allied/supportive straight couples are followed by an (*).



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Larry Palm & Jon Dean

3.5 YEARS // Over Ever since we met at the 2010 Bingham Rugby Cup in Minneapolis, we've been living in two cities. Because Jon is in veterinary school in Saint Paul and Larry lives in Madison, we've spent the last three years driving back and forth. We take this as an opportunity to explore both communities and the unique things they have to offer.

Along the way, we've learned a lot about the importance of good communication and being present in each other's lives even when we can't be physically together.

Our wedding in Saint Paul symbolized the combining of both our lives. We planned the date before marriage was legal in Minnesota, but were ecstatic when friends and family could hear those special words, "I hereby pronounce you married!"

This year, we look forward to finally having our family (including our dog, Molly) all together under one roof in Madison for good.

- FREDONIA**
29 Chris Hewitt & Dean Wiegert
- GERMANTOWN**
 12 Pat Brown & Dennis Kohler
- GLENDALE**
 29 D A Leonard & W. Michael Ross
 6 Diana & Paul Doro*
 5 Gina Lisko & Julie Taylor
- GRAFTON**
 4 Melissa Jones & Dawn Kittson
- GREEN BAY**
20 Stacie Christian & Julie Tetzlaff
18 Etienne & Jacques Honoré
12 Angie & Deanne Kowalzek-Adrians
 12 Doug Rickert & Todd Rolain
 10 John Cote & Paul Toutant
9 Julie & Theresa Weise
 6 Curtis Morissette & Robert Orde
 6 Greg & Hadley Pattin*
 6 Kelsy Burke & Maggie Lozier
 6 Kevin Garrity & Michael Larkey
 5 Megan Carter & Tabitha DeBauche
 4 Cassandra Hall & Jessica Verville
- GREENFIELD**
18 Marshelle Gerber & Debra Mueller
14 Mary Bergeson & Tess Gallun
7.5 Rod & JR Rasch-Claussen
 4 Dana Gill & Jessica Langoehr
- HALES CORNERS**
 1.5 Charity Aviles & Angela Laack
- HARTFORD**
 1 Amanda Cramer & Ashley Detrie
- HARTLAND**
 8 Amanda & Khary Penebaker

- HUBERTUS**
20 Nancy Maas & Tammy Thorlakson
- HUDSON**
 51 Rev. Dr. Dan Bruch & Dr. Elizabeth Bruch*
- JANESVILLE**
 35 Judith Detert-Moriarty & Patrick Moriarty*
15 Maria Parker & Kelley Richardt
 14 Alexis & Jennifer Cloute
14 David Keith Steinbeck & Brad Yarmark
11 Jay Schleker & Josh Siedschlag
11 Robert Crandall & Michael Piette
8 Kimberly Blanchette & Colleen Frentzel
 3 Kady DeBerge & Katie Martinez
- JEFFERSON**
 20 Karen & Paul Glasser*
 6 Sheryl & Tarrah Spooner
 4 Robert Harrold & Nhes Ticoy, Jr
- KAUKAUNA**
4.5 Rob Gulig & Scott Webber
- KENOSHA**
10 Chris Schwartz & Lynn Groleau
- KEWAUNEE**
 35 Gary & Marsha Brown*
- LA CROSSE**
30 Francie Ball & Mary O'Sullivan
 24 Tara De Long & Willem Van Roosenbeek
 13 Leah & Roshan Defoe
 2 Christopher Damlo & Tanner Hofius
- LA FARGE**
22 David & Joseph Rogan-Nordstrom
- LA POINTE**
22 Glenn Carlson & Michael Childers
- LADYSMITH**
9 JillMarie Phillips & Amy Smith-Phillips
- LAKE GENEVA**
 40 Jody & Beth Rendall
 7 Melissa Byrd & Rita DiVenere
- LAKE TOMAHAWK**
 15 David & Sharon Lintereur
- LANCASTER**
 37 Joan & William Driscoll*
- LODI**
 2 Patrick Bass & Raymond Hestres
- LONE ROCK**
21 Sandi (Sam) Gauger & Karen Stampfli
- LUXEMBURG**
20 David Rohde & Greg Zaletel
- MADISON**
 62 Joann F. & Joseph W. Elder*
 59 Margaret & Richard Walker*
 57 Evan Pizer & Jane Piwe*
 52 Clarence Cameron & Robert Lockhart
 51 Sharon Brainerd Whitney & James Whitney*
 45 Curt & Joan Anderson*
 45 Kay Heggstad & Paul Wertsch*
44 Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
38 Raphael Kadushin & Thomas McGhee
 36 J. Corkey Custer & Betty Harris Custer*
36 Sunshine Jones & Joann Kelley
34 Janice Czyscon & Crystal Hyslop
 34 Lee Melahn & Rick Shaver
 34 William Busch & Nira Scherz-Busch*
 33 Danielle Dresden & Donna Peckett
33 Louie (Allan) Phillips & Brian Schultz
32 Nancy Buckwalter & Sue Hughes
 31 Dan & Kathy Johnson*
 31 J. Patrick & S. J. Robinson
- 31 John Cannon & John Fritsch
 31 Larry Seeman & Keith Stephens
 31 Linda Halsey & Mary Milhaupt
31 Melissa Keyes & Ingrid Rothe
31 Sue Currier & Janis Senungetuk
 30 Darren & Stephanie Bush*
 30 M.C. Reisdorf & Valerie Hodgson
 30 Michael F. Bemis & Duane M. Hansen
30 Tom DeChant & Paul Gibler
 29 Robert Bergeman & John Sacia
28 Deborah & Ocean Meir
 28 Margo Kealey & Sarah Newport
 28 Todd Streicher & Rylee Wedekind*
 27 Laurie Frost & Jeff Henriques*
27 Rob Latousek & Brian McCormick
25 Dale Decker & Chad LaFlash
25 Katy Heyning & Judi Trampf
 25 Mare Chapman & Pam Porter
 23 Andrew & Giso Broman
22 Donna Miller & Mary Kaye Radtke
22 Maggie Dugan & Melanie Witte
 22 Terri & Tim Wells*
 21 Bill Grout & Mary Schmelzer*
21 Dan Ross & Charlie Squires
 21 Jackie Hind & Kelli Neal
 20.5 Richard Butler & Charles Klauer
20 Judy Seymour & Mary Sykes
20 Susan Oshman & Tamara Seeker
19 Eldonna Hazen & Cathy Noth
 19 Goldie Kadushin & Steven Morrison*
 19 Jack Coe & Mary Ptasasi*
 19 Liz Lauer & Nina Lebwohl
 19 Nancy Garnier & Kyle Stasiak*
19 Rigoberto Gallegos & David Wahlberg
19 Scott Lundberg & Burt Tower
 18 Gael Boyd & Ginny Ross
18 Judy Howard & Amy Scarr
 18 Kim Fisher & Linda Ketcham
 18 Lori & Mark DuRussel*
18 Rene Christesen & Karen Larson
 17 Jonathan Cooper & Jane Richard*
16 DeeJay Redders & Jonathan Viau
16 Denise King & Nancy Smider
 16 Erin Johansen & Jeff Zoerner*
 16 Peter Barden & Kirk Williams
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"I believe all couples deserve the benefits that come from choosing a partner and establishing a family. I have chosen to focus my practice on the legal needs of the LGBT community because every family deserves legal protections that respect the commitment of the relationship."

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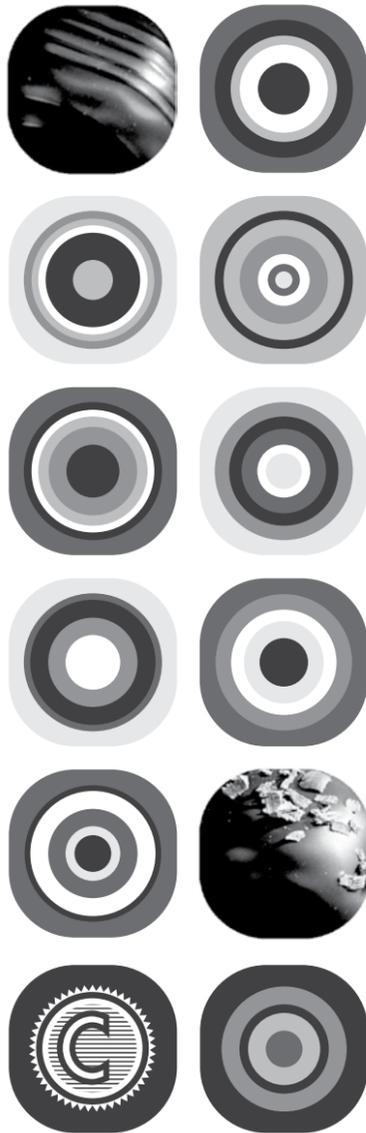
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M.C. Reisdorf & Valerie Hodgson

30 YEARS // We've been life partners and now spouses (in some more enlightened states) for nearly 30 years. It's hard to believe for lots of reasons—how could we be this old already among them, and how could we be so lucky to have found each other to begin with?

We can't know the answer to those questions, but we think these are some of the things that make us stick like glue to our life together:

Respect; listening to each other; being grateful for friends, family, jobs, neighborhood, travels, cats, etc.; all that stuff, but also a sense of "us against the world" sometimes, too. We've met some challenges together that we didn't expect to face, and we won for the most part. We started out just being in love, and now we truly know how to love each other—still working on it and laughing all the way. Corny as it sounds, we've only just begun!

- 12 Briony Foy & Michael May*
- 12 **Cynthia & Jessica Bachhuber**
- 12 Kevin Hubbard & David Casey
- 12 **Renee Herber & Tamara Packard**
- 12 Sandra Janagold & Mary Muellenbach
- 11 **Becca Schmitz & Amanda Berg**
- 11 Daisy & Jocelyn Quintal-Lepinski
- 11 Jeremy Miller & Lucy Nutti*
- 11 **Jonathan Garber & Derek Tyus**
- 11 Kevin Campion & Wes Marnier
- 11 Philip Frank & Mark Pocan
- 11 **Susan Frikken & Deb Hanrahan**
- 10 Danny Atwater & Joey Broyles
- 10 Jacinda Tessmann & Teri Weiland
- 10 **Jessica Maus & Hailey Schulte**
- 10 Megin & Scott McDonell*
- 10 Randy Cornell & Jess Salek
- 9 **Beth McConnell & Karen Darcy**
- 9 **Christopher & Joseph Wilford**
- 9 Jason Hiller & Justin Price
- 9 Nick Baillies & Craig Kramer
- 9 **Virginia Harrison & Melissa Peyton**
- 8.5 **Donald Haar & Steven Starkey**
- 8 **Daniel Ramos Haaz & Steven Lange**
- 8 Dennis Johnson & Matthew Mulligan
- 8 **Eric Borchert & Timmo Dugdale**
- 8 Helene & Jeanne Benink
- 8 **James Mulder & Charles Philyaw**
- 8 Mary Lelle & Asia Voight
- 8 Maureen Brady & Cheri Maples
- 8 Nate & Steve Vargas-Mathis
- 8 Rebecca Murray & Jeremy Olson*
- 8 **Robin Bechhofer & Pat Lambert**
- 8 **Whitney Adams & Cori Reith**
- 7 **Amanda Evenstone & Dawn Siebert**
- 7 Andrew & Noah Carrillo

- 7 **Bradley Tabor & Tim Walters**
- 7 **Chris & Petrovnia McIntosh**
- 7 **Derek Aimonetto & Glenn Rowe**
- 7 Dylan Bryne & Miriam Hall
- 7 **Erin Anderson & Stephanie Johnson**
- 7 **Heather Hazelwood & Becci Menghini**
- 7 **Jay Edgar & Joshua Feyen**
- 7 Jeffrey Clark & Timothy Hagen
- 7 Jennifer Lawrence & Melanie Rider
- 7 **Judith Davidoff & Rhonda Lanford**
- 7 Lee Kampa & Eric Sedelmaier
- 7 **Lisa Becher & Lynn Etnier**
- 7 **Rebecca & Summer Laird**
- 7 **Sara Colopy & Robin Sereno**
- 7 Tina Dorschel & Andrea Wipperfurth
- 7 **Tony Jamieson & Rob Van Nevel**
- 6.5 Katy Conley & Leonie Dolch
- 6.5 Lauren Lebwohl & Katie Wilkin
- 6 Andrea Bill & Chops Seggerman
- 6 **Bonnie & Sarah Schulte**
- 6 **Bruce Gladstone & Brian Wilkes**
- 6 Cindy Desch & Lynn Olson
- 6 Jason Kivela & Paul Waller
- 6 **Jessica Courtier & Kate Hewson**
- 6 **John Sims & Garret Trinrud**
- 6 **Laura Jeske & Erin Todd**
- 6 Mel Freitag & Amber Sowards
- 6 **Melissa Dittmer-Herrmann & Molly Herrmann**
- 6 Monica Adams & Shaquita Griffin
- 6 **Philip Keller & Steven Sievert**
- 6 **Tonia Brock & Kristen Petroschius**
- 5.5 Lana Lawrence & Louise Stout
- 5 Bill Blansett & John Lanari
- 5 **Chrystal & Heather Seeley-Schreck**
- 5 Elisa Derickson & Daniel Krueger

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- 5 **Heather Kauffman & Heather Maxwell Putnam**
- 5 James & Shawnee Parens
- 5 Jason Vangalis & Travis Rickert
- 5 **Jim Chiolino & David Heuer**
- 5 Joseph Halaas & Andrew Irving
- 5 Julie Beauchamp & Brenda Stanley
- 5 Kasey DeWitt & Christine McKinley
- 5 Luke Wolfgram & David Rhode
- 5 Michal Osier & Nancy Hutson
- 5 Nan Mortensen & Crystal Rossman
- 5 Rolando Cruz & Thomas Reid
- 5 Ronald Lee & Dana Crumpton
- 5 Tracy Hogan & Chloé Patterson
- 4.5 Andy Jarvis & Brent Roeder
- 4 **Amanda & Erica Analla**
- 4 **Brigid Daly & Lindsey Farnsworth**
- 4 Charlene & Sarah Zindel
- 4 Geoffrey Burke & Amy Henderson*
- 4 **Helen Hazelmare & Daun Johnstone**
- 4 **Jason Rittel & Jenna Shelley***
- 4 **Juliet Darken & Marlo Dobrient**
- 4 **Laura Johnson & Hollie Thompson**
- 4 Scott Brown & Justin Krause
- 4 Susan Levin & David Patnode
- 4 **Toni Baker & Stephanie Graham**
- 4 **Vicki Goldman & Jen Mrotek**
- 4 **Victoria Echeverria & Natalie Hinckley**
- 3.5 **Heather Abney & Paula Orton**
- 3.5 Jennifer Beyette & Chiquetta Fisher
- 3.5 Jon Dean & Larry Palm
- 3 Brian Solomon & Karin Wolf
- 3 **Dawn Papke & Jacqui Scott**

- 3 Derek House & Emil Treige
- 3 **Diana Love & Kim Prine**
- 3 Jason Rush & Troy Theis
- 3 **Jennifer Johnson & Stormy-Kito Justice**
- 3 Jillian Garcia & Amy Kjeldahl
- 3 Kris Kalb & Robert Von Rutenberg
- 3 Lee Schroeder & Justin Sprague
- 3 Monica Vasquez & A B*
- 3 Raini Justice & Erika Rusch
- 3 Richard Kilmer & Andy Ringquist
- 2.5 **Bonnie Gutsch & Heidi Hershberger**
- 2.5 Owen Karcher & Chelsea O'Neil
- 2 Bill and Ron Strelow-Dunn
- 2 Brian Belz & Simone LaPierre
- 2 Jenny Maahs & Laura Varela
- 2 Kael Fry & Anne Toter*
- 2 **Kathy Guthrie & Lisa Rowe**
- 2 Kelsy Schoenhaar & Lisa Schoenwetter
- 2 Meredith Peterson & Brian Turany*
- 2 Michele & Robin Briggs
- 2 Rhea Lyons & Bailey Padesky
- 2 Samantha Dutcher & Adam Waldron*
- 2 Shannon Ballhorn & Nicholas Wagner*
- 2 Shawn Ramsey & Kelly Staerzl
- 2 **Sondra Dalton & Brenda Swenson**
- 2 **Staci Jensen & Katie Mier**
- 1.5 Aldous Tyler & Sarah Wheeler
- 1 Ali Dwyer & Lorrie Hurckes
- 1 Annie Getsinger & Andrea Weinstock
- 1 Kate Johnson & Brittany Kitchens
- <1 Katelyn Danielson & Krystal M
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Photo by Sharon Vanorny

Mel Freitag & Amber Sowards

6 YEARS // Amber and Mel met back in 2008 when they were neighbors inside a row home in the historic Bolton Hill neighborhood in Baltimore, Md. They were friends for eight months before they started their romance. Their six-year relationship has brought many adventures and challenges, including moving across the country, supporting each other through loss and general family craziness, and creating a beautiful east side home with their mischievous animal clan: Fred, Dante, and Bailey. Their house is never clean, and they are proud to say that they are both air signs who love to go on a road trip on a moment's notice. Mel loves that Amber is one of the most considerate, mindful, engaging, and wise people she has ever met. Amber loves that Mel is patient, encouraging, uniquely funny, and one of the most amazingly enthusiastic people she has ever met. This couple is proud to say that they are not married, but they continue to make a daily conscious choice to be together.

MAIDEN ROCK

34 Helene Stafford & Lance Stromberg*

MANITOWOC

35 Debbie & Neil Holschbach*
28 Ronald Kossik & Mary Sipiorski*

MARATHON

33 Mark Blume & Thomas Voss

MARENGO

12 Sara Moses & Lauren Tuori

MARSHFIELD

54 Lois & Neil Greehling*

MAZOMANIE

2 Fred-Allen Self & Matthew Boldebuck

MC FARLAND

12 Lisa Abler & Amy Johnson
21 Chuck Mocco & Thomas Scheid

MENOMONIE

28 Jerry Duncanson & P B

MEQUON

16 Christopher Albrecht & Mary*
13 Brian Le Starge & Dale Mueller

MERCER

35 John Flynn & Michael Novak

MERRIMAC

13 Sondra Benson & Sabrina Osowski

MIDDLETON

43 Bill & Jim Green-Diederich
16 Joyce & Leilani Robertson-Hoyt
6 Kelly & Patty

5 Sarah Groeneveld & Casey Kenney

2 Cassie Immel & Taryn Lindemann

MILWAUKEE

56 Ross Walker & Erv Uecker
43 Paul & Mariaelena Calhoun*
38 Ronald Coleman & Thomas Thresher
37 Roy Badger & Garth Wangemann
36 Randolph Schoedler & Thomas Pionker
33 Sarah Kubetz & Chris Schofield
33 Steven Sanders & Rand Schmidt
33 Wendy Pologe & Mary Thoreson
30 Gary Hollander & Paul Mandracchia
30 Jon Martin & Thomas Reed
27 Brenda Coley & Sandra Jones
27 Gerry Coon & Stewart Dempsey
26 Jessica Suhr & Jerry Tollefson*
24 Anthony Balistreri & David Jones

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- 22 Betty & Richard Heiden*
- 18 Gregory Ruffer & Peter Stark
- 17 John Harmon & Karter Wilkening
- 16 Candice Hackbarth & Debbie Knepeke
- 13 Jessica Pestlin & Zachary Peterson
- 12 Mark Janetski & Ed Mullins
- 10 Dawn Tower & Troy*
- 10 Erin Brady & Brigid Condon
- 9.5 **Jacque Lindo & Dawn Schmidt**
- 9 Jack Keller & Ben Pigeon
- 9 Jennifer Morales & Tina Owen
- 8.5 **Janet Borucki & Maureen White**
- 8 **Scott Jones & Thomas Zigan**
- 8 Susan & Troy Davis*
- 6.5 **Jose Gutierrez & Matthew Schreck**
- 6 Tony Snell & Wujie Z
- 5 **Beth Brown & Rebecca Larson**
- 5 **Haley Heaviland & Catie Sampedro**
- 5 Jackie Degenhardt & Donna Schweda
- 4 **Jennifer Wayd & Nichol Wayd**
- 4 Tameka Bradberry & Sapphire Manning
- 3 Gina Olson & Olivia Nordstrom
- 3 Jaime Sebastian Andres & James McFarland
- 3 Kaston Graves & Anthony Harris
- 3 Kate Cunningham & Katherine Kober
- 2.5 Joseph Imperiale & Ryan Moss
- 2 Jessica Hughes & Sarah Krueger
- 2 Jim Lautenbach & Chris Wisniewski
- 2 Marc Anderson & Tim Gagliano-Anderson
- 1.5 Aaron Mayo & Jeighsen Christiansen
- 1.5 Eric Euteneier & Brad Fellin
- 1.5 Kara Robertson & Alisa Streets
- 1.5 Tandra Hill & Amanda Meyers
- 1 Catelynn Champeau & Ashley G
- 1 Kelly Marie Perez-Cruz & Leslie Schwartz
- <1 Jeanne Geraci & Karla Strand

MINERAL POINT

12 **John Greenwood & Frederick Vaughn**

MONONA

48 **Michael Sweet & Leonard Zwilling**
14 **Cliff Kraege & Michael Stapleton**
12 **Becki & Jessica Ralyn**
10 Christine Haas & Nicole Lendborg
9 Dorothy & Julie Carskadon
8 **Dorothy Rietzler & Kari Sievert**
5 **Erica & Leslie Gittings**
4 Ande Johnson & Emily Peffer

MONROE

32 **Judy Price & Mary Pandow**
23 **Russell Fichter & Marcus Swieca**

MONTELEO

24 Jo Anne McLaughlin & Carol Vandenberg

MONTFORT

3 Christopher Schnulle-Simons & Aaron Simons
2.5 Gary McHone & Harry Zelhofer

MT HOREB

16 **Martin Christopher & David Landre**

MT PLEASANT

13 **Eric Bates & Patrick Gazarkiewicz**

MUSKEGO

6 **Cecilia & Andrea Danlin**

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22 **Elizabeth Miller & Maureen O'Gara**
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Photo by Mila Orjana

Jillian Garcia & Amy Kjeldahl

3 YEARS // She introduced herself as Norway and drove me home from rugby practice once. I told her she was beautiful on the dance floor then disappeared like Cinderella, leaving behind an uneaten burrito—and a spark. We made puzzles and tornadoes and noodle pools. She nurtured my competitive spirit, my bruised ribs, my broken tailbone, my fractured hand, and my heart the day my world came crashing down. I gave her a sparkler card for her birthday. She kept it pinned in her kitchen for almost a year. Slowly but surely the threads of our lives had intertwined. We both knew it was love that day we bailed on our mission for dinner to cram into the Majestic Theater for a spontaneous concert instead. We stood by the railing only half paying attention to the music, looking for any excuse for our arms to touch. As I stole a glance at her, I couldn't help but think of a J.D. Salinger quote I'd once memorized: "She wasn't doing a thing that I could see, except standing there leaning on the balcony railing, holding the universe together." I proposed in that theater the following spring. The marquee lit up the night with our story: "Fireworks."

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16 Christine Gomand & Aaron Maternowski*
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- OAK CREEK**
32 Collette Kimber & Mary Martin
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8 Stephanie Atkins & Jasmin Valentin
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- SAUK CITY**
17 Agnes Baldwin & Ginger Pierce
- SAUKVILLE**
47 Frank & Kathy Parsons*
- SHEBOYGAN**
26 GERALYN & Michael Leannah*
10 Cheri Lubach & Dawn Stanley
8 David Hein & Sam Watson
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24 Teresa Dziak & Mary Willard
- SHOREWOOD**
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27 Hal & Liz Hackett*
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- SOMERSET**
30 Diane Bystrom & Marian Quinn
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<1 Timothy Anderson & John Barczynski
19 Patrick Brady & William Heinzelman
8 Meghan Staszak & Kristin Wroblewski

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48 Bob Charley & Tom Alfini
48 Tom Alfini & Bob Charley
25 Heidi Nelson & Stacy Spears
- STEVENS POINT**
23 Christine & Mike Wiza*
12 Lorie Dobrzynski & Melanie Kuolt
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40 Judy Captain & Kate Stormer
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12 Carmen Alcalde & Sue Hunter
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17 Scott Arthofer & Brian Jones
14 Angie Muchow Truby & Martha Truby
12 Carol Mitchell Rybak & Katherine Rybak
5 Molly Censky & Maggie O'Leary
3 Timothy Lom & Steve Noll
2 Jane Kahl & Sue Nelson
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1 Lysie Dunigan & Nikki Nikunen
- TOMAH**
11 Brenda & Erica Falk-Huzar
- TOMAHAWK**
49 Cheryl & Walter Hobbs*
- UNION GROVE**
5 Kirsten Dent & Lisa Szalanski
- VERONA**
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28 Janet & Lynette Studer
19 Andrew & Natalie Gaba*
8 Migdiel Moretta & Steven Rush
3 Cynthia Moehlenkamp & Amanda Purington
1 Michael Burns & Aaron Carreno
- VIROQUA**
8 Kaitlyn Karasek & Cassandra Torgerson
- WATERTOWN**
12 Brad & Leah Klotz*
- WAUKESHA**
13 Brendan Barrett & Vance Skinner
2 Regan DeGrand & Anna Vandagriff
- WAUNAKEE**
25 Steve Keip & Daniel Ploessi
14 Leah Buysse & Randii Waddell
3 Dana Gordon & Chelsea Rowe
- WAUPUN**
1 Tricia Carr & Melissa Lembcke
- WAUSAU**
48 Elizabeth & Gerald Whipps*
- WAUWATOSA**
2 Nick Moyles & Brad Schlaikowski
- WEST BEND**
44 Chuck & Jan McCall*
9 James Combs & Kyle Watry
2 Jen Droppers & Tessa Hirtreiter
2 Victoria Weise & Jeff*
- WHITEFISH BAY**
24 Lenore & Tom Bentz*
4 Anne Marie Arroyo & Tamela Greene
- WHITEWATER**
16 Robin Fox & Kim Simes
- WINDSOR**
1 James Hartman & Paul Fritsch
- WISCONSIN DELLS**
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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2014

LGBT Campus Center

The LGBT Campus Center at University of Wisconsin-Madison is featuring UW alums and students making a difference in the LGBTQ community. Each of these proud Badgers have reinvested their UW educations and experiences towards making the world a better place for LGBTQ people to live, work, and learn. To learn how you can be involved with the LGBT Campus Center and reinvest in your community, visit lgbt.wisc.edu.

Senior Spotlight



Dany Seiler BA '14
Gender & Women's Studies,
Certificate in LGBT Studies

What are the ways that you have been involved with the LGBT Campus Center?

My junior year I went to quite a bit of the programming held at the LGBTCC. I participated in the Queer Emerging Leaders Program (QUELP) and went to the weekend-long Leadership Institute in February along with other on-campus events and speakers. Then, in July, I was hired as the Accessibility and Diversity Program Coordinator at the Campus Center.

How has being involved with LGBTQ life at Madison prepared you for life after graduation?

By being involved in the community, I've become a stronger leader. In my last semester here, I'm moving from a participant to a leader in several of the Center's programs. Overall, being involved has helped me become a better leader within the community and within other non-LGTBQ+ spaces.

I think that I'm also more able to stand up for what I believe when I encounter challenging social situations. I'm way more extroverted than I used to be and I think that I learned that from interacting with people who walk into the Campus Center and who attend all our events.

I've also had the opportunity to network with some really interesting and amazing people, which has been a lot of fun.

What is one thing you know about yourself now that you didn't know before you first started college?

I am strong and I will not lose any of that strength by asking for help.

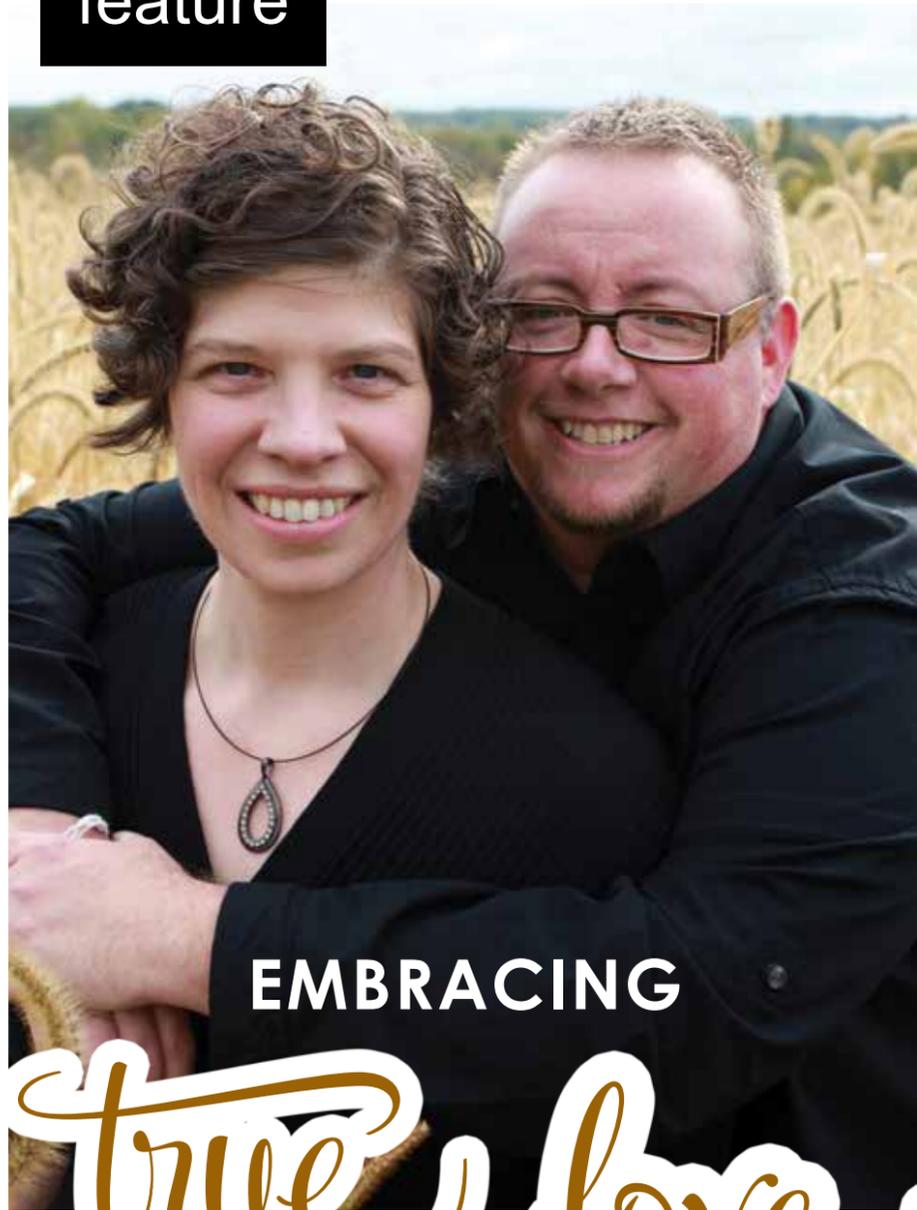


Division of Student Life
University of Wisconsin-Madison

lgbt.wisc.edu
608.265.3344
123 Red Gym
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the LGBT Campus Center is a unit of the Division of Student Life at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

feature



EMBRACING

true love

A winding road of ups, downs, and big changes has bonded **Will Van Roosenbeek** and **Tara DeLong** ever closer together.

We met at Bible study in the fall of 1990. Looking back, it was love at first sight. We lived on opposite ends of campus: I was in food service, scanning dining cards. I wrote Tara notes, and as she made her way through the breakfast line, I handed them to her. I walked the long way to class just to see her in the morning.

I guess we have a typical love story: You meet, find ways to spend lots of time with one another, create a long-lasting friendship, commit to each other "forever," and journey on. We were oblivious to the fact that we were falling in love. Neither one of us had been in a same-sex relationship before (when we first met, I identified as female and went by my birth name). We were also Catholic, which complicated our coming-out process. Our relationship grew into a very close friendship, and we felt like family to each other. We spent loads of time together, staying up late talking, going for walks and on adventures around campus, and so much more. Leaving each other over breaks seemed unbearable.

In the summer of 1991, we ventured off to work at a camp. This allowed time together without the pressure of school. There, that feeling of friendship turned into love. Or at least, that is what we came to realize. Despite having our own space at camp, we could not resist sharing every night together. And then one summer night I kissed her. I kissed her forehead, her nose, and then her lips. When she looked startled, my quick response was "The nuns do it." What I meant was, the nuns I stayed with kissed each other as a greeting ritual. The relationship changed, and our journey out began. There were definite struggles, the idea of being lesbians, and how could we be lesbians and be Catholic? The love that we had for each other was so beautiful, and we couldn't be convinced otherwise. Eventually we stopped being Catholic, leaving the church because of its policy on LGBT+ people.

Despite having our own space at camp, we could not resist sharing every night together. And then one summer night I kissed her. I kissed her forehead, her nose, and then her lips.

The process of coming out is never easy. I struggled with coming out for a while. I had always felt different; empty and incongruent. I longed to fill the hole that feeling different left in my heart. Once I accepted being a lesbian, I embraced this new identity. Tara hesitated, afraid of what people might say or think. She grew up in a small town where feeling different penetrated deep. We stayed closeted for a while. Both of us worked in healthcare, where being out could be risky. Upon entering graduate school, I decided my identity deserved acknowledgment. I was out and proud. Eventually, more and more of the friendships surrounding us reflected this sentiment.

Sometimes you think your sexual orientation is obvious, but in reality people are usually oblivious. We were together most of the time. We bought a house and a dog, and assumed people knew. Then they would say, "How great you two girls found each other so you don't have to live alone." It took us many years to tell Tara's family. In fact, it took a new person in the family to ask the obvious: "How long have you and Tara been together?" Tara's sister-in-law responded, "They are an old married couple." It was true; we'd had a little commitment ceremony, just the two of us, many years prior to that day.

I grew up always feeling different. The reflection in the mirror never matched the internal view I had of myself. For a while, falling in love seemed to take that feeling away. However, feelings of incongruence returned. At the time, I worked at a university as a LGBT director. I attended a national conference and went to a Gender Queer Caucus. I had never heard of the term "gender queer" before. In this room there were 60-80 people of all ages. There were many different identities present. Some people shared that they were transgender and talked of wanting to transition. This was the first realization that gender identity might be my issue.

I never really fit into the female box. In fact, I forced myself most of the time to fit. I started to identify myself as gender queer, which felt OK. I started reading books and researching gender identity/expression, and at some point decided I needed to talk to a professional who understood gender identity/expression. I approached Tara with the wish to visit the University of Minnesota Human Sexuality Clinic. Because this was such an internal process, I had failed to share my struggles up to that point with Tara. Understandably, she was completely surprised. This had been my silent internal struggle for over 30 years, and the majority of that time I thought something was wrong with me.

[LOVE] WHAT'S TRENDING

Creating a truly local experience



HOTELRED
JASON ILSTRUP, GENERAL MANAGER

Nothing is currently trending more in hotels than creating an experience. Whether you're staying for work or celebrating your love, hotels should be all about creating an experience that makes you feel special. A hotel should make you feel like you're living a different life, one that takes you to a more fun and interesting place.

When staying at a hotel, the experience must be local and unique. You've already chosen to travel to a foreign city; therefore, you should get the full local experience. Madison, or any area, should bring itself to you through the food, furnishings, style, and staff. HotelRED strives to be the Madison authority by hiring the best local talent, delivering the most timely information about the city, and serving Madison's wonderful cuisine. With our unique vantage point on one of the most important intersections in the city, you can't help but feel a part of Madison. Being truly part of a locale is essential to creating the proper experience for every guest.

Original music for original people



SOPHISTICATES OF STRING QUARTET
SHANNON BALLHORN, DIRECTOR

The Sophisticates of String Quartet had our busiest year ever in 2013, playing for private parties, engagements, weddings/commitment ceremonies, and the AIDS Network Red Ribbon & White Shoes Affair, as well



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WHAT'S TRENDING [LOVE]

as for Wisconsin Capitol Pride's Commitment and Vow Renewal Ceremony.

We love playing for parties, but our main gigs are ceremonies. I think the most important thing we do for celebrations is to set the joyous mood for a couple's special day. We have a repertoire for people to choose from, and also have an arranger who writes out pieces for us when a couple wants us to play a song we don't already have. I do see couples choosing to walk down the aisle to their own special selection more often now than in years past (examples include "The Promise" by Tracy Chapman, "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles, "Chasing Cars" by Snow Patrol, "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey, and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"). Another trend I've seen lately is an overall boom in ceremonies, despite the economy and Wisconsin's continued lack of recognition of same-sex marriage.

This year, I changed our contract language to make the wording more inclusive: We now talk about the couple rather than "bride and groom."

Faith communities opening their arms to all



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
REV. CARLY KUNTZ, PASTOR

First United Methodist Church in downtown Madison is a Reconciling Congregation. This means we welcome all people, and "all" means all at First Church. We believe all people deserve to love and be loved. One of my happiest moments in 30 years of ministry came last Christmas Eve, a time when people bring friends and family from all over the world to worship. Family members and church members

I came out as transgender after months of therapy. For me it felt like the weight of the world was lifted from my shoulders. I wanted to change my name, begin hormones, and tell everyone the news. Tara was overwhelmed, sad, and angry; and her identity shattered. She feared losing the person she fell in love with. She wondered if I had been intentional in keeping this from her all along. How would the people in our world respond? How would she respond to them? How would testosterone change my personality? How would this change her identity? She had many questions and concerns; I was focused on the future.

Naturally, Tara grieved many losses. She expressed anger, fear, and uncertainty. At times the future of our relationship was uncertain. Love carried us through pain, struggle, and a difficult process. Looking back, I realize the sacrifice and hard work my partner gifted me with through this process. All of the joy and anticipation for my new life meant loss, change, adjustment, and perseverance for my partner. It was with much grace that she supported me and our relationship through this transition.

I eventually came out at work, to friends, and my family. Legally changed my name, started testosterone, and eventually had chest surgery (paving the way to legally change my gender marker). I never wanted to hurt Tara. I just needed to become my authentic self to be the best partner I could.

Tara's process of coming out was slower. She is fiercely private. This was complicated by my complete opposite nature of being an open book. The biggest fear was coming out to her parents and family members. I came out to her parents, and we shared the news with her



Receiving a Fair Wisconsin Leadership Award



Love carried us through pain, struggle, and a difficult process. Looking back, I realize the sacrifice and hard work my partner gifted me with through this process.

family; despite her fears, they were and are tremendously supportive.

We have been together 23 years. In 2010, we got married. When people ask me the question, "If you could relive one day, what day would that be?" My answer is simple: The day I publicly said, "I do!" I love Tara with all my heart, and that day meant so much because we shared our love with dear family and friends.

I hope our journey together lasts another 23+ years. ■

[LOVE] WHAT'S TRENDING

introduced me to their partners as well as their same-gendered husbands and wives. There was no hesitation, no fear of rebuke or insult. There was love, acceptance, support, and celebration for all people.

First Church differs from our denomination in taking this stance, but we are not alone. The trend among United Methodist congregations in Madison is to embrace our LGBTQ friends as members and partners in ministry. Three United Methodist congregations in Madison have declared themselves to be Reconciling: First Church, Bethany, and Trinity.

As we look at the culture around us, we can see the growing acceptance and support of LGBTQ people. Therefore, it is only a matter of time before the United Methodist denomination becomes fully inclusive. Until that day comes, though, First Church is open and supportive of all people. We are committed to sharing God's love with any and all.

Joining forces to make a bigger difference



FAIR WISCONSIN
KATIE BELANGER, PRESIDENT & CEO

The theme of our work in 2013 was creating a more unified movement for equality. Not only did we accomplish a groundbreaking merger between Fair Wisconsin and Equality Wisconsin to increase the impact the LGBTQ community's advocacy will have on our state for years to come, but we've also forged new partnerships and deepened existing relationships in exciting ways.

In November, Fair Wisconsin, Diverse & Resilient, AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, and Cream City Foundation hosted a

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did you hear?



UW-Madison implements preferred-name policy

The University of Wisconsin-Madison began a "phased implementation" of a preferred-name policy on campus starting in fall 2013. The stated goal of the policy is to create a consistent preferred-name experience across University systems with the use of one's preferred name wherever one's legal name is not absolutely necessary. The policy is geared toward groups such as international students who go by English names and members of the LGBTQ community, especially trans* students who have changed their names or are in the process of doing so.

Diversity Committee Secretary Madison Tully worked with the LGBT Campus Center, the dean of students, and the Office of the Registrar to set the details of the policy. "If your name is legally Jane but you go by James, then on a class roster it would have your legal name, but then also your preferred name," Tully told the *Daily Cardinal*. "Then when the teacher is calling roll, you don't have to out yourself."

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new lease ON life

Robert Mahr reflects on what it took to bring back a beloved community spot, the **Shamrock Bar & Grille**, and the outpouring of support that made it happen.

Years before I worked at the Shamrock Bar, I always thought it was a warm, inviting place, a place where people of all walks of life came together and left their troubles at the door. At that time I was the manager of Cafe Montmartre, a downtown wine bar and jazz cafe. Having been there for eight years, I decided it was time for a change.

Glen, the Shamrock's previous owner, offered me a position as a bartender. I reluctantly agreed, thinking it might be a good fit for me. As much as I enjoyed being a patron, I was skeptical about working in a gay bar. It turned out to be a life-changing decision. I really enjoyed the position, the patrons, and the opportunity the venue offered me to be part of a community.

I quickly became the manager and remained so for many years.

Glenn and I made many improvements over that time, but it was never really the business I thought it could be. I always thought it needed a little TLC and attention to detail. I saw potential to create an environment that matched the camaraderie and sense of community I had experienced there.

When the Shamrock closed in July, I did a lot of soul-searching. I had lost my job, and felt as though I had let my staff down. Beyond that, I lost my favorite place to hang out and the sense of community that came with it. It had always been so much more than a job to me. I loved all the patrons and staff.

So, I decided to open a new venue in its stead: the Shamrock Bar & Grille. I had a vision and felt I had a responsibility not just to the gay community, but to downtown Madison as well. It was time for me to

put my own stamp on the place. I knew I had many hurdles ahead of me. Looking back, I'm surprised I went for it. Even as I write this, tears well up a bit in my eyes.

I began by applying for a new liquor license and formulating a business plan. My goals were to maintain the welcoming atmosphere while providing a higher quality product with improved service. Then, I had to find a way to finance it. I've never been the kind of person to ask for help, but I really had no other choice. I found some investors through personal and family relationships. What was even more amazing was the way the community reached out to me! People actually approached me to help. Not only financially, but also with advice. So many friends, colleagues, and patrons offered their help in any way they could, from cleaning to demolition, but also a lot of emotional support. I was "walked off the ledge" many times. I never felt so much support in my life. It was then that I knew this was truly much more than starting a new business. People wanted a place to gather and to feel at home.

Once I had found investors, the challenge of creating the space I dreamed of began. I pulled many ideas from my years in the bar and restaurant business. I used many ideas from Cafe Montmartre. It was paramount that the space maintain its warm and inviting feel, but it needed a facelift and a lot of love.

[LOVE] WHAT'S TRENDING

series of events aimed at educating navigators and the community about the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on dismantling the systems and policies that have created serious health disparities for LGBTQ people.

Our four organizations had never united in a collaborative educational program until we began an exploration of how we could leverage the ACA to work toward our shared vision. By combining our organizations' skills, areas of expertise, and networks, we had a far greater impact than any one of us would have had alone.

I believe this is a sign of the increased collaboration and unity within the LGBTQ community and movement in Wisconsin that will strengthen our ability to achieve lasting change.

Going green for the big day



HOLY WISDOM MONASTERY
JILL CARLSON, DIRECTOR OF GUEST SERVICES

Holy Wisdom Monastery is seeing an increased interest in "green" weddings and commitment ceremonies. "Green" means lessening the impact on the earth by choosing eco-friendly items used during the ceremony, or by choosing venues that incorporate social and environmental responsibility into the way they operate.

Couples like to hold their special day at Holy Wisdom because the monastery is one of the "greenest" buildings in the country and was awarded the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating available. Holy Wisdom is open and welcoming to all.

Going green also means going outside for the ceremony. We have three outdoor locations for ceremonies: the Lake Lawn



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WHAT'S TRENDING [LOVE]

area, the Mendota Overlook with views of Lake Mendota and the Madison skyline, and the Monastery Garden.

Fred-Allen Self and Matthew Boldebuck were married in October on the Lake Lawn area. "I had

previously visited Holy Wisdom on a personal retreat," Fred-Allen says. "The atmosphere of love, acceptance, quiet holiness, and beauty absolutely astounded me. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced. What really stood out to me was the fact that I was dating a man and it didn't even cause a blink. It was amazing to me."

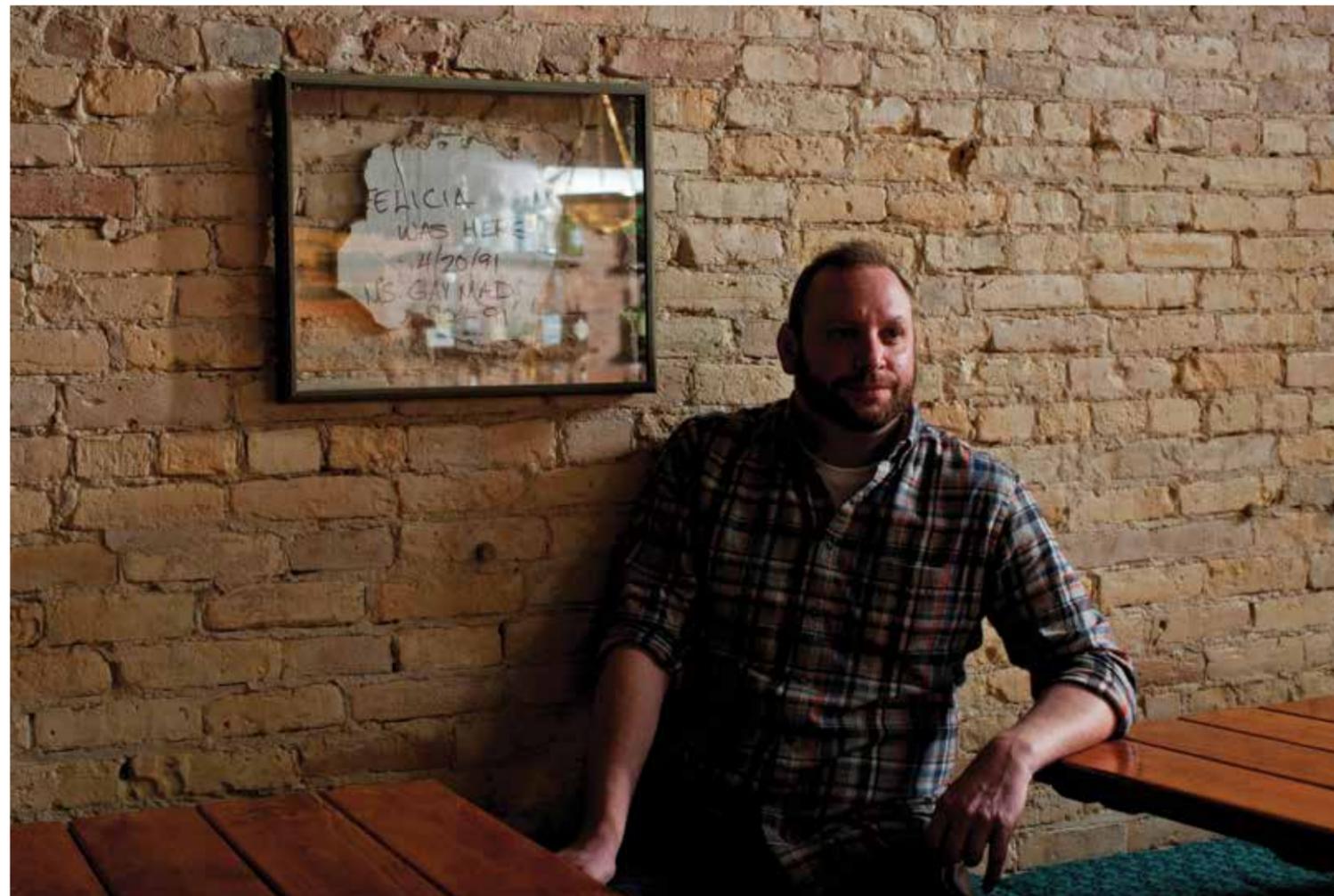
Economically smart marriage equality



ORANGE TREE IMPORTS
CAROL "ORANGE" SCHROEDER, CO-OWNER

Orange Tree Imports has always offered an alternative cover page for our wedding registry that can be used for commitment ceremonies, but not very many couples took advantage of it. How much happier it would be to have everyone who wishes it able to celebrate a legal marriage! We are looking forward to the day when Wisconsin joins our neighboring states in making same-sex marriage possible. Not only does it make sense from a moral and humanitarian standpoint, but it's also good business.

Currently, couples have to leave the state if they wish to get married with full legal rights, which means that the hospitality industry in those states is benefiting from hosting weddings for Wisconsin residents. I would say that Orange Tree Imports still does some business in wedding gifts, even if the marriage is out of state, but I know that we will have more wedding reg-



It would be unfair not to mention my longtime friend Kevin Day. Having recently left his job, Kevin worked on the bar for three months without pay. He would often work 15-hour days and do tasks neither of us thought we could accomplish. He is now my bar manager.

I was very pleased to discover beautiful cream city brick beneath the drywall and plaster in the bar. This amazing gift became part of my design theme. I adore the look and feel of exposed brick. I decided to incorporate the brick with reclaimed wood and exposed metal for an overall organic look. Again, Kevin proved to be exceptionally dedicated and surprisingly handy with this work.

During the renovation, there was an amazing discovery. On a chunk of plaster underneath the drywall, written in black marker, was "FELICIA WAS HERE 4/20/91 MS GAY MADISON '90-'91." Felicia Melton-Smyth was a longtime friend and employee of the bar. She was tragically taken from us while on vacation in 2008. She was a philanthropist, and the annual AIDS Network gift drive is named in her honor. I saved the plaster and framed it. She will always be here in spirit.

We made more trips to Home Depot than I can recall. The manual labor proved to be an amazing stress relief as I worked toward my liquor license. I look back at the redesign as one of the best summers of my life. It was a lot of work, but also a lot of fun.

Again, the community stepped forward to help. Some Saturdays, as many as 20 people would volunteer and lend their expertise to the project. Staff from Five Nightclub came to help. It tickled me that another gay venue came to support me.

This was a particularly trying time for me. I was unemployed. I was borrowing money. I was living off credit cards. And I still had not been granted my liquor license. While the renovation was challenging, the license was the most stressful part of the experience. Eventually, though, it all worked out and the license was given. It was very hard on me personally to be so much in the public eye. Many rumors were flying about and I often felt I was being personally attacked. It was then that I would try to remind myself how the community had reached out

I was "walked off the ledge" many times. I never felt so much support in my life. It was then that I knew this was truly much more than starting a new business. People wanted a place to gather and to feel at home.

to help in so many ways. I was humbled by the faith my colleagues, friends, family, and patrons had in me. I was not going to give up.

After the license was granted, that's when the fun truly started. The bar was beginning to take shape and my vision was being realized. We muscled forward and finally set an opening day. It was so unbelievable! I loved seeing the expressions on patrons' faces as they walked into the bar. The reception to the new space was amazing. Customers who had been coming in for 20-plus years complimented the changes.

[LOVE] WHAT'S TRENDING

istries and guests seeking gifts when our state allows marriage equality.

We are very fortunate to have many gay customers (and staff members, over the years), so I know that we have couples coming in to buy gifts for each other for special occasions. But anniversaries are traditionally tied to weddings, so we anticipate more gifts being purchased for these occasions when more couples are able to choose to get married if they wish.

Unique and customizable rings



JEWELER'S WORKSHOP
JASON BRADEN, CO-OWNER

The number of same-sex couples coming in for rings seems to grow every week. Many are celebrating establishing domestic-partnership status or legal marriage, and ordering rings for next summer when they plan to have a reception with their friends and family. Often this can come in the form of multiple ring sets. Many female couples are selecting alternative-metal rings, hand-engraved with motifs that have significance to their relationship. Jackie Goetz, who specializes in groundbreaking titanium work, says, "The rings I am designing for our same-sex couples are not your sister-in-law's engagement ring; they don't follow national trends and tend to be incredibly personal."

Our men's rings frequently feature diamonds and sapphires, and are often the most exciting men's bands we design.

Simple 6mm domed bands are rare with our LGBTQ clients. More personalized jewelry is the norm. We are seeing a lot of family-heirloom diamonds being incorporated into rings.

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WHAT'S TRENDING [LOVE]

Celebrate by getting to know the city



CONCOURSE HOTEL & GOVERNOR'S CLUB
JOAN HERZING, MARKETING MANAGER

Here at the hotel, we've been seeing more couples enthusiastic to really experience the city of Madison during their stay. They start by choosing a local, independent hotel like ours, and then they hit the farmer's market and some local downtown shops. Perhaps they time their stay around city festivals or seek out local bands, artists, and performances—and they're definitely asking about one-of-a-kind Madison restaurants that source locally.

We've responded to the trend by creating a variety of packages that include items like local beers, locally sourced snacks, downtown Madison gift certificates, B-cycle rentals, museum passes, and even drink tokens to our staff's favorite locals bars.

Marriage Comes Out of the Closet



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ELDONNA HAZEN, SENIOR MINISTER

After some recent changes in our neighboring states (Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois), many LGBTQ couples have been able to make their lifelong commitments legal. Of course, here in Madison, we still only provide the service of a religious ceremony, but to those who are in love and have a faith background, the religious ceremony is important.

First Congregational United Church of Christ has been leading commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples for years. Now,

This was very important to me. I saw myself as more of a caretaker of an important venue than the proprietor.

As far as operations go, I wanted to give a strong focus to customer service, quality ingredients, employee appreciation, and sound business practices. Lunch is now served Monday through Friday, with the grill open until 1 a.m. with a dedicated cook position, rather than bar staff preparing the food. The menu has been well received and the food side of the business is thriving. I began serving brunch in November, which was very popular with the previous business.

The manual labor proved to be an amazing stress relief as I worked toward my liquor license. I look back at the redesign as one of the best summers of my life.

I believe strongly in philanthropy and supporting Madison's vibrant LGBTQ community. I see the bar as a great opportunity to give back. I love supporting many organizations. Beginning in January, I'll be featuring local artists in a rotating art show. I'm excited to be able to branch out into other ways to give back.

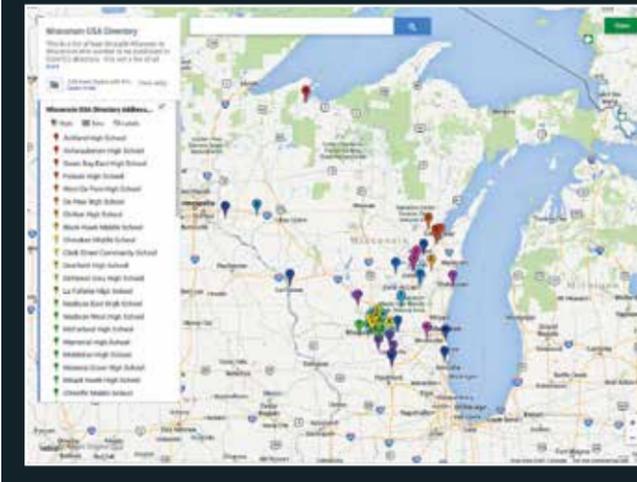
Reflecting on my experience, I have to say it was not the summer I had planned. I learned a lot about myself, the gay and downtown communities, and people in general. If you believe in something and don't give up, amazing things are possible, even if the odds are stacked against you. I learned that the bar is so much bigger than me and means so much to so many people. It mostly taught me that Madison's LGBTQ community felt a void and stepped forward to help me bring it back. Providing a space for people to gather and be comfortable is the ultimate reward. For that, I'm incredibly grateful. ■

did you hear?



GSAFE releases map of Wisconsin GSAs

In a good sign that having a Gay-Straight Alliance at your school is becoming more accepted and even expected, GSAFE was able to compile information about Wisconsin GSAs over the last several years for inclusion in their newly released map and directory. The list is not exhaustive and includes only those GSAs that wished to be included. If you don't see your school listed and would like it to be, please e-mail Tim Michael at tim@gsafewi.org. The list and map are available via www.gsafewi.org.



[LOVE] WHAT'S TRENDING

however, there seems to be less of a closeted approach to the ceremony. Over the years, I've met with many same-sex couples; many meeting with me and feeling like they need to explain their relationship. Because more and more people and states have expressed their understanding of love by legalizing marriage for same-sex couples, couples are also more able to express their love publicly in a ceremony. They want to be surrounded by family and friends as they make lifelong promises to each other. They now can approach with joy, instead of defensiveness.

Going Beyond Cake



BLOOM BAKE SHOP
ANNEMARIE SPITZNAGEL, OWNER

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Progressive Pioneer

State Rep. Lloyd Barbee broke lines of color and sexual identity as a tireless champion of equal rights for all citizens.



In some losing statewide votes on gay marriage, there were assertions that lack of support from African Americans hurt the cause for LGBTQ rights. In fact, more detailed analysis of California's vote on Prop 8 showed that when other variables of income and class were factored in, racial difference between African Americans and others did not exist. In Wisconsin's gay history, we have one of our own instructive examples on marriage equality.

In most historical discussions of Wisconsin's 1982 first-in-the-nation gay rights law, there is usually a nod to State Assemblyman Lloyd Barbee, who had first introduced the bill before State Rep. David Clarenbach authored and passed it. Most do not acknowledge the price paid by pioneer Barbee.

Barbee, born in Memphis in 1925, grew up in the South and joined the NAACP at the age of 12. After World War II service in the Navy, he came to Wisconsin in 1949 to attend the UW Law School on a scholarship. Awarded his degree in 1955, he served as chairman first of the Madison branch and then in 1961 of the statewide NAACP. He moved to Milwaukee in 1962 and led the lawsuit to desegregate the Milwaukee schools. After a lengthy judicial process, he won the case in federal district court in 1976, and after further legal maneuvers there was a settlement to desegregate in 1979.

Barbee had a lengthy record as a fighter to reform Wisconsin laws. In his first session in the legislature, Barbee took up abortion reform.

For the second session, he went whole hog with AB 678, "Crimes against sexual morality." In his third session, he again dealt with sex crimes and abortion, but added repealing laws against marijuana and prostitution.

In the fourth session starting in 1971, following Stonewall, he took up all of the above again and added bills prohibiting discrimination based on sexual practices and in favor of same-sex marriage. He again pursued these goals in his fifth session.

Needless to say, Barbee's farseeing bills did not elicit groundswells of support in the legislature of those days. Barbee himself was realistic and philosophical about this, drawing on the experience of how long African Americans had been battling for equality and rights.

The *Milwaukee Courier*, the state's leading African American paper, which claimed 40,000 readers weekly, wrote about Barbee at the time, characterizing him as a reform legislator. "Introducing controversial legislation seems to be Barbee's forte, according to some, but Barbee views such bills as legislation that would not be immediately passed, but might keep politicians abreast of the need for reform in our laws."

That the bills were controversial was in little doubt. On July 14, 1973, the *Courier* published a letter signed, "A Senior Citizen, A Teresa Muehleakamp." The letter was headed, "Rep. Barbee's bills seen as immoral." Ms. Muehleakamp wrote, "I am sure he doesn't represent the wishes of the Black Community. Black people are no more immoral than white people. I suggest that you find a man now to replace him at election time—a man who will let it be known that blacks do not condone his immorality and that whites would not flee to the suburbs because of rape, etc., etc." The letter-writer specifically

cited the bill to "permit persons of the same sex to marry."

Barbee was not shy about his push for reform that would benefit gays. In 1973, reporting in his regular (usually biweekly) column in the *Courier*, he wrote of his sex reform advocacy on two occasions. Describing how the Assembly Judiciary Committee was considering a bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, he opined, "The changes to eliminate distinctions of race, sex and sexual preferences are long overdue. Lets us work to effect such changes vigorously and expeditiously."

Then, noting his attending a national conference on criminal justice where he proposed repeal of "victimless crimes" laws, he specifically mentioned "private sexual relations among consenting persons..." Barbee also went on the radio show "The Gay Perspective" on WZMF to discuss repeal of sex laws for consenting adults.

It could not be said that Barbee's constituents were uninformed about his sex-law efforts. In April 1971, the *Courier* headlined a news story "Bill takes government out of bedroom," and proceeded to discuss sex reform. It noted, Barbee said, "that one of the effects of erasing the so-called sexual morality crimes would be to reduce police entrapment of prostitutes, male homosexuals, etc., and cut down on the harassment and blackmail of homosexuals. Prostitutes and homosexuals are humans. They should be respected and accorded fair treatment."

Later that same month, Barbee himself discussed the corrupting effect of enforcing such laws, noting that requiring officers "to stick their noses into

bedrooms, parks, cars, and restrooms makes degenerates out of policemen." Clearly these were enforcement tactics used against gay men at the time. Barbee pointedly said, "What we seem to be developing here is a public crop of professional voyeurs or peeping toms."

Barbee's commitment to fight for gays came from his championship of all those oppressed. He spoke out for the Black Panthers' fights against racism, women's struggle for equal rights, the efforts by Native Americans in the Menominee to maintain their own government, welfare rights, and hippies at smoke-ins. He viewed the enforcers of law skeptically, saying, "The vice squad, in my mind, should be immediately abolished." On the occasion of J. Edgar Hoover's death, his view was that "the runt will grunt no more." When endorsing him for re-election in 1972, the *Courier* noted, "He is acknowledged throughout the country as a

champion of the underprivileged."

Such righteousness resulted in a challenge to Barbee in the 1974 Democratic primary. Robert Swan (brother of State Senator Monroe Swan, elected in 1972) announced on July 13 that he would challenge the incumbent. Robert Swan complained Barbee "had failed to provide true representation of the people in his district by introducing legislation that 'does not reflect the feelings of the 18th district.'" Robert Swan specifically mentioned the measure that would "permit men to marry men."

In the August 17 issue, the *Courier* broke the story of smear tactics being used in the campaign. "Some of State Rep. Lloyd A. Barbee's more controversial Assembly bills are being waved about by his opponents in their efforts to portray him as unfit to serve ... Campaign workers for Robert Swan, Barbee's opponent in the Sept. 10 Democratic Primary, have been distributing a large white poster with red lettering listing some of the bills and accusing Barbee of 'painting a very negative image for our community.'" The poster carried the disclaimer "Paid for by Citizens for Swan." Among the bills listed were AB 442, eliminating criminal sanctions against sexual acts between consenting adults, and AB 185, allowing persons of the same sex to marry. The poster followed a letter by Sen. Monroe Swan mailed to Barbee's constituents listing

the same bills and with his comment, "I believe these bills deal with issues that do a great injustice to the image of our community." It was reported that 500 posters were distributed and an effort was made to get these materials to black churches.

The *Courier*, in the same August 17 edition, ran an editorial called "Dirty Tricks."

It deplored the "moralistic smear campaign" and referred to using the bills as "red herrings." The paper felt "Swan and his backers have resorted to the sad, desperate, ancient, and dangerous approach of emotionalism, distortion, and character assassination." A further characterization was "the cowardly and divisive crusade" by reactionary opponents. In referring to Barbee, the editorial gave him attributes of courage and brilliance, claiming his "litany of progressive legislation" had made African Americans "a force to be reckoned with on the Assembly floor." There was, according to the paper, "no better Wisconsin legislator."

A letter signed by Fred A. Swan, Citizens for Swan, was printed in the next edition that claimed the *Courier's* article on the smear tactics was "very biased and subjective to say the least, but the heading was obviously just plain false representation." There was little doubt, however, where the *Courier* stood. In the story announcing Robert Swan's run and that one of his aims was to get more black representation on the school board, the paper included a line that Barbee had already introduced legislation for district elections to the board that likely would have accomplished that. They also mentioned that Barbee was the author of fair-housing and consumer-protection legislation. In a later editorial commenting that opponents claimed the controversial bills were negative, they said, "They have not said why."

On August 24, the *Courier* placed a letter in their special church news section. It bore the headline, "Rev. Gregg asks support for Lloyd Barbee." The reverend was the distinguished pastor of the St. Matthew Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Rev. Gregg put Barbee in the light of "a dedicated fighter for our community" who had worked for fair-housing laws, the enforcement of non-discrimination law, and community services. "We need a person to represent us in the Capitol who is honest, courageous, and uncompromising."

Needless to say, the *Courier* endorsed Barbee in the primary, citing "his distinguished record of struggles against racism, classism, and sexism, through law." In reporting on Barbee's victory, the paper noted that "A great deal of Swan's support came from precincts with a larger percentage of white voters located on the district's west side boundaries." These white voters would also be highly unlikely to be *Courier* readers. On election night, Barbee noted that he declined to make it "a political skunk fight," claiming "my constituents appreciate me representing them enough not to resort to sewer and garbage politics."

After winning the general election, Barbee charged that in the primary, Republicans had crossed over to hurt him. The data seem to support the claim. In the September primary contest, out of 1,429 votes cast, the Republican candidate Anderson got 29 votes, or 2 percent of the total. But in the November general election, out of 2,352 votes cast, the Republican Anderson got 399, or 17 percent of the total.

Thus, the 1974 primary election appears to show that the African American community in Milwaukee, through both its media and the votes cast, did not oppose Rep. Barbee for his efforts for progressive sex reform, including marriage equality.

In the early 1970s, then, gays in Wisconsin had a champion in State Representative Lloyd Barbee. Demanding reform of the laws and an end to police practices that oppressed us all, he announced in the public realm a vision of equality and fairness. For that he endured hate mail, public attacks, and an election challenge with smear tactics and dirty tricks. Undaunted, however, Lloyd Barbee won and remained a champion. ■

Dick Wagner (rrdickwagner@gmail.com), openly gay former Dane County Board Chair and co-chair of Governor Earl's Commission on Lesbian and Gay Issues, is now working on gay Wisconsin history and welcomes topics and sources.

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READER SPOTLIGHT

Heather Hazelwood & Becci Menghini
(aka The Hazelghinis) introduce us to their family of furry friends.

What kinds of animals are part of your family? What are the breeds?
Earnest Strongbow Hazelwood Menghini, aka "Ernie," is a 7-year-old labradoodle, and June SourMash Hazelwood Menghini, aka "June," is an 8.5-month-old goldendoodle.

Who are the other members of your family? We are very lucky to have a large group of family by birth and family by choice. A few deserve extra-special mentions:

Grandpa Mark (Hazelwood) is a lifesaver to us as he walks our dogs twice a week, even though he is retired and has to drive 60 miles roundtrip to do it. Mike, Monica, & Abby are the best neighbors and dog-tire-outers ever. Lisa and the Out-U-Go staff help us every time we're in a dog-walking pinch.

Nate and the Dog Haus University crew take such good care of our babies three times a week!

Dr. Erica Olsen at Fitchburg Veterinary Hospital makes our dogs think that's where treats are made and so happily dance in the door every time. And of course Dog's Best Friend for helping us train June.

They constantly remind us of how good life is and that if we take care of the most basic needs—food, water, exercise, playtime, and sleep—the rest will take care of itself.

How did you come to have these animals in your family? We got Ernie when we were living in Greensboro, North Carolina (2006). We were new to town and having a puppy was a great way to motivate us to be out in the community. He made lots of friends quickly! We still keep in touch with some of our neighbors and dog-park friends from NC, in large part because of Ernie. We had always talked about adding another dog and had even joked about getting Ernie cloned and naming the clone "Ernie Junior." Somehow this translated into the idea that if we ever got a female dog, we'd name her June. Late this spring, we started thinking there would never be a perfect time to add another dog, and that if we didn't act soon, Ernie might be too old to accept a puppy. We happened upon June, and she joined our family.

How do the pets meet your needs? They are always happy to see us, always ready to go, and always happy for it to be morning. They constantly remind us of how good life is and that if we take care of the most basic needs—food, water, exercise, playtime, and sleep—the rest will take care of itself.

How do you meet their needs? It's not a stretch to say that to a certain extent our lives revolve around our dogs. We make sure they are well fed and exercised, and we try to give them plenty of time to play and sleep each day. We're also not stingy with the toys or treats. If either of us could bring our dogs to work, we would in a heartbeat.

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did you hear?

Out candidates running for local office in spring elections

At least three out LGBT candidates will be running for local office in the April elections. **Brett Blomme**, an attorney with the Wisconsin State Public Defender's office, is running for city council in Monona. Brett also serves in the Internal Committee with OPEN, and has done grassroots organizing and fundraising for Fair Wisconsin.

Kyle Richmond, who has spent more than a decade working on county issues like the domestic-partner registry and benefit requirement for same-sex couples, will be running for reelection to District 4 county supervisor.

Chuck Erickson, the incumbent county supervisor in District 13, is also running for reelection. Erickson helped pass the 2014 county budget, which matched the city of Madison with \$15,000 for the LGBT senior coordinator (Caroline Werner) position at OutReach. The budget also included significant funding for Briarpatch for their facility and youth—including gay youth—outreach programs.

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Grieving Suicide, Healing Ourselves

In the wake of suicide, **Connie North** reflects on the importance of human connection and the example set by those who live.

"Save yourself; others you cannot save."
—Adrienne Rich,
"Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"

The Madison community recently suffered multiple suicides. When people we love deliberately end their lives, we easily blame ourselves, asking questions like, "Why didn't I see that behavior as a red flag?" or "Why didn't I do more?" According to Kübler-Ross's grief model, such inquiries represent a kind of bargaining with the reality of our loss. We want to make sense of this tragedy and our potential contributions to it.



I want to emphasize that you, the one reading this essay, remain among the living. Because our lives are intertwined, you are part of me, and I am part of you. Therefore, we are not alone.

This negotiating is part and parcel of our lived experience and can be accepted as such. If we become stuck in cycles of blaming and shaming, however, we miss an opportunity to live a life rooted in an understanding that we belong to each other—that we are all interconnected. To borrow from *Stay* author Jennifer Hecht, "...our social sciences demonstrate that suicide causes more suicide, both among those who knew the person and among the strangers who somehow identified with the victim. If suicide has a pernicious influence on others, then staying alive has the opposite influence: it helps keep people

alive. By staying alive, we are contributing something precious to the world."

Our bargaining may also involve a search for explanations. What prevents the embrace of life's preciousness? Conflicting theories about suicidality abound. Adherents to a biomedical model, for example, understand depression and other mental-health issues as physiological diseases. Treatment of such illnesses may involve psychotropic medications as well as a focus on ameliorating the illnesses' symptoms, such as recurrent feelings of sadness and worthlessness in the case of depression.

Insight meditation practitioners, on the other hand, emphasize suffering as an effect of our relationship to life's struggles, including trauma. As one saying goes, "Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional." Healing emotional, cognitive, physiological, sociocultural, and spiritual wounds thus becomes the focus of releasing one's suffering. Some integrate scientific and contemplative traditions in their explanations of suicide, particularly as neuroscientific research advances. For instance, in *Hardwiring Happiness*, neuropsychologist Rick Hanson argues, "Just a handful of painful experiences of futility can rapidly become a sense of helplessness—a major factor in depression—and a person usually needs many times as many counter-experiences of effectiveness in order to regain a sense of confidence and capability."

Rather than engaging in a discussion about which approach best prevents suicide, I want to emphasize that you, the one reading this essay, remain among the living. Because our lives are intertwined, you are part of me, and I am part of you. Therefore, we are not alone.

If we rest in a sense of belonging and connection for even a few moments, we can interrupt "Why" questions about suicide (since they rarely produce satisfactory answers) and return to the life that remains, within us. Coming back to the present moment, we can engage in a different, more generative kind of inquiry: "What would

I have to face if I stopped bargaining with my loss?"

I respond to that question as follows: "Oh, is there pain! It lies in my chest, my belly, my throat." I do not bury the pain alive, pretend it does not exist, or grab onto it for dear life. Instead, I open myself to it, with curiosity rather than judgment, and pray, "May I feel peace again soon. May I remember the love that is here and all around me. May I take myself into my own heart and mind and love this life no matter what." I also seek out others—family, friends, counselors, spiritual guides—who care for and love me, remembering that all of us need to feel cared for and loved.

Ultimately, we must find our own pathways to a radical acceptance of this life and ourselves. We cannot force self-love to manifest, and we cannot force others to cultivate it. Our grieved one took our breath away with that searing truth. We can look to others' stories for guidance. I find Marsha Linehan's biography, as published in the *New York Times*, particularly powerful.

A survivor of multiple suicide attempts, 20-year-old Linehan had the following experience while praying in a chapel: "The whole place became gold—and suddenly I felt something coming toward me... It was this shimmering experience, and I just ran back to my room and said, 'I love myself.'" She continued to struggle as life threw various challenges her way, but she did not harm herself again. After years of studying psychology, she created dialectical behavior therapy, a therapy for severely suicidal people. She concluded that two seemingly opposite principles were the basis of successful treatment for others and herself: "Acceptance of life as it is, not as it is supposed to be; and the need to change, despite that reality and because of it."

We also can turn to our poets to strengthen our resolve to stay alive. From "Birthright" by Danna Fauld: "Despite illness of body or mind, in spite of blinding despair or habitual belief, who you are is whole...Despite doubt or hopeless turns of mind, you are not broken." ■

Connie North is a psychotherapist in Madison with an MS in marriage and family therapy and PhD in education. She uses a mindfulness-based, justice-oriented approach and has taught and written about LGBTQI, equity, and diversity issues. More information about her is located at connienorth.com.

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quality of life

OUR ELDERS

Accessing Friendly Housing

Caroline Werner explains the progress being made toward establishing LGBT-friendly senior co-housing in Madison, along with other options for aging members of our community.

at the end of the September/October “Living Long, Living Well,” article I said my next article would “tell you about a local agency that can help you figure out what you can afford and help find the right place for you.”

The one-stop agency I was referring to is the Aging and Disabilities Resource Center for Dane County, located at 2865 N. Sherman Avenue in Madison. It is in the shopping mall



You can consider teaming up with 20 LGB baby boomers who are seriously considering investing in at least one co-housing unit (that would accommodate 40 units) at the Union Corners site on the corner of East Washington Ave. and Milwaukee Street.

at the corner of Sherman Avenue and Northport Drive.

Free of charge, benefit specialists at this agency help Dane County seniors (ages 55+) figure out what programs are available to them based on their income and assets. They also serve adults ages 18 to 59 who have physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, mental illness, and/or substance-use disorders. They take phone calls, arrange appointments, or take walk-ins. Their contact numbers are: (608) 240-7474, TTY: (608) 240-7404, fax: (608) 240-7401, or toll-free: (800) 417-6892.

I stopped in to see how they would work with an older lesbian looking for some services, including wanting to learn about friendly

housing options. Although the person I talked with was friendly, I learned they are unable to refer me to anything that is known to be specifically LGBT-friendly. They don’t categorize by LGBT-friendliness. They referred me to the same services they’d refer for any senior.

When I inquired about housing options for a (general) low-income senior, I was told that the options are very limited and that there’s a high need for more low-income housing for seniors in Dane County. The housing options that exist have long waiting lists.

One option LGBT seniors have is to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Staying in your own home and having care come in is often much less expensive than moving to an assisted living facility, as long as you don’t need a lot of care and you’re mentally stable or have a partner who is able to ensure that your needs are met. The important thing is that your partner/caregiver can remain healthy.

A second option if you want to live in a retirement center in Madison is The Gardens on Segoe Road, owned by Independent Living, Inc. I know that agency to be LGBT-friendly.

Third, you can consider teaming up with 20 LGB baby boomers who are seriously considering investing in at least one co-housing unit (that would accommodate 40 units) at the Union Corners site on the corner of East Washington Ave. and Milwaukee Street in Madison. There may be room for three separate co-housing units on this property owned by Gorman Construction in the LGBT-friendly Schenk, Atwood, Starkweather Creek, and Yahara neighborhood.

Several monthly meetings have been held since September to discuss the idea. The Design Coalition helped the group understand the co-housing concept and think about what we might want from it. In November, the group toured the Arboretum Co-Housing (Arbco) site off S. Park Street. After a warm reception from a few Arbco residents, we received a complete tour of their site—from the inviting communal spaces to the large kitchen, the guest space, an individual unit, the underground garage, and the outdoor plantings. We saw the solar panels on the roof and learned about the radiant heating in the floors, alleviating the need for heat



Sketch of Union Corners

ducts between units.

We learned that they share larger kitchen appliances or sporting equipment used infrequently by the owner, thus reducing the need for a lot of storage space in individual units. We learned they have a system for preparing shared meals and sharing other chores. They operate with committees and encourage involvement by all residents, as each individual is able.

They shared with us their process for potential new residents to self-select whether they would be a good fit for this type of housing arrangement. We also learned about a book for suggested reading entitled “Heads, Hearts and Hands: Lessons in Community Building.” They offered to help us figure out the legalities and financial arrangements needed to make our Union Corners co-housing dreams come true.

Now the decision-making for what we want in our co-housing unit(s) begins. We have to

decide what we want in our individual units and for the communal space and operation. We are not embarking on this venture completely on our own, though. We have experienced support behind us and we’re fortunate to be in Madison, where other co-housing sites have gone before us.

The Union Corners site will be developed in stages. First, ground will be broken for the UW clinic on the corner of East Washington Avenue and Milwaukee Street in 2015. In 2016, the Hawthorn Library branch will move to this location and other businesses will be break ground as well. It may be five years before the co-housing units are under construction.

If you’d like to follow what’s happening and/or want to participate in our meetings to help plan space for yourself as well as the entire living unit or units, please “like” us at facebook.com/LGBTFriendlyCoHousing. The Design Coalition website is designcoalition.org. Sue Thering is the staff person who’s working closely with us. ■

Caroline Werner has a master’s degree in social work. She did case management with Dane County seniors before retiring. Now she is a part-time LGBT senior advocate for the OutReach LGBT Community Center, funded by the City of Madison.

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Island of Inequality

Fair Wisconsin Executive Director **Katie Belanger** lays out the steps to be taken on the path to equality in Wisconsin.

When I picture myself on an island, usually there's a piña colada in my hand and a warm sun overhead.

But recently, the thought of island living has soured for me, as Wisconsin has become an island of discrimination in a sea of marriage equality.

I'm often asked when we at Fair Wisconsin will start working on marriage equality. I'm always befuddled by this question. From our perspective, we've never stopped.

Legislative action on marriage equality



A litigation strategy needs to be fully vetted before moving forward in Wisconsin. Legal cases are a complicated equation; in order to be successful you need to have the right case, the right argument, in the right court, with the right legal team.

is often the most visible part of a long-term vision for achieving true equality in Wisconsin, but it is only one piece of the puzzle, and it's not where we start. At Fair Wisconsin, we have a holistic approach to how we will continue building the capacity we need to accomplish the same victory our neighbors in Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois have achieved. **FIRST**, building a strong, diverse movement is the foundation of our ability to advance LGBT equality.

We need a robust grassroots infrastructure to support a statewide effort. Volunteers, donors, and local leaders need to be active,

committed, and determined to create an environment that is ripe to move amendment repeal and marriage forward. That's why in 2012 we launched the Wisconsin LGBT Leadership Conference. Entitled "Connecting Leaders, Advancing the Movement," the conference is a partnership with Diverse & Resilient and seeks to build a more skilled and connected network of LGBT and allied activists advocating for equality in their local communities. This year's conference will be held in Milwaukee on February 7-9.

SECOND, linking local work to building statewide support and momentum is key.

The lack of majority support in the state capitol for pro-fairness legislation does not mean that tangible victories cannot be had in Wisconsin. In fact, over the past two years it has been clear that local activists and elected leaders are craving opportunities to make their communities more inclusive for LGBT residents and employees.

When communities outside of Madison and Milwaukee take a proactive stance on LGBT equality, it demonstrates the depth and breadth of support LGBT people and their families now have across the state, and highlights how out of touch many of our state legislators are with their districts and constituents, creating more pressure in the capitol to move forward.

THIRD, defending the statewide domestic partnership registry is necessary to protect past victories and continue moving forward.

It seems passé to still be defending such a limited set of legal protections when our neighbors now have full marriage equality. But nevertheless, our past victories are the foundation upon which we can continue to build. We also cannot forget that people are relying on this legislation to protect themselves and their families.

FOURTH, strategically assessing all options for constitutional amendment repeal allows us to be prepared to work on multiple fronts.

Before passing marriage equality, we have to tackle the 2006 constitutional amendment banning marriage equality and civil unions. This process is neither short nor easy, as it requires two consecutive sessions of both houses of the legislature to pass the repeal,

followed by a statewide referendum.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the Proposition 8 and DOMA cases, marriage equality litigation is sweeping the nation as couples and organizations seek legal remedies to their state bans on marriage equality. A litigation strategy needs to be fully vetted before moving forward in Wisconsin. Legal cases are a complicated equation; in order to be successful you need to have the right case, the right argument, in the right court, with the right legal team. One unknown variable in Wisconsin's equation is the outcome in our domestic partnership registry lawsuit, which could have a tremendous impact on how we could build a case for marriage in Wisconsin.



FIFTH, engaging in the electoral sphere is critical to our success.

When you can't change the hearts or minds of elected leaders, you need to change the faces of the individuals deciding Wisconsin's and our collective future. From electing more openly LGBT people to identifying and supporting pro-fairness champions, elections are an opportunity to directly impact our ability to achieve the change we seek.

Ensuring that LGBT people are able to participate in the electoral process is also of utmost importance. Whether registering young pro-fairness advocates to vote in their first election or working to protect the ability of trans* and gender non-conforming people to vote given the attempts to implement restrictive voter ID laws, LGBT people deserve and need to have their voices heard on election day.

SIXTH, recognizing that marriage equality isn't the only issue we need to address to achieve full equality for the LGBT community.

Without fully inclusive nondiscrimination laws, trans* people face twice the rates of unemployment and homelessness as their LGB brothers and sisters. Racism is alive and well in our country and means that LGBT people of color face multiple systems of oppression and discrimination. National studies have estimated that approximately 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ—a significant overrepresentation. LGBT-related hate crimes and bullying are on the rise as the backlash to pro-fairness progress swells. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the many priorities of a

diverse community, but rather an attempt to demonstrate the complex nature of the LGBT equality movement.

Marriage equality solves many problems for families and signifies inclusion and acceptance for a great number of LGBT people, and should therefore be a priority. But when we make only one issue of importance a priority, we lose sight of the diversity in the broader community. We aren't serving the full community, and we aren't able to build the broadest support possible for the plethora of issues of importance to the community, including marriage equality. Most importantly, we lose the ability to dismantle multiple systems of oppression simultaneously.

I firmly believe that achieving marriage equality is not a question of if, but of when we are able to do so. The path is clear, but complicated, and how we achieve our victory is just as important as achieving it. ■

Katie Belanger has been Fair Wisconsin's Executive Director since 2009. She also currently serves as the Board Co-Chair for the Equality Federation, the national alliance of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations.

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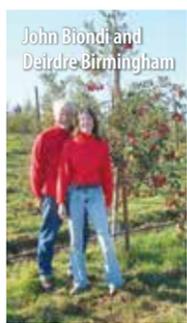
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Spirit of the Apple

The Cider Farm revives a tradition that provides the perfect sip for winters in Wisconsin.



John Biondi and Deirdre Birmingham

In days gone by, apple brandy was a celebrated spirit here in the States, but like most things, tastes change and something more nouveau comes along to replace it. I'm extremely happy to see a revival in interest for it, and even more pleased to report that we have a top-tier organic product right here in southern Wisconsin.

The Cider Farm, owned by Deirdre Birmingham and husband John Biondi, is an organic orchard with about 2,400 apple trees located in the beautiful rolling hills of southwestern Wisconsin, just outside of Hollandale. Their orchard comprises a curious mix of English/European cider apple varieties that are grown specifically for properties that make them ideal for high-quality cider.

If an outside party had listened in on our interview, they may have mistaken the topic for grapes instead of apples, because the dialect of cider-makers runs very closely to that of vintners. Birmingham talks of the acids, tannins, and sugar content of these apples as she describes

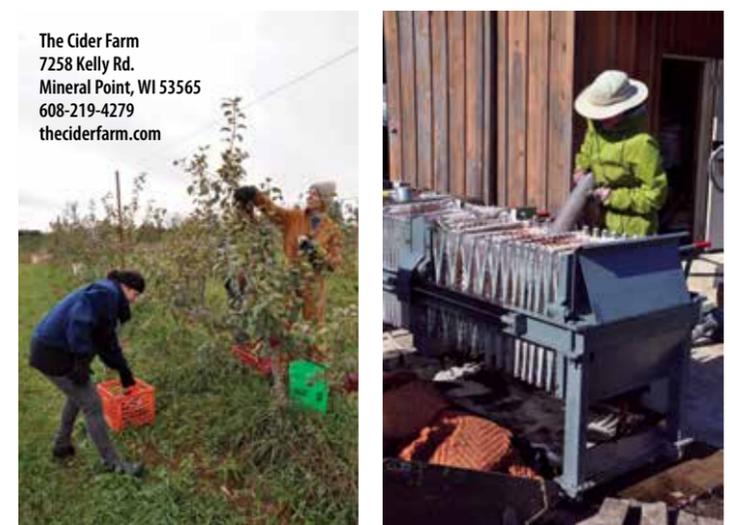
Their goal was to produce a truly top-tier product that people will fall in love with. In a snifter, on a cold winter's night, it's just about perfect.

how they arrive at their particular cider. Suffice it to say, there will be no Galas or Braeburns found on The Cider Farm's 166 acres. But what they do grow results in ideal cider for distilling to apple brandy.

Deirdre and John met in 1995 while she was working on her dissertation in agriculture here at UW-Madison. She has worked in agriculture her entire adult life, but primarily in Africa to help improve rural livelihoods. Biondi's expertise lay in business start-ups, and he's had great success with companies such as Xolve and Lucigen, both located in Middleton, Wis. Interestingly enough, when the two met, Biondi already had a "start-up" file for farm-based ideas, while Deirdre had never even

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considered her own farm!

"I hadn't even taken one horticulture class," says Birmingham. "I was interested in developing other country's agriculture." But people like Biondi have a unique ability to paint their vision in a way that allows others to see the beauty and get involved. Which is just what happened—and the rest is history. In 2002, they bought their farm and have been bootstrapping it ever since to make the dream a reality.

The Cider Farm just had their first apple brandy release party at Yahara Bay Distillery in October, and it was met with a great deal of enthusiasm. The Cider Farm doesn't have a distiller's license, which is why Yahara Bay became involved. Nick Quint, the owner of Yahara Bay, was approached by Birmingham a while back to see if their two businesses could join forces. Quint was quickly onboard with her idea. I applaud Quint, because Yahara Bay was already distilling their own apple brandy, yet he still decided to work with The Cider Farm to help them achieve their dream. Another wonderful example of small businesses working together outside the main frame of standard American business practices to allow the tide to raise all ships. Bravo.

Now, understand that distillation is only the beginning. Based on a great deal of research, The Cider Farm chose to age its apple brandy for two years in charred oak bourbon barrels with some of their own wild apple wood added in for flavor. This longer aging process really allows the brandy to develop a wonderfully smooth and flavorful finish. Their goal was to produce a truly top-tier product that people will fall in love with. I've had it on three occasions now, and I'm sold. In a snifter, on a cold winter's night, it's just about perfect.

If you're interested in getting your own bottle, Yahara Bay is the only place you can buy it. And don't wait: This year's product is already 80 percent sold. However, if you miss this year's, don't despair. "If we sell out this year, we'll just start taking reservations for next year's product," says Birmingham. My advice, just call now and hedge your bets. Worst-case scenario, you'll have an extra bottle next year just in time for the holidays. —**Jeanne Benink**



Jeanne Benink is a Madison chef and the sole owner of Simply Served Personal Chef Service. Her friends often call her the soup guru, and she truly does have passion for exploring soups and stews from all over the world. You can find her online at simplyservedpersonalchef.com

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The group we formed that night remained close. The best part of it all was that I finally found a queer group that I could really talk to and that understood what I was going through in terms of my sexuality.

100 Percent Acceptance

UW student **Roxanne Meyer** navigated a rocky road to coming out, but found a place and people to call home in the Ten Percent Society.

my name is Roxanne Meyer, and I am an actuarial science major at UW-Madison. I am also one of the co-presidents of UW-Madison’s queer and ally social group, the Ten Percent Society, and a queer mentor. While I’m very “out” now, I wasn’t always.

I was raised in a small, extremely religious, conservative Wisconsin town. My mom, who lived and left her heart in San Francisco, as she would say, is very liberal. My dad is not, but to be honest, it didn’t really affect me growing up. I didn’t realize I was gay, so it didn’t affect me when he’d use the term “queer” derogatively.

Only when I was in the 9th grade did his views actually begin to affect me. That’s when I fell for my first girl. I was so scared to come out that I hid the relationship for months. I couldn’t even work up the courage to come out to my twin. Eventually, I told my friend and had her tell everyone because I didn’t want to see people’s reactions, which is how my completely accepting twin finally found out.

My mom’s reaction was the first I ever witnessed in person. She saw a hickey on my neck when she knew I had been with a girl the entire day. I was mortified—and, worse yet, she insisted it was a phase. I was confused—she said she would love me no matter what. With her negative reaction, I retreated back into the closet, and hid my sexuality from my dad, stepmom, and older brother.

The only thing that got me through my “re-closeted period” was being the president of my high school’s gay-straight alliance (I told my dad that I was at “art club” instead). There I had a community,

even within a conservative high school where I was bullied by both students and the principal.

In February of 2009, I was outed to my dad and stepmom. I came home sobbing, waiting for him to get home. But something weird happened. He came home and hugged me. He told me he loved me and that he was sorry I felt I had to hide it from him. And my stepmom wrote an elegant letter telling me that she too accepted me.

Two years later, I was admitted to UW-Madison. I figured the city would be perfect for me—I would be far enough away from home that I could come out completely, without fear of complete judgment. That fall, I attended the LGBT ice cream social, and I knew I had made the right school choice. There, I signed up for the Ten Percent Society (TPS). I attended the first meeting, and afterward, a group of us played Apples to Apples and went to “Waffle Wednesday” at Frank’s dining hall.

The group we formed that night remained close. We eventually had a ritual—TPS, then Waffle Wednesdays. The best part of it all was that I finally found a queer group that I could really talk to and that understood what I was going through in terms of my sexuality. In the spring, TPS held officer elections, and I was nominated by one of the then co-presidents. I ran as co-president and was elected.

My hope for club members is that they’re able to talk about all the queer things they never could at home, with friends like the ones I made my freshman year. With about two events each month, we hope to bring in and welcome as many people as possible.

In addition, I am also a queer mentor. I think my experiences with both coming out of the closet on my own terms and with being outed are what motivated me to become a mentor. I also know that coming to college as a queer student, and navigating coming out to new people, making friends, dating, etc., can be extremely intimidating. I wanted to help get queer underclassmen comfortable in their new environment like the older TPS members did for me when I was new here.

It has been a long and sometimes difficult process coming to terms with my own sexuality (see: hiding my sexuality from my own twin). To be honest, I could never have been this relaxed about telling my story before coming to Madison. Case in point, I’m still not out to my older brother, but I agreed to write this article knowing that he might find out about it, because I want him to finally know.

I came to Madison looking for a better sense of identity—something I could take back to my hometown or to wherever I go next. I’ve also found things that I wasn’t looking for: lasting friendships, a sense of community in a big city, and even some romance (shout-out to my amazing girlfriend, whom I met at TPS). I still have three more semesters left here—who knows what else I’ll find, but I look forward to finding it. ■



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