Local leaders & advocates share insights & ideas.

Yet She Persists

Tanya Atkinson
President & CEO of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin

Reader Poll: Health Care
p.46

Culinary Ladies Collective
p.60
Get a clear picture of your energy use

Ever wonder how your energy use compares to other homes in our area? Have you used more energy this year than last year?

Visit mge.com/compare and sign in to My Account. Find easy-to-use charts of your energy use. Get tips on how you can save more energy. Have questions? Call our Home Energy Line at 252-7117.
“I live in a constellation of intimates, and the shape of us is a family. We touch base and check in with each other and also—I am so grateful to report—they sometimes check in with one another. Correspondences have sprung up and friendships have started to form beyond my influence. Family has begun to take on a transitive property as well.”

- S. Bear Bergman
EXPLAINING HEALTH CARE

The article in question was, in fact, a reprint from the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce and was written by Sarah Davis, an insurance marketing and enrollment firm. We reached out to the Center for Patient Partnerships for a comment, but they were unable to provide a response.

Health care costs are a major issue for all of us. Currently, these costs consume almost 18% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For those of us fortunate enough to have insurance, insurance premiums and deductibles average 10% of our income. For those without insurance, the costs are rising every year. Insurance companies are looking to reduce costs, and focusing on prevention is a valuable strategy.

Lifestyle Health Plans claims that 75% of health care costs are caused by preventable behaviors and that these behaviors are the cause of escalating health care costs. This is misleading at best, painting a simplistic picture that puts the blame on individuals. Health behavior account for approximately 30% of health outcomes. More impactful are social and economic factors, and our physical environment. How safe are our homes? Do we have parks dispersed in our community so all families can exercise? Are we paid a living minimum wage? Even health behaviors themselves have underlying root causes. Take what we eat: Nearly 75% of packaged foods contain sugars, including high fructose corn syrup. Federal government farm subsidies for corn make corn syrup cheap. It is simply more expensive to eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains than packaged foods. A non-lifestyle way to reduce costs is to reduce over-testing and treatment. This is estimated to cost $200 billion annually. The Choosing Wisely Initiative offers resources for patients and providers to help guide decision making about what tests and treatments are important, and worthy of the cost. [choosingwisely.org].

When a clinician suggests a test, ask why. What information will be gained? Will the test results alter the treatment recommendation? Even if insurance pays for the test, we all end up indirectly bearing the cost. Lifestyle Health Plans offers insurance from several different carriers, so each plan will be different—varying in coverage and quality. It is important for employers to understand the details of the coverage they are purchasing for their employees—to assess its total value. Are their employees able to receive the right care at the right time and place—not too little, and not too much? What would the total out-of-pocket costs be to address a long-term illness? Would the employee have access to a National Cancer Institute supported Comprehensive Cancer Center?

It is human nature to want simple solutions to complex problems. I commend the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce for its efforts to address escalating health care spending. A multi-dimensional approach is needed. Individual health and the health of our community is based upon more than the individual choices we make. It is shaped by public policy, by economics, and by the biases—including homophobia and racism—that we experience every day. It is affected by the support (or lack thereof) of state, community, state, and national leaders, and by the world we live in.

SARAH DAVIS, J.D., MPA is a Clinical Associate Professor of Law and Associate Director of the interdisciplinary Center for Patient Partnerships at the University of Wisconsin.

The article in question was, in fact, a reprint from the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce and was written by Sarah Davis, an insurance marketing and enrollment firm. We reached out to the Center for Patient Partnerships for a comment, but they were unable to provide a response.

Health care costs are a major issue for all of us. Currently, these costs consume almost 18% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For those of us fortunate enough to have insurance, insurance premiums and deductibles average 10% of our income. Insurance companies are looking to reduce costs, and focusing on prevention is a valuable strategy.

Lifestyle Health Plans claims that 75% of health care costs are caused by preventable behaviors and that these behaviors are the cause of escalating health care costs. This is misleading at best, painting a simplistic picture that puts the blame on individuals. Health behavior account for approximately 30% of health outcomes. More impactful are social and economic factors, and our physical environment. How safe are our homes? Do we have parks dispersed in our community so all families can exercise? Are we paid a living minimum wage? Even health behaviors themselves have underlying root causes. Take what we eat: Nearly 75% of packaged foods contain sugars, including high fructose corn syrup. Federal government farm subsidies for corn make corn syrup cheap. It is simply more expensive to eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains than packaged foods. A non-lifestyle way to reduce costs is to reduce over-testing and treatment. This is estimated to cost $200 billion annually. The Choosing Wisely Initiative offers resources for patients and providers to help guide decision making about what tests and treatments are important, and worthy of the cost. [choosingwisely.org].

When a clinician suggests a test, ask why. What information will be gained? Will the test results alter the treatment recommendation? Even if insurance pays for the test, we all end up indirectly bearing the cost. Lifestyle Health Plans offers insurance from several different carriers, so each plan will be different—varying in coverage and quality. It is important for employers to understand the details of the coverage they are purchasing for their employees—to assess its total value. Are their employees able to receive the right care at the right time and place—not too little, and not too much? What would the total out-of-pocket costs be to address a long-term illness? Would the employee have access to a National Cancer Institute supported Comprehensive Cancer Center?

It is human nature to want simple solutions to complex problems. I commend the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce for its efforts to address escalating health care spending. A multi-dimensional approach is needed. Individual health and the health of our community is based upon more than the individual choices we make. It is shaped by public policy, by economics, and by the biases—including homophobia and racism—that we experience every day. It is affected by the support (or lack thereof) of state, community, state, and national leaders, and by the world we live in.

SARAH DAVIS, J.D., MPA is a Clinical Associate Professor of Law and Associate Director of the interdisciplinary Center for Patient Partnerships at the University of Wisconsin.
THE LEAVES HAVE DROPPED from the trees, the frost has bitten, and snows have likely come together and lift each other up in the winter. Finally, thank you for coming along and wellness—a good fit, we think, for the time when many of us may struggle with certain a time for relying on our communities to help us keep our wits. Our Novem to keep cozy during the winter months. The shorter days and longer nights are also the highs and lows of the campaign and what compelled him to get active and involved. 

2008

WE INTRODUCED the family theme for the first time, with a cover feature focused on Brendan Barrett, Vance Skinner, and their twin daughters—born via surrogacy. It was a fun and moving portrait of the many ways in which LGBTQ people choose to build families, and included an amazing twist ending (find out more). The Law Center for Children and Families put together a great resource guide on the path to parenthood for LGBTQ people. We featured Bonnie Augusta, former LGBTQ liaison for the Madison Metropolitan School District, for her work to pioneer that position and her vocal advocacy for GSAFE and LGBTQ kids in general.

2009

IN OUR FIRST major attempt at providing corporate accountability around LGBTQ issues, Marty Fox tackled an extensive Corporate Diversity Initiative Report project for us. It compiled and averaged various rankings for a number of larger companies with a presence in Wisconsin, giving a clearer picture of their true diversity and inclusion. The Out Professional Engagement Network (OPEN) was started that year, and one of its co-founders, J. James Tye, gave us the rundown of how it all got going. We introduced readers to Ellen Berz, who was then the AIDS Network board president and has since gone on to become a Dane County judge. Ellen helped see the organization’s food pantry opened. Our Pioneers featured Scott Seyforth talking about the Madison Alliance for Homosexual Equality (MAHE) and that group’s history of firsts. Attorney Tamara Packard shared a piece addressing Obama’s promise to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, and Autonette Cole wrote a coming out story tied to her transition, with these poignant words to take to heart: “Life’s too short to live these lies. Besides, this was like holding a beach ball underwater; it always surfaces.”

2010

IF YOU EVER SAW the blue Prius emblazoned with phrases like “Kindness Ripples,” that was Paul Wessellmann, who wrote our cover story that year on being brave enough to be your full and true self, and the trickiness of finding that balance. Rev. Ellwood Carey, who most folks knew as Woody, was given the Man of the Year Award by OutReach, in large part for being brave enough to be your full and true self, and the trickiness of finding that balance. Rev. Ellwood Carey, who most folks knew as Woody, was given the Man of the Year Award by OutReach, in large part for being brave enough to be your full and true self, and the trickiness of finding that balance. Rev. Ellwood Carey, who most folks knew as Woody, was given the Man of the Year Award by OutReach, in large part for

We have Hygge. (google it)

Hygge is Danish. It’s coziness and comfort and warmth, with hugs and tea and quiet music. Rutabaga did Hygge before it was cool. We have a ton of comfy socks, warm sweaters and soft, snuggly merino. We’re the House of Hygge.
A PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

JULIET DAREK

She provided our first (and so far only) illustrated cover, highlighting the theme of how LGBTQ people create our own families. Sue Gill wrote the insightful piece behind the cover, tackling the ways in which we navigate and build our families of choice. The issue also included a beautiful narrative by Linda Balisle, who gifted us with a deep dive into the very difficult spaces she navigated while coming out and building her identity. Linda’s life was hit hard by the AIDS crisis, while coming out and building her identity.

2012

CHAZ BONO

In order to create their family, GSAFE Educator of the Year Abra Bankendorf Vigna wrote a powerful statement of values about her life and work with Briarpatch’s Teens Like Us, with group alumni sharing their own thoughts alongside it.

2013

STATE REP. JOCASTA

ZAMARIPPA

Our cover featured Zamarippa’s narrative about her personal journey, and how it brought her into the education world. We were pleased to include a reported piece on the services offered at Briarpatch, which included the voices of both staff and clients. We featured co-founder of PFLAG, Jane LaFlash. We included a piece on Donald Harr and Willima’s Fund. Sheltreese McCoy, then the Crossroads Coordinator at the LGBT Campus Center & Multicultural Student Center at the UW, offered musings on life at the intersections of multiple identities. Alex Hanna wrote about access and barriers to healthcare for trans people, part of her work with the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition (Alex has since moved to Toronto and is an assistant professor at U.T.). We had therapist Owen Karcher talk about image policing, introducing some subconscious ways we might end up policing and stigmatizing others’ identities.

2014

IN A DEEPLY PERSONAL

narrative about her journey, Judge Rhonda Lamford offered us a fascinating glimpse of the people and events that helped shape her. Judy Dahl put together an excellent resource guide for those thinking about using surrogacy in order to start a family. The issue included one of our more controversial articles, as we took a look at the local chapter of the Salvation Army and its efforts to be more welcoming toward transgender clients in particular. Sue Gill wrote on being “invisibly queer,” and the risk of social isolation even occasional hostility faced by those people too often ignored or erased even within LGBTQ communities.

2015

THEN VICE PROVOST

of Madison College, our cover featured Zamarippa and her personal journey, and how it brought her into the education world. We were pleased to include a reported piece on the services offered at Briarpatch, which included the voices of both staff and clients. We featured co-founder of PFLAG, Jane LaFlash. We included a piece on Donald Harr and Willima’s Fund. Sheltreese McCoy, then the Crossroads Coordinator at the LGBT Campus Center & Multicultural Student Center at the UW, offered musings on life at the intersections of multiple identities. Alex Hanna wrote about access and barriers to healthcare for trans people, part of her work with the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition (Alex has since moved to Toronto and is an assistant professor at U.T.). We had therapist Owen Karcher talk about image policing, introducing some subconscious ways we might end up policing and stigmatizing others’ identities.

ADOPTION CAN BE A

lengthy and complicated process under the best of circumstances. Denise Marjya and Margaret McMurray wrote about the process of adopting their daughter from Russia in the era before marriage equality, and running a gauntlet of legal and social issues in order to create their family. GSAFE Educator of the Year recipient Abra Bankendorf Vigna wrote a powerful statement of values about her life and work with Briarpatch’s Teens Like Us, with group alumni sharing their own thoughts alongside it.

APRIL 2009

HILARY KOREN

The issue included one of our more controversial articles, as we took a look at the local chapter of the Salvation Army and its efforts to be more welcoming toward transgender clients in particular. Sue Gill wrote on being “invisibly queer,” and the risk of social isolation even occasional hostility faced by those people too often ignored or erased even within LGBTQ communities.

APRIL 2010

A PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

JULIET DAREK

She provided our first (and so far only) illustrated cover, highlighting the theme of how LGBTQ people create our own families. Sue Gill wrote the insightful piece behind the cover, tackling the ways in which we navigate and build our families of choice. The issue also included a beautiful narrative by Linda Balisle, who gifted us with a deep dive into the very difficult spaces she navigated while coming out and building her identity. Linda’s life was hit hard by the AIDS crisis, while coming out and building her identity.

2012

CHAZ BONO

In order to create their family, GSAFE Educator of the Year Abra Bankendorf Vigna wrote a powerful statement of values about her life and work with Briarpatch’s Teens Like Us, with group alumni sharing their own thoughts alongside it.

2013

STATE REP. JOCASTA

ZAMARIPPA

Our cover featured Zamarippa’s narrative about her personal journey, and how it brought her into the education world. We were pleased to include a reported piece on the services offered at Briarpatch, which included the voices of both staff and clients. We featured co-founder of PFLAG, Jane LaFlash. We included a piece on Donald Harr and Willima’s Fund. Sheltreese McCoy, then the Crossroads Coordinator at the LGBT Campus Center & Multicultural Student Center at the UW, offered musings on life at the intersections of multiple identities. Alex Hanna wrote about access and barriers to healthcare for trans people, part of her work with the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition (Alex has since moved to Toronto and is an assistant professor at U.T.). We had therapist Owen Karcher talk about image policing, introducing some subconscious ways we might end up policing and stigmatizing others’ identities.

2014

IN A DEEPLY PERSONAL

narrative about her journey, Judge Rhonda Lamford offered us a fascinating glimpse of the people and events that helped shape her. Judy Dahl put together an excellent resource guide for those thinking about using surrogacy in order to start a family. The issue included one of our more controversial articles, as we took a look at the local chapter of the Salvation Army and its efforts to be more welcoming toward transgender clients in particular. Sue Gill wrote on being “invisibly queer,” and the risk of social isolation even occasional hostility faced by those people too often ignored or erased even within LGBTQ communities.

2015

THEN VICE PROVOST

of Madison College, our cover featured Zamarippa and her personal journey, and how it brought her into the education world. We were pleased to include a reported piece on the services offered at Briarpatch, which included the voices of both staff and clients. We featured co-founder of PFLAG, Jane LaFlash. We included a piece on Donald Harr and Willima’s Fund. Sheltreese McCoy, then the Crossroads Coordinator at the LGBT Campus Center & Multicultural Student Center at the UW, offered musings on life at the intersections of multiple identities. Alex Hanna wrote about access and barriers to healthcare for trans people, part of her work with the Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition (Alex has since moved to Toronto and is an assistant professor at U.T.). We had therapist Owen Karcher talk about image policing, introducing some subconscious ways we might end up policing and stigmatizing others’ identities.

2016

OUR COVER FEATURED

Wisconsin Alumni Association President Paulea Bonner, with a reflection on important family ties, barriers broken, gracious mentors, and her life’s work to help create equality and innovation. In the midst of a contentious national discussion about the role of police in our communities, Madison Office Brian Chaney Austin wrote about his life at the intersections of being a gay black man wearing the uniform. GSAFE’s Ali Muldrow tackled the subject of juvenile incarceration in Wisconsin, and the challenges faced to fix a broken system.

2017

YOU HOLD IN YOUR hand the final issue of our 10th anniversary celebration. It’s been a wild ride of a year, with seemingly endless outrages and setbacks coming from the national and local stages. It’s what makes the positive news, and the work done by the everyday folks (yes, you!) to fight the good fight, all the more crucial to know and share. Tanya Atkinson of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin gets us centered on health and family issues, with a healthy dose of love and laughter to keep us sane. GSAFE Educator of the Year Abby Swetz gives us a roadmap for using vulnerability to create safer schools and healthier kids. Kaci Sullivan lets us all in on his incredibly poignant journey into trans parenthood. And there are many more stories, calls to action, ways to reach out and help and to get help, and so much more in the pages of this issue. We are, as always, so grateful to everyone who contributes their time and energy to help bring this magazine to all of you. Here’s another 10 years, and more, of Our Lives.
New Wisconsin budget includes sweeping changes to Domestic Partnerships. Attorney Tamara Packard explains just what the recently signed state budget does and does not mean for those people on the Domestic Partnership Registry.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, if your sweetheart needs just one more reason to accept your marriage proposal, Scott Walker and his acolytes in the Wisconsin legislature just gave you one. That’s right, Scott Walker wants you to get married. To each other.

On September 21, Governor Walker signed the belated executive budget act of the 2017 Legislature, which includes changes to the statewide Domestic Partnership Registry. The budget act also phases out domestic partner health insurance coverage for state, municipal, and other governmental employees.

Let’s not kid ourselves: Wisconsin Republicans have never really wanted same-sex couples to marry. They have never supported any sort of governmental recognition of our relationships. That is why, after the voters amended the Wisconsin Constitution in 2006 to ban same-sex marriages, as well as anything “substantially similar to” marriage, Governor Doyle and legislative Democrats enacted in 2009 (also through a budget act) the Domestic Partnership Registry. Registration provided same-sex couples with a limited set of legal protections, but nowhere near the benefits.
and obligations of marriage. Nevertheless, thousands of couples flocked to their local county clerk to register.

The governmental recognition and the protections provided through registration were an important step forward in our quest for civil marriage equality.

That same year, the budget act put in place a number of employment benefits for those employed by the state, their domestic partners, and the children of the partners. Most importantly, state workers and their families gained access to family insurance coverage. Those health insurance benefits also flowed to employees of other governmental bodies participating in health, retirement, and other benefit plans through the Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF).

Five years later, in 2014, the federal courts ruled that Wisconsin’s marriage ban was unconstitutional, and recognized that access to marriage was our civil right. A year later the U.S. Supreme Court agreed. At a purely pragmatic level, now that the gap has been closed with marriage equality, the stop-gap measures of the 2009 budget bill are largely no longer needed. However, people who have organized their lives around those 2009 measures need to know of the changes and take new measures to protect their families.

First, while most of the protections tied to Domestic Partnership registration will continue for those already registered, the State merely level, now that the gap has been closed with marriage equality, the stop-gap measures of the 2009 budget bill are largely no longer needed. However, people who have organized their lives around those 2009 measures need to know of the changes and take new measures to protect their families.

First, while most of the protections tied to Domestic Partnership registration will continue for those already registered, the State merely

Second, governmental employees who get their insurance through ETF soon will no longer be able to include their domestic partners and the partner’s children on their health insurance. If you need to restructure your benefit options, please reach out to us directly at contact@ourlivesmadison.com.

NEWS

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

CREAM CITY FOUNDATION

On September 22 the organization hosted its 9th annual Business Equality Luncheon at the Pfister Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. The event was attended by over 350 guests and featured the 2017 Cream City Foundation LGBTQ+ scholarship award winners who collectively received over $22,000 in scholarship awards. The event also featured keynote speaker Col. (Ret.) Sheri Swokowski speaking about her experiences and activism as keynote speaker Col. (Ret.) Sheri Swokowski speaking about her experiences and activism as a keynoter. Swokowski

Queer basketball group starts in Madison

CALLING ALL BASKETBALL LOVERS of all skill levels! Owen Karcher is helping to start a regular, queer, pickup basketball game group in Madison. Games happen on Sundays at 3:00 p.m. at Garnier Park (333 S. Rosa Road, Madison). Join the Facebook group to get updates and post additional times you want to play: facebook.com/groups/159173144661393.

STAFF / BOARD CHANGES

Who’s moving on or moving into org leadership.

NEWS

ORGANIZATIONS UPDATE

Important notes about area LGBTQ groups.

Indiana, Pennsylvania, California, and Hawaii.

INDIANA PENNSYLVANIA CALIFORNIA HAWAII

PROFESSIONAL MENTORS’ PROGRAM

The group sang as they marched in the Outreach Pride Parade in August, and sang more formally for the Outreach 25th Anniversary Awards Banquet in October. The PHMC outreach ensemble, Common Chords, performed for Wool’s King Street Pride in August.

For more than 40 years, Briarpatch Youth Services has served at-risk and homeless youth and their families.

If you know?

• Approximately 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.
• It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth in the U.S. die each year as a result of assault, illness, or suicide.
• 849 high school students reported being kicked out by their parents in the last 12 months.
• Homeless teens are more likely to become homeless adults.

Did you know?

• Approximately 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.
• It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth in the U.S. die each year as a result of assault, illness, or suicide.
• 849 high school students reported being kicked out by their parents in the last 12 months.
• Homeless teens are more likely to become homeless adults.
and field and communications strategy. Prior to joining FEC, she worked in marketing and communications for the Houston Museum of African American Culture, and for the Monroe Center, one of the largest LGBTQ service centers in the South.

Outreach is looking for passionate, hard-working people to grow their board of directors. LGBTQQ people of color, people who are disabled, women, people who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming, people of varying faiths and backgrounds, are welcomed and encouraged to apply. Anyone who is interested should reach out to Steve Starkey at steve@lgbt outreach.org or by phone at 608-255-8802.

The local chapter welcomes new board members: Paul Wurtsch, Nancy Jones, and Ken Jones.

The current board is comprised of Theresa Emmening (President, Pharmacy Division), Shane Klappenberg (Co-President), Seth Cross (Co-President Elect), Grainy Eastling (President, Phar).

For further information and to apply, visit their website or contact them directly.

The Catholic Diocese of Madison doubles down on discrimination

IN A CONFIDENTIAL EMAIL, Vicar General James Bartylla urged priests to consider whether or not to perform funerals for people in same-sex relationships, offering options and alterations that would “minimize scandal” for doing so.

The email comes in response to questions from the diocese’s priests, and was confirmed by Bishop Robert Morlino and the Catholic Diocese of Madison.

The directives “conform with the mind of the bishop and meet his approval.”

The email was circulated to diocese’s priests in response to questions from the diocese’s priests, and was confirmed by Bishop Robert Morlino and the Catholic Diocese of Madison, who told News 3 that its directives “conform with the mind of the bishop and meet his approval.”

The section entitled “Consideration of funeral rites” for a person in a homogeneous civil or notorious union” was first reported by the Pray Tell blog. Bullet points included in the directive include:

- Was the deceased or the ‘partner’ a promoter of the ‘gay’ lifestyle?
- Did the deceased give some signs of repentance before death?
- To minimize scandal, should there merely be a short scripture service at the funeral home? Or maybe a graveside service? Maybe a later “Mass for the Dead” with or without explicit mention of the name of the deceased or “partner” could alternatively or in addition be offered at the parish or even at another parish (to avoid scandal), with or without family members present.
- Any surviving “partner” should not have any public or prominent role at any ecclesiastical funeral rite or service.
- A great risk for scandal and confusion is for the name of the celebrating priest and/or the parish to be listed in any public (e.g., newspaper) or semi-public obituary or notice that also be offered at the parish or even at another parish (to avoid scandal), with or without family members present.
- Any surving “partner” should not have any public or prominent role at any ecclesiastical funeral rite or service.
- A great risk for scandal and confusion is for the name of the celebrating priest and/or the parish to be listed in any public (e.g., newspaper) or semi-public obituary or notice that also lists the predecessor or surviving “partner” in some manner. This can’t happen for obvious reasons.
- There should be no mention of the “partner” either by name or by other reference (nor reference to the unnatural union) in any liturgical booklets, prayer card, hymn, sermon, talk by the priest, deacon, etc.

The executive director of LGBT Outreach, Steve Starkey, believed the consideration to be “offensive and discriminatory,” but also acknowledged that at least the directive would give priests options rather than a demand. “I just would hope that this day in age the Catholic Church would be more inclusive, and treat people more equally, especially somebody whose coming to the Catholic Church and asking for a funeral service,” Starkey said. “They probably have a connection, they have been members of the church, and it seems very discriminatory.”

Bishop Morlino has a long public record of being stridently anti-gay marriage, and the diocese has fired church staff members for being openly gay, including Charles Pylys, who had been hired as the director of liturgical music at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Verona but was fired in 2015.

Bishop Morlino has a long public record of being stridently anti-gay marriage, and the diocese has fired church staff members for being openly gay, including Charles Pylys, who had been hired as the director of liturgical music at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Verona but was fired in 2015.

The Art and Soul Innovations Board of Directors has added members Sydney Kleinholz, Garrett Stolen, and Conan Smyth.

Mike Fienegan served on the board for three years and has now stepped down. Newly elected board members are Sara Beth Nahorn, Dawn Bankers, and Dennis Tuden.

The group welcomes Ti Banks to its board of directors. Ti is a strong, creative presence in the community and well known for their activism. The coalition is so excited to begin working with them!

The organization’s Every Child Deserves a Family campaign coordinates action at the federal and state levels across the country to fight anti-LGBTQ discrimination in adoption and foster care systems. For information, visit: familyequality.org/ecdf.

In an effort to expand its online presence, the group has a new Wisconsin-specific site at forge-wi.org. Facebook page at facebook.com/forge.wi, and a new blog for transgender survivors of violence and those who love/serve them at trans-survivors.com/blog.

Introducing the New 2017 MINI COUNTRYMAN

MINI of Madison
310 West Beltline Highway
Madison, WI 53713
608-729-MINI (6644)
MINI@MADISON.COM

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2017

THOSE WHO DEFY LABELS, DEFINE THEMSELVES

New programs, outreach, or changes in mission.
Milwaukee Pride invests in local LGBTQ+ community

FOLLOWING A RECORD-BREAKING PrideFest Milwaukee 2017, the Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors announced the disbursement of over $150,000 in financial donations, scholarships, and gifts to local causes, including:

- $10,218 to GSAFE, through the PrideFest Plus One 2017 campaign
- $3,000 to Ashley Smith, recipient of the 2017 Rising Star Scholarship
- $2,500 to the 2017 Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival
- $723 in WisOut sponsorship to the Milwaukee Women’s Center

“Milwaukee Pride’s mission makes firm commitments to the LGBTQ+ community by developing future leaders, improving access to services, celebrating our history and heritage, to creating learning, networking and outreach opportunities,” said Wes Shaver, president of Milwaukee Pride. “Our donations are an investment in the future of LGBT Milwaukee.”

This year’s PrideFest Plus One campaign raised a record-breaking $5,199 in community donations for GSAFE, which were matched by the Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors for a grand total donation of $10,398.

“We’re humbled by the generosity shown by everyone who gave to the Plus One Campaign,” said Brian Juchems, GSAFE senior director of education. “These donations help trans and queer students develop their voice as advocates for themselves and for others. These dollars will help create schools where LGBTQ+ youth—particularly trans and queer youth of color—aren’t just surviving, but thriving.”

“This fall, nearly 900,000 students returned to Wisconsin’s classrooms,” said Michel Takash, Milwaukee Pride’s vice president of communications. “We recognize that LGBTQ+ students may feel increasingly unsafe and unsupported in the academic setting. “We are honored to support GSAFE in protecting and developing these students in their journey to their best selves—through mentoring, networking, advocacy, policy formation, and educator and administrator training.”

PrideFest Plus One nominations are currently being accepted for the 2018 Festival season. Submission guidelines and instructions are available at the Milwaukee Pride website. The 2018 PrideFest Plus One homonewee will be announced in January.

The organization’s fundraiser raised more than $150,000 to help cover postage—a huge need. Five dollars sends one package with books to LGBTQ+ inmates, which means the fundraiser brought in enough to cover more than 3,000 packages. So far in 2017, more than 2,419 packages in total have been sent.

OUTREACH

The center has received funding from the State for several years. Their grant is up for renewal, and they will be writing a grant to fund a position for HIV/STI prevention, needle exchange, HIV/STI testing, and education on HIV and STIs in the LGBTQ community.

They also received a grant for their LGBTQ+ Senior Advocate, Michal Osier, to fund an information and referral program for LGBTQ seniors. This program will identify and train existing and new service providers in the Dane County area on LGBTQ-affirming practices.

PERFECT HARMONY MEN’S CHOIR

PHMC was included in Partners in Giving—the state, university, and UW Health employees combined campaign of Dane County—for the first time.

PRIDE IN HEALTHCARE

The organization has been busy: They peened a letter to Wisconsin legislators—urging them to pass a ban on so-called “gay conversion therapy,” produced transgender healthcare cards for white coat pockets, created references for medical staff on how to work with non-binary patients when addressing patients, and handed out rainbow cuff links for medical professionals wishing to show their support for LGBTQ+ people.

NEW HARBOR ART COLLABORATION

The New Harvest Foundation has selected the Coalition’s 2018 Spring Show for sponsorship. This means the group will be able to have a regional event showcasing work from trans and gender non-conforming artists all over Wisconsin. It also means they will be able to offer travel and lodging scholarships for queer trans people of color, and queer trans folks living with disabilities, and QT folks living in rural areas. Additionally, they will be able to provide professional development workshop opportunities to participants.

WI LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Stay tuned for an announcement about an exciting new campaign with Fair Wisconsin “to protect our trans brothers and sisters from discrimination.”

CALLS TO ACTION

Where and how you can help.

FORAGE

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and FORGE marked it by featuring their extensive series of webinars and publications that help shelter survivors of all genders. If you want to check it out, all are available free online at forge-forward.org.

FOLLOW UP EVENTS

Please join at any volunteer session on Monday or Tuesday evening or midday on Saturdays. The group also keeps a running wish list of needed books on A Room of One’s Own’s website and through Amazon. They are always excited to meet new people, happy to talk about the project, and eager for new supporters and volunteers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plan ahead to join in.

ACW OF WISCONSIN

The annual Bill of Rights Celebration in November 8 and will celebrate A Year of Resistance. Awards will be given to Planned Parenthood, the NAACP Youth Com- munards of the 1967 fair housing marches, the young plaintiffs in the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake juvenile prison case, and Ruthelle Frank, the lead lead plaintiff in the voter ID case. Go to aclu-wi.org/events to buy tickets.
Trans Research Lab at UW creates needed opportunities for academic study of transgender experiences

Ismhaeus recently featured the pioneering work of the Trans Research Lab at U.W.-Madison. Created and directed by Prof. Stephanie Budge of the Counseling Psychology Department, the lab conducts what’s described as “affirmative research.” In 2016, the lab published research on the relationship between geographic location and level of anxiety and depression among transgender populations in America. Right now, the research focus is on the use of psychotherapy for transgender people, an area in which there is little current research. The hope is to improve therapy practices for a population that has typically faced stigma and non-scientifically based treatments.

The lab has no regular location or schedule, but has attracted interest from across the country. There are about 20 volunteer members conducting research, and past interns have gone on to help figure out what problems the transgender community faces. The little research being done in the area, Budge says, was often “really bad and really offensive,” with researchers often using outdated methodologies. According to Ismhaeus, Budge has been researching transgender-related issues for more than a decade. In 2011, she founded the TSTAR lab at the University of Louisville—which she says was the first-ever transgender-focused research lab in psychology. At the time, she was mainly working to figure out what problems the transgender community faces. The little research being done in the area, Budge says, was often “really bad and really offensive” with researchers often using outdated methodologies.

“Following years of research and data collection into psychology-related issues, Budge says the problems facing the transgender community are just now coming into focus, and she’s hoping the lab will help address them.”

GSAs

Three annual GSAs conferences offer three chances to connect with GSAs, GSAs, educators, and administrators across Wisconsin.

Full Unity Conference on December 8
Middle School GSAs Conference on February 9
Spring GSAs Conference on March 9

LGBT books to prisoners
The group is planning to host a Black and Pink Holiday Card Writing Party for Black & Pink again this year. Folks will get together in late November or early December to write cards for LGBTQ+ incarcerated people. Check the website or email them for more details about date, time, and location: lgbtbookstoprisoners@gmail.com / lgltbookstoprisoners@gmail.com.

OutReach
The LGBT Senior Alliance and OutThere invite you to attend a Thanksgiving potluck on Sunday, November 26 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at OutReach. There is a suggested donation of $10, or bring a dish to pass. The LGBT Senior Alliance is also hosting a New Year’s Day party on January 1, time and suggested donation amount TBD. For more information on all these events, please go to lgbtseniors.org.

Perfect Harmony Men’s Chorus
“A Winter Evening” concert will be offered on Friday, December 8 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 10 at 3:00 p.m., both at First United Methodist Church, 203 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison. Tickets are $20 at the door, or $15 in advance.

PFLAG Madison
The group holds its monthly meetings on the third Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House, 1794 Roberts Court in Madison. Upcoming topics and guests are as follows: November 19 with guest speaker Z’ Haukeness, December 17 with GSAF students, and the annual holiday party, January 21 with a discussion of the “TRANSforming Faith Conference” video featuring Joanne Lee. Parents, friends, and allies of LGBTQ+ people are welcome (as are LGBTQ+ people!

PROUD IN HEALTHCARE
The group will present a regular Coffee Talk series, held every other Friday at 10:00 a.m. during the semester, in the atrium of the research building, next to Revive Cafe. Upcoming dates are: November 3 and 17, December 1 and 15. Follow them on Facebook or subscribe to the email list to stay up-to-date on events: join-prideinhealthcare@lists.wisc.edu and facebook.com/prideinhealthcare.

PROUD THEATER
An informational meeting was held in Green Bay in preparation for a new chapter in that area. Their first full development meeting will be November 2 at 6:00 p.m. Proud Theater Madison and Proud Theater Sun Prairie will be teaming up to do a performance and talkback at U.W.-River Falls on November 11 at 1:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater, Kleispell Fine Arts Building. This is open to the public. Proud Theater Beyond will be holding an Open Mic at Trinity United Methodist Church on November 13 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Upcoming networking events in Madison include the regular Coffee Connection series, November 7 at the River Food Pantry, and the Chamber on Top Holiday Edition on December 19 at HoTedR.

WGWB

The group will present a regular Coffee Talk series, held every other Friday at 10:00 a.m. during the semester, in the atrium of the research building, next to Revive Cafe. Upcoming dates are: November 3 and 17, December 1 and 15. Follow them on Facebook or subscribe to the email list to stay up-to-date on events: join-prideinhealthcare@lists.wisc.edu and facebook.com/prideinhealthcare.

Proud Theater
The group will present a regular Coffee Talk series, held every other Friday at 10:00 a.m. during the semester, in the atrium of the research building, next to Revive Cafe. Upcoming dates are: November 3 and 17, December 1 and 15. Follow them on Facebook or subscribe to the email list to stay up-to-date on events: join-prideinhealthcare@lists.wisc.edu and facebook.com/prideinhealthcare.

Proud Theater
An informational meeting was held in Green Bay in preparation for a new chapter in that area. Their first full development meeting will be November 2 at 6:00 p.m. Proud Theater Madison and Proud Theater Sun Prairie will be teaming up to do a performance and talkback at U.W.-River Falls on November 11 at 1:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater, Kleispell Fine Arts Building. This is open to the public. Proud Theater Beyond will be holding an Open Mic at Trinity United Methodist Church on November 13 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

WISCONSIN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Upcoming networking events in Madison include the regular Coffee Connection series, November 7 at the River Food Pantry, and the Chamber on Top Holiday Edition on December 19 at HoTedR.

Contact Us
If your LGBTQ+ organization would like to be included in these updates, please reach out to us directly at contact@ourlivesmadison.com.

More resources include access to the doctors, hospitals and clinics of UW Health as well as those of UnityPoint Health – Meriter. Unity Health Plans Insurance Corporation, Physicians Plus Insurance Corporation, and Gundersen Health Plan, Inc., will underwrite health plans under the Quartz brand name and are separate legal entities. © 2017, Quartz Health Solutions, Inc.
I often recall the sights, sounds, and smells of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Yet the place I once called home is now the one place I haven’t been able to return to since my departure 21 years ago. I remember attending my dad’s soccer games every Sunday, and my mother walking me to pre-school as a young child. We lived in one household with two other families; my single mother aunts who had their own daughters. Being an only child, my cousins were like my siblings. My parents, along with most of my extended family, struggled economically. My mom was only able to complete a sixth grade education and my father never received his high school diploma because he missed his last day of school.

They share stories with me about how difficult it was for them to acquire something many of us take for granted in the United States: notebooks and pencils. My dad recalls making his own notebooks for their different classes by dividing loose pages into cheap folders. He said to me once, “We always found a way to make it work.” I share this to paint of picture of the economic barriers my parents endured growing up and that eventually fueled their desire to provide me with the opportunity for a better future.

The Realization that Mexico had limited opportunities for us as a family lead my father to journey to the United States. He couldn’t apply for a visa because he wasn’t financially stable, so he crossed the southern border of the United States hopeful to be able to provide for his family. I still have memories of crying with my mom, talking to my dad on the phone late at night. I hold the pain of missing him that much in my heart to this day. My dad had found a job and was living with my aunt for a couple of months before my mom and I journeyed to the United States. At the age of five, on December 25 of 1995, my mom and I packed up our things and ventured to Tijuana. It was my first time on an airplane, and I still recall my mom asking someone for permission to see the ocean through someone else’s window seat. I was full of hope and excitement knowing that I would soon be reunited with my dad.

My mom and I met with strangers at the border and I was handed over to a family that would help me cross the border by pretending to be one of their own children. I climbed into a burgundy van that had a mattress in the back and said goodbye to my mom, who indicated she would see me when we reached my dad in the United States. I had to remember a false identity in case border agents asked us questions. I still remember her getting picked up at five in the morning and coming home with her face, hair, and clothes full of dust.

For years all the way until this very day, I have seen my parents work laborious jobs for long hours. My dad has often had day and two a.m. shifts with fixed days off and no paid leave, and my mother has worked 12-hour long days with multiple health complications that no access to health insurance. These were and continue to be my parent’s circumstances because they are undocumented. My parents are exhausted but, despite this, they don’t complain and are simply thankful to have an opportunity to work. Labor rights are not a thing they are familiar with, and in fact are afraid to pursue any information about because they fear losing their job and being reported to deportation officials.

The Pacific Ocean can be acquired through someone else’s window seat. I was full of hope and excitement knowing that I would soon be reunited with my dad. My mom and I met with strangers at the border and I was handed over to a family that would help me cross the border by pretending to be one of their own children. I climbed into a burgundy van that had a mattress in the back and said goodbye to my mom, who indicated she would see me when we reached my dad in the United States. I had to remember a false identity in case border agents asked us questions. I still remember her getting picked up at five in the morning and coming home with her face, hair, and clothes full of dust.

The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. The ending of this program means that I will have to drop out of my Ph.D. program if a resolution is not approved. Congress.

While in a 5-year electrical apprenticeship program, she will earn more than $150,000, acquire a career, and have no student loan debt.

Are you ready for a challenge?

Apprenticeship applications can be acquired at:
IBEW Local 159
4903 Commerce Ct.
McFarland, WI 53558
M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m
No experience necessary
Being witness to my parent’s pain and living in a state of “aguardar” (withstanding) because they feel they don’t have the same rights as U.S. citizens is one of the major sources of motivation for my advocacy and social justice work. I share their story because there are many misconceptions about them, including that they don’t pay taxes and that they take advantage of government programs. My parents have paid taxes since they began working, and they contribute to Social Security even though they have no access to it or any kind of retirement fund of their own. They’ve never had access to viable health insurance.

Growing up, I had faced my own struggles. I was teased for speaking Spanish, and later on for being queer. I recall eating lunches alone often and having things written on my locker for being different. I put my energy into school because I found refuge in the encouragement of my teachers, despite being misunderstood by my peers.

**Pursuing the dream**

However, my own struggles growing up unfolded primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.

**The struggle continues**

Fast-forward 10 years to today and I am now a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Deferred Action Program for Early Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enacted by President Obama in 2012, which has presently been rescinded by Donald Trump, enabled me to work lawfully in the United States and finally be able to travel. This allowed for me to move out of California and acquire teaching assistantships to pay for my studies. However, my own struggles growing up primarily manifested when I began applying for college. I had been tracked into honors and AP classes and was in the top 15% of my class, but even this did not make up for my lack of having a Social Security number. I was stopped on the very first page and initially I doubted whether undocumented students like myself were even able to attend college. I had to disclose to my high school counselors that I was undocumented and needed help submitting my college applications. Thankfully, I had two counselors that advocated for me by making phone calls and taking me on college trips to see what possibilities were out there for me.

I was admitted to top universities in California but, unfortunately, I could not afford to pay the tuition fees. In 2008, undocumented students in California did not have access to state financial aid or grants. To this day, I am not eligible to apply for FAFSA, another loophole to get through since colleges required that you fill it out if you’ve grown up in the United States.

I recall spending most of my junior year crying in my counselor’s office, desperately trying to find a pathway to pursue the future I had worked hard to achieve. Unfortunately, I was forced to let go of the four-year university dream—temporarily. I eventually found out that I could receive a full ride to a local community college thanks to my two-year involvement in the California Scholarship Federation program.
Family on Wheels

In roller derby, Eddie “Rufhouse Wainwright” Lupella finally discovered a sport that not only welcomed queer people, but provided a needed team environment that ended up feeling more like family.

I Grew up in central Minnesota—not the best environment for an outspoken kid who couldn’t contain his queerness to save his life. I never said it out loud, and it took me a long time to accept it myself.

I had an identical twin, which might’ve affected a lot of people’s response to who I was as a child. “That one seems normal, but what’s up with that one?”

I lived the stereotypical “boy” life; played tee-ball and Little League, but preferred to pick the daisies. I was made fun of on a pretty constant basis, so even when I had interest in playing, I didn’t feel encouraged to do so. I loved playing soccer when I was little, but the small area I came from didn’t offer it.

The closest I got to sports in junior high and high school were five years of cross-country running. I could never see a place for myself in team sports, and I liked that I could do something athletic that only focused on me. I started taking dance lessons later in high school, which was a much friendlier environment, though in Minnesota I still faced a lot of questioning and assumptions being in dance. “Oh, you dance? I once knew this guy who danced so he could get all the girls.” Can’t say I was a fan of gendering activities and, looking back, it seemed like most people were trying to excuse or block out my potential queerness.

I continued dancing through college. I liked dancing, especially tap dancing, but it never fully clicked for me. Eventually I’d figure it out because no one was smashing into each other (on purpose) when they were tap dancing. My other activities in college and through school were always arts related, which I still participate in when I can.

Women Lead the Way

At the end of college, I had a friend who joined a women’s roller derby league in Stevens Point (shout-out to Midstate Sisters of Skate and Poundstooth). I had heard of roller derby, and I loved the idea of something woman-centric. I was tap dancing. My other activities in college and through school were always arts related, which I still participate in when I can.

The week one qualifier: “Women’s Basketball,” and so on.

In roller derby, the names we used to refer to a league of predominantly women? There’s always the qualifier: “Women’s Basketball,” and so on.

Something about a woman-centric sport really appealed to me. In other sports, how often do you hear the default sport name used to refer to a league of predominantly women? There’s always the qualifier: “Women’s Basketball,” and so on.

Poundstooth when she joined her league, and saw so many different kinds of people there skating, I knew I would try. There was one individual skating who flamboyantly introduced himself and I realized, “Wow, no one here cares who you are.”

I moved to Milwaukee after college and was trying to find my place. I always felt safer in women’s spaces than male-dominated ones.

Years of being berated for just being me and not being “man enough” or fitting whatever mold I was expected to fit made me fearful, but really when it came down to it, I didn’t want to be a part of those spaces anyway.

I moved to Milwaukee after college and was trying to find my place. I wanted a break from arts (especially after studying them) and had always wanted to try team sports. There were inter-leagues in college, but I never had time to do any of them. Seeing Poundstooth’s response to it made me curious, and with a Google search I found there was actually a men’s roller derby league in Milwaukee. At the time, it was called the Milwaukee Bludsknegg, but we’ve evolved into Wisconsin Men’s Roller Derby since combining with the amazing Madison men’s derby team, Mad Men. They had open practices and encouraged attending one to see if it was something you wanted to try, and I thought, “What the hell? Why not?”

I think I had it in my mind it was something I wanted to do. The first practice I went to was a little bit to see how it was played, but it was really to feel out if I could feel safe in this space. It was a group of men, but the coach was a woman. When everyone introduced themselves to me, I saw the same lights in everyone’s eyes as

When I joined, I was really to feel out if I could feel safe in this space. It was a group of men, but the coach was a woman. When everyone introduced themselves to me, I saw the same lights in everyone’s eyes as

I’m now going into my seventh season of derby. There are a few other queer-identified men that are part of my league now, though I started as the only one. I stuck around because, for the first time, I was playing a team sport. I saw the value and excitement of being a part of something bigger than me—my team, my family. I also saw men and women, those in between, and everyone working and playing together all for the love of getting smashed into tiny pieces.

I’ll never forget getting laid out on my ass by Stank Girl when we scrimmaged the Dairyland Dolls several seasons ago, and I’m 6’2” and 250 pounds. Size, age, gender; nothing matters. Roller derby leveled the playing field, but moreso, I think it showed how ridiculous preconceived notions of gender or abilities—or anything else—are. Underneath it all, I felt inspired knowing that I was a part of something woman-led. I’ve seen some backlash against men’s derby in my time, which I understand. Men’s sports are dominant, but the reason I joined derby wasn’t to try to take something from women—it was to leave from them.

I’m a lot more confident in who I am now, both through growing up, and through roller derby. My attraction and gender identity doesn’t define what boxes I have to fit into. Just because my size 13-wide quad skates are bright pink doesn’t mean I can’t knock your ass down. Come at me, bro. ■

Photographed by Mike Hiller for Our Lives magazine.

2016 National & Regional award winner NARI basement under 30K
2017 Regional award winner NARI kitchen under 50K
2016 Angie’s List Super service award
**Unapologetic Craft**

Filmmaker and YouTube star Bria Brown carves out space for queer, black identity in an entertainment and cultural landscape still largely hostile to her existence.

**AS A LOCAL VIDEOGRAPHER** I film a lot of events around Madison. Lately, clients have been asking for interviews at their events. They want testimonies to put into words the impact of the space they’ve created. I love doing it and, everytime, I have to remember that people are really uncomfortable in front of the camera. As a person who has been on stage since the age of seven, and at 24 have found myself building a career both in front of and behind the camera, I can’t relate.

I started making YouTube videos at a time of great upsurge in this country. While I don’t remember who or exactly what was the catalyst, there were many protests, many online arguments, and a lot of tension. I needed a place to speak truth to power, if you will. I changed my pace when I was attacked online by a Neo-Nazi (seriously, one of her most popular videos was her singing Happy Birthday to Hitler). This kind of action is par for the course on YouTube, though.

I found my space because I created it. I created “Unapologetically Bria Bea” because I truly apologized for my voice, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long.

In creating my YouTube channel and my production company, I found my space because I created it, I created “Unapologetically Bria Bea” because I truly apologized for my voice, laugh, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long.

I could talk about serious issues, how I could make sure no one was overwhelmed by my blackness or queerness. Those days are gone. I embrace my identities unapologetically because I deserve to do so.

In creating my YouTube channel and my production company, I found my space because I created it, I created “Unapologetically Bria Bea” because I truly apologized for my voice, laugh, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long.

**WHY NOT BOTH?**

One week I was frantically recording a first-person comedy video and editing a client video and losing sleep and I really had to stop and ask myself what the point of all of this was? I could drop the acting thing and become a Director of Photography/Cinematographer or Director and work solely behind the scenes. But I also have this passion to write about my real experience as a black, queer woman. That’s nothing short of iconic. Often in the race for representation, queer people are last. In a “you can get yours, after we get ours” kind of way. Lena made history as a black woman because her story of blackness and queerness—and how we sit in the middle of those identities—resonated so widely. Our stories are relatable because we are human. Our stories are worthy because they exist, and there is no pecking order for whose story gets to be told or when.

Sometimes, when I try to emphasize the importance of this moment to others, I get really emotional. I have spent years telling myself what careers I can’t have because there is no space for me and because the world of entertainment was not made for a black, queer woman who is just trying to survive and make my people smile and feel joy.

In creating my YouTube channel and my production company, I found my space because I created it. I created “Unapologetically Bria Bea” because I truly apologized for my voice, laugh, the space I take up, and the accent that slips out here and there, for far too long. When I started my channel, I calculated how consumable I could be; how nice...
What's happening in the Madison area this winter to keep the LGBTQ community warm and connected? We've got some ideas!

For more LGBTQ-specific events, see our Organization Events on page 19.

### NOVEMBER

#### 3 & 5
**MADISON OPERA’S “CARMEN”**
Overture Center
Madison Opera presents Georges Bizet’s famous opera, “Carmen.” With some of the most famous music in the genre, Bizet’s passionate composition is a vivid story of love, jealousy, and betrayal.

#### 9
**FAIR WISCONSIN’S VETERANS DAY LUNCHEON**
The Madison Club
The Fair Wisconsin Education Fund holds its annual event in honor of all veterans, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tickets are $75, complimentary for veterans and active service members.

#### 11
**JOCKS IN FROCKS: A MADISON RUGBY DRAG SHOW**
Five Nightclub
Madison Minotaurs and Wisconsin Women’s Rugby team up to present a fun evening of drag performance and fundraising. A portion of the proceeds raised by the drag queen/king shows, raffle, and merchandise sales will go to benefit GSAFE. $5 at the door.

#### 18 & 19
**MMOCA ART & GIFT FAIR**
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art
Formerly known as the Holiday Art Fair, the event will feature a wide array of fine art and craft, handmade items, and gourmet treats for sale. Guests to the fair will enjoy shopping at nearly 100 booths, designer vignettes, holiday “selfie booths,” a silent auction, performances by local art organizations, and the popular Rediscovered Treasures Sale. This festive event is one of MMOCA’s most important annual fundraisers, providing crucial support for exhibitions and education programming.

### DECEMBER

#### 1-16
**“TWILIGHT OF THE GOLDS”**
StageQ, Bartell Theatre
The results show 10 fingers, 10 toes—but a 90% likelihood that your male baby will be gay. So would you have an abortion? One family must consider this.

#### 8 & 10
**PERFECT HARMONY’S WINTER CONCERT**
First Unitarian Madison Church
Madison’s gay men’s choir presents their winter show, “A Winter Evening,” over two days on December 8 at 7:30 p.m. and December 10 at 3:00 p.m. Tickets are $20 at the door, or $15 advanced purchase.

#### 11 & 12
**WINTER ART FAIR OFF THE SQUARE**

#### 18 & 19
**MMOCA ART & GIFT FAIR**
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art

### O URLIVESMADISON.COM CONNECT ➔ OUR CALENDAR ➔  OUR LIVES MADISON.COM

**For more LGBTQ-specific events, see our Organization Events on page 19.**
Karen Williams-Brusubardis
PAINTING
Theresa Cleven
JEWELRY
artcraftwis.org
Saturday & Sunday, November 11 & 12, 2017
9:00 to 5:00 & 10:00 to 4:00
Monona Terrace Convention Center
One John Nolen Drive, Madison
Admission $5 • Under 12 free • Silent Auction • 135 Wisconsin Exhibitors
Doreen Forcier
FIBER
Marilyn Leach
CERAMICS

TANYA ATKINSON
Mission Driven
Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin President Tanya Atkinson takes a holistic view of social justice and healthcare advocacy, with plenty of love and laughter along the way.

I’VE WASHED A LOT OF ANIMALS in my life: A horse, a cow, a pig, a cat (once), a dog — with tomato juice and more recently a high-tech “dry shampoo.” I recently rescued a mouse that we found paddling furiously in our dog’s water dish on the deck. I’m not sure I was necessarily washing the mouse, but it seemed cleaner as it scurried away.

This is when I should probably tell you I grew up on a farm and was in 4-H—hence the washing of the animals. Of course, I’ve since aged out of 4-H. And I have a job. But I still wash the dog and the occasional misplaced mouse.

The point is, when I was knee-deep in cheap shampoo and animal hair (trying to mentally convey to the horse, pig, or cow that they would be the most gorgeous horse, pig, or cow when it was all over), I never had a doubt that my parents would provide for me (I’m writing that with dramatic flair). I attended Carroll University, which has a great drama department. I took a social work class mistakenly believing it met a core requirement (I’m not detail oriented). The professor, Claudette McShane, showed us the dynamic nature of individuals and their communities, and I was hooked. Claudette herself became an incredible mentor and that safe person for me when I was just beginning to come out — that person I wish for all of us.

Then the Legislature changed the juvenile justice code with harsher sentences, reaching younger ages. There was not a concurrent community investment. I remember sitting across from kids who were so young and facing incarceration, wondering how this helped anyone. I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.

The second happiest day of my life was our wedding day. A gorgeous beachfront wedding at sunset, friends, family, and a runaway dog all went as planned. It was 2008 in Santa Barbara, 1.5 months before Prop 8. We went in to the Santa Barbara courthouse and filled out our paperwork. After we had signed, the clerk stuck his head out of his little glass window, looked to the left, looked to the right, and then looked right at us and said, “See? Society didn’t crumble. Congratulations on your marriage.”

I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.

CLAUDETTE McSHANE, shows us the dynamic nature of individuals and their communities, and I was hooked. Claudette herself became an incredible mentor and that safe person for me when I was just beginning to come out — that person I wish for all of us.

Then the Legislature changed the juvenile justice code with harsher sentences, reaching younger ages. There was not a concurrent community investment. I remember sitting across from kids who were so young and facing incarceration, wondering how this helped anyone. I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.

RURAL ROOTS
I grew up on a small dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin, and that’s where the seeds were sown for my future. It’s really those kernels that stick with you (I can do this for days).

In retrospect, I’m so grateful for that childhood. As children we were surrounded by community — neighbors rolling up their sleeves and helping each other get the job done, supporting each other in tough times, or having neighborhood parties with all the kids in tow. A community where caseworkers = love and nurture trash-talk is an art form.

My parents Bill and Char were civicly engaged, along with my grandparents and a tight-knit family who were farmers, road workers, teachers, nurses, and proud union members. My parents took my little sister Heather and me to the polls when they voted, cementing that right and responsibility early on. I remember spirited family conversations about whom they had voted for and why. They really conveyed that their votes mattered, one of the many reasons I so passionately believe it’s a complete and utter affront to our democracy that there is a sustained and well-resourced effort to take away this fundamental right from those that don’t carry specific kinds of privileges.

Life on a farm can be beautiful, but it can be tough. Being farmers whose income could vary greatly impacted by pricing or even nature, the cost of health care could be a major source of stress. If any of us had health issues when we were uninsured, the bills were devastating. I remember watching my parents sitting at the kitchen table wondering how they were going to manage our medical bills. Moms worked the night shift to provide the family with health insurance. The memory of my parents struggling with health care sticks with me to this day. I believe it connects me in a personal way to Planned Parenthood’s mission to ensure all people have access to the care they need.

Struggling into Social Work
I also believe those roots made social work a natural fit for my future. Originally my plan had been to be a professional actress in the theatre (I’m writing that with dramatic flair). I attended Carroll University, which has a great drama department. I took a social work class mistakenly believing it met a core requirement (I’m not detail oriented). The professor, Claudette McShane, showed us the dynamic nature of individuals and their communities, and I was hooked. Claudette herself became an incredible mentor and that safe person for me when I was just beginning to come out — that person I wish for all of us.

Then the Legislature changed the juvenile justice code with harsher sentences, reaching younger ages. There was not a concurrent community investment. I remember sitting across from kids who were so young and facing incarceration, wondering how this helped anyone. I quickly saw how many of the policies in the juvenile justice system were contrary to the goal of helping young people, or of realizing justice. It was then I decided to go back to graduate school at U.W.-Madison and focus on public policy.
In 1996 when I was attending the U.W., I was fortunate to have an internship in Tammy Baldwin’s state legislative office. Then-Representative Baldwin was leading a fight against a “Defense of Marriage” bill. In a last-minute maneuver, legislative leadership moved the hearing to Wausau, for all the obvious reasons that have nothing to do with fairness or democracy.

That backfired with rainbow-colored beauty, and busloads of people went to Wausau to oppose the legislation. The high school lunchroom was packed, and you could cut the tension with a knife. I stood there and watched ally families talk about how important their friends were and how gay relationships did not harm their marriage, incredulous that it even needed to be said out loud—alike to water is wet. Children got up and talked about their moms and their dads and how very loved they are. Not a dry eye on our side.

When the anti-gay marriage people spoke, they claimed that we threatened the very foundation of marriage. Then it got worse. They said vile things about the safety of children around people like us, and at least one person called for our deaths. The chairman of the committee asked for clarification, and it was repeated for clarity. There was no doubt what the man testifying thought should happen to half of the people in that room.

In that moment, any questions I had about whether to return to direct practice social work or stay in advocacy evaporated. I spent the next couple of years working in the legislature for Rebecca Young and Peter Bock, both progressive elected officials committed to social justice.

Though marriage equality was achieved, it can’t be said enough that we are so far from achieving justice in the LGBTQ (or any marginalized) community, and under this current “administration” we risk erosion of so many of our rights, including reproductive rights.

The political environment is alarming, not only for the LGBTQ community, but for many others that align with us, like Planned Parenthood. Most people in Wisconsin and across the country value the services Planned Parenthood provides, yet we’re tossed around like a political football. This has a real and almost immediate impact on real people. A few years ago, Governor Walker eliminated Planned Parenthood’s state funding for preventive health care, forcing us to close five rural family planning health centers. No provider has been able to step in and fill that service gap, and they are seeing rising STD rates.

Through this current administration, we are so far from achieving justice in the LGBTQ (or any marginalized) community. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

The beauty is in the simplicity.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.

If there is one positive thing to come out of this current environment, it’s that people are coming together to create community through activism. They are holding space for one another and lifting one another up. Cliché as it may be, they want to divide us. They’re invested for decades without reproductive freedom, individual civil rights, and safe, healthy communities. Together, with our partners in social and reproductive justice, we are committed to efforts to eliminate racism, end discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, and advance the rights of immigrants and other marginalized communities.
they think women should not be in particular jobs. If an employer

doesn't like minorities, or protections against discrimination in the workplace. Currently, certain

SCOTUS to determine LGBTQ rights case

been cleared. For more information about cryopreservation, please

transition. Surgery and hormones used during transition can reduce

Cryopreservation for transgender parents

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to take up a case regarding whether LGBTQ individuals are entitled to protections against discrimination in the workplace. Currently, certain groups have protections that make it illegal to take adverse action (e.g., fire them, discipline, reduced pay for equal work, refuse to hire) based on their status. For example, an employer can’t terminate someone from employment because they don’t like minorities, or they think women should not be in particular jobs. If an employer

TIPS & TRENDS

DEWITT ROSS & STEVENS, SC

GENERATIONS FERTILITY CARE

DR. CHRISTINA BROADWELL, FERTILITY CARE SPECIALIST

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to take up a case regarding whether LGBTQ individuals are entitled to protections against discrimination in the workplace. Currently, certain groups have protections that make it illegal to take adverse action (e.g., fire them, discipline, reduced pay for equal work, refuse to hire) based on their status. For example, an employer can’t terminate someone from employment because they don’t like minorities, or they think women should not be in particular jobs. If an employer

Taking a bus to D.C. is a rite of passage for community organizers. The week before I began my career at PPWI I volunteered to be a bus captain for the Women’s March. It was magical: A bus full of pink-shirted forces of nature. The gas station stops didn’t know what hit them, as bus after bus of similarly clad women from across the nation stopped to use the restroom and stock up on Dr. Pepper, corn nuts, and string cheese—the fuel of activists. Or, maybe just me.

The march numbered around a million, and the feeling of community and hope was exhilarating. What a way to begin the new phase of my professional life. It is a thrill and an honor to work for PPWI.

Our staff and supporters know we play a critical role in providing access, of family, teamwork, and community. Very similar to how we approach our work at Planned Parenthood. Our community came together to support one another—especially our young people. Everyone wanted to help them pursue their interests—whether that meant athletics, forensics, me

Saying Yes to Progress

Taking a bus to D.C. is a rite of passage for community organizers. The week before I began my career at PPWI I volunteered to be a bus captain for the Women’s March. It was magical: A bus full of pink-shirted forces of nature. The gas station stops didn’t know what hit them, as bus after bus of similarly clad women from across the nation stopped to use the restroom and stock up on Dr. Pepper, corn nuts, and string cheese—the fuel of activists. Or, maybe just me.

The march numbered around a million, and the feeling of community and hope was exhilarating. What a way to begin the new phase of my professional life. It is a thrill and an honor to work for PPWI.

Our staff and supporters know we play a critical role in providing access, of family, teamwork, and community. Very similar to how we approach our work at Planned Parenthood. Our community came together to support one another—especially our young people. Everyone wanted to help them pursue their interests—whether that meant athletics, forensics, me

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter

Choosing laughter
The Power of Vulnerability

Former middle school teacher Abigail Swetz reflects on the triumphs and travails of the classroom, how wanting to be a good role model for her students pushed her toward a healthier and more open sense of self, and why she’s leaving the profession to work in public policy.

“I named my school Abigail Swetz. My pronouns are she/her/hers, and I am a proud queer public school teacher.”

These words began my speech at the Celebration of Leadership where I accepted the award of GSAE Educator of the Year last May. These words are the perfect summation of why I believe being out made me a better teacher. These words are also indicative of why I am leaving the profession. It is not because I can no longer be a proud queer public school teacher; it is because I no longer believe that is enough.

I said I was a proud queer public school teacher because I love the work I do with students as a public educator, but also because I am an out queer woman and a teacher at the same time. It is the intersection of these identities that made me an effective teacher, because this intersection mandated I strive to create a safe space in my classroom.

After all, I needed to be safe there, too. It is not my contention that teachers must be queer and out to be effective—it far from it. I have known truly transformative teachers who are not queer and also those who are and are in the closet. What we all have in common is our understanding of the need for safe spaces.

I happen to enter that understanding through my queerness; other teachers come to this understanding through different avenues, be they because of other oppressed identities or just really great professional development (I’m a big believer in great professional development; after all, I met my wife at a Welcoming Schools PD which consisted of, of course, workshops on the importance of safe spaces and how to create them). And even though we all understand the need for safe spaces, we all go about creating them in different ways because we are all unique individuals. Me, I chose to create my safe space through public education.

It was in a Tulsa, Oklahoma psych hospital that I first realized I was queer. In realizing I was worthy of love, I realized I was worthy of giving it, too, and to whom I would give it. I grew up in the Unitarian Universalist church and had known many queer people my entire life, and while society at large told me queerness was wrong, I never heard the opposite. Some of our closest family friends were queer, and those who loved me refused to accept this and convinced me to begin inpatient treatment. So in July of 2006, I checked into Laureate Psychiatric Hospital. Five months later, I discharged a different person—a whole, healthy person for the first time in my adult life.

The decade I spent in the throngs of my eating disorder was a hell I would not wish on anyone, but the journey out of it was as transformative for me as a teacher as a potential role model looking the way I looked and behaving the way I behaved. These were the primary reasons I got help.

I thought of my dream of becoming a teacher. I knew I was in no physical position to put myself in front of a classroom as a potential role model looking the way I looked and behaving the way I behaved. These were the primary reasons I got help.

I had agonized over what to do that day all night and all morning. All I had written in my lesson plan book was “process the election,” but I didn’t know how to keep them safe anymore. I didn’t know how to teach this. So I turned over class to my students. We talked. And then something really special happened: We cried together.

My students walked in that morning eerily quiet. They felt bewildered; they felt sad and lost; they felt more than a little betrayed. I didn’t know how to keep them safe anymore. I didn’t know how to teach this. So I turned over class to my students. We talked. And then something really special happened: We cried together.

I told them it was a good day to think about expressing kindness. To think about gratitude. Who are you thankful for today? Who in your life do you wish on anyone, but the journey out of it was as transformative for me as a teacher as a potential role model looking the way I looked and behaving the way I behaved. These were the primary reasons I got help.

I told them how wanting to be a good role model for her students pushed her toward a healthier and more open sense of self, and why she’s leaving the profession to work in public policy.
letter telling them why they were grateful for them and thanking them for being in their life.

And this is where the magic happened. You could have heard a pin drop. I asked them to be kind, to reach out, and they were, and they did. They wrote to their parents, to neighbors, to teachers, to friends, to mentors in the community, to family. But most touching of all, they wrote to each other. They reached out to classmates they saw lurking, classmates having an especially hard day and they said, “I’m here for you.” And they were. It was a day of intense vulnerability and trust, and I will hold these students and their stories with me for the rest of my life.

Later, a former student currently in high school told me that when she woke up and heard the news of Trump’s election, she had the immediate thought, “I want to spend this morning in Ms. Swetz’s class.” I wish she had. I think she would have felt safe. I also wish she hadn’t felt she needed to come to my classroom to feel that safety. I wish she had more safe spaces than our classroom. I wish her world were a safe space, too.

SAFE SPACES FOR ALL

That is why I’m leaving teaching. I still love the work I do with stu-

dents, but I am tired of spending a year creating and then living in a safe space with them only to watch June and push them out the door immense bad, unsafe world. It’s starting on a new journey in love as a newly married spouse of that amazing human I met at an MMSD professional development, I know I have the support required to do so. Now it is time to take the lessons my students and I built together to the rest of the world. It is time to make our world a safe space. Because this country is not just Trump’s America, it is ours, too.

Students Speak Up

Former students of Ms. Swetz offer their reflections about the time spent discovering their own vulnerability and truth in the classroom and why those safe spaces matter.

Evelyn (age 14)

Everyone deserves a safe space, but then again, everyone should be able to go anywhere and already feel safe. To me, a safe space is somewhere I can be myself and not be judged. Somewhere my opinions are respected. Having my classroom as a safe space made it easier to go to school every day. Even if my year started off bad, I would always remind myself that my safe space was always there. Having an out queer teacher gave me hope. That my personality and those of my friends and peers—people I love—will be the main thing people see when they look at me, not my sexuality. Hope that in the future I can go to work without having to worry about being harassed or judged. Ms. Swetz gave me that safe space, and Ms. Swetz gave me that hope.

RHYS (age 13)

I never really knew what a safe space was until I entered Ms. Swetz’s classroom, of the most righteous and caring people I think I could ever know. She showed me what a safe space was, somewhere where a person could say what they needed to say and it would be kept in that place without being disrespected or criticized. I have to say, I started the year as quite a shy guy with showing my emotions, but after I I saw my chance with the safe space, I could tell my class anything about what was happening in my life, and I know it would be respected. And that rule was sacred, making it a safe space was a space of raw emotion and truth telling. Without a safe space this year, I would not have my emotions kept inside of me, and that definitely isn’t OK. Thankfully, I was with Ms. Swetz; and she protected my class and me like a momma bear protecting her cubs. It’s for you to know, and I have to say, I done for me, and I know others can’t thank her enough either.

NADIA (age 14)

In an environment like middle school where we all have our own identity to fit into a label is the norm, a safe space that encourages inclusivity, intersectionality, and self-exploration is absolutely essential—yet rare. I was lucky enough to find such a space in Ms. Swetz’s class. As a member of her 8th grade home room, Social Studies, and English/Language Arts classes, I became more aware of curricular content that connected to me and my community, and developed an appreciation for critical reactions to our material in a way they hadn’t before. It made me proud to be growing alongside them, knowing they had finally found a place where they were heard and respected.

In addition, I was a part of my school’s Gender and Sexuality Alliance club; GSA, led by Ms. Swetz and another out gay teacher, was a safe space to me and many of my friends and peers. A space that I know those of us moving on will miss dearly. Twice every week, we explored various issues, but we were united by our need for community. While some meetings were carefree and silly, often providing release after a long day of judgement and sadness, others were deeper to earth and productive. We dedicated that time to events like the Day of Silence (which honors historically silenced communities such as women, LGBTQ+, Black Lives Matter, and others), reaching out to a larger community, hoping to cause change and acceptance. However, the GSA days I remember the most were the emotional ones, where we let out our anger, sadness, and fear. We cried and felt together, but the important part is that everyone felt safe because we were together, without fear of judgement or harassment, and we always felt feelings as though things needed to change, and we had been given the tools with which to change them. To conclude, safe spaces MAKE A DIFFERENCE. They help people grow and learn about themselves as well as build community and essential values as active, informed members of society.

HAZEL (age 14)

Having an out queer teacher is a special and rare thing for a multitude of reasons. It takes bravery to come out to 30 differ-

ent people every year—many people struggle to do it. It means this teacher probably has a wall or two for day to day, but every year, patients are pleased because they don’t have to talk to three different people when trying to reach their doctor, and doctors are pleased because they spend more time with their patients and less time doing computer-based trainings and mandatory meetings.

Charming two story in hub of the near East Side with easy access to downtown, lakes, parks and bike path plus all the new amenities! For more information about ORIEL MEDICINE, LLC, call or connect with Dr. Kathy Oriel, Family Physician.

www.LauerRealtyGroup.com 608.444.5725

TIP & TRENDS

Getting back to the patient relationship

KARYN OREIL, FAMILY PHYSICIAN
ORIEL MEDICINE, LLC

There is a small-but-notable trend for family physicians, most of whom are women, to leave the increasingly corporatized; large medical groups to start small, solo practices. Some of these small practices take insurance, others charge a monthly fee. By networking with these empowered women docs, it gave me the courage to break out on my own. Patients are pleased because their doctor probably has a wall or two to keep hateful comments out. Having a queer teacher is not the same as having an out queer teacher. It means they not only have walls, but being willing to knock down those walls to let others in. It’s selfish and they look time, and that creates meaning to the word “queer” other than a schoolyard taunt. It gave me hope to see that no matter what, someone was fighting. It showed people that being yourself is redeeming, because you can’t make a connection with a paper maché dummy. Ms. Swetz carried me through the room every morning being herself, and being vulnerable. But she didn’t let people knock her down. When the election came, she was devastated. In room 202, we all were. She could’ve stayed home in bed and cried. She could’ve missed all day, throughout lessons. But she took this opportunity to let us connect with one another and learn that hope is always an option. Abby was always herself in the classroom, and that is what helped her students understand that they could be themselves, too. Fear was always an option as well, but that it was far less redeeming than hope. She taught us day-to-day school things, but more impor-
tantly, she taught us to share, that being vulnerable and open is better than having walls and being safe, but alone.

24 N Baldwin St
Tenney/Lapham Two Story
3 beds | 1 baths | 1,182SqFt  | $289,900

www.LauerRealtyGroup.com 608.444.5725

Charming two story in hub of the near East Side with easy access to downtown, lakes, parks and bike path plus all the new amenities!
I’ve been lucky. I haven’t suffered from too much dysphoria as a direct result of being pregnant. That isn’t to say I don’t deal with dysphoria almost daily, because I certainly do. However, the dysphoria would be there regardless, as there are immutable attributes of my body and mind (where the latter, they fall off in that particular way) that are in conflict. For me, every day is another unique journey where I must make my peace with that. There are moments of grief for what will never be, wrapped up in an overall gratitude and joy for what is.

Every time I’ve been pregnant, it has been of profound emotional significance. My first pregnancy was before I had even come out, and at that point, I couldn’t have possibly known I was transgender. However, I was still clinging to the delusion that I could force myself to be someone I wasn’t.

Pregnancy put me under the stress necessary to transform my mind-space. It required reaching some horrifying lows, but I finally arrived at a place of personal power and conviction. A few months after my first child was born, I came out and socially transitioned. I began medical treatment about a year after that.

My first pregnancy was about finding clarity and authenticity, and so is my second—yet the path is very different. All the stress and trauma has been replaced with deep introspection and a significant sense of vulnerability. This pregnancy has invited to the surface everything I thought I could hold by refusing to think about. It has forced me to confront my internalized toxicities, work through them, and grow.

This has been painful, challenging, and cathartic. Sometimes it feels like running in circles, and sometimes it is more often than not, though, I reach an even deeper understanding of myself. With that comes a release of something I can’t identify. It’s like a fragrance that catches you by surprise, somehow unique and painfully familiar at the same time.

Breaking Binaries

Kaci Sullivan speaks to being transmasculine and pregnant in a society still steeped in binary expectations and understandings of childbirth.

There are so many joyous moments that have peppered this pregnancy: Hearing the heartbeat, seeing the baby during ultrasounds, and feeling life move inside of me. Not to mention the ineffable closeness I feel to this brand-new life I’m bringing Earth-side. There are these incredibly beautiful moments with my partner. I am bliss personified, watching the baby move on the ultrasound screen. We are making so much more than a baby right now, and I am learning so much about being present as I take these moments in, needing to remember them forever.

Of course, pregnancy is as much a physical journey as it is an emotional one, and medical support is required. One of the biggest decisions we faced after getting pregnant was who our provider was going to be, and whether we would choose a hospital physician or a midwife. I’d already had a hospital experience that I wasn’t happy with, and I knew I wanted to try something different. However, my partner had never had a baby before, and we needed to make an educated decision together. We scheduled two 8-week appointments, one at a hospital clinic and one with a midwife.

Our appointment with the midwife was absolutely amazing. We were given as much time as we needed (it ended up being hours) to understand what we were getting into. She thoroughly explained all of our options for a safe delivery, and she supplied us with ample, diversified information to make a choice. She applied absolutely no pressure towards our final decision and genuinely wished us all the best (plus, the entire consult was free of charge!).

By contrast, the hospital clinician rushed us out the door. The appointment length didn’t allow for her to even get through her spiel. I had to arrange a dialogue or our questions. She pushed a bunch of pamphlets and free formula samples onto us and sent us on our way.

Not to mention that constant mis-gendering of me, or the way she spoke of pregnancy as a cisgender woman-specific undertaking.

When we ultimately chose a homebirth with the midwife, we called the hospital clinic to cancel our follow-up appointment. They were very aggressive in attempting to retain me. In fact, the doctor herself called me twice to tell me what a terrible choice she thought I was making. Her invasive, dominating attitude is a strong example of a problematic role that is not synonymous with gender role.

Ultimately, I found a single study and lots of anecdotal evidence (that’s an oxymoron, I know), and it was all overwhelmingly positive. It would seem that a majority of transmasculine folks, even after a decade on testosterone, maintain their fertility (assuming hormone therapy began 16+). Additionally, you really cannot have too much support, as pregnancy is bound to kick your ass in ways you never expected. Invite your friends and loved ones to be a part of the process. Let them do your dishes and bring you food. Allow yourself a decreased workload. Take naps.

It’s a beautiful thing to bring another human into the world, but it’s also a tremendous, complicated effort. Energies enraged, euphoria, modify, and elevate. So much is birthed alongside a baby. You are bound to discover new pieces of yourself, to redefine what you thought you knew and to remember all those things you’d forgotten. The experience of pregnancy is defined by a great many things, but gender is not one of them. ■

**WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU’RE EXPECTING**

Other transmasculine folks often ask me for advice. I think that first and foremost it’s crucial to know yourself. If you’re able to anticipate the elements of pregnancy you might struggle with, so much the better. On that note, research is very empowering. If you familiarize yourself with the process, you’ll be able to ask better questions and make better decisions. Learn your body. Go exploring, find your cervix, track its changes, understand your cycle and its indicators.

**Trust your body.** This is a big one, and one with which I wasn’t anticipating so much of a struggle. It took us six months to get pregnant, and even though that’s not a long time, it was plenty long enough for me to agonize over whether or not I’d compromised my fertility (as a result of the few years I’d been on testosterone). This was compounded by the fact that I couldn’t readily find information on transmasculine fertility, conception, or pregnancy.

Regardless, no one is spared gender role expectations, and we face them internally with the same ferocity that our society commands them. Therefore, no one is spared gender role expectations, and we face them internally with the same ferocity that our society commands them.

**Gender...**

...is not synonymous with gender role.

Where gender is an inborn trait native to the architecture of one’s brain, a gender role is merely an archetype of what it means to be male or female, as prescribed by a patriarchal society hell-bent on an oppressive binary role.

Sex (as defined by the existence of first and secondary physical sex characteristics) does not follow binary law any more than gender does. In fact, both demand a spectrum that expresses their variable outcomes.

Therefore, pregnancy is not specific to, nor contingent upon, any particular gender (binary or otherwise), as we cannot unequivocally identify a singular gender/sex combination that pregnancy is uniquely applicable to.

Regardless, no one is spared gender role expectations, and we face them internally with the same ferocity that our society commands them.
SEEKING OUT MEDICAL CARE while LGBTQ+ can be a daunting and often stressful process. Progress is being made in many ways, with groups and individual practitioners doing the work to become more inclusive and educate around the particular needs of the community.

Still, there are still serious barriers for LGBTQ+ folks seeking quality and constitute care. We polled Our Lives readers for some of their best and worst experiences in the medical world, and got their thoughts on ways our healthcare system could stand to improve. We hope some of the information is helpful for those seeking quality care, and that those with the power to make change are also paying attention.

NOTE: We are keeping responses anonymous to protect privacy, and are including self-identifications as they were submitted. For legal reasons, we have removed the specific names of any healthcare providers included in some of the negative responses.

RESPONDENT 1 (Bi racial/Cisgender)

“For physical (and mental health), I had a great experience at Uni-Point Health on West Washington near the capitol. The doctor spent over an hour talking with me and helping me understand my options. When I brought up LGBTQ-specific issues, he seemed to be familiar with what I was talking about, even if he didn’t directly understand. He also did a great job listening without interjecting.”

“I had one really poor experience at the University Health Services. While most of my experiences there were great, I had one or two that were cringe-worthy. For example, I went in to get a routine STI test done. All the questions were heteronormative and asked if I had been using condoms. When I said ‘sometimes,’ she assumed that I didn’t always use protection and began to lecture. However, I said it was because I used different types of protection depending on my partner. It was incredibly uncomfortable when she critiqued the number of sexual partners I had. All recent experiences had been consensual and protected, so I didn’t understand why her judgment was coming from. Overall, I thought it was still important to be tested. I just made sure to never go back to her again.”

RESPONDENT 2 (Queer/Transgender Male)

“My doctor, Beth Potter at Wingra Family Medical Center, has been very supportive and helpful regarding my transition care. She was honest about what she didn’t know, and did the work to educate herself wherever needed. The whole team at Wingra—those whom I’ve interacted with, at least—has been great.”

“Despite having my name and gender changed on all records (ID, driver license, health insurance, etc), [my medical] records still incorrectly list my gender, and apparently this ‘cannot’ be updated. A couple doctors I’ve seen have alluded to this being a higher-level institutional issue. My employer, a ‘progressive’ local start-up (~5 years old) has a trans health and medical plan, but the finances are still being accumulated. When I register at a new clinic, I was asked who my emergency contact was. I gave their name, number, and relationship to me. When I said ‘girlfriend,’ the receptionist made a big deal about labeling them as ‘friend.’ Excuse me, but it is not your job to edit what I tell you or reduce the importance of my relationship for me. I was too taken aback and insulted by her to respond, but I refused to return to that healthcare entity. I’m not sure what I expected from a clinic with a religious affiliation, but that’s still not acceptable.”

RESPONDENT 3 (Queer/Masculine Female)

“I was at my first visit with a new PCP and when she asked me what my sexuality is (which was a relevant question, she wasn’t just asking for her own curiosity), she didn’t bat an eye when I said Pan-sexual. She knew what it meant and it was nice not having to explain.”

“When I was registering at a new clinic, I was asked who my emer- gency contact was. I gave their name, number, and relationship to me. When I said ‘girlfriend,’ the receptionist made a big deal about labeling them as ‘friend.’ Excuse me, but it is not your job to edit what I tell you or reduce the importance of my relationship for me. I was too taken aback and insulted by her to respond, but I refused to return to that healthcare entity. I’m not sure what I expected from a clinic with a religious affiliation, but that’s still not acceptable.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Cultural competency training needs to be given to all healthcare workers, doctors, and receptionists alike, because LGBTQ folks face harassment at all levels.”

RESPONDENT 4 (Queer/Bisexual Male)

“When I was asked by my PCP if I had any family history of HIV or AIDS, I was immediately connected to an amazing case worker who helped me get the care I need.”

“I was on my father’s health insurance for the past two years, which means I had to see my ID specialist at La Crosse (two hours from Madison) and have many blood draws in my hometown (one hour away). The labs in my hometown clinics do not often do draws for HIV patients and have, on several occasions, misdraw or mishandled the blood, forcing me to return for another draw or go without one.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “I used to work as an EMT. We were called to a scene where a patient was having a psychiatric emergency. I suspected that patient was transgender but couldn’t confirm it and hadn’t asked because it simply wasn’t relevant. I treated the patient and we drove them to the ER. During my assessment I asked about pronouns and they advised me of the ones to
to court, representing myself and going to Mayo Hospital for a Total TMJ Replacement, bilateral. It’s been an absolute disaster, and ruined my life.”


RESPONDENT 5 (Queer/Non-binary)

“My ‘best’ experiences are simply healthcare professionals not commenting on or making assumptions about my identity.”

“When I look for a queer healthcare professional it’s because I want a safe space and someone who is familiar with my own experiences.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Training healthcare professionals to not make assumptions. I am a dental professional. Telling a trans man to erect and inanimate penis is not respectful. I respond, but I refuse to return to that healthcare entity. I’m not sure what I expected from a clinic with a religious affiliation, but that’s still not acceptable.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Cultural competency training needs to be given to all healthcare workers, doctors, and receptionists alike, because LGBTQ folks face harassment at all levels.”

RESPONDENT 6 (Pansexual/Cisgender Male)

“Even though I was diagnosed with HIV at my university clinic (U.W.-Madiso- son), I was immediately connected to an amazing case worker who helps me get the care I need.”

“I was on my father’s health insurance for the past two years, which means I had to see my ID specialist at La Crosse (two hours from Madison) and have many blood draws in my hometown (one hour away). The labs in my hometown clinics do not often do draws for HIV patients and have, on several occasions, misdraw or mishandled the blood, forcing me to return for another draw or go without one.”

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: “Small town labs need to learn how to better draw for HIV testing and care.”

RESPONDENT 7 (Pansexual/Cisgender Male)

“Even though I was diagnosed with HIV at my university clinic (U.W.-Madi- son), I was immediately connected to an amazing case worker who helps me get the care I need.”

“Not having my marriage or identity questioned during an over- night hospitalization.”

RESPONDENT 8 (Pansexual/Cisgender Male)

“I used to work as an EMT. We were called to a scene where a patient was having a psychiatric emergency. I suspected that patient was transgender but couldn’t confirm it and hadn’t asked because it simply wasn’t relevant. I treated the patient and we drove them to the ER. During my assessment I asked about pronouns and they advised me of the ones to
They need to have a better process for reassigning primary care. One of the triage nurse, only instead of a raised eyebrow, this person decided it would be appropriate to ask me about my opinions on the bathroom bill, which ultimately meant I got to sit on an exam table while this man I’d never before voiced his concerns about “gays in dresses going in the same bathroom as a little girl.” I reported the incident and have heard nothing since. This was about two years ago and I haven’t set foot in there since.

**RESPONDENT 4 (Transgender Male)**

“My best experience has always been with the folks at the NorthEast Family Medical Center. Everybody there—from my provider to the clinic staff, pharmacy, all the way down to the registrars—has always been respectful of my gender identity, never once batting an eyelash at the paperwork that still reads ‘Female’ in the Sex/Gender market. I would name my favorites, but there are too many.

“I had to go to [a local hospital] for a short period of time due to a change in insurance. I have had plenty of experience with the mixed bag of reactions I get from folks who aren’t used to seeing a bearded man with an ‘F’ on his identification, so I tend to make lighthearted jokes about my appearance. This particular visit was trainwreck in slow motion. I checked in and immediately noticed the registrant’s non-so-subtle raised eyebrow as she looked at my records. Same crap happened with the registries of those taking new patients, to determine if they’re a good fit.”

**IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** “More sexually active men need to know the importance of getting a pap smear. There needs to be training so doctors and other healthcare providers know the health concerns of queer people, including mental health issues that are more prevalent in the queer communities. Also: addiction, disease, depression, anorexia, etc. Everyone in healthcare needs to know how to treat trans people with dignity and respect. They must be trained how to care for folks in transition.”

**RESPONDENT 10 (Gay Man)**

“My health insurance provider, GHC, covers my husband’s testosterone therapy, psychiatric appointments, and gender reassignment surgery. They also put his preferred name and sex in their system so they never use his female birth name at appointments!”

**IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** “They need to have a better process for reassignment surgery. Right now there are still a lot of hoops to jump through.”

**RESPONDENT 11 (Gay Male)**

“I was in the ER in need of stitches. The nurse told the intern that I was a ‘whiny fag’ while she was talking about my cut—which she told me didn’t need stitches but resulted in six. She then went and flirted with/air in the lap of the head doctor. I complained to the hospital and nothing happened.”

**IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** “I have heard similar stories from all the emergency departments over transgender health issues. Training could help.”

**RESPONDENT 12 (Lesbian)**

“Every moment with Dr. Kathy Oriel is a positive one. She and her amazing staff have been respectful, smart, and caring.”

**RESPONDENT 13 (Lesbian)**

“I was at Meriter Hospital, on antepartum bedrest, and needed to get married prior to the birth of our child so my wife would be on the birth certificate. The hospital accommodated our ceremony and even sent up a small cake and sparkling cider to our room to help us celebrate. Also, Madison Women’s Health sent us flowers and gave us congratulations.”

“A local healthcare clinic where some medical staff consistently ask questions about ‘dad’ or our child’s ‘father’ in ignorance.”

**IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** “Medical forms with parental boxes instead of father and mother.”

**RESPONDENT 14 (Gay Male)**

“Most caregivers, who were not phased by my same-sex marriage and welcoming of my partner.”

**RESPONDENT 15 (Gay Male)**

“My partner is a transgender man. A local provider wrote in my child’s chart that I am sexually involved with a female. While she may have been trying to be accurate, it made me feel unsafe. It felt disrespectful to his history and to his lengthy efforts to be recognized as male. Another time, I went to a doctor for prenatal counseling. Once she learned that I’m in a queer relationship, she immediately pushed for me not to conceive through donor sperm and instead to adopt through foster care. While adopting through the child welfare system can be a beautiful thing, I know that the process can be fraught with uncertainty and years of waiting. Locally, there are virtually no children that are simply, legally free for adoption through the foster care system; their parents are provided the opportunity to work a program and regain custody. I found a provider who could be more supportive of my efforts to conceive a child biologically, which I saw as a more certain path to building my family.”

**RESPONDENT 16 (Gay Male)**

“I’ve been seen by the U.W. HIV clinic for the past 20–25 years. I’ve always been amazed at my doctor’s ability to do whatever needed to be done for me. All the staff are helpful, genuine, and caring.”

**IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:** “There might be room for healthcare providers to indicate their comfort and ability to provide LGBTQ+specific healthcare. It’s difficult reading the lists of physicians, and the much smaller list of those taking new patients, to determine if they’re a good fit.”
The Bathroom Issue

Abigail Churchill gives a no-nonsense overview of the legislative and legal state of transgender civil rights in the US, especially where it concerns public accommodation.

Note: This article is adapted from a chapter in the forthcoming State Bar of Wisconsin PINNACLE® publication, “Changing Times, Changing Law: LGBTQ Issues.”

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, we’ve seen an increase in national attention on the transgender community. Much of this attention has focused on access to bathrooms, locker rooms, and other sex-segregated facilities. This article will examine this issue through a legal lens. There are two parts to this discussion: 1) laws prohibiting discrimination; and 2) laws restricting access.

PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION

A public accommodation is an entity which, although privately owned, is available to the public at large. Wisconsin law gives a few examples of places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, bars, hospitals, cemeteries, “… and any place where accommodations, amusement, goods, or services are available, either for free or for a consideration.” Most, if not all, of these establishments have sex-segregated facilities available to their patrons.

NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS & ORDINANCES

Wisconsin has a statute prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, or ancestry. Although there exists a growing body of law about whether the term “sex” includes the notion of “gender identity,” for the purpose of protecting against discrimination, this has not yet been developed within the context of Wisconsin’s relevant non-discrimination laws.

Wisconsin does not yet have a state statute prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of gender identity. There are a few city ordinances that include gender identity. There are many different requirements across the country for changing one’s gender marker on their birth certificate. Many states, including Wisconsin, require that an individual provide proof they have undergone gender confirmation surgery (GCS). However, due to the expense related to most of these surgeries, and because of the prevalence of gender transition-related exclusions in insurance policies, providing the required proof can be financially difficult, if not impossible, to achieve for many gender-transitioning individuals.

Additionally, there are gender-transitioning individuals who do not wish to pursue GCS. As a result, they may be unable to change the gender marker on their birth certificate. According to many of these bills, these individuals would then be obligated to use the restroom corresponding with the gender marker on their birth certificate regardless of their gender identity and gender expression. So far, only one state in the country has implemented one of these bathroom bills. North Carolina’s law, commonly known as HB2, was signed into law on March 23, 2016. As a result of heavy pressure from various industries contributing to the state’s economy, they repealed the most controversial portions of the law on March 30, 2017.

A Member of A Member of

Check out our new site and consider adding New Harvest to your planned giving this year!

New Harvest Foundation continues to support and fund LGBT projects and programs in South Central Wisconsin. However, the work we do cannot be done without the financial support of our donors.

First, we’d like to thank all those who have given and continue to give to NHF. We encourage and ask for your enduring support.

As the tone of the national conversation shifts, it is clear the importance of groups like New Harvest as the role they play in their local communities. Our mission is even more vital now than ever before so we ask those who have not given to consider giving to New Harvest’s mission in supporting the LGBT communities of south central Wisconsin.

For more information, visit newharvestfoundation.org

PO Box 1786 Madison, WI 53701-1786

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

DeWitt attorneys see things differently while exploring and creating solutions to our clients’ needs. At DeWitt, we utilize our creativity to offer proactive and effective legal advice in more than 30 areas of law while serving public and privately held companies, individual clients, family-owned businesses, municipalities and more. With nearly 140 attorneys practicing in Wisconsin and Minnesota, our firm handles matters for clients nationwide.

When you need a trusted, full-service law firm, please visit our website at dewittross.com or email info@dewittross.com for more information.

DeWitt Ross & Stevens, P.A.

DeWitt attorneys see things differently while exploring and creating solutions to our clients’ needs. At DeWitt, we utilize our creativity to offer proactive and effective legal advice in more than 30 areas of law while serving public and privately held companies, individual clients, family-owned businesses, municipalities and more. With nearly 140 attorneys practicing in Wisconsin and Minnesota, our firm handles matters for clients nationwide.

When you need a trusted, full-service law firm, please visit our website at dewittross.com or email info@dewittross.com for more information.
Intentional Families

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher reflects on the often arduous but ultimately rewarding journey faced by LGBTQ people who wish to start families and offers perspective and hope for the road ahead.

IT’S LONELY ON THE ROAD to queer parenting. The world reminds us every day why we are not okay, how hard it is going to be, and how much we have to lose at a moment’s notice. As we think about what it means to parent and expand our capacity for love in this seemingly normal and customary rite of passage, it becomes glaringly apparent that this, too, will be hard.

For straight people it’s often as simple as deciding to try. It happens on a whim, it happens by mistake, it happens without pause as if jumping off a cliff and crashing down into the waves of being parents. For queer and trans people it can feel like more of a long and steady uphill climb. We stumble over bumps in the road, we must buy expensive equipment or supplies to complete the journey, we never know what kind of obstacle or predator will be lurking around the next bend to destroy our chance at happiness. The risk of injuries is great and the emotional and spiritual weight of the burdens involved can be crushing. For some it’s enough to opt out altogether. For those who choose to persist, it often comes down to one thing and one thing alone: hope. There must be a great deal of faith and hope for what is possible.

SETBACKS AND RESILIENCE

The hope must overshadow the doubt and fear—and the discouraging reality that building a family is not automatical-ly a birthright for queer and trans people. Success requires envisioning a life that exists beyond our own physical, emotion-al, familial, and financial limitations. It requires stamina and dedication and hours of conversation and planning and weighing of options. We find information and direction from our people, our therapists, and all those brave enough to reach back from the top of the mountain and say, “This is my story and what you want is real and if I can do it, you can do it, too.”

Two years ago I sat at the dining room table of a couple I had only just met as they detailed their fertility journey and birthing stories. The whole way home I craved more. The books didn’t fully and cut so deep I couldn’t bring myself to try again. That’s how it is when the stakes are so high.

The one time we tried, the feeling of failure and grief broke my heart so fully and cut so deep I couldn’t bring myself to try again. That’s how it is when the stakes are so high.

“IT’S LONELY ON THE ROAD” TO QUEER PARENTING. THE WORLD REMINDS US EVERY DAY WHY WE ARE NOT OKAY, HOW HARD IT IS GOING TO BE, AND HOW MUCH WE HAVE TO LOSE AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE. AS WE THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO PARENT AND EXPAND OUR CAPACITY FOR LOVE IN THIS SEEMINGLY NORMAL AND CUSTOMARY RITE OF PASSAGE, IT BECOMES GLARINGLY APPARENT THAT THIS, TOO, WILL BE HARD.

IT’S LONELY ON THE ROAD TO QUEER PARENTING. THE WORLD REMINDS US EVERY DAY WHY WE ARE NOT OKAY, HOW HARD IT IS GOING TO BE, AND HOW MUCH WE HAVE TO LOSE AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE. AS WE THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO PARENT AND EXPAND OUR CAPACITY FOR LOVE IN THIS SEEMINGLY NORMAL AND CUSTOMARY RITE OF PASSAGE, IT BECOMES GLARINGLY APPARENT THAT THIS, TOO, WILL BE HARD.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher reflects on the often arduous but ultimately rewarding journey faced by LGBTQ people who wish to start families and offers perspective and hope for the road ahead.

“IT’S LONELY ON THE ROAD” TO QUEER PARENTING. THE WORLD REMINDS US EVERY DAY WHY WE ARE NOT OKAY, HOW HARD IT IS GOING TO BE, AND HOW MUCH WE HAVE TO LOSE AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE. AS WE THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO PARENT AND EXPAND OUR CAPACITY FOR LOVE IN THIS SEEMINGLY NORMAL AND CUSTOMARY RITE OF PASSAGE, IT BECOMES GLARINGLY APPARENT THAT THIS, TOO, WILL BE HARD.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-01 is a gender and sexuality art psychotherapist and social justice educator. She is also the co-founder of the Center for Community Healing in Madison, Wisconsin where she works with LGBTQ people of all ages on their paths to healing and provides support and education for allies. Visit chelseakenrich.com for more information.
Violence Hits Home
Kathy Flores

On March 27, 2017, Andrew (Drew) Nesbitt was murdered in his home after a night out celebrating his birthday. During the weeks of October 2 and 9, a trial was held to bring a case against Darrick Anderson, the man who caused his death. On Friday night, October 6, Mr. Anderson was indicted of the three charges, including eye contact.

BE DIRECT. Be assertive in your communication.

USE BODY LANGUAGE. Show that you are serious, including eye contact.

Hookup-related violence in the LGBTQ community is both a public safety issue and a personal safety issue. Through our work with the Center for the Study of Violence and Society at the University of Washington, we have identified several key areas where we can work to prevent such tragedies, and why it is important to do so.

General Tips

GOING OUT

· TRUST YOUR GUT. If you feel threatened or unsafe, trust your instincts and remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.

· LEAVE A TRAIL. Let someone you trust know your fabulous plans, including if you hook up with someone, where you’re going and how long. If you decide to leave a note, make sure this trusted person knows where you’ve left it.

· TAKE A BUDDY. When heading to and leaving your destination or waiting for transportation.

INCIDENTS OF HOOK-UP VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN IN PUBLIC SPACES SUCH AS BARS, SEX/PLAY PARTIES, ETC. Let friends, other patrons, or bar/nightclub staff know if you leave temporarily and when you intend to return. When you are outside, scan the street for establishments (such as a restaurant or car service) where you can go to seek help if you feel unsafe. Don’t leave any drinks or your belongings unattended. Discuss your interests and boundaries for sex, including BDSM role plays.

· MAKE A SAFETY PLAN AND LET SOMEONE ELSE KNOW. Tell at least one person about your plans, such as who you’ll be with, a way to get in touch with the person/people that you are meeting, meeting place, and what you plan to do. Plan in advance what will happen if you feel unsafe, such as where you will meet and whether you want police called.

· USE YOUR TECH. Text yourself or friends about where you’ll be and where you are, the handle the person or persons use on the website or phone app. Include a picture of the person, and save messages when using websites and phone apps.

Document the incident. Take photos of any wounds you incurred. If you feel threatened or unsafe, no matter who initiates or how it happens, you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. “No” is a complete sentence! USE WORDS. Alert bystanders and friends (not angry) an assailant.

Settling your boundaries?

Your boundaries are beautiful. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. “No” is a complete sentence! Use words.

Practise safer sex. If you think you may have sex, make it safer sex– bring safer sex supplies and use them. Diverse & Resilient has free safer sex supplies available at our table and can help you safety plan around how to ask your sex partner to engage in safer sex.

Keep a record of all forms of violence, including hook up, dating, sexual, intimate partner, hate, and police violence. If you have witnessed or experienced violence: Contact Kathy Flores through Diverse & Resilient’s Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program: roomtobesafe.org or call/text 414-404-LGBT (5428) (resource line, not a hotline) or the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 24-hour hotline 212-714-1141.

Take care of yourself. Use the help of supportive friends, partners, and family.

These tips are suggestions for staying safer. If you experience violence, it is not your fault. The Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program and other members of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) brought these tips to you.

-violence hits home

kathy flores

On March 27, 2017, Andrew (Drew) Nesbitt was murdered in his home after a night out celebrating his birthday. During the weeks of October 2 and 9, a trial was held to bring a case against Darrick Anderson, the man who caused his death. On Friday night, October 6, Mr. Anderson was indicted of the three charges, including eye contact.

BE DIRECT. Be assertive in your communication.

USE BODY LANGUAGE. Show that you are serious, including eye contact.

Hookup-related violence in the LGBTQ community is both a public safety issue and a personal safety issue. Through our work with the Center for the Study of Violence and Society at the University of Washington, we have identified several key areas where we can work to prevent such tragedies, and why it is important to do so.

General Tips

GOING OUT

· TRUST YOUR GUT. If you feel threatened or unsafe, trust your instincts and remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.

· LEAVE A TRAIL. Let someone you trust know your fabulous plans, including if you hook up with someone, where you’re going and how long. If you decide to leave a note, make sure this trusted person knows where you’ve left it.

· TAKE A BUDDY. When heading to and leaving your destination or waiting for transportation.

INCIDENTS OF HOOK-UP VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN IN PUBLIC SPACES SUCH AS BARS, SEX/PLAY PARTIES, ETC. Let friends, other patrons, or bar/nightclub staff know if you leave temporarily and when you intend to return. When you are outside, scan the street for establishments (such as a restaurant or car service) where you can go to seek help if you feel unsafe. Don’t leave any drinks or your belongings unattended. Discuss your interests and boundaries for sex, including BDSM role plays.

· MAKE A SAFETY PLAN AND LET SOMEONE ELSE KNOW. Tell at least one person about your plans, such as who you’ll be with, a way to get in touch with the person/people that you are meeting, meeting place, and what you plan to do. Plan in advance what will happen if you feel unsafe, such as where you will meet and whether you want police called.

· USE YOUR TECH. Text yourself or friends about where you’ll be and where you are, the handle the person or persons use on the website or phone app. Include a picture of the person, and save messages when using websites and phone apps.

Document the incident. Take photos of any wounds you incurred. If you feel threatened or unsafe, no matter who initiates or how it happens, you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. “No” is a complete sentence! Use words.

Practise safer sex. If you think you may have sex, make it safer sex– bring safer sex supplies and use them. Diverse & Resilient has free safer sex supplies available at our table and can help you safety plan around how to ask your sex partner to engage in safer sex.

Keep a record of all forms of violence, including hook up, dating, sexual, intimate partner, hate, and police violence. If you have witnessed or experienced violence: Contact Kathy Flores through Diverse & Resilient’s Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program: roomtobesafe.org or call/text 414-404-LGBT (5428) (resource line, not a hotline) or the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 24-hour hotline 212-714-1141.

Take care of yourself. Use the help of supportive friends, partners, and family.

These tips are suggestions for staying safer. If you experience violence, it is not your fault. The Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program and other members of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) brought these tips to you.

-violence hits home

kathy flores

On March 27, 2017, Andrew (Drew) Nesbitt was murdered in his home after a night out celebrating his birthday. During the weeks of October 2 and 9, a trial was held to bring a case against Darrick Anderson, the man who caused his death. On Friday night, October 6, Mr. Anderson was indicted of the three charges, including eye contact.

BE DIRECT. Be assertive in your communication.

USE BODY LANGUAGE. Show that you are serious, including eye contact.

Hookup-related violence in the LGBTQ community is both a public safety issue and a personal safety issue. Through our work with the Center for the Study of Violence and Society at the University of Washington, we have identified several key areas where we can work to prevent such tragedies, and why it is important to do so.

General Tips

GOING OUT

· TRUST YOUR GUT. If you feel threatened or unsafe, trust your instincts and remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.

· LEAVE A TRAIL. Let someone you trust know your fabulous plans, including if you hook up with someone, where you’re going and how long. If you decide to leave a note, make sure this trusted person knows where you’ve left it.

· TAKE A BUDDY. When heading to and leaving your destination or waiting for transportation.

INCIDENTS OF HOOK-UP VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN IN PUBLIC SPACES SUCH AS BARS, SEX/PLAY PARTIES, ETC. Let friends, other patrons, or bar/nightclub staff know if you leave temporarily and when you intend to return. When you are outside, scan the street for establishments (such as a restaurant or car service) where you can go to seek help if you feel unsafe. Don’t leave any drinks or your belongings unattended. Discuss your interests and boundaries for sex, including BDSM role plays.

· MAKE A SAFETY PLAN AND LET SOMEONE ELSE KNOW. Tell at least one person about your plans, such as who you’ll be with, a way to get in touch with the person/people that you are meeting, meeting place, and what you plan to do. Plan in advance what will happen if you feel unsafe, such as where you will meet and whether you want police called.

· USE YOUR TECH. Text yourself or friends about where you’ll be and where you are, the handle the person or persons use on the website or phone app. Include a picture of the person, and save messages when using websites and phone apps.

Document the incident. Take photos of any wounds you incurred. If you feel threatened or unsafe, no matter who initiates or how it happens, you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. “No” is a complete sentence! Use words.

Practise safer sex. If you think you may have sex, make it safer sex– bring safer sex supplies and use them. Diverse & Resilient has free safer sex supplies available at our table and can help you safety plan around how to ask your sex partner to engage in safer sex.

Keep a record of all forms of violence, including hook up, dating, sexual, intimate partner, hate, and police violence. If you have witnessed or experienced violence: Contact Kathy Flores through Diverse & Resilient’s Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program: roomtobesafe.org or call/text 414-404-LGBT (5428) (resource line, not a hotline) or the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 24-hour hotline 212-714-1141.

Take care of yourself. Use the help of supportive friends, partners, and family.

These tips are suggestions for staying safer. If you experience violence, it is not your fault. The Room to Be Safe Anti-Violence Program and other members of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) brought these tips to you.
Friendship is a Verb

GSAFE’s Ali Muldrow tackles the question of how to know who your friends are in the era of Donald Trump, and how to be a better friend in return.

I REMEMBER MY FATHER

In fact, once when my dad pressed me on my white friends. Looking back, I now realize my father wanted me to be prepared to be fair to me as a judge of character, or alignment. It’s not about always agreeing.

I have learn from each other, forgive one another, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.

This is a beginner’s guide to revolutionary friendship, summarized in five steps:

1. LEARN TO IDENTIFY DISCRIMINATION BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Friends are the people you turn to on your hardest days. They are people you can talk to for strength after the world has taken a bite out of you. Notice if you are complaining from a place of privilege, or if you are dominating conversations and then stop so you can make space for your friends.

2. EXAMINE YOUR BIASES AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have bias. Each of us carries with us stereotypes and outdated terminology. We have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

To be available for friendship we have to accept that we need folks around us who will challenge us to acknowledge the harm we are part of. To be available for friendship we have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

This is a great time to have a firm grasp of human rights so that even when your rights are not directly being violated you recognize that other people’s are. In order to be a good friend it’s important that you rise to the occasion and stand up for the people in your life who are targeted by injustice. If you are unprepared to stand up for your friends you will end up using them as human shields.

3. SHOW UP WHEN IT ISN’T ABOUT YOU

This is what it means to be a good friend to a person of color. Had they said to Tristan, if you’re going to be friends with black people you’re going to have to be brave enough to stand up for your friends when it really counts, you’re going to have to take responsibility for interrupting racism.

Being a good friend is not about being in alignment. It’s about having the skills to listen to each other, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.

This is a beginner’s guide to revolutionary friendship, summarized in five steps:

1. LEARN TO IDENTIFY DISCRIMINATION BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Friends are the people you turn to on your hardest days. They are people you can talk to for strength after the world has taken a bite out of you. Notice if you are complaining from a place of privilege, or if you are dominating conversations and then stop so you can make space for your friends.

2. EXAMINE YOUR BIASES AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have bias. Each of us carries with us stereotypes and outdated terminology. We have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

To be available for friendship we have to accept that we need folks around us who will challenge us to acknowledge the harm we are part of. To be available for friendship we have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

This is a great time to have a firm grasp of human rights so that even when your rights are not directly being violated you recognize that other people’s are. In order to be a good friend it’s important that you rise to the occasion and stand up for the people in your life who are targeted by injustice. If you are unprepared to stand up for your friends you will end up using them as human shields.

3. SHOW UP WHEN IT ISN’T ABOUT YOU

This is what it means to be a good friend to a person of color. Had they said to Tristan, if you’re going to be friends with black people you’re going to have to be brave enough to stand up for your friends when it really counts, you’re going to have to take responsibility for interrupting racism.

Being a good friend is not about being in alignment. It’s about having the skills to listen to each other, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.

This is a beginner’s guide to revolutionary friendship, summarized in five steps:

1. LEARN TO IDENTIFY DISCRIMINATION BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Friends are the people you turn to on your hardest days. They are people you can talk to for strength after the world has taken a bite out of you. Notice if you are complaining from a place of privilege, or if you are dominating conversations and then stop so you can make space for your friends.

2. EXAMINE YOUR BIASES AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have bias. Each of us carries with us stereotypes and outdated terminology. We have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

To be available for friendship we have to accept that we need folks around us who will challenge us to acknowledge the harm we are part of. To be available for friendship we have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

This is a great time to have a firm grasp of human rights so that even when your rights are not directly being violated you recognize that other people’s are. In order to be a good friend it’s important that you rise to the occasion and stand up for the people in your life who are targeted by injustice. If you are unprepared to stand up for your friends you will end up using them as human shields.

Being a good friend is not about being in alignment. It’s about having the skills to listen to each other, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.

This is a beginner’s guide to revolutionary friendship, summarized in five steps:

1. LEARN TO IDENTIFY DISCRIMINATION BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Friends are the people you turn to on your hardest days. They are people you can talk to for strength after the world has taken a bite out of you. Notice if you are complaining from a place of privilege, or if you are dominating conversations and then stop so you can make space for your friends.

2. EXAMINE YOUR BIASES AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have bias. Each of us carries with us stereotypes and outdated terminology. We have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

To be available for friendship we have to accept that we need folks around us who will challenge us to acknowledge the harm we are part of. To be available for friendship we have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

This is a great time to have a firm grasp of human rights so that even when your rights are not directly being violated you recognize that other people’s are. In order to be a good friend it’s important that you rise to the occasion and stand up for the people in your life who are targeted by injustice. If you are unprepared to stand up for your friends you will end up using them as human shields.

Being a good friend is not about being in alignment. It’s about having the skills to listen to each other, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.

This is a beginner’s guide to revolutionary friendship, summarized in five steps:

1. LEARN TO IDENTIFY DISCRIMINATION BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE IT

Friends are the people you turn to on your hardest days. They are people you can talk to for strength after the world has taken a bite out of you. Notice if you are complaining from a place of privilege, or if you are dominating conversations and then stop so you can make space for your friends.

2. EXAMINE YOUR BIASES AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have bias. Each of us carries with us stereotypes and outdated terminology. We have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

To be available for friendship we have to accept that we need folks around us who will challenge us to acknowledge the harm we are part of. To be available for friendship we have to own not only our ability to treat people poorly, but also the toxic ways we think about people, ourselves included.

This is a great time to have a firm grasp of human rights so that even when your rights are not directly being violated you recognize that other people’s are. In order to be a good friend it’s important that you rise to the occasion and stand up for the people in your life who are targeted by injustice. If you are unprepared to stand up for your friends you will end up using them as human shields.

Being a good friend is not about being in alignment. It’s about having the skills to listen to each other, and challenge each other to rebuild trust. We are our only friends. We cannot be divided and conquered; we must be bold enough to value everyone.
Am I Welcome Here?
Finding little current information, OutReach’s new LGBT Senior Advocate, Michal Osier, is hoping to create a reliable list of LGBTQ welcoming senior care centers.

Since I began my work as the LGBT Senior Advocate at OutReach, I’ve been getting calls that start like this: “Hi, my mom/dad is lesbian/gay/bi/trans, and I’m looking for an assisted living place/nursing home nearby where they’ll be welcome and accepted. Are there any places you can recommend?”

I have to say no, I don’t have recommendations, because this kind of information has never been gathered. There are a few anecdotal reports, perhaps, but nothing I can stand behind.

Independent living communities? Memory care facilities? Likewise. I wasn’t comfortable with this situation, so I started doing some research. I learned that responses to the growing need for wel-

coming senior living communities for aging LGBT baby boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964 (the largest age cohort in the U.S.) who are now between 53 and 71 years old—have branched in two distinct paths.

The first path has been the creation of senior living communities oriented and marketed primarily or specifically toward LGBT elders. At this writing, there are 21 of these scattered around the country: six in California, two in Florida, two in New York, two in New Mexico, and one each in Massachusetts, Oregon, Ohio, North Carolina, Washington, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Washington, D.C.

While this trend is heartening in some respects, it’s clear that of the estimated 1.1 million LGBT adults 65 and older, very few will be able to access, let alone afford, such places. That leaves the other path: that of working toward creating welcoming environments in the hundreds of thousands of senior residences and care facilities in the U.S.

Several national-level LGBT organizations have taken on this challenge.

SAGE (Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders; sagesa.org), MAP (Movement Advancement Project; lgbtmap.org), the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging (lgbtagingcenter.org), and others, are hard at work doing research, publishing findings, creating policy, and training LGBTQ activist presenters around the country. Here in Dane County, I’m working with our many allies and community members within and outside of senior residence and care facilities who can help advance the goal of affirming environments for LGBT elders.

Over 1/3 of LGBT baby boomers identified fear of discrimination, compromised care, and bullying in senior housing as one of their biggest fears about aging.

In response to the growing need, to the newly available research on LGBT aging, and to the energy in the larger Dane County communities that I believe is waiting to be engaged toward this goal, OutReach’s Am I Welcome Here? Project is newly underway.

Initially, my hope was to reach all of the senior residences and care facilities in Dane County. I realized I’d have to backpedal when I learned there are over 300 of them! I decided to focus on assisted living and memory care residences, because of what going into assisted living means: that the aging person can no longer care for her/him/themselves in the self-sufficient and independent way that characterizes adult life. To need assistance in the tasks of daily living is to be dependent on other people whom you do not know, in a way that you have never needed before. This represents a huge loss to anyone; but for LGBT people, this may well mean dependency on individuals who may disapprove of, dislike, or even be hostile to you, just because you are LGBT.

It’s for this reason that over 1/3 of LGBT baby boomers identified fear of discrimination, compromised care, and bullying in senior housing as one of their biggest fears about aging. In fact, a 2014 study by the Equal Rights Center found that 48% of LGBT-identified seniors “experienced unfavorable differential treatment in terms of availability of housing, pricing, financial incentives, amenities or application requirements” just in applying for senior housing.

The Am I Welcome Here? Project has three main parts. The first is a survey— with a cover letter explaining the Project’s purpose and goals—which has been sent out to almost 90 locations. The survey asks each facility’s director to self-assess LGBT cultural competence in three areas: overall knowledge about LGBT elders’ histories and how lifelong discrimination has affected many of us; LGBT terminology and culture; and specific action steps to make their facility LGBT-affirming, from adding additional options to gender and marital-status questions on forms, to putting LGBT images and information into their décor and libraries.

Staff trainings in each of these areas are being offered, and participating organizations are given an incentive: a free listing in OutReach’s annual directory, indicating they have engaged in building their LGBT cultural competence.

Cultural shifts take place steadily but gradually. In addition to the trainings themselves, my further goal is to bring the discussion about LGBT elders’ needs, wants, and realities to the larger community. We LGBT older adults have made uncountable contributions, large and small, to our communities throughout our lives. When we’re no longer able to fully care for ourselves, we too deserve to be able to call the place we move to, not our new closet, but our new home.

“I want to support my LGBT friends. I’m just not sure how or where to do it.”

MICHAL OSIER, BA, LPC, is the LGBT Senior Advocate for OutReach. She’s a newly retired psychotherapist and lifelong writer who lives with her beloved wife, Nancy Hutson, and their adopted dog, Rosa.
“As a small business owner it is easy to feel isolated,” Tami said. “It is easy to feel like this is just happening to you, so it is nice to have a space where we can be in camaraderie with other women business owners. It’s nice to be able to get advice on how to manage being a mom with being a business owner, to be able to talk to other owners about how to best keep up with regulations, or about what dishwasher to lease. It is also wonderful to just be able to celebrate victories with other women.”

Francesca added, “That is the biggest part, after our first meeting, after getting to talk in the group and just be heard. It was so cathartic. I felt so relieved afterward.”

Looking toward the future, members of the CLC are looking forward to incorporating formal mentoring for female food business owners who are just starting out in the industry. They are also planning to do more fundraising and activities in concert with other organizations around town.

I look forward to seeing how they blossom. One thing is sure: This group of capable, well-respected women will continue to nourish patrons, each other, and the community for a long time to come.”
Well Versed

East High student Daniel Gengenbach discovered a new self-confidence and a community of support through the world of slam poetry, Proud Theater, and an accepting environment.

I AM A NINTH GRADER at East High School. I was born north of Madison, but Madison is where I grew up. I love participating in clubs, specifically GSA. I got involved in poetry because of the way my eighth grade poetry class was taught. It showed me this new side, where a poem doesn’t have to just be rhyming words with no deeper meaning. Acting was something that I had no great interest in until I heard about Proud Theater. It was a place where I could act while still being accepted for who I am.

Both poetry and theater allow me to become different people, at least for a little while. They let me escape when I need to. It’s not just an escape, though. They challenge me to become better at what I love doing. They are an important part of my life.

School, friends, family, and my identity are important to me. My identity has completely changed over the course of the past two years, as I started to figure out who I am. Sometimes I still don’t know who I am, but I still have time to figure it all out. After all, I am just a freshman in high school.

My teacher, my friends, and my family have all supported me and stood by me, while Proud Theater and participating in poetry slams have made me a more confident person. I am who I am today because of these things and these people.

My identity has completely changed over the course of the past two years, as I started to figure out who I am. Sometimes I still don’t know who I am, but I still have time to figure it all out. After all, I am just a freshman.

Slam poetry was not something I was aware of until my teacher showed videos of people slamming in class for our poetry unit. It inspired me to write poems that I would want to perform for other people. My first poems were rough but they got better over time. I’m always improving on the things I write, trying to make them the best I’ve ever written yet. The first time I slammed, it was the most nerve-wracking thing I had done. In the end, I ended up tying for third place and getting a spot on the City Slam team.

It was the most nerve-wracking thing I had done in my life. I got involved in poetry because of the way my eighth grade poetry class was taught. It showed me this new side, where a poem doesn’t have to just be rhyming words with no deeper meaning. Acting was something that I had no great interest in until I heard about Proud Theater. It was a place where I could act while still being accepted for who I am.

I didn’t know it at the time but these slams were hosted by an organization called the JVN Project. I was at the City Slams that I first really learned about the group. They were the ones who put together the event and were the ones taking the top six poets to California for the Brave New Voices showcase and competition. They are the ones who hosted the events here and are the ones who let us spit our truth.

Poetry has forced me to think in different ways, especially when writing. I have to figure out how to make thing flow together and how it should sound. It’s always a challenge, which I love.

When working with other poets, you have to work together to make it all fit. I worked with one of my friends to create a two-person poem, which was later performed at a school poetry event. Working together isn’t always easy: we argued about what should be included and what stuff we didn’t think was important for the poem. But hearing everything come together is a wonderful experience. Creating a piece of art with another person is a shared success.

One thing that really stood out to me during my first poetry slam is that even if you don’t place in the top three, top five, or even the top 10, the other people present will still support you. They snap their fingers when they hear something they like, cheer for you when you finish, and boo the judges for giving you a score they don’t think is high enough.

The slam community is there to support anyone and everyone who gets up on the stage—because you’re letting yourself be vulnerable to strangers and you are letting your poems be judged as well. Even if you mess up, even if you stumble over your words or forget them, the people there will still be cheering for you.

Being a part of this has made me more confident, strengthened my friendships and, in a way, made me a better actor. Being an actor has made me a better poet. Poetry taught me how to get up on the stage and be present, while being an actor has taught me how to really being the emotion and how to tie it into what I’m performing. I firmly believe that poetry has helped me change for the better and that it will continue to change me over time.

Investing is within Reach
Personal Portfolio Makes It Easy

Whether you’re saving for your dream home or a child’s education, or want to jump-start your retirement savings, you need a way to get started. Our online investment program, Personal Portfolio, can help.

› Get started with as little as $1,000.
› Answer questions about yourself and your goals.
› Personal Portfolio suggests an investment strategy.

Learn more and get started at uwcu.org/personalportfolio.
Not a UW Credit Union member? Simply open a checking account, then create your Personal Portfolio.
It’s really quite simple. Because, regardless of where we get it or how we pay for it, we can agree that health care matters. We can agree that regular screenings are important, and that healthy people make stronger communities. And we can agree that cholesterol, the flu, diabetes, and cancer can affect anyone. We may have our differences, but when it comes to the importance of quality health care, on that We Can Agree.

Learn more at PlannedParenthood.org/WeCanAgree