

Greater Cincinnati GLBT News

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Cincinnati City Council Votes to Add Gays and Lesbians to Human Rights Ordinance

Advocates for fairness and justice won a decisive victory in Cincinnati on February 5th. At its Wednesday meeting, the Cincinnati City Council overwhelmingly approved a proposal to expand the city's existing Hate Crimes Ordinance to include age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. The vote was nine to seven, with Councilmembers Pat Dewine and Chris Monzel the only votes against the bill.

Following the murder of Gregory Beauchamp, an openly gay African American man, on New Year's Eve in Over-the-Rhine, many in our city were reawakened to the very real threat of anti-gay violence. In response to this event, on January 24th Councilmember John Cranley introduced language to the Council that would add sexual orientation, as well as gender, age and disability, to the city's existing Hate Crimes Ordinance. Councilmembers David Crowley and John Pepper immediately weighed in with their support and a grass roots lobbying campaign was mobilized by GLBT leaders.

A well attended town hall-style meeting took place on January 26th at St. John's Unitarian Church at which Mr. Cranley explained the proposal and discussed strategies for lobbying efforts. Another similar meeting was held the following Sunday at Club Chica on Colerain Ave, which led to a huge email and telephone effort aimed at City Hall by supporters.

On February 4th, the afternoon before the vote, City Council's Law Committee held an open debate about the Hate Crimes extension. Chambers were filled with a standing-room-only crowd. According to Doreen Cudnik of Stonewall Cincinnati, of the 59 people who spoke before the committee about the ordinance, only five expressed their opposition to it. Among them was Phil Burress of the Citizens for Community Values (CCV) who said that if the measure was passed, his group would file a lawsuit against the city. He and others contend that including gays and lesbians in Hate Crimes legislation violates Article XII of the City Charter, a position which is contradicted by a recent report from the city's Solicitors Office.

Among the many who spoke in favor of the Hate Crimes extension were clergy from Clifton United Methodist Church, Mt. Auburn Presbyterian, and Church of Our Saviour. A large group of disabled people, including advocates from the Center of Independent Living, also voiced their support for coverage of lesbians and gays.

While Cincinnati's new Hate Crime Ordinance is an important victory, it should be noted that the law only applies to victims of harassment, menacing and vandalism, not murder.

During the debate, one speaker suggested Mr. Cranley's position was inconsistent with his faith. Mr. Cranley responded by saying, "You asked me to read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, I ask you to read the Constitution."

Human Rights Legislation Presented to Covington City Commission

The Northern Kentucky Fairness Alliance is coming closer and closer to victory in its efforts to expand the Covington's human rights ordinance to include protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination. On January 21st, the Covington City Commission heard a recommendation from the city's Human Rights Commission to add gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital status and parental status, to the city's human rights ordinance, as well as enforcement provisions. The proposal would also expand the law to cover employment and public accommodations. Covington's current law covers only housing, and does not cover the classes of people the expanded ordinance would.

Covington Mayor Butch Callery said he will schedule one or more public hearings before the proposed new law would be put to a vote. The first hearing has been scheduled for February 11 at Covington City Hall at 6:30pm. As the date nears, city officials may decide to move the meeting from City Hall to a larger meeting place. A vote will occur after two public readings and one or more public hearings.

NKFA has been working with the City Human Rights Commission on this goal for two years. The group's leaders, buoyed by results of 2 separate surveys, are optimistic city commissioners will listen to their constituents and will pass the new ordinance. When asked in door-to-door and telephone surveys, nearly sixty percent of Covington's registered voters said they support expanding the city's human rights law to include people who are gay and lesbian.

"We are very encouraged by the support we are receiving," said Dean Forster, a Covington resident and a member of NKFA's steering committee. "In our neighborhood walks last summer, many people told me, 'No one should be discriminated against,'" he said.

Put on Your Ruby Slippers for PFLAG's Scholarship Banquet on March 1

PFLAG Cincinnati's 11th Annual Scholarship Banquet will be held on Saturday March 1st. So "follow the yellow brick road" to The Madison at 7th and Madison in Covington, KY for a night of fun and celebration. New this year will be PFLAG's Rainbow Achievement Awards.

The "Dorothys" will be pre-sented by Cincinnati *Enquirer* columnists Jim Knippenberg and Laura Pulfer to those individuals who have been nominated for their outstanding work as advocates, educators and supporters of our local GLBT community. There will also be a big raffle and silent auction as well as the premiere of PFLAG's new video entitled "My Child Is Gay, Now What Do I Do"?

Cash bar will begin at 6pm with complimentary cheese and hors d'oeuvres followed by dinner at 7pm. Complimentary valet parking is available.

PFLAG still needs items for both the silent auction and raffle. If you are interested in donating bottles of wine, personal service items, restaurant coupons, have a special item that would bring a fetching price, or you would just like to make a donation, please contact June Delph at 241-8291 right away to arrange for pick up.

Tickets are \$40 per person. Students are \$25. Send checks payable to PFLAG at PO Box 19634, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219. All proceeds from the event go to benefit the group's annual scholarship fund. For more information, visit their website at www.pflagcinci.com.

Local GLBT Organizations Gather for Historic Planning Retreat

On January 18th approximately 70 GLBT leaders and other supporters braved the single digit weather to spend an entire day at Clifton United Methodist Church assessing the GLBT community of Cincinnati. They examined where we are as a community, where we want to be, and how to get there. All the leaders left the retreat confident that the focus, interest, and enthusiasm shown by all that participated would lead to positive developments within the GLBT community.

The idea for a retreat grew out of Coalition meetings in the fall where groups asked themselves how they could better be serving the community. It was decided to hold a retreat to identify aspects of our community that perhaps need more attention so that member organizations of the Coalition could begin thinking about how to better serve the community.

Evaluation of the GLBT Community

The morning session addressed how we as a community can best use the resources that we have available to make Cincinnati a better place for everyone. The various topics that were examined included social activities, religious opportunities, health, community image, GLBT businesses, diversity, political presence, and GLBT families. Each discussion group shared their findings with the entire assembly, which enabled broad input and discussion. Here are some of the highlights from the groups:

Social Opportunities concluded that while there are a wide variety of activities available, better means of communication must be found to keep people informed as to what's happening in the community. The group also identified a lack of entry level sporting activities. They urged more activities for people outside the bars and also the need for non-smoking bars.

Religious Opportunities found that there needs to be a coalition of religious groups that establish better communication.

The Health group, led by Debbie Tripp from the Cincinnati Health Department, suggested that thought be given to establishing a GLBT health website which could consolidate a variety of health links. The group stressed the importance of good communication between the doctor and patient about sexual orientation.

The Community Image group identified that the GLBT community is not very good about telling people outside of our community about us. We need to work on creating a positive image. A specific project to be undertaken is the creation of a "how to contact the media" booklet for use by local groups. Jim Knippenberg from the Cincinnati *Enquirer* suggested that the community should supply the general media with a list of contacts who could serve as sources of information on GLBT issues.

The GLBT Business group's recommendation is that we need to support those businesses that support our community and suggested that a logo be developed to identify businesses that are GLBT friendly.

Getting out of our comfort zones was the theme of the Diversity group's discussion which focused on the barriers that exist within our community (and not just with race). We need to learn, work, and spend more time with others from different cultural backgrounds so that we can understand each other.

The Political Presence group's recommendation is to build a strong Political Action Committee to help GLBT-supportive candidates. The point was made that whether people realize it or not, every thing that we do is political in nature. In addition, voter registration must be expanded along with outreach to African Americans.

The GLBT Families group's found that there is a need for a group to help with the issues facing GLBT parents, including resources in regard to laws on adoption and partner benefits.

Repeal of Article XII

During lunch Cincinnati City Councilmember David Crowley explained that as the father of a lesbian daughter and a gay son, he had a personal and civic interest in the removal of Article XII. Mr. Crowley explained that Citizens To Restore Fairness, a group organized specifically to work for repeal of Article XII, is up and running with a broad-based Board of Directors composed of GLBT people as well as leaders in the straight community including some very prominent Cincinnatians. It is estimated that the repeal effort will require at least \$750,000 in fundraising. CRF Campaign Manager Scott Seidewitz said, "a final strategy has not yet been fully developed for repeal of Article XII". He asked the group to keep an open mind when it comes time to present the campaign strategy. Scott had the group brainstorm on how to best mobilize the GLBT community for the repeal effort.

Organizational Matters

After lunch, Bill Bridges gave a presentation suggesting the need for organizations to take a closer look at what the GLBT community really feels are priorities and then make modifications to their groups as may be appropriate. He suggested more use of Town Hall Meetings to determine the GLBT community's needs.

The day concluded with a panel discussion focusing on organizational issues. The panelists agreed that the most effective way to grow membership is by raising awareness of what the organization is doing. Each leader stressed that it is important to spell out in advance what the time commitment is for potential new volunteers. Having a good "organizational product" to sell is the most important thing in effective fundraising. Donors give when they see results. Organizations were urged to consider utilizing grant writing to a greater degree.

What is the Next Step?

With the end of the retreat all the material presented will be compiled and sorted to identify specific projects. A report on the retreat will be issued to the attendees and the broader community. The Coalition will then discuss the various projects and begin prioritizing them with assignments to specific groups.

Local Attorney Honored For Work on Name-Change Cases

In January, local attorney and longtime GLBT community activist Scott Knox was honored by the *Ohio Lawyers Weekly* as one of its "Lawyers of the Year" for 2002. The honor comes for Scott's work on two recent cases which involved name changes which were denied to GLBT people.

One case involved a lesbian couple from Butler County who wanted to share a common last name with their children. Knox successfully argued before the Ohio Supreme Court that the denial of the couple's request by a lower court judge had no legal merit.

The other case involved a transgender person whose request to adopt a female first name had been denied. The name change was a requirement for reassignment surgery.

Knox, 46, who is openly gay, has built a successful practice concentrating on serving the legal needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people faced with discrimination, as well as those affected by HIV. His work on many of these cases is done pro bono. In addition to his regular caseload, Scott frequently leads seminars on legal issues involving GLBT people and is a regular advertiser in this paper. His office can be reached at 241-3800. participate in the meetings. The meetings will be every two weeks, and the first meeting is set for January 14th at 6:30pm at The Center. The main agenda for the first meeting will be to review the surveys from last year to understand what the Pride Night guests liked and disliked about the event.

Legends of Women's Music to Perform at Pride/Womonfest Fundraiser Concert

On Saturday night March 8th, two legendary performers of the women's music world will come together for a very special concert to benefit the 2003 Cincinnati Pride Committee and TriState Womonfest. The concert will be held in the Zimmer Auditorium on the University of Cincinnati campus and begins at 8pm.

Holly Near's career spans over 30 years. Her music articulates the social conditions of the world community, and her strength as a performer has led to collaborations with such artists as Ronnie Gilbert, Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, and Bonnie Raitt, to name just a few. She has received awards for her work including honors from the ACLU, the National Organization for Women, and was named Ms. Magazine's Woman of the Year. She will be performing old favorites along with new songs that are filled with strength, reassurance, and humor.

Cris Williamson is a singer, songwriter and spirit healer. Decades before the alternative music market was formally coined and women enjoyed influence in the recording industry, Cris Williamson was busy making her mark and changing the face of popular music. First in clubs where she performed, and later in larger more established venues, including two sold-out shows at New York's Carnegie Hall, she has stirred souls and opened minds with music that celebrates human strength, tenacity, and resilience. Ken Colegrove of the Pride Committee reports that months of planning have gone into the concert and both the Cincinnati Pride Committee and Tri-State Womonfest are counting on the support of the community to make the event a success.

Tickets to see Holly Near and Cris Williamson in concert are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. Tickets are now on sale at the Women's Resource Center (Crazy Ladies) in Northside, New World Book-store on Ludlow in Clifton, and at Books n' More in the New-port Shopping Center. Tickets may also be purchased online at www.cincypride.com.

The concert was originally set to take place at the College of Mount Saint Joseph but, due to a scheduling conflict, it was moved to the UC campus. Organizers say that anyone who purchased tickets for the Mount Saint Joseph show will need to exchange their tickets by calling 681-4627 or emailing to info@cincypride.com.

Xavier Alliance Welcomes "Real World" Star

The Xavier Alliance will welcome Danny Roberts to their campus on Monday March 24th. Danny was an openly gay cast member on the Chicago season of MTV's "Real World" series. He will speak about his personal experiences in "coming out" and about the need for greater education surrounding GLBT issues on university campuses and in society as a whole. The event will begin at 8pm and will be held at the Schiff Family Conference Center at the Cintas Center on the Xavier University campus. Admission is free for Xavier students and tickets for the general public will be \$7. Advance tickets may be purchased by contacting the Cintas Center Box Office at 745-3411.

Gathering for Lesbians of Color

Sista! Sista!, a local network for lesbians of color, will meet next on Saturday February 22nd. The group offers support, discussion and information and women of all ages are represented. At this next meeting, Sista Sista will enjoy poetry, music, and get to experience the power when Sistas get together. Join them at 4pm at One Mo Cup on Hamilton Avenue in Northside. For details, contact Darlene Hicks at 281-3846.

Hearts That Care AIDS Awareness Party Feb. 13th

Celebrate Valentine's Day one day early with a very special night of dancing, education and fun at Woolly's on Monmouth. The Northern Kentucky Health Department, AIDS Volunteers of Northern Kentucky and Woolly's invite you to join them on Thursday night February 13th for "Hearts That Care—A Valentine's Day AIDS Awareness Party." The party will feature dancing, contests and big prize giveaways. Plus there will be free and anonymous HIV testing and information available. The event is from 9pm to 1am at Woolly's on Monmouth. For more information, please call 859-578-7660, ext. 2094.

And The (Rainbow) Band Played On....

The Queen City Rainbow Band, the Cincinnati area's GLBT marching band and flag corps, started its second season on February 5th and they want you to join them. If you've ever played an instrument, think you would enjoy spinning a flag, or have another talent you'd like to share, then join in the fun.

You may have seen the band play at the 2002 Pride Festival or Pride Parade. Since then the group has performed at Pride events in Lexington and Columbus, a campaign fundraiser, the Northside Christmas tree lighting, and at the send off for athletes going to the 2002 Gay Games. Recently the Rainbow Band held a "Bar Raids" fundraiser in which they played in 14 different bars in two nights.

GLBT bands in other cities started with only 7 members their first year, but by the end of 2002 our band had over 40! If you think you'd like to be involved in the fun, drop by one of their rehearsals on Wednesday nights from 7pm to 9pm at Woolly's on Monmouth. For further information or to learn about upcoming band engagements, visit the group's website at www.qcrb.org.

Gay & Lesbian Ballroom Dancing Classes Coming

Imagine it, group ballroom dance lessons, where same sex couples will be the norm, where a man may be dancing with a woman, but you'd have to look close to see who's leading! Well it's here!

Gay and lesbian ballroom dance lessons are going to be held at Step-N-Out Studio in Covington, KY on alternating Fridays from 8-9:30pm beginning on February 28th. This first night is being offered FREE of charge so that people might have fewer reservations about coming and seeing the space, seeing who's there, meeting the instructor, and seeing just what a ballroom dance lesson is like. There is no obligation involved. Registration and payment for the remaining 5 lessons in the session will take place that night, after the lesson is given. The cost is \$42.50 per person.

Organizer Sandy Allen says "These dance forms can take some work to get fancy with and to perfect, but even just the learning can be enjoyable, and it only takes knowing the simple basics and some willingness to get up on the floor when the music comes on, to have a good time at a dance." The instructor, Doreen, who is the owner of Step-N-Out, was supportive and enthusiastic about the idea of the class when approached says Sandy. She mainly teaches ballroom, swing, latin and country dancing. The lessons themselves will be structured to be social as well as educational, welcoming of both couples and singles. Following the final lesson of the session, plans are to hold a dance which will be open to the whole GLBT community. For more information, please call Sandy at 681-8973.

Chix Mix Dating for Single Women

So busy that you don't have time to meet new women? You hate blind dates? Not interested in the bar scene? ChicOut is now offering a single dating event that may be the thing for you. The group's "Chix Mix" meetings are an opportunity for single women to get to know one another and have fun in a structured social setting. There is no wasted time, no awkwardness, and absolutely no fear of rejection!

A series of 3 minute introductory conversations with all the participants allows for quick "get to know you's" that can be followed up later with the help of the ChicOut staff. To register for these Chic Mix groups, call 588-9987 or email to chicout@aol.com. ChicOut is an organization dedicated to providing women with alter-native social events and opportunities in a safe atmosphere.

A Night of Reunion and Remembrance

On February 22nd, Imperial Sovereign Queen City Court of the Buckeye Empire will host a special evening of "Reunion and Remembrance" at The Dock. The evening will be a tribute to honor those friends who have been lost over the last 13 years of the Court's reign. Tom Wherry, Crown Prince I, will also be celebrating his 50th birthday that night. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres begin at 7pm with a tribute show at 8pm. For more information, please visit www.isqccbe.org.

Our Faith Too!

Celebrating the Spirituality of GLBT People

Dignity and New Thought Unity Ask

"What Does The Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?"

So often it seems that those who oppose equal rights for GLBT people site what they believe is "God's word" that homosexuality is a sin. But an increasing number of scholars from top theological schools across the country are coming out and proclaiming that those who perceive Biblical passages as condemning gays and lesbians are really being misled by faulty translation and poor interpretation.

On Saturday and Sunday February 15th and 16th, two local religious communities will welcome Dr. Daniel Helminiak, the author of [What The Bible Really Says About Homosexuality](#) and [Religion and the Human Sciences](#) to speak about the myths surrounding those often quoted Biblical passages.

Dr. Helminiak is a former Roman Catholic priest and currently serves as an Associate Professor at Western Georgia University. He received a PhD in systematic theology from Boston College and Andover Newton Theological School in 1979 and an MA in psychology from Boston University in 1983. In the past he has been a pastoral counselor in private practice in Austin, Texas and has authored articles published in *The Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *Spirituality Today* and *the Heythrop Journal*. His books and presentations explain in a clear fashion the fascinating new insights scholars are embracing about the Bible and its take on homosexuality.

Dr. Helminiak will present a one hour open discussion entitled "Homosexuality and Spirituality" on Saturday night February 15th at the monthly meeting of Dignity Cincinnati. The program will begin at 7:30pm and is free and open to the public. Dignity meets at the Community Friends Meeting House located at 3960 Winding Way near Xavier University. If you are planning to attend, they ask that you RSVP by calling 557-2111 in advance.

On Sunday February 16th, New Thought Unity Center of Cincinnati will welcome Dr. Helminiak to speak briefly at both of its morning worship services at 9am and 11am. This will be followed by an afternoon workshop beginning at 1:30pm at which he will elaborate on his book [What The Bible Really Says About Homosexuality](#). Admission to the workshop will be \$15. No advance registration is needed. For more information, call 961-2527 or visit www.ntunity.org.

Jewish Family Service Offers Education and Support

In November of 1999, Jewish Family Service of Cincinnati formed a task force to study the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Jews in the Greater Cincinnati community. The task force decided to focus on three main issues: education, advocacy and spirituality.

In 2000, the organization started up a monthly support program for Jewish individuals and families. The purpose of this group is to create a better understanding of GLBT issues within the Jewish community and to help family members learn new ways to support their GLBT loved ones. Although the program has been well received, Kathleen Tamarkin of JFS says that identifying and marketing it to the local Jewish community has proved to be a major challenge.

In April of 2001, JFS presented a special program called "Homosexuality and Spirituality." Rabbi Steven Greenberg, an openly gay Orthodox rabbi, led a discussion with a diverse group of 500 people from both the Jewish and general community. As a follow-up event, JFS brought Rabbi Greenberg back to Cincinnati a year later as part of its presentation of the documentary "Trembling Before God." A large crowd came to see the film which chronicles the struggles gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews face as they fight to integrate their sexual orientation with their religious beliefs. Following the film, there was a panel discussion led by Rabbi Greenberg and Sandi Dubowski, the film's producer.

For the coming year, Jewish Family Service is currently planning two programs that will continue to explore issues related to GLBT individuals and their families. The first event is a screening of the documentary, "Daddy & Pappa," a film that explores the growing phenomenon of gay fatherhood and its impact on American culture. The second event will be a workshop for educators and professionals who work with GLBT individuals and their families. The goal of this workshop is to increase awareness about sexual orientation, dispel stereotypes, and offer an introduction to GLBT community resources.

For more information on the dates of these events and other resources and services offered by JFS, please contact Kathleen Tamarkin at 469-1188 or visit the organization's website at www.jfscinti.org.

New Spirit MCC to Have New Home Soon

Last month, the members of the New Spirit Metropolitan Community Church of Cincinnati announced they had at last finalized the purchase of a building of their own. Their new home (seen at left) will be at 4033 Hamilton Avenue, right between Jacob's and the Women's Resource Center, in the heart of gay-friendly Northside. The congregation, which now meets on Sundays at 7pm at Grace Episcopal Church in College Hill, is hoping to have all of the necessary repairs and renovations to the property completed in time to begin holding regular services there by Easter.

In My Opinion

Welcome to the Community

by Bruce Beisner, GLBT News editor

On a hot Sunday afternoon last June, I found myself sitting alone on a folding chair in the middle of a parking lot just off Court Street downtown. No, I wasn't being punished for bad behavior. I, like a large group of others, was patiently awaiting the start of the annual Drag Races, and I had sat down behind one of the tents to load more film into my camera.

I noticed an older African American woman who was walking around the parking lot emptying trash cans and picking up litter. As she passed me, I said "hello" and she nodded. As she passed me on her return trip, she stopped and asked what was going on. Apparently she had been hired by the organizers to do clean up and wasn't aware of the nature of the event. When I explained the whole concept of a "drag race" to her, she was genuinely amused. She said it sounded like fun and that she had a gay brother whom she loved very much. Then she asked me, "How many people are in the gay community in Cincinnati?"

What a question. The short answer is "who knows." I told her that I thought that defining who is and is not a part of the GLBT community is a matter of opinion. When tallying our numbers, I would include my mother long before I counted all those men who sleep with other men but remain totally in the closet.

As I think about all the people I know and work with in our community on a regular basis, it seems to me that some of the most passionate individuals are actually straight allies. People like the grandmother at my church who never ever misses one of our Welcoming Committee meetings and can't wait until the next Pride Parade. Or the leaders of groups like GLSEN and PFLAG whose support and dedicated work are unfailing. I am so grateful for Rev. Steve VanKuiken and Rev. Hal Porter of Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, who teach justice and loving inclusion each and every day. And for those of our elected officials who speak out and understand what equality really means.

It's February and Valentine's Day is coming up before you know it. While you may be planning a romantic night with your someone special, I urge you to consider a more expansive interpretation of the holiday about love.

In the next week or two, take a moment to send an email to a straight friend or family member and let them know how much their acceptance means to you. Write a thank you letter to that teacher at your high school who bravely told the fagbashers to shut up and sit down. Go to the PFLAG Banquet on March 1st and see all the wonderful straight allies we really have. And of course, "come out" to someone whom you feel safe about. By doing that, you'll probably be adding to our GLBT community by at least one.

My conversation with that woman at the Drag Races last June ended with me telling her that I thought that just by being loving and accepting of her gay brother and other GLBT people, she was a member of the gay community herself. And we were very glad she was with us. She was delighted!

Family Matters

Reflections and Renewal

by Marti Kwiatkowski, PFLAG Cincinnati President

Love is a very powerful word. The month of February always brings thoughts of Valentine's Day and remembering those we love. We want those we love to know just how much we love them. Yet nothing is more painful to a gay person than to think about coming out and worrying about the fact that those who loved you may change their minds after you tell them you are gay. To those individuals I say, "don't give up, we need you to be who you are." And to the rest of us who are working hard to create a loving world for our GLBT children, here are some loving words of encouragement by the poet Langston Hughes:

*"Life for me ain't been no crystal stair
It's had tacks in it
And splinters and boards torn up
And places with no carpet on the floor—Bare
But all the time I've been a-climbin' on
And reachin' landin's and turning corners
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light
So, boy, don't you turn back
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin' honey, I've still climbin'
And life for me ain't been
no crystal stair."*

PFLAG is a place where you can find light and love and the "tacks" in life are easier to bear. In this month when love is so celebrated, help us continue to love our children so that we may help the world put a face and a name to hate and bias. Visit us. Become a member of PFLAG. To learn more about us, visit our web-site at www.pflagcinci.com. We need your help.

And don't forget, next month PFLAG will host our annual Scholarship Banquet on Saturday March 1st at the Madison in Covington.

PFLAG National has announced that it has expanded its outreach to include anyone that has an intersex condition. These are individuals who are born with a notable atypical sexual anatomy. PFLAG supports the efforts to end the secrecy and the medically unnecessary genital surgery experienced by some intersex persons. We encourage all of our members to be sensitive to the needs of intersex persons and their families and we welcome intersex persons and their families as fully participating members.

Please come to see us on the second Tuesday of the month at Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church at 7:30pm and help us promote the health and well-being of GLBT persons, their families and friends. All meetings include a small group discussion. This PFLAG chapter feels like family. I hope you will join us!

GLBT Health

Piercing and Tattooing

by *Bob Donovan, MD*

Thinking about getting a tattoo or having your body pierced? In addition to worrying about where to put it, think about infection, since both involve needles and blood.

Tattoos usually heal fairly quickly, in about a week, so infection is unusual. However, piercings can take anywhere from three weeks for the tongue to nine months for the navel to heal completely. During this time, then, infection can set in. So, carefully follow the instructions given by the artist to keep the area clean and disinfected. Don't use alcohol, which isn't a very good disinfectant and dries the skin. Even with good cleansing, you can get an infection, so if the area gets very red or swells or drains pus, get to see your family doctor.

More serious infections are possible, too. Hepatitis B, C, and D have been transmitted by piercing and tattooing. HIV and tetanus can be transmitted this way, too, although this is extremely rare. Virtually always the reason for this is poorly sterilized equipment or re-using needles. Needles, corks, jewelry and ink should be single use, gloves used once only, and the work site should be very clean. The concern over these infections is great enough that, if you have one done, you can't donate blood for one year. In a reputable parlor, none of this should be a concern, but ask about their technique. And don't let your friend do this to you!

How is a piercing done? After disinfecting the surface, the skin is pulled firm with a surgical clamp and then the opening is created with a large hollow needle followed by inserting the jewelry, which will maintain the opening. This can be done with a piecing gun, but this can crush the tissue, creating future problems, and the guns are more difficult to sterilize, so many experts suggest avoiding this method. As you notice, there is no numbing involved, so it will hurt some (or a lot!). So, if you're not tolerant of pain, this may not be the thing for you!

A problem some people have after a piercing is a reaction to the metal in the jewelry. This is not the place to save money. Get something that's made from surgical stainless steel, 14K gold, niobium or titanium, with no rough edges. Allergic reactions can cause the hole to ooze and turn red, then get infected. Tattoos and piercings can cause keloids, or thickened scars, in people that are susceptible.

Be certain about a getting a tattoo before you go through with it; you should consider it a permanent investment. Lasers can remove them, but it's time-consuming and expensive.

Financial Advisor

Starting the New Year on Track

by *Vicki L. Marsh, American Express Financial Advisors*

The holidays are over – your extra time off has come and gone, school is back in session, winter marches on, it's a brand new year. For many, this time of year marks a return to what might be called more serious pursuits, perhaps making good on resolutions to do things differently than years before. Maybe those resolutions include writing or revising a will, or to finally getting serious about retirement planning. If your New Year's resolution includes financial planning, you'll want to start with the basics.

For lesbians and gay men, unfortunately these basics aren't always so basic. While the same financial goals usually apply – a secure retirement, saving for a new house, planning to start a business – the strategies used to pursue them can be quite different. Several factors combine to make financial planning a unique challenge for members of the gay and lesbian community. There's the lack of access to marriage for gay couples, of course, but more subtle elements can come into play. Sometimes members of the GLBT community approach financial planning differently, often either with suspicion or indifference. Also, though the situation is improving all the time, not all financial service providers recognize the challenges their lesbian and gay customers face. Regardless of the reasons, financial planning requires a different style for gay men and lesbians.

So, if financial planning is one of your resolutions for 2003, what are the things you need to know to be sure you start off on track? While books can—and have—been written on financial planning for the gay community, there are a few high-level themes to keep in mind.

First, if you're in a relationship, remember that you can't take anything for granted. If you're engaged in retirement planning, your partner can't rely on your Social Security benefits. Some benefits from your employer's retirement plan may be unavailable to your partner. Other benefits require careful planning to maximize withdrawals and avoid potential tax traps. It's also important to be sure that you've designated your partner as a beneficiary on your retirement plans.

If your planning includes estate planning, the pitfalls are numerous. In addition to wills to be sure your property goes to your partner as you intend, you'll need to think about powers of attorney to be sure your partner can make decisions when you can't. You'll want a priority of visitation to ensure he or she has access to you when you're incapacitated. You'll have to plan harder to avoid estate taxes, because the estate tax marital deduction is usually unavailable to you. If your planning includes estate planning, the pitfalls are numerous. In addition to wills to be sure your property goes to your partner as you intend, you'll need to think about powers of attorney to be sure your partner can make decisions when you can't. You'll want a priority of visitation to ensure he or she has access to you when you're incapacitated. You'll have to plan harder to avoid estate taxes, because the estate tax marital deduction is usually unavailable to you.

If buying or revising insurance is part of your fall planning makeover, be sure your policies offer the protection you think they do. Auto and homeowners insurance doesn't always provide the coverage gay couples need – especially if only one partner's name is on the deed or car title. In the life insurance arena, be sure the right partner owns the insurance, and that the policy is purchased from a firm that recognizes a gay partner's "insurable interest" in the life of the other.

Second, be mindful of your own attitudes toward financial planning. Yes, historically the process has not been very gay-friendly. However, all that is changing.

Progressive financial institutions are recognizing the different needs of their lesbian and gay customers, and designing products and services to meet those needs. Moreover, larger social forces are shifting the responsibility for financial planning to the individual – from retirement plans to health insurance to estate taxes, the social compact is being changed. These changes apply equally to gay people. So it's up to you to plan for a secure retirement, to be sure your income stream is protected in the event of disability, or to manage your investment portfolio. While you can't do all these things alone, you also can't assume someone else is doing them for you, either.

Finally, now that you know that the rules can be different, make sure you have a qualified financial advisor who does, as well. It's clear that there are a lot of details to consider when financial planning involves gay and lesbian clients, so it's essential that you find an advisor who is knowledgeable about how the process may differ. It's also important that your advisor work with financial services companies that are sensitive to the needs of the gay community, and whose products reflect that sensitivity. After all, the right financial advisor can help you make this year's resolution an easier one to keep!

Out of the Past

Growing Resources for GLBT Youth

by Bruce Beisner

When I was growing up, which wasn't that long ago, the lesbian and gay community was strictly for ADULTS ONLY. The bars that were the center of gay life required ID to prove you were over 21. Even the organizations out there were geared for older people and many of them didn't welcome or know how to deal with young folks. In my high school years, I basically believed that I would have to wait until I was older to meet other gay people and find a place where I could be open about who I was.

Times have changed! In only a decade or so, the number of resources for GLBT youth have really exploded here in the Greater Cincinnati area. Today we have Gay Straight Alliances at many local high schools, a citywide group for GLBT and supportive youth, and even annual conferences devoted to the unique and important concerns of our young people.

Back in 1986, a group of activists here in the city attempted to begin a support group for those under age 21. This first group was called GAY (Great American Youth). The adults involved struggled to find others who would facilitate meetings and offer support to high school age people who identified as gay or lesbian. They found that the majority of GLBT adults at that time were very afraid of the potential legal liabilities of associating openly with minors. In the end, this effort failed to live on but it did lay important ground work for things to come.

It was not until 1992 that Cincinnati Youth Group (CYG) was officially formed. Initially, meetings were held at miscellaneous places including private residences and churches. As the attendance grew, CYG moved on to meet at the Light House Shelter of Cincinnati and then at Crazy Ladies Center. In 1995, the group voted to become an official program of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Cincinnati.

A bunch of GLBT and supportive students at Walnut Hills High School, some of whom had been active with CYG, decided in 1996 that it was time that their school had a group where students could talk openly about issues and receive support. After some debate with school administrators, the area's first Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) was born and has been going strong ever since. In the past six years the number of such groups at area high schools has grown tremendously and keeps growing all the time. To date, 13 area schools have GSAs including the School for Creative and Performing Arts, Oak Hills, Ursuline Academy, St. Xavier, Sycamore, and Cincinnati Country Day. New groups are currently forming at Lakota East and Princeton.

With so many GLBT young people being out and active in the community, it was decided last year that the time was right for a major event focussing on their issues. The first GLBT Youth Summit took place on March 16, 2002 at UC which offered a daylong program of workshops, rap sessions and speakers. Because of its huge success, a second summit was held in November at Northern Kentucky University which attracted over 200 youth and adults.

Today, local GLBT groups are increasingly aware and interested in how to better serve the younger members of our community. Our local chapters of PFLAG and GLSEN, which both focus on outreach to youth, are two of the fastest growing organizations in the area. In January a new chapter of Campfire USA, a gay-supportive alternative to the Boy Scouts, began meeting at St. John's Unitarian Church.

If young people are our future, than the GLBT community has wonderful years to look forward to.

The Nightbeat

Theater, Arts, Entertainment and Nightlife

by Miss C.C. Bloom

They tell me that this is the slow time of year for many of our local bars and nightspots. Well, if you stay home and out of the cold this month, there's a lot you will be missing. Here's just a few highlights, a complete calendar of nightlife and bar events is posted on the paper's website at www.greatercincinnatiigbtnews.com.

The "Alteractive" series at Cincinnati's Playhouse in the Park returns this year with another thought-provoking series of Monday night shows. As part of the series, gay monologist and activist Tim Miller will present "Body Blows" on February 24th. Miller touches on issues of artistic freedom, American politics and gay and minority rights through a mix of poetry fancy, confession, monologue, memoir and satire. For tickets, call the Playhouse box office at 421-3888 or 800-582-3208.

So Valentine's Day is almost upon us! A couple of fun special events coming up include the "Heartbreaker Party" on Saturday February 15th at The Pipeline. Upstairs in Flux there will be a marathon drag show featuring some of the Spicy Divas with lots of great dance music in between the sets. Over at Hamburger Mary's, its a "Red Hot Valentine" with drink specials, appetizers, drag show, and a bachelor and bachelorette auction. The entire event is a fund-raiser for AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati and One Human Family. The Imperial Queen City Court will have its big "Red and White Party" at Shooters on Friday February 14th. The show, hosted by Truly Scrumptious and Jon Wagner begins at 11:30pm. Speaking of Truly, I want to send out a huge congratulations to her for winning the 2003 Miss Queen City pageant on January 26th down at The Dock.

Did you know that Ashley West is now the new Sunday night show director at Woolly's on Monmouth in Newport? Woolly's also features great live music from the band SubCulture on Saturday nights. A festive crowd was on hand to see my triumphant return to the stage on Friday January 31st at Woolly's. The all star cast included queens from Toledo and New York City as well as Blue Door calendar model Kevin taking it off. What can I say, he was HOT!

Designer Patrick Howell will be bringing his collection of outlandish performance costumes for female impersonators to the Contemporary Arts Center's 64-foot runway on Friday March 21st. As part of its "Contemporary Fridays" series, the CAC will welcome Ashley West, Hurricane Summers, Quasi, Scarlet Fever and other local personalities who will be showcasing Patrick's unique work in a very avante garde fashion extravaganza.

Probably the world's most respected and most renowned gay man is coming to the region. Sir Elton John will perform in concert with his pal Billy Joel on March 12th at the Rupp Arena in Lexington. These two put on one incredible show that's well worth the drive, as I'm sure anyone who saw them here in Cincinnati can tell you.

Have you been down to new Yadda Club in Covington? Formerly Margo's, Yadda offers food, drinks and dancing. Look for more details soon on their website at www.yaddaclub.com or better yet, drop by some night while you're out and about. The bar is located at 404 Pike Street (near the infamous Anchor Grille).

Thought You Knew!

*Advice for the Confused and Clueless
from Ambrosia*

Greetings Gentle Readers, I hope that every-one is staying warm in this frigid weather. I do always enjoy watching the "girls" dress for the weather and see what exciting things they can come up with! Now you out there still wearing open-toed or sandled shoes, you know better. I'm just so sorry that I have to be the one to tell you to STOP! Anyway, the responses to my first two "Hollywood Diet Tips" has been in-teresting. I don't have room to publish them but I will say that if you opt for regular colonics, please make sure to stay hydrated, I would hate to have one of my gentle readers endanger themselves in the name of beauty! Well, here's what some of my readers had to ask this month...

Dear Ambrosia,

I've been in a monogamous relationship with my girlfriend, Lefty, for a good bit. I love Lefty with all my heart and all I got to give. But sometimes I wish that Lefty would be more gentle with me. She makes me feel like a floozy the way she talks to me and touches me when we're in bed. She really "man-handles" me! She touches me everywhere and tells me how much she likes each part of me out loud in coarse, dirty language and laughter. What can I do to change her? Do you have any hints?

–Object of Lefty's Desire

Dear OLD,

Does Lefty have any brothers? Maybe I could... Just kidding dear...Wow, the neighbors must really hear a wild show at your place. You wo- men really amaze me, sounds like you have some men's desire in a bed partner. Many men love this kind of thing (and some ladies, but then again a "lady" would never be able to admit this out loud). I would have to ask whether or not you're ashamed of the recognized body parts? Ashamed of the attention? Sex is natural and fun and it sounds like at least one of you is really having a good time. Possibly Lefty learned how to express herself sexually from watching straight porn and has assimilated this rough behavior. I might even go as far as to say that perhaps she really gets a charge watching you fidget uncomfortably while she loudly admires each private part of your body. (I find myself liking Lefty more and more...) Well, my advice to you would be to give her good signals when she does something you like her to do and also to show her (by your example) what you like to have done to you. That way, if she changes her behavior in a way that you like, you've won. However, if she gets worse and more crass, you'll know without a shadow of a doubt that she gets off on watching you squirm.

Dear Ambrosia,

I love to dress up in girlie clothes and shoes and show off in public. I love the attention I attract and have committed to living this way as well. My issue is that not everyone embraces this lifestyle and sometimes when shopping, I have trouble getting admittance into the ladies dressing room and/or bathroom. There was a terrible row last week at K-Mart as I tried to get into the dressing room to try on the most adorable floral printed stretch pants. I didn't enjoy the attention I received from security, the employees, and other shoppers. What should I do in situations like this? If I have to buy clothes and return them when they don't fit, I won't have time for much else! Please help me!

–Shy Gal

Dear Shy One,

It sounds to me like you are very far evolved. I say this to point out that just because you're at a point of realization doesn't mean that the rest of the world is too. That's why we have friends and places we like to hang out in, because they're up to speed with us. As far as K-Mart goes, that place is a pit and perhaps you would do better to stay away from it completely. It's not very fashionable (no not even the Jaelyn Smith collection!) Situations of bathroom and dressing rooms....well, you know the saying, "when in Rome, do as the Romans do..." A good girl always follows local protocol and propri-eties. I will say that as you became a familiar face in these places (and a good one I'm sure) that they will offer you more liberties. For example, I am always offered dressing rooms, etc. because of who I am, not what I am. As they begin to know you and like you, you will be surprised at all of the roads open to you. Relax and don't let these minor episodes hamper your shopping activities!

Ambrosia wants to hear from you! Write to her at ehutflie@cincyradio.com