

# N E T W O R K I N G NORTH

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## FRIENDS NORTH ELECTS FIVE TO BOARD

The Friends North annual meeting in December was highlighted by the election of new members to the Board of Directors. The following people have committed themselves to serve the gay/lesbian community for the next two years.

Brenda Bartz  
Jim Ingleson  
Ben Maddy

Sue Schwartz, elected as Treasurer

### *Remaining on the Board for another year are:*

Carol Lambertson, President  
Tom Kincaid, Vice President  
Victor Dinsmore, Secretary  
M'Lynn Hartwell  
Julie Parker

Please give them your support and input throughout the year. The Board would like to remind you that your participation is important. They welcome your comments and presence at their monthly board meetings.

FRIENDS NORTH

## WINTER SPORTS PARTY

Sunday, February 23rd — 1-4 pm

Lunch provided. Donations accepted.

*Come ski and sled with us and socialize  
in the Bahle Warming Hut at the park in the  
Village of Suttons Bay.*

For questions/to volunteer/to RSVP  
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## GERRY CRANE DIES

Gerry Crane, 32, died suddenly of a heart attack on January 3rd after a year of being in the local and national news. Gerry resigned this past year from his teaching position as music director of Byron Center Schools. He had inadvertently 'come out' in class in October of 1995 after persistent questioning from some of his high school students. Gerry had just 'married' his sweetheart, another man, in a quiet ceremony with flowers, family, and friends.

Byron Center, lying on the outskirts of Grand Rapids, is a highly conservative and religious community, and the school officials were not pleased when Gerry came out. He quickly became the center of controversy, and his classes were boycotted by some students who didn't agree with his sexual orientation. Parents and administrators pressured Crane until finally a public school board hearing ruled in favor of retaining Crane in his position. However, he was warned that he was under close scrutiny and the school board and administration were vocal in their opposition to his sexual orientation.

For the duration of the school year, Crane kept up his job, but the pressures from kids, parents, teachers and administration were horrendous. He quickly became both a target from the religious extremists as well as a hero to the national gay and lesbian community. He began speaking about his life in Byron Center at public events, gaining support from all across the country. However, the pressures of the school were unrelenting. Gerry eventually struck a bargain with the school district and resigned.

Crane was known locally and Friends North Board member M'Lynn Hartwell had an opinion after his death. "He was just really, really damaged from the hate that had been directed toward him. In fact, my first reaction when I heard the news that he had been rushed to the hospital was that he had absorbed so much hate that it seems hate was what killed him." M'Lynn had met Gerry at a GLSTN conference in Chicago during 1996.

## PLEASE JOIN US — PRIDE DAY 1997 IN TC

A meeting to plan for Traverse City's next Gay/Lesbian Pride Day will be held at Dean Robb's Law Office, 420 E. Front St., on Wednesday, February 5th, at 6 p.m. All interested people and volunteers are encouraged to attend! Call Cindy Robb at 271-5045 for any questions.



## FROM THE EDITOR

It has been a rough road for the Friends North organization this year. Back in January, 1996, newly-elected president, Jim Ingleson, lost his partner, Kevin, and was forced to resign. Compounding this, numerous board members left the organization and traditional events from past years never got off the ground.

However, thanks to the Board members who stuck with their duties until election time this December, our organization remains strong enough to lead us into 1997. The direction of Friends North is influenced by its board members - their ideas and the amount of time they are willing to put in. The new board members are now in position, and the plans and goals for the upcoming year should be announced in January. There is a nice balance of men and women, something that has been unofficially recognized as the best thing for the organization.

Beyond the casual "nice newsletter this time," I get very little direct feedback from members. And, until recently, neither has the Friends North board of directors. I want to thank M'Lynn Hartwell for pushing so insistently to gather opinions and ideas of the members by sending out a questionnaire in an earlier issue of the newsletter.

As I read through the comments that were given, I tended to focus on the negative comments, of which there were many. Of course, there will always be those people who simply are unhappy with anything that gets done or everything that isn't being done. Those opinions are easy to dismiss, and it then becomes too easy to dismiss all the comments.

However, I hope that the new board will read these carefully, because the survey results tell us that there is a significant 'perception problem' within the organization - the members don't understand the basic nature of the group, how it works, or what its goals are. Many say they are frustrated because they don't know how to become involved.

The Board has a big task this year. They need to bridge this gap that has emerged between the leaders and the members. It needs to generate enthusiasm and commitment both within the board members and its members. They need to assist the willing members to participate and volunteer for specific tasks or events. And, they need to recruit new members, contributors, that represent a cross-section of the community.

I appreciate Carol Lambertson's commitment and stability after being drafted to lead the organization when Jim resigned last year. I wish her the best of successes in mapping out a plan to attack the major problems that are now coming to light.

Carol has taken a major step forward on this path by organizing a successful Board Retreat on Sunday, January 5th. As a participant, I was pleased to see such a great turnout from our community organizations. These people came and shared their ideas and comments to the FN Board in hopes of educating them on their activities as well as networking for the future events of the year.

A person who worked perhaps the hardest this year never got a chance to show success. Patty O'Donnell, past president of Friends

Friends North, Inc., P.O. Box 562, Traverse City, MI 49685-0562 (616) 946-1804 (This is a general information line to receive F/N information.)

FRIENDS NORTH is an organization of lesbians, gay men, bi-sexuals and their friends from northwestern lower Michigan. Located in Traverse City, we provide social activities, a newsletter, phone line, workshops, and a community needs fund for financial assistance.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of FRIENDS NORTH is composed of nine women and men elected each December. Regular board meetings are held at Grace Episcopal Church at the Corner of Washington & Boardman the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Brenda Bartz - 616-946-2708/bbartzstar@aol.com  
 Victor Dinsmore, Secretary - 616-459-5759/itsyrigloo@aol.com  
 M'Lynn Hartwell - 616-943-8800/les n more@aol.com  
 Jim Ingleson - 616-922-0925  
 Carol Lambertson, Pres. - 616-275-7102/tclambo@gtii.com  
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*Networking 45° North* is the newsletter of Friends North, Inc. Viewpoints expressed do not necessarily represent those of the board or general membership.

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**CONTRIBUTIONS** to *Networking* are welcome. Letters, essays, features, reflections, and original artwork should be sent "c/o Editor" to above address. (*Networking* will not accept material that is sexist, discriminatory or sexually explicit. Contributors are responsible for obtaining permission from those whose names they submit for publication.)

**DEADLINES:** Volume 11 Issue #2, February 15. Issue #3 April 15.

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Please notify us in advance if a change is coming. Call John Evans, 922-0746, or send changes to our address.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS/MEMBERSHIPS:** \$15.00/single; \$25.00/couple. Please send checks or money orders to: Friends North, P.O. Box 562, Traverse City, MI 49685-0562.

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North, worked all year to organize the Gay-Lesbian History and Education Day at Sugarloaf Resort. Reluctantly, due to lack of support, this weekend workshop was canceled. With this canceling, I felt great guilt. I hadn't yet signed up and it appeared that there were many, many others who had also been irresponsible by waiting until the last minute to register. Together, we let lapse an event that many praised in 1995 as being their highlight of the year. I hope that we as an organization can pull together to rescue the enthusiasm that was generated by this event as well as the commitment of Patty, its organizer.

*Richard Tuxbury*

Carol Lambertson



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the long winter unfolds, I find that it is a perfect time to reflect on the past 12 months. Overall, Friends North experienced a successful year. Our calendar of events included the winter sledding party, the spring High Tea, the summer Bike Tour, and the Picnic and Garage Sale.

The newsletter, Networking 45° North, continued to provide Northern Michigan g/l/b/t homes with up to date news, current events, information and entertainment.

We had to cancel a couple of events this year due to lack of registrants, including what would have been the second annual Lesbian and Gay History and Education weekend. This was a major disappointment to many people and again, we are sorry that this weekend did not take place. Hopefully, the knowledge gained from this experience will benefit all of us in the future.

Fortunately, a whole new year is ahead. We have four new people on our board who bring various talents and a lot of dedication to Friends North. We will strive for unity as a board, and plan to energize more of our gay and lesbian community. We will strategize ways to encourage more of your involvement in all aspects of Friends North events and activities. After all, this is YOUR organization.

Reminder: Board Meetings are on the 1st Tuesday of the month, beginning in February, at 6:30 pm held at Grace Episcopal Church - all are welcome!

There are many people to thank for their time and service to Friends North over the past year: Jim Poole, Scott Southwell, Dick Tuxbury, Richard Curtis, Jim Ingleson, Greg Baird, M'Lynn Hartwell, Victor Dinsmore, Julie Parker, Tom LaForte, Tim Evans, Patty O'Donnell, Gretchen Sauvage, Tom Kincaid, Jim Carruthers, Ed Richardson, Tom Barkley, John Evans, are names that come to mind. I appreciate all that each of you has done using your own time and resources to forward the cause of Friends North. Thank You!

Carol Lambertson

# Out, n t About

## A Lesbian Coffeehouse

Unity Church - 3600 Five Mile Road - Traverse City  
Call 946-2708 for more information

Saturday, January 18, 1997  
7 pm until 11 pm

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Saturday, February 15, 1997  
7 pm until 11 pm

### 3rd ANNUAL AUCTION & POTLUCK DESSERT BUFFET

For information and/or to donate items for the auction  
call Deb at 275-5924

**Out n' About** Lesbian Coffeehouse is held on the third Saturday of each month except August and December. The Coffeehouse comes alive between 7:00 and 11:00 pm at the Unity Church, 3600 Five Mile Road, Traverse City. Smoke-free and Chem-free with a cover donation of \$3 (\$5-\$10 if we have entertainment). Coffee, tea and snacks are free; soft drinks are available.

For more information, or to have your name placed on the Out 'n About Lesbian Coffeehouse mailing list, call Brenda at 946-2708—leave message.

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## SPEAKERS BUREAU FORMING

The Traverse City Area PFLAG chapter has just embarked on the organization of a Speakers' Bureau to serve the community on behalf of our gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans-gendered loved-ones. The purpose of the Speakers' Bureau is to provide a resource of speakers to the community for various public-speaking engagements. Our chapter is called upon from time-to-time to provide speakers for panels, college classes, public meetings, and other engagements in and around our community. The bureau will provide our chapter with a resource list of volunteers to fulfill these obligations.

Those interested in participating in this volunteer opportunity are asked to contact Penny Smith at 947-4462. She also welcomes calls of requests for speakers.

## INTRODUCING THE PFLAG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dean Robb** is the senior partner of the Robb, Messing, Palmer and Dignan Law Offices in Traverse City. Dean has served the community over the past 45 years as a leader of civil rights causes. In 1994, he was the recipient of the prestigious State Bar of Michigan's Champion of Justice Award. He has been elected co-president of the PFLAG Board and also serves as a board member of the Boys and Girls Club of Traverse City and the Third Level Crisis and Intervention Center. Dean is the stepfather of a gay son, Ben.

**Patrice Stewart** is the president of Wellness Networks of Grand Traverse Area. Our chapter was first introduced to Patrice in November of 1995 when she spoke on a panel discussing the issue of HIV/AIDS. Patrice's son James, a gay man, died of AIDS complications in 1993. Patrice works as a financial consultant and moved to Traverse City from Florida in the fall of 1990. She will serve as co-president on the PFLAG Board.

**Lynn Milliron** became involved in PFLAG within the past year when her fifteen year-old son Eric came out to her. Lynn is the mother of four children and was somewhat dismayed when her eldest stepped out of the closet. Finding the journey to acceptance an easier job than most, however, she has jumped into the board position of Secretary.

**Penny Smith** has been with Traverse City Area PFLAG from its inception. Penny's Son Joe (Gavin) is gay and he has two non-gay siblings. Penny has a diverse professional background and is currently employed as an Employment Specialist/Educator. She is a volunteer for Wellness Network, Inc. and has served as a board

member of the Benzie Co. Teen Parent Association and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa/Chippawa Youth Outreach Program. Penny has stepped forward to head up our newly formed Speaker's Bureau.

**JoAnn Thomas**, the mother of a gay son, is also a member of the Wellness Network Board of Directors. JoAnn became involved with our chapter about a year ago and has assisted as a refreshment/program coordinator.

**Peter Taylor**, former mayor of Traverse City, is the newly-elected Treasurer for Traverse City Area PFLAG. Peter brings with him a wealth of experience in the area of fundraising, having served as fundraising coordinator for Wellness Network.

**LuEllen Baty** is the mother of a gay son, Peter. Her fascinating story of acceptance was chronicled in a unique article featured in the Record Eagle's "Active Years" supplement last Fall. LuEllen is a native of Traverse City and a former "Cherry Queen." She has served on the PFLAG board for the past year and has been the refreshment coordinator for the support group meetings.

## RAP GROUP

Ed Richardson — 947-4697

The Friends North Rap Group wants both gays and lesbians to come to our second Wednesday of each month gathering at 7:30 pm at Grace Episcopal Church on Washington St. Parking is available in back of the church and you can use the back or front entrance. We have a basement room reserved but often use space in the church hall on the main level. Rap "members" are alert to first-timers and try to watch for people in the building (we will try to post a directional sign).

The focus of the Rap Group is on the entire g/l/t/b community, regardless of age. Our primary goal is to regularly offer an information/support group in a safe, open, discreet environment. We are flexible with agendas and listen to the needs of those attending. Discussion is encouraged and supplemented with topics, videos, speakers, etc. We will always schedule time to listen to anyone that needs to talk! Besides our monthly schedule, other activities are encouraged such as dining out, hikes, picnics... Please join our Rap "Family"!

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## PROFILE: PENNY SMITH

John Evans

"I would hear jokes and I wouldn't pay any attention, and all of a sudden after Gavin told me he was gay... I would hear things and it would just go right straight to the heart. It was like - 'you're talking about my kid. You can't do that.' There was this tremendous awareness. It dawned on me how much that stuff hurts people."

So said Penny Smith, one of the founding mothers of the local chapter of PFLAG. Her oldest son, whom we know as Joe Morgan, a former board member of Friends North, now lives in Bremerton, Washington, with his younger brother, Brandon, an ensign in the navy, and his sister, Andrea, an artist. (Penny calls Joe by his middle name, Gavin).

"The chapter is growing by leaps and bounds. We're making contact with a lot of parents and a number of teenagers - connections with kids in high school here and in Interlochen, and grandparents... People will come one or two times and then not come back, simply because they get what they need. We've got a pretty sizeable core group. Every meeting there are people who come and bring a parent or a friend - people that want to know more about the gay lifestyle and how to handle problems. I think we are really performing a service for people - a support group."

By the time Penny moved to Traverse City in June of 1986, her son Joe was a student at MSU. A year or so later he approached her during Christmas break.

Penny tells it this way: "Joe came to me and said, 'Mom, I've got something to tell you.' He was all primed with all this information. He said, 'I'm gay.' and I said 'o.k...' that doesn't make any difference, I still love you, everybody does.' He didn't really get a chance to use all that ammunition he had!"

"And then he told his brother and sister separately sometime later and the reaction was 'So?'... then he told his grandfather, who is quite conservative, and it was a shock, but it was his grandson, so it was ok. There is not one negative person in the family."

Penny was brought up in that conservative atmosphere in the Battle Creek area. She attended Kellogg Community College and got her bachelor's and master's degree from Western Michigan University in the field of education. She settled in her home area, married and began raising her three children there.

"In 1975 we moved to Idaho. Spent six years there and then six years in Missouri. The children went to ten or twelve different schools during that time... We lived in American Falls, just south of Pocatello. I worked for Idaho State. Then we moved to Moscow, about six miles from Portland, WA. We loved it there. But I lost my job at the University there in 1975. They had a major recession... it was a real destructive year as far as the potato crop and the sugar beets... They shut down the mines... That was the year that nationwide the housing starts went to pieces and that pulled Weyerhaeuser and Potlatch out... the state went broke."

It was while they were living in Moscow that Penny and the children's father were divorced. The family moved to Marshall, Missouri where Penny and her second husband owned a restaurant.

"Then there was another major recession. That was the time of the major bank foreclosures. It was a little agricultural town and our restaurant just served the agricultural community. We went under with everybody else. Then we moved to Kirksville, MO. I taught school there. I was clerk for circuit court. And then I worked for a rock radio station."

When the family moved to Missouri, Joe went to live with his father in Middlebury, IN, and then Berrien Springs, MI where he graduated from High School.

After moving to Traverse City in 1986, Penny went to work for the Cooperative Extension Service in Benzie County. While there she

Penny Smith



discovered a program for foreign study: The Congress-Bundestag Youth Program. She sent the information to both Joe, in his sophomore year of MSU and Brandon, in his junior year of high school in Traverse City. They both won scholarships to study in Germany. Both were over there at the same time in different locations.

"I always felt guilty about moving so many times and not being able to supply the kids with a real stable education. And both of them said that when they went through the interview process for the foreign study, the people were looking for young people who were very flexible and were able to fit in anywhere with different cultures. Both of them said that without being exposed to all those different places and people maybe they wouldn't have been selected... I quit being guilty!"

Joe's advisor while he was in Germany was a woman from Brattleboro, VT. She suggested Joe look into the School for International Training in Brattleboro. During his stay in Traverse City, Joe applied there and was accepted. His current work in Washington is an extension of that program. He plans to return to the School in Brattleboro when his work in Bremerton is over.

Meanwhile Penny has worked in several jobs here in the Grand Traverse Area. She is a certified teacher, not only in Idaho and Missouri and Michigan, but also in Alaska.

"I got a certification from Alaska and to get a permanent certificate I now have to take two more courses - in Alaskan history, and multicultural education."

I asked why the Alaskan certification.

"I want to go there. I just want to be ready in case I get a chance. I've always wanted to go to Alaska ever since I was old enough to read stories about it. I'd like to go to Seattle, Bremerton. But then I don't know how long Brandy is going to have to house there... Or how long Andrea will be there."

We talked about Friends North

"I have talked to a couple of people who have been in Friends North who say that it's a really good organization and they enjoyed being in it but too often times there's so much squabbling. Everybody should band together for a cause instead of squabbling."

We talked about the need for a center, which was one of Joe's dreams while he was here.

"Maybe you should apply for a grant from Rotary Charities! Or United Way!"

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# Contributions

## FROM THE COMMUNITY

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### THE HOLIDAYS

by Alan Williams

For many people, the holidays in particular, and the winter in general, can be a time of great joy, as friendships and acquaintances—and past and present loves—come together to share tidings of the season. In the midst of the celebration, however, it's important to remember that others find the holidays to be a time of loneliness and depression.

A reminder of that second group of people came to me the other day, when I was corresponding with a friend from the Internet. He's in a long-distance relationship, and because of various problems he couldn't spend the holidays with his boyfriend, or even with many of his good friends, because they're also long distances away. Instead, he's with a family to whom he isn't out. It's a very sad time for him, and I imagine it doesn't help for him to be in chats where other people are talking about how they're spending holidays with their significant others.

In some respects, I completely understand how he feels. I'm a recent transplant to Traverse City, and this is the first time I've spent this time of year without seeing my parents, and basically without a lot of friends. It takes time to make friends, and unfortunately I moved up here at a time when the hectic nature of the holidays impedes the process even further. My closest friends—the ones with whom I've shared much joy and much sorrow—are great distances away, as is most of my family. I share a place with one of my older brothers, but we don't see much of each other and we were never especially close anyway. Of the people I've already met up here—well, it's just a bad time of year to try and get to know someone (at least for me), because those people have enough to do in their lives, without taking some extra time to try and get to know me.

That's the situation for a lot of people throughout the country. In modern times, holidays like Christmas are difficult. The traditional gatherings of family and friends are often nonexistent, thanks to more modern trends of spread-out families. For those who attend family gatherings, such events can be stressful when one isn't out to family or friends—and even when one is out, stress can still result from intolerant attitudes rearing their ugly heads. It's ironic, perhaps, that a time of the year that once meant great joy has, over time, become a harbinger of such tension and anxiety in so many people.

For some people, the bars become the pressure-release valve, but even there exists the trend to spend time with only those whom you know, and not with the total stranger sitting in the corner. And there's the age-old trend I've observed countless times—there seems to be a whole breed of men (and, I'm told, of women) who don't seem to be interested in associating with anyone whom they wouldn't want to date (or at least sleep with).

There's an easy solution to this dilemma of being alone. If you're the lonely one, it helps to get involved in community activities of some kind. If you want to be involved in the gay community, there are many

support/discussion groups that can provide a place to meet other people and maybe make friends. If you're the one who finds it easy to meet people anyway, try introducing yourself to someone you don't know. You never can tell when you're going to make a new friend.

Most of all, though, if you're lonely and shy about meeting other people, DON'T GIVE UP HOPE! Meeting people can take time, but patience usually pays off. Who knows? It might even lead to close friendships and even romance. Just remember: As the bleakness of winter ends, so too does the season of loneliness.

### WHERE DO YOU GO?

by Greg R. Baird

There is a Top 40 dance tune that has made it quite big on the charts lately and it seems every time I turn on the radio, and it's on, I'll sing along. Granted the lyrics are not the most complicated, but it's a fun little song.

This song came to mind in a strange way last week while I was travelling on business in the Upper Peninsula. For my job, I have to visit some very small communities. The radio was on while I was going from town to town and the song, "Where Do You Go?", by No Mercy, came on the radio, and as usual I started singing along.

While I was sitting in the van driving and giving the best vocal performance of my career, the thought of, "Where do you go?", started me thinking about our community and the feeling of togetherness. Mostly, it got me thinking about gays and lesbians in small rural areas, like the U.P. and many other areas that grace our great country. The thought was very simple, where do you go?

Since being back in Petoskey for five months now, I am feeling a sense of community in my small rural area. The gay dinner group that gets together on Thursdays at 7:00 pm at the Park Garden Cafe is a great place to meet new people and find people with common interests. Our community has small parties, game nights, pot luck dinners and occasional nights out to a restaurant or to Side Traxx in Traverse City. This is a nice outlet to have. I can remember a few years ago I wouldn't have been able to answer the question, where do you go? There just wasn't anything at all.

So, this is where I am going to ask you for help. If you are getting this newsletter I want to hear from you. Tell me what you do or where you go for your sense of community and support. If you don't have a place, write me anyway and if you wish, I'll try to hook you up with a group of people who are in your same situation. Of course, I would only do this with your permission. Tell me what it's like in your area being gay, lesbian or bisexual. Do you have a sense of community? Do you wish to start a group? Do you want to join some people for dinner or a movie now and then? Or, do you have a group that does some interesting things and you would like others to know about it?

I'll write some of your stories and information in the next newsletter. Don't be shy! This is your chance to share and motivate others to do the same.

Feel free to contact me by mail at P.O. Box 132, Petoskey, MI 49770 or by e-mail at [gbair@sunny.ncmc.cc.mi.us](mailto:gbair@sunny.ncmc.cc.mi.us). Again, we all have a voice in our community. I'm giving you the opportunity to be heard.

## IT'S ALL IN YOUR BRAIN

Staff Writer

A structure deep within the brain, where the tangled roots of sexuality are thought to lie, differs substantially between ordinary men and transsexuals who have been surgically transformed from men into women, scientists have reported. The results raise the tantalizing possibility that transsexuals may in a sense be more female than real females are.

Researchers in the Netherlands have discovered that a small region of the hypothalamus, located at the floor of the brain, is about 50 percent larger in men than in women, and almost 60 percent larger in men than in male-to-female transsexuals.

The discovery is the first detection of a difference in transsexual brains, and it could at least partly explain why such individuals describe themselves as "women trapped in men's bodies."

The finding may also cast light on the larger issue of sexual identity, of what makes a person feel comfortable - or tormented - in the skin of a man or a woman.

Significantly, the region of the hypothalamus does not differ in size between gay and straight men, and so it cannot be said to play a role in male sexual orientation. Other recent studies have focused on identifying minor brain discrepancies between homosexual and heterosexual men, reporting in general that gay brains appeared comparatively feminine.

Such findings, which remain deeply contested, have troubled many people for the simple reason that gay men overwhelmingly think of themselves as men, not as abnormal women. But genetic men who undergo sex reassignment often claim that they felt like girls from early childhood on.

Dick Swaab of the Netherlands Institute for Brain Research in Amsterdam, who with his colleagues is reporting the work in Thursday's issue of the journal *Nature*, emphasized that this section of the hypothalamus is by no means the entire source of sexual identity.

"I'm convinced this is only one structure of many that are involved in such a complex behavior," he said. "This is just the tip of the iceberg."

In addition, the study remains to be replicated by other researchers, which will not be easy. It was performed by dissecting the autopsied brains of transsexuals, homosexual men, heterosexual men and heterosexual women. Because transsexuality is rare, it took the scientists 11 years to collect six transsexual brains.

## NOTES FROM THE PETOSKEY GROUP

- Veronica Daniels, Petoskey

If you've been yearning for a place to go just to socialize without the hassles of the night club environment... then your search might be over! Friends North Petoskey is a weekly social gathering every Thursday evening from approximately 7 p.m. to about 10 p.m. at the Park Garden Cafe in Petoskey.

My first awareness of this wonderful gathering of diverse people from northern Michigan - and sometimes beyond - was provided by friends of mine this past June at the Pride March in Lansing. I'll take this space and time to mention that if YOU weren't present at the March this past June, YOU should have been! It was a fun experience - being my first march. Not only did I let my voice mix with thousands of other peoples' to let the politicians know that we are everywhere and do not expect "Special Rights" but EQUAL rights, but I also had the opportunity to buy neat Gay stuff like bumper stickers, t-shirts and books. So, if you are tired of the way things are in the political scene, PLEASE don't be a "non-participating-I'll-let-somebody-else-speak-for-me" individual! Attend next year's march or any other function you can attend. Let yourself be seen and your voice be heard OUT LOUD - and PROUD! Nuf said on that!

Friends North - Petoskey is a social gathering of our g.l.b.t. community in northern Michigan. It is an alternative group for those not wishing to socialize in a nightclub atmosphere. Special events are often planned such as picnics, holiday parties, potluck dinners and much more. Recently, a group of us attended and participated in the World AIDS Day candlelight vigil in Alpena. We've also viewed a slide presentation of this year's AIDS Memorial Quilt display in Washington, D.C.

Our Petoskey group is a diverse group of people from all areas of northern Michigan. We enjoy beverages, appetizers or dinner - whatever we individually choose. My partner Pam (three wonderful years this January!) and I are always anxious for Thursdays so we can once again see our friends' smiling faces and gather in a non-club, positive energy environment. I've been to various gay bars/clubs in Michigan and elsewhere and never made as many wonderful, genuine friends as I have in the past six months attending the Petoskey Friends North gatherings. By the way, my social calendar becomes quite full as a result of regular attendance.

So, if you want to met some quality people and make some new friends, come visit with Friends North Thursday evenings at the Park Garden Cafe in Petoskey. We enjoy seeing new faces and meeting new people at our gatherings. I must also add that it's great to finally have a pleasant venue to gather with "family" in my own home town!

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# LARA'S THEME: NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

Staff Writer

*"Who's the woman in your relationship and who's the man?"*

*"I hate the sin but love the sinner"*

*"Marriage is something between a man and a woman, something for normal people"*

*"I'm praying for you."*

Where to begin? What to do? Get mad? Walk away? Debate? Lie?

Fifteen people who attended the Toward Understanding workshop at Neahtawanta Center Nov. 8-10 tried out another way: LARA.

LARA is an acronym for a method of nonviolent communication taught by American Friends Service Committee as part of its Toward Understanding Project

The training program was designed to help participants find their own voice in responding to verbal confrontations about sexual orientation in a way that reduces hostility, encourages dialogue and supports full equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people

LARA stands for:

Listen

Affirm

Respond

Add

What you listen for is the feelings underneath the statement - fear, discomfort, anger, frustration? Try to hear what lies at the core of the question or statement. What do they really want to know? What is legitimate?

What you affirm is whatever you find in the question or statement that represents a reasonable issue or real fear. You try to find a point of commonality - of genuine human connection.

When you respond, you give people the information they're seeking. If you don't know the answer, say so and refer them to sources.

What you add is information that will help them consider the issue a different way or that will redirect the discussion down a more positive path.

The goal of LARA, facilitator Jan Wright said, is not to win, but to initiate dialogue that can inform and educate. The secret is coming from the heart. It is not meant to be manipulative.

The Toward Understanding Workshop is based on materials developed by Bonnie Tinker, of Love Makes A Family Inc., a leader in the work against recurring anti-gay ballot initiatives in Oregon. Tinker has a 23-year history of working for lesbian and gay rights. Love Makes a Family is committed to a philosophy of nonviolence.

The primary message of nonviolent speech, the facilitators said, comes from Mahatma Ghandi's word for nonviolence: Ahimsa - "I will not harm you."

It implies, in addition, a deeper message: "You will not harm me."

"Speaking nonviolently comes from a profound respect for the humanity of the person to whom you are speaking," according to the Love Makes a Family materials.

"It also demonstrates a belief that the moral ground you are standing on is big enough for all. If you take up all of the moral ground by backing others into a corner, forcing them up against the wall, or pushing them over the edge of a verbal precipice, they cannot join you in your opinion. Nonviolent speech seeks agreement with dignity."

*"I don't want any guy hitting on me."*

*"I would never let my daughters go on an overnight trip with a lesbian teacher - she'd be molested."*

*"All you need, gal, is a man who knows what he's doing- a good fuck."*

*"Did wearing dresses when you were little make you gay?"*

The purpose of nonviolent speech is first to establish common ground, which assumes that people share at least one value in common - the desire to do the right thing. That may seem hard to believe when it looks and sounds as though some people are determined to deny gays and lesbians recognition and respect.

The big challenge for people who want to practice nonviolent speech and establish a meaningful dialogue around sexual orientation is to overcome

## **A first-person account**

The first time I found it difficult to respond. I thought it was my unfamiliarity with the LARA method.

The second time, I thought it was just another of my recurring shyness attacks.

By the third time, I realized that this nonviolent communication method - listening, affirming, responding and adding information - was going to teach me a lot about the still unhealed wounds and unexpressed thoughts that came from some 20 years of living in a closet.

I learned at the workshop that I can deal with innocent clumsy questions from people who only want more information to help them confront the stereotypes they grew up with.

But hostile, curt or self-righteous remarks that are based on a desire to maintain stereotypes trigger strong emotions in me. At the workshop, they washed through me in waves. I could no longer listen or hear what was behind the statement, much less come up with a response of any kind - nonviolent, irritated or outraged.

I felt speechless. For so many years I had never talked about what was going on in me. In fact, I had tried to fool myself into thinking it didn't hurt me. But it did. I have known that ever since I came out. And I got to

know it even better that weekend at Neahtawanta.

We gays and lesbians have a lot going on inside of us. It's no wonder, if you consider the daily bashing we undergo growing up and living in a homophobic society.

The two days of role playing and other forms of practicing LARA took away my discomfort and the fear of responding to homophobia with nonviolence. It's a much less mysterious process now, and I know that, with practice, I can come to learn how to do it automatically in any kind of difficult dialogue.

But I need to work through some of the old wounds and my fears because they keep me from hearing and seeing the fear in others. I know that the base emotion of all hatred, anger, hostility and scapegoating is fear. Knowing that helps me want to respond with nonviolence.

Doing it is going to take a lot of practice. And it is the practice that will help me know myself and will make me stronger - inside and out.

I've heard it said that to truly practice nonviolence we must learn and know our own fear. I've also heard it said that real courage is to know that you are afraid of doing the right thing and to do it anyway.

I guess that is what LARA will teach me.

their own fight-or-flight reaction and to respect the other person enough to assume that their intention is to "do the right thing."

*"The Bible says it's wrong."*

*"The purpose of marriage is to have children. Therefore, lesbian-gay people shouldn't get married."*

*"It's unnatural, don't you think?"*

*"Why do you have to talk about it?"*

Here's a sample dialogue:

**QUESTION:**

Why do homosexuals think they should have special rights?

**POSSIBLE KERNELS TO LISTEN FOR:**

Fear that I am going to be left out. That important values are undermined. Why are you better than I am. I am not being unfair to you, so why do you need special treatment? I don't believe that you are really a victim of discrimination.

**AFFIRM:**

It doesn't sound fair at first, does it? Not if one group gets rights somehow that others don't have. None of us wants to see one group elevated to a higher status.

**RESPONDING AND ADDING:**

The term special rights isn't helpful. Rather, it confuses the issue because the term does suggest unequal treatment. But gays and lesbians aren't asking for special treatment. We don't want any rights that aren't equally available to everyone, whether gay or straight.

In reality, what gay and lesbians are saying is: no special discrimination. Please don't single us out for discrimination. Treat us like everybody else who is in the work force or looking for an apartment, regardless of sexual orientation. We're not looking for something extra.

The 15 people who attended the workshop at Neahtawanta included lesbians, gays, straights and P-Flag parents from northern Michigan and the Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Ann Arbor and Lansing areas.

## REMEMBERING A DEAR FRIEND

Ed Richardson & Gene Strang

In our effort to direct focus on the AIDS/HIV crisis, our gay/lesbian community much too often 'forgets' that there are members suffering terminally with other diseases. Unfortunately, such was the case with Carol Srbeny, who died in November. Carol had stopped smoking many years past. About 2-years ago, cancer made an appearance in her lung and continued to spread. Carol fought long and hard despite the removal of a lung, brain surgery, radiation, chemo and numerous hospitalizations. With the help of two friends and hospice, Carol was able to spend final precious time in her home, surrounded by the beautiful nature she loved.

I first met Carol at a Friends North monthly board meeting. In her spirit, she was trying hard to persuade the board to help support a dance for which Carol offered to do all arranging and promotion but the board did not waver in its opposition. I would hope, in Carol's memory, her idea be again considered!

Smile upon us Carol (don't take off your dancing shoes, yet!) (Ed)

A time—A space I am passing thru

Carol Ann Srbeny, March 13, 1947 to November 17, 1996. Touching only those who need and healing them who ask. Part of Dignity early on as it became Friends North — Dancing at the Den — Rap Groups — Loved by women with passion — Accepted by close male friends — Communicated with my animal partners of the woods — My dog Chancey — Accepted my illness of cancer with reluctance. Gene asked me questions on Saturday night and I answered best I could. Sunday he was with me to help me give way to letting go. Monday I was on my way to new \_\_\_\_\_ at 8:00!

Where was everybody — only 13 people showed at my service? (Gene)

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## MESSAGES FROM CINDY

Cindy Robb

As I sit at the keyboard, congested head and stuffy nose from this cold /flu thing that won't go away, reflecting back on the past year and what it has meant for PFLAG and the Gay / Lesbian Community as a whole, it is truly astounding!

We started the year 1996 with planning the "Pride Celebration" for June. I think every G/L group in T.C. had a hand in its organizing. Networking with everyone is very powerful and was a great start for the year. Friends North, PFLAG, GLSTN, Out & About Coffee House, Wellness Network, SideTraxx, and some just plain wonderful individuals came together, each bringing their own unique talents and perspective to lay the groundwork for the future event.

February sparked the thought that the City of Traverse City ought to look at adding "sexual orientation" to its employment policy. The great thing was it was spawned from the Human Rights Commission, not the gay/lesbian community. In April, many of us wrote letters to the TC City Commission that numbered 140 in favor of adding "sexual orientation" and only one letter was received in opposition.

At the May 8 commission meeting supporters packed the room and spoke from their hearts, while a handful of others read bible passages to commissioners. Sadly, the commission voted to look at alternative language, and at a later meeting was defeated by only one vote. The result was an insult but the people who had the courage and strength to speak out was a huge victory in itself!

The outpouring from not only the G/L community but from many other businesses and institutions was overwhelming and heartfelt, including staffers at Third Level Crisis Center, many area clergy (who spoke out at risk to themselves), school teachers, counselors, doctors, and lawyers. We were unable to shift the commissioners but we made a big difference to people in the community, and gave many the opportunity to think about an issue that they might have never thought about otherwise in a positive way.

We need to continue to stand up and speak out, and put faces and names with the labels "Fag" and "Dyke" in order to transform these labels to "Gay" and "Lesbian" in the minds of the ignorant, and uninformed. The undertaking of petitioning the City Commission is just one example of the power of hope that coming together and speaking out creates. We simply have a very bad city commission that does not listen to its people, and it is important for us to remember to forget them in the next election. This issue is no more dead than you or I.

It was around this time that Michigan's legislature banned same sex marriage, which was a big waste of time and taxpayer money since it was never legal anyway! In June Rev. Mel White performed a Commitment Ceremony for 90 same sex couples on the Michigan Capitol steps. I'm sure it burned a few, but it is proof, WE ARE NOT GOING AWAY.

The Triangle foundation has been incredible by testifying everywhere and reporting the violence- from public meetings to court to State Commissions, and it is making a big difference. Again, the Triangle Foundation's success depends on us SPEAKING OUT, and reporting incidents as they happen.

1996 has brought huge success in the Court Systems. The most monumental was of course the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Romer v. Evans* overturning Colorado's Amendment 2. Jamie Nabozny's victory to the tune of a million dollars says loud and clear the harassment of G/L students must end in public schools. Schools across the country are forced to allow G/L student groups to organize and they are sprouting up with Traverse City's already in the planning stages. Hawaii's Court decision on same-sex marriage has just one final hoop to jump through with the victory in early December being the most critical. Locally, Steve Sharp was awarded \$300,000 when his HIV status was poorly handled in his workplace.

WOW... as I sat to ponder the past year, I must admit I felt tired and sort of beat down by all the holiday hoopla and being sick, and I thought to myself, "okay, can I think of ANYTHING good in the past 12 months?" And, yes I can! It has been a GREAT, FANTASTIC, RECORD-BREAKING, MONUMENTAL, ALLIANCE-BUILDING, FRIEND-MAKING, INCREDIBLE YEAR!

I now end 1996 with great pride and joy for the enormous strides forward we have made together, and look to 1997 with great hope and wonder of the miracles to come. I suddenly feel better and my nose is not nearly as stuffy anymore! Here's to a fantastic "97"! Love, Cindy

## PETOSKEY PARTY

Ric Nelson

On Thursday, December 13, some friends of mine and I made the two hour trek to Petoskey so that we could join Friends North of Petoskey at their Christmas Party. I, for one, and I know that my companions will agree, had a very enjoyable time.

The party was held at the Park Garden Cafe in Petoskey. The group meets there every Thursday. There was more food than anyone could eat provided for us. Hot wings, white fish paté, and puff pastry with cream and chocolate filling were only a few of the goodies that were a part of the spread. There was a cash bar that was well-stocked for the diverse tastes of the ensemble. Frankly, I found the atmosphere of the entire facility to be most friendly and welcoming.

There were about 45 of the nicest people in attendance with music provided for just about every taste. Although I personally could have made it through the evening without hearing "Living on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi, but like I said, every taste. Yes, there was some dancing. That was fun once it got started. My favorite moment of the evening was watching two of the cutest older lesbian couples twirling around to Rod Stewart. I was given opportunity to meet just about everyone there, and honestly, not once did anyone make me feel like an intruder.

Needless to say, I felt my nine dollars for dinner plus what I spent on drinks was well spent. I suggest to everyone that every once in a while you should visit our brothers and sisters of the Petoskey group, whether you live in Petoskey, Cheboygan, Marquette, Traverse City, Cadillac or elsewhere. To quote Miss Chi Chi Rodriguez, "No one is so rich to throw away a friend." (a "To Wong Foo" reference)

## DETROIT: AFFIRMATIONS RECEIVES GRANT FOR OUTREACH TO STREET YOUTH

Alternatives for Girls, a homeless shelter for young women in Detroit, and Affirmations have been awarded a collaborative grant for outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth in the 6/7 Mile and Woodward corridors. In Carl Ripberger Youth Services, we currently provide peer-education, peer-counseling, support group, mentorship, and educational activities to 40-50 youth each week at our center. A large number of these youth have been involved in trading sex for money, drugs, or shelter, thus Affirmations staff is very familiar with the daily challenges that young lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered young people face.

Affirmations will hire a youth outreach coordinator to provide eight to ten hours of street outreach in conjunction with our youth peer educators. Issues addressed with the youth will include personal safety techniques, substance use information, prostitution issues, HIV risk reduction and counseling techniques. Additionally, our outreach staff will assist in weekly youth group activities and provide follow-up and coordination of various services to youth contracted through this new outreach work.

Our goal is to be as accessible and responsive to the needs of our transient youth as possible, while promoting self-esteem and other life-skill enhancement techniques. This is an exciting program expansion for Affirmations' Youth Services and a fabulous collaborative effort to serve the needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered youth.

(The address/phone for Affirmations can be found on our Resource Page—on the back of this newsletter)

## BORN AGAIN PAGAN SEEKER

Richard Curtis

The wheel continues to turn. Darkness gives way to Light. The Mother once more gives birth to the Son. Is there meaning to this movement? To these symbols? At a church service this holiday season the priest used as his central image "If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound?" Supported by 'Modern Science' his conclusion was that without perception sound does not exist. I believe he intended this conclusion as a call for communal witnessing—the need to be part of a community to be validated. A very human feeling.

So far, I've spent the dark period of this year in introspection. "The unexamined life is a life not worth living." No one who knows me could accuse me of not analyzing everything I perceive. Some would credit me with ridiculous, unfounded conclusions — but that would be their opinion.

Verbal comments on some of my past columns have been that I have 'preached' anti-Christian sentiment. This has never been my intention. I have, however, intended to 'preach' against blind adherence to outdated doctrine taught by addle-brained, hate-filled, fools. The Christ was none of these, and in his teachings, as I have read them, I believe he would agree with me. But too many have claimed to speak for The Christ, to justify their own agendas, and I will not do that.

One of the lights I've seen lately is in a book "Gay Soul" by Mark Thompson. It is a compilation of interviews with gay men "Finding the Heart of Gay Spirit and Nature." Any gay man interested in spirit/soul should find this introduction to the greater gay community blinding. James Braughton, Ram Dass, Joseph Kramer, Ed Steinbrecher, Robert H. Hopcke - sixteen in all. Writers, healers, teachers and visionaries. Not all their names are well known.

The majority of these men would be considered our Elders. We need to respect them by hearing them. We need to respect them because of what they have to say, what they have lived—what they have to teach us about our selves.

If we don't hear them, do they cease to exist? Even the primitive child's game we call 'Modern Science' confirms that plants are affected and react to music and the emotions of people and beings around them. How could a tree fall in a forest and not be heard, when every tree hears it? Is there somewhere a forest without trees? Do any of us exist in a vacuum?

We are all accountable to each other. If we turn a deaf ear to the world, it does not cease to exist. If we choose to deny our actions, ourselves, our feelings, our sexuality... they will not cease to exist.

A wish for a Happy New Year — for a year where we can all hear one another — for a year where we can all hear ourselves — without fear to listen to our hearts, whether they sing in a choir of hundreds or alone in a forest — and a year where no tree falls while people turn deaf ears.

Let your light shine out from your own forest while you step "Out" into a New Year.

Blessed Be



# C L A S S I F I E D S

(Note: All classified announcements as well as personals are run without charge. Please submit them in writing to the Friends North address, or call the editor and leave the advertisement on the answering machine with a phone number)

## NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

**LOOKING FOR GAY, LESBIAN, bisexual and transgendered Catholic people in Northern Michigan to help form a task force for ministry to like-minded people.** Call Jim McLaughlin at 517-821-4095. (issue 2)

## ON-GOING ANNOUNCEMENTS

**BI-MONTHLY, BI-SEXUAL, WOMEN'S LUNCHEON:** Meet the first and third Tuesday of each month, from 11:30 am until 1:00 at a local, Traverse City restaurant. Call Pamela at 922-0734 or contact Friends North. (issue 1)

**PLEASE SPONSOR OUR POSTCARD PROJECT:** They do make a difference! The cost for printing the 2800 postcards is \$100.00. To contribute specifically to the Postcard Project, please call Richard at 271-3042 or send a check (in an amount of \$100.00 or less) directly to Friends North. (issue 1)

**QUESTIONS ABOUT HIV AND AIDS?** Call locally 24 hours a day to 947-1110. This program is sponsored by the HIV/AIDS Wellness Networks Grand Traverse Area and is staffed by Third Level Crisis Center volunteers. (Issue 2)

**THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF PETOSKEY is meeting** at the Concord Academy, 2230 East Mitchell St. Services will be held on alternate Sundays with dates disclosed in their newsletter, Diversity. Please call 348-3117 for details or write to us at POB 271, Petoskey, MI 49770-0271 (Issue 3)

**REPORT HATE CRIMES!!** The Triangle Foundation of Michigan has begun a VICTIMS' PROGRAM COMMUNITY WATCH COALITION. The group will collect hate-crime information from Lesbian and Gay victims of such crimes. For details, call 313-533-1166 or 517-753-9823. Report Hate Crimes! Stop the Violence! (issue 2)

**GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT:** Their Reproductive Health Clinic is open to women and men of all ages. Confidential services provided are physical exams, HIV counseling and testing, pregnancy testing, sexual transmitted disease testing and treatment, all methods of birth control available, FREE Norplants, Depo-Provera, IUDs, and Condoms. For more info about these and other methods which are charged on a sliding fee scale, call 922-4630. Services are by appointment only. (issue 2)

## PERSONALS:

**LOOKING FOR WOMYN** in their 50's and 60's for correspondence. I would like to move into your area after my house sells. Need to know if anyone has an apt. for rent, or shared housing until I can re-establish my business. I'm a furniture and interior wood refinisher, also like to do houses that are considered "fixers." Please write if you feel you might have something of interest for me. Would like to have a friend in the area when I more. Will answer all. J.A. Morrison, 508 Delia St., Ludington, MI 49431; 616-845-1542 (issue 1)

**GWF-Age 51, shirt and jeans woman...loves good company, long Sunday drives, country music, nature, picnics, camping, and much more.** I am honest, sincere, caring and romantic. Looking for a good close friend and possibly more, so any singles out there, please write. I will answer all. Sharon, 8595 N.E. Limits, Mancelona, MI 49659 (issue 2)

## GROUPS:

**FRIENDS NORTH BOARD AND MEMBER MEETINGS:** The Friends North Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm. at their **NEW LOCATION** at Grace Episcopal Church, corner of Washington and Boardman Streets, across from the Old Courthouse. **ALL ARE WELCOME**, (issue 1)

**FRIENDS NORTH RAP GROUP** is a group of men and women who get together monthly for informal discussion, often on a particular topic. Please join us on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at Grace Episcopal Church, 349 Washington, T.C., at 7:30pm. For information, call Tom at 275-6127 or Ed at 947-4697. (issue 1)

**GLSTN**, the Gay-Lesbian-Straight Teachers Network, is meeting monthly in Traverse City. They welcome all interested educators. For more information, call M'Lynn at 943-8800. (issue 1)

**P-FLAG:** (Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays.) This is a network of parents, friends, and families of lesbians and gays who meet monthly to offer information, support, and a place to talk with others about the issues concerning them. Gays and Lesbians are also welcome and encouraged to attend P-FLAG meetings. Meet at Grace Episcopal Church every third Wednesday of the month, at 7:30 pm. For more information call Cindy Robb at 271-5045 (Issue 1)

**WINDFIRE:** This is a local youth support group for teens and others under the age of 25, which meets on a weekly basis in an atmosphere that is comfortable and friendly. Please contact Third Level at 922-4800 or 1-800-442-7315 for location, date and time. (issue 2)

**OUT 'N ABOUT** is a lesbian coffeehouse featuring entertainment as well as a chance to meet others from the area. It all happens at the Unity Church, 3600 Five Mile Rd. in T.C. Please see the Out 'n About calendar elsewhere in this newsletter for times and specific activities. (issue 2)

**TRAVERSE CITY FRONTRUNNERS** If you are interested in running, call Paul or Jim at 271-4510 and leave your name, number, and that you are interested in Frontrunners. We will return your call with information on where to meet. All ages and abilities are welcome. (issue 2)

**WELLNESS NETWORKS SUPPORT GROUP** is for people with HIV or AIDS and they welcome you to attend. Please drop in Monday evenings from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at the Grace Episcopal Church library at 341 Washington in Traverse City. Every fourth Monday of the month the Significant-Other Support Group will be meeting at 3301 Veterans Drive, Suite 221, just north of S. Airport Road. For further information, please call 933-0279. (issue 2)

**THE PETOSKEY GROUP:** A social group for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual persons is meeting weekly in Petoskey. The group meets at 7 p.m. Thursdays at the Park Garden Cafe on Lake Street. For information please contact Tim at 348-8151 (issue 1)

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN WOMYN'S CHOIR** is always looking for new voices. To obtain more information or for a performance schedule, please contact Deb at 275-5924. (issue 2)

**H.A.N.D.S** is an HIV/AIDS Network located in Petoskey. They are currently seeking volunteers in the northern lower peninsula and eastern upper peninsula of Michigan. HANDS is a non-profit organization that has committed itself to helping and supporting the needs of HIV infected persons. They offer a number of services, including support groups, education, public awareness, and one-on-one friendship support. Volunteers are urgently needed in the Alpena, Gaylord, and Rogers City areas. If you would be interested in the program, please call 616-526-9213. (issue 2)

**GAY ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** Meetings for gays and lesbians are held each Saturday at 11:00 am and have been moved to a new location at Grace Episcopal Church, corner Washington and Boardman Streets in TC. For further info, call John at 922-0746 or Tom at 947-4647. (issue 2)

**FRIENDS LIKE US:** A social group in north east lower Michigan for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Meets monthly. For info, please contact Jeff @ 517-354-7702, or write to him at POB 391, Alpena, MI 49707. (issue 2)

## SHARED LETTERS

### *Discouraging Comments*

The comments of Rep. Michelle McManus regarding the recent Hawaiian court decision regarding marriage, as reported in the December 5 *Record-Eagle* are discouraging. For an individual who is an integral part of the constitutional system, and our representative in that system, she displays an astonishing lack of understanding regarding the function and structure of the system.

McManus opined that it was "undemocratic to have one of the institutions of society transformed through the acts of a court." A cursory review of any high school civics text would reveal that one of the primary intentions of the founding fathers in establishing an independent judiciary was to guarantee just such authority. And that authority has been exercised many times over in our history to the great benefit of the country; has Representative McManus ever heard of *Brown vs. Board of Education*?

It is essential to distinguish between the decision itself and the process by which it came to exist. There certainly are varying opinions on the wisdom of the Hawaii decision. But to attack the authority of the court to make the decision itself is to attack our constitutional system. An elected representative should know better.

Thankfully, the Bill of Rights established, and an independent judiciary has preserved, the right of any citizen to publicly express his or her opinion. Regrettably, Rep. McManus's exercise of this right reveals a distressing gap in her understanding of the very system she is sworn to defend and uphold.

Wallace H. Tuttle.

Traverse City.

*Reprinted from the Traverse City Record-Eagle*

Dear Friends:

Through my dear friend, John Evans, I was introduced to your excellent publication and I am enjoying reading of the activities of "our" people in my own home state.

I must, however, protest the thoughts of Daniel Zingale, political director of the Human Rights Campaign published in the November/December issue. We need to examine closely, the thoughts and the motivations of those who would lead in our struggle for recognition as citizens with the same rights and privileges and other Americans. We need to take great care before we elect to battle those who are not worthy of being our enemies.

I appreciated his thought that we are a spiritual community — it is a fact that is too often ignored by far too many people. But then he goes on to define our spirituality in the same terms as those who interpret religion as a collection of fanciful credos and magnificent buildings. Somehow, we appear to have forgotten that religion is supposed to be the food through which our souls are fed. And if the soul isn't well nourished, there is little hope for development of spirituality among our people. We are truly blind if we can not understand that the real reason for the distance between the "church" and our community is because the hate-mongers in their midst are "slopping in the thoughts" (if I am allowed the use of an old mid-Thumb expression of speech) of the one who truly is the enemy of our souls.

We need to pray for the partnership between MCC and HRC as they embark on a campaign to duplicate the handiwork of the Christian Coalition in the area of voter registration. They need to take a close look at the spirits engendered by those who would turn our church assemblies into political pedestals. They are not pretty and they have no place within our religious institutions.

Are there others who will stand up and say we could care less how the Christian Coalition acts or what they say — what can be gained by debating with those who are at heart, students in the Anita Bryant school of applied theology? We are not to be scapegoats — and surely not the grist by which the bigots operate their money making mills. Maybe it is time that we let our light shine in their midst — somehow it seems quite appropriate!  
Sherwood MacRae, Nashville, TN.

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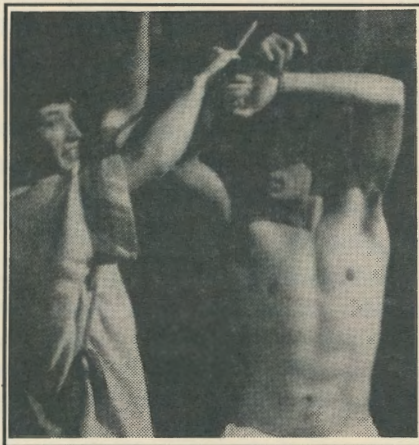
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## LILIES

Film reviewed by David Collins

Who would have thought 1912 backwoods Québec could look so sexy. But in the fanciful mood of director John Greyson [*Zero Patience*], the isolated northern town of Roberval becomes a hotbed of cross-dressing, theatrical intrigue and gay romance.

Greyson's new film, *Lilies*, presents a performance by a group of prison inmates that slowly uncovers the story of a doomed love triangle between three schoolboys, 40 years earlier. Within the prison audience are two sides of the triangle, now grown men: a Catholic bishop and one of the inmates wrongly convicted in the death of the third.



A richly painted memory piece, *Lilies* overflows with beautiful images: a lavishly ornate air balloon hangs high above gathering town folks, the sun rises crimson red over a tranquil lake, ethereal choir music resonates through the solitude and beautiful boys make love in a steaming bath prepared approvingly by mother.

Mother [Tony award winner Brent Carver, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*] is the dizzy, aristocratic motor that powers many of the film's scenes. After unwittingly interrupting her son and his lover a second time, moments before their long-awaited kiss, she sighs, "No not again; won't we ever get to see the end?"

We are well-acquainted with films that leave gay romance in suspense and recognize our own familiar questions, as she asks: "Why do you always stop at the same point?" Not this time; they follow through with the kiss, "with a passion that would make all the women of Roberval blush with envy" according to the Countess.

The accomplished cast, headed by Carver, was easy to assemble due to the success of the original play. Easy, that is, except for the major role of the Countess' son. "We couldn't find a Valiere. Then we met Danny, just out of school. When he came into the audition, he was very nervous—but there was one scene, the bath scene, he'd actually performed in his high school. Can you imagine going to high school in your theater arts class, that's the scene you do? Things are changing."

The film slips seamlessly between the two time periods, occasionally mixing the characters to create strange hybrid scenes. In one scene, the boy who will become the Bishop serves his older self wine with a knowing smile.

*Lilies* is about looking directly at our past and coming to terms with it. This is nowhere more evident than after the climatic death of the Countess. The convict and the Bishop are transported out of their jail, to sit contemplatively at the side of the lake, watching the sun rise. "The strength of the sunrise," explains Greyson, "was all about getting them to a point of incredible reflection, where there's no longer any distance between yourself and your memory. You are inside the memory." The trip inside this memory is one of welcomed and intoxicating beauty.

## AROUSAL SURVEY SUGGESTS DENIAL AMONG HOMOPHOBES

(Editor's Note: In another earlier issue, we ran a similar article, but the way the survey was measured was never explained. This might just fill in the blanks.)

It's an old adage, and once again shown to be true: What you hate most in other people often is a reflection of what is inside you.

Henry Adams, a psychologist at the University of Georgia, was interested in the link between sexual feelings and anti-gay violence. More than one-third of homosexuals have been physically attacked at least once because of their sexual orientation, and nearly all have been taunted or threatened in some way.

Adams recruited 64 male heterosexual students and divided them into two groups, which he labeled "homophobe" and "non-homophobe," depending on the levels of dread and anger they described feeling when interacting with homosexuals. He asked all the men to watch short erotic videotapes showing lovemaking among heterosexuals, gay males and lesbians.

Then he measured their physical arousal. Both groups of men responded with erections to the heterosexual and lesbian sex scenes. But 80 percent of the homophobes — compared to 34 percent of the nonhomophobes — also got erections when watching homosexual lovemaking, even though they claimed not to feel turned on.

Sometimes anxiety can enhance arousal and erection, although Adams expressed doubt that this explains the magnitude of the homophobic group's response. Psychologists have long believed that some people who feel discomfort, aversion and rage when they encounter gays are repressing homosexual urges. Adams thinks the emotional confusion can lead to physical aggression.

"Most homophobic males don't want to believe that they can have some feelings for the same sex," Adams say. "The intense fear that one might be homosexual can trigger tremendous hostility."

(Reprinted from the *Chicago Tribune*.)

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## LOVE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS

By Michael H. Price

It helps to be a devotee of gay romance and cloyingly upbeat pop music to get any worth out of Hettie Macdonald's "Beautiful Thing," but no one can deny the film's forthright purpose and clarity.

Macdonald's breakthrough is twofold: She resists the middle-class/professional/intellectual stereotype that Hollywood has seized upon in attempting to categorize some convenient "gay lifestyle," as in

"Longtime Companion," "Philadelphia" and "It's My Party." And Macdonald, an English director fresh from the stage, singlehandedly resurrects the long-ignored singing career of Mama Cass Elliott.



Jamie, occupant of London housing project, is obsessed with his sporty neighbor, Ste.

Neither is a small task. Mama Cass died 22 years ago but left an extensive legacy - much of it (apart from her perennials with The Mamas and the Papas) mercifully forgotten until now.

Cass had a mellow voice and a taste for Tin Pan Alley schmaltz. This combo is just the ticket to appeal to a teen-age girl (played by Tameka Empson) who, as a neglected dropout with only the phonograph for a maternal role model, bombards her neighborhood and the film's soundtrack with "It's Getting Better" and its sticky-sweet kind.

Such underscoring makes for an odd counterpoint to the greater story, which involves an introverted teen-ager named Jamie (Glen Berry), his more extroverted neighbor pal, Ste (Scott Neal), and the romantic attraction between them. Seems Ste's home life is so brutal that the lad finally inquires whether he might take refuge with Jamie.

One thing leads - awkwardly, at first - to another, and soon enough the boys have commenced an affair whose pitfalls seem to occur only vaguely to screenwriter Jonathan Harvey. Berry and Neal convey vividly the mingled defiance and hesitancy that any such couple might display in a harsh working-class environment.

The film minimizes the difficulties, however, preferring a rose-colored outlook tinged with droll comedy. About the cruelest act rendered here is a blur of uncouth graffiti - that, and the rumor-mongering of the Cass-obsessed neighbor girl. Even the music (though it wears somewhat thin) is used for smart irony, a candy-coating on a gritty environment.

## SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Following is a list of the films screening in the main categories at the Sundance Film Festival, which runs Jan. 16-26 in Park City, Utah.

Non-competition U.S. premieres: [list abbreviated to highlight films with gay theme. Others may have a gay theme but their reviews didn't explicitly say so]:

- Kevin Smith's "Chasing Amy," a romantic comedy from Miramax in which a young man (Ben Affleck) falls in love with a lesbian (Joey Lauren Adams).

- Joe Mantello's "Love! Valour! Compassion!," an adaptation of Terrence McNally's hit play, to be distributed by Fine Line, starring the original Broadway cast with the exception of Jason Alexander, who fills the Nathan Lane role.

- Gregg Araki's "Nowhere," a stylized ensemble comedy that satirizes the blank generation types who have populated his films to this point, from Fine Line.

Set for the dramatic competition are the following features:

- Alex Sichel's "All Over Me," a lesbian coming-of-age tale that will be released by Fine Line.

- Ira Sachs' "The Delta," which showed at Toronto, about a young Asian gay man and his relationship with a middle-class white man.

The following films were selected for the documentary competition:

- Su Friedrich's "Hide and Seek," an experimental semi-documentary about the childhoods of lesbians.

- Arthur Dong's "License to Kill," a film about gay bashing.

- Gina Reticker's "New School Order," which depicts the attempted takeover of school boards by the Christian Right and the fight to stop it by a Pennsylvania community.

- Monte Bramer's "Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End," a study of the gay writer.

Five Midnight attractions will be screened:

- Kelly Sane's "Franchesca Page," about a drag queen.

- John Waters' "Pink Flamingos," a relaunch from Fine Line of the seminal underground classic.

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## WORDS AND MUSIC: A LOCAL GUIDE TO BOOKS, MAGAZINES, TAPES AND CD'S

By Rick Gould

You'll be noticing some changes in the booklist in 1997. There are new stores, new opportunities for the gay and lesbian community, and established stores trying new things. And the booklist will be, to paraphrase Goldie Hawn in *The First Wives Club*, "freshened up!" Now on to the winter booklist:

At **The Bookie Joint**, Shelley is drastically reducing prices on new gay and lesbian books. This is to make way for building up a used gay and lesbian book section, with your help. Bring in your past favorite books and talk money, trade, or consignment. Hopefully, the used gay/lesbian section will become as successful as the mainstream used book sections in *The Bookie Joint*. The discounts on her current new books will range from 25-40% over January and February. The store will still continue to carry gay/lesbian magazines, buttons, bumper stickers, jewelry, and other pride paraphernalia.

At **Horizon Books**, Alex recommended:

*Gay and Lesbian On-line* by Jeff Dawson, \$15.95. "A fascinating guidebook for travelers exploring the world of queer cyberspace" says Cleve Jones, founder of *The NAMES Project*.

*Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories*, edited by Patrick Merla, \$24.00. Told chronologically from Manhattan in the late '40s to San Francisco in the early '90s, these personal essays create a documentary of changing social and sexual mores during the last half-century.

*The Girls Next Door: Into The Heart Of Lesbian America*, by Lindsay Van Gelder and Pamela Robin Brandt, \$23.00. Drawing on more than a hundred interviews with women around the country, Van Gelder and Brandt have composed a stunning portrait on gay women today, and how they think, feel, live and love.

At **Comics North** in Cheboygan, Dave sent us this list:

*Seven Miles A Second*, by David Wojnarowicz, \$7.95. The autobiography of the controversial artist/writer, who went from a child prostitute/drug addict to an adult living with AIDS. yet his will to live compels him to fight against a complacent world.

*Drag Queens of New York: An Illustrated Field Guide*, by Julian Fleisher, \$13.00. Purports to tell the true story of the worlds most productive drag queen eco-system! Are we talkin' hand-me-downs here, or does it really scratch the surface, so to speak?

*Peach Slices* by Donna Barr, \$9.95. The many and varied illustrated stories starring the Desert Peach, the unfortunately fictional gay brother of WWII's *The Desert Fox*!

Dave also has back issues of gay and lesbian comics, so check it out!

At **Open Mind Books** in Sault Ste. Marie, Dan gave us the following suggestions:

*And Then I Met This Woman*, by Barbee Cassingham and Sally O'Neil, \$ 9.95. Features 36 true stories of women transformed by their encounters with other women.

*Gay Hollywood*, by Steve Steward, \$15.95. Packed with photos, plot summaries, ratings and juicy quotes, this guide spotlights over a hundred films and videos with gay/lesbian themes.

*Out Sounds*, by Will Grega and Randy Jones, \$12.00. With virtually every kind of music represented, this book reviews many current CDs and cassettes by gay and lesbian performers on independent labels.

*Lesbian Bedtime Stories*, edited by Terry Woodrow, \$9.95 and \$10.95. Both volumes are a treasury of humor, warmth and excitement.

At **Borders** in Traverse City, Joe gave us the following list:

*Pryor Rendering*, by Gary Reed, \$20.95. A novel set in dusty Oklahoma that tells of a boy's devotion to his saloon keeper grandfather and his own sexual coming-of-age. *Kirkus Review* called it "a near perfect little tale, and a compelling alternative to the spate of gay epics that have lately inundated readers."

*Farm Boys*, non-fiction, by Wills Fellows, \$27.50. An oral history of growing up gay in the rural mid-west. Full of humor, pathos and bathos. Sounds like *Showgirls*!

*Homosexuality In History*, by Colin Spencer, \$29.00. An entertaining and readable overview of homosexual behavior across time and history.

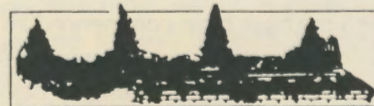
And don't forget, AB CD's has moved further downtown on Traverse City's Front Street. They are next door to *The Big Boy*, formerly *Miner's North*, at 157 E. Front. Stop by and check out their new location or give them a call at 946-2112.

These stores appreciate your business and comments.

WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

For those who have checked out *Borders*, it has been noted that they have an extensive and labeled gay and lesbian book section and carry a healthy selection of gay and lesbian magazines. Also, book discussion groups are being started at *Borders*, including contemporary literature and Jewish literature. A gay and lesbian reading group would be welcome, says *Borders'* Joe Ginis, their community relations coordinator. Well, folks here's your big chance! Coffee, books, a pleasant atmosphere, what more could you ask? No more slogging through "social studies" or feeling like you've won a scavenger hunt when you find a new gay/lesbian book buried among the mainstream stuff.

*Borders* would like to see a group leader from the community, so give Joe a call at 616-933-0412. This person should have both literary and leadership skills, or be willing to develop them. Hopefully, someone will answer the call and also, perhaps this will be a wakeup call for some of our other stores in the community to realize what an untapped potential there is in our gay and lesbian consumers.



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## MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

### Survey Results

by M'Lynn Hartwell

Friends North growth had left us with an incomplete picture of who our membership is and what programs and services you value the most from us. A primary goal of the Member Services committee of the Friends North Board of Directors to become your ears and voice. Our job is to listen to what -you- the Friends North dues-paying members have to say about how your elected board may serve our community better.

As of this date, slightly more than eight-percent of our newsletter recipients have returned their Member Services Committee Survey questionnaire and this is what you are telling us about ourselves.

65% of the those people who took the time to respond are Male, compared to 35% who are Female. As nearly as we can determine, the overall Friends North membership is 54% male and 46% female, so the men clearly have so far had more to say about our organization in response to this survey. All of the men who responded to the survey identified as Gay Male, whereas 33% of the women identified as Lesbian and 2% of the women identified as Bisexual. No respondents have identified as either Heterosexual or Transgendered.

As a whole, we tend to be aging a bit. 70% of us claimed to be over the age of thirty-six. If we examine the age question in more detail, we see that 34% of us are 36-45 years old. 21% are 46-55 years old, and 15% over the age of fifty-five. The remaining 30% of our membership is younger than thirty-five.

Friends North members apparently earn more money than the average citizen in northern Michigan. A whopping 77% of us claim to earn over \$25,000 a year, including 22% of us that said that we earned more than \$50,000 per year. Twenty three percent of us claim our earnings as less than \$25,000. Note: I have not broken down income by gender, age or any other indicators yet, but I am certain that this will be an interesting exercise that I may wish to conduct later as we accumulate a larger number of survey responses.

Some of our members have been with us from the very establishment of the organization (correct me if I am wrong on this) in the year 1982. The average membership term however is 4.5 years. Most of the "new" Friends North members are women.

When asked why you joined Friends North you answered:

65% I Believe in the General Mission of the Organization

57% To Meet like-minded People  
40% I Have Participated in Friends North Events/Programs and Was Pleased with My Experience

38% I Know Someone Who Is/Was Involved in the Organization

32% I Am Impressed by the Organization's Work to Date

28% I Need/Want the Organization's Support in My Life

19% I (Or Someone Close to Me) Was Deeply Affected by Homophobia

6% I Was Personally Affected/Victimized by Hate Crime  
(100% Verbal & 100% Physical)

5% Someone Close to Me Was Affected/Victimized by Hate Crime (50% Verbal & 50% Physical)

We tend to be involved in our community. In addition to Friends North, many of us volunteer our time in other organizations. 15% of the people who responded indicated that they are active with the Wellness Network, and the same number claimed involvement with the Out 'n About Lesbian Coffeehouse. Nearly as many showed an interest and involvement with PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and a growing group interested in GLSTN (Gay Lesbian Straight Teachers Network) came in next. Other organizations mentioned included: Gay Alcoholics Anonymous, the National Organization of Women, the Rapp Group, Windfire and several others ranging from the Network in Grand Rapids, to the National gay/lesbian task force and LAHR, to the ALCU and Affirmations.

A clear majority of you indicated that you wanted Friends North to provide Advocacy services and help others within our community. The task ahead will be for Friends North to take a more active role in establishing effective connections with various public and private agencies and the raising of public awareness on the Issue of homophobia through the Media and Other Means. Most of you (57%) urged us to move toward the creation of a Lesbian/Gay/Bi-friendly Regional Business Directory. Other popular ideas included: (48%) Creating Informative Materials for Use in Northern Michigan Communities, (44%) Providing More Member Oriented Services (e.g., a Lending Library for Books and Videos), (38%) Additional Programming (e.g., a Speaker / Entertainer Series), (38%) Providing Friends North Membership Cards (Includes Discounts at Area Businesses), (38%) Developing Regional Chapters and Increasing Membership (e.g., Petoskey, Charlevoix etc.) And (32%) Establishing a Trained (Lesbian/Gay) Speakers Bureau. Many of you provided ideas

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## TRIANGLE REPORT

Henry Messer

The TRIANGLE FOUNDATION held a Board retreat in Douglas, Michigan, November 22-24, 1996.

In addition to the Trustees, some Advisors a few guests who are very important to the organization, attended. At this weekend retreat, major enhancements in the organization were put forward.

The Mission Statement was revised somewhat. The Goals and Objectives of TRIANGLE were revisited and clarified with specific persons designated to carry some of them out.

Because of rapid growth of the TRIANGLE FOUNDATION, the organization can no longer just get along with minimal underpaid staff and some volunteers. Professional expertise in direction is needed.

The TRIANGLE FOUNDATION gives the most bang for the buck of any organization that we know of, but as organizations grow, professional management becomes required, and will allow an even more efficient operation.

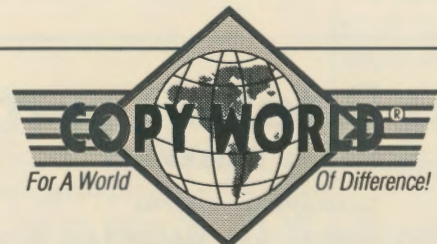
There has been a tentative commitment from an individual to make a \$25,000.00 challenge grant for development to the organization. This grant would depend on raising a matching \$25,000.00 from general sources, dedicated to that development. With that \$50,000.00 plus an additional \$25,000.00 requested from the Hope Fund, we should be able to recruit and hire a full time Executive Director and raise salaries of our present staff to more acceptable levels. A search committee has been named to begin the search.

The organization is moving rapidly toward more Michigan state-wide agendas. Catherine Bailey is on board to work with organizations around the whole state regarding Legislative Policy matters. The Anti-Violence Project has already established several reporting stations about the state, and this project is now in the hands of Sean Kosofsky.

A libel lawsuit against Rep. Deborah Whyman of Canton is being written.

Progress!

If you would like to know more, please give us a call at 313-537-3323.



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that the newly elected board of directors will actively discuss in 1997.

Nearly everybody who responded to the survey had many kind words to say about the Friends North organization, but also included were some points of criticism that we we should make some effort to remedy. Some of constructive criticism included: the existence of cliques, and the judging of others without knowing them. Others noted a need to be more inclusive. More than one person said, "I attended [functions and meetings] and felt like an outsider." One such comment was followed by the simple and positive suggestion that "board members should walk around and greet and welcome people, not just chat with folks they already know." Some respondents felt that we were too political as an organization, others felt that we were not political enough. I will continue to share survey results, comments and suggestions from you, our Friends North members, in future articles.

A perennial question that we often ask is: Who are we, who do we, or should we, represent as an organization? The overwhelming majority of you feel that we should represent -all- queer folks (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and the transgendered) as well as those people that share our lives.

Currently the Member Services Committee of Friends North consists of Julie Parker, Brenda Bartz, Tom Kincaid and yours truly, M'Lynn Hartwell. We would like to invite you to join with us in seeking a clearer understanding of our community and developing new ideas based upon that understanding. It is our goal that this board will try to serve you, our membership, better than ever before. You do not have to be a member of the Friends North Board to serve on the Member Services Committee.

Friends North represents you! Hearing what you have to say is critical—if we are to do our job well. You may contact Friends North at Post Office Box 572, Traverse City MI 49685.

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### KEVIN B. WOLF

Nov. 20, 1968 - Jan. 12, 1996

Dear KB,

I Love You and I Miss You... Our Life together was an adventure filled with Love, Affection, Laughter, Travel, Moving to discover new places together, and Our Wonderful Family & Great Friends...

But Best of all it was filled with You & Me...

I Hope you found Music in Heaven...

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Sleep Tight... Stay Close

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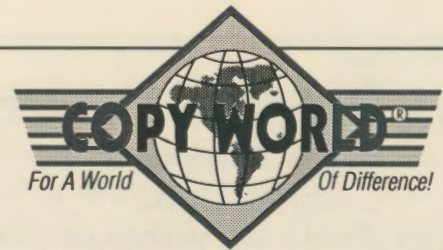
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## NEWS CLIPS

Richard Tuxbury

### **Ford Motor Company Doesn't Discriminate**

Chairman Alex Trotman has changed Corporate Policy Letter No. 2 to include sexual orientation as one of the groups protected by non-discrimination. The new Ford Motor Company policy is dated November 14, 1996.

### **Massachusetts Would Honor Gay Unions**

Gov. William F. Weld declared that if a Hawaiian law recognizing gay marriages is upheld by that state's Supreme Court, Massachusetts will be forced to recognize those bonds as legal and to endow the newlyweds with "all the benefits and burdens of marriage."

Weld said he views the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which was recently passed by Congress and is designed to allow states to ignore gay marriages sanctioned by other states, as clearly "unconstitutional."

Weld said that his primary obligation as governor is not to adhere to the will of Congress but to the words of the US Constitution. And he said he believes the Constitution requires Massachusetts and other states to recognize the legitimacy of gay couples who might eventually marry in Hawaii and travel or move to Massachusetts.

### **Mixner To Marry**

David Mixner, 50, considered President Clinton's best only gay buddy, says he will 'marry' artist Patrick Marston, 30, in November at a Los Angeles church. Mixner, a political strategist, helped raise millions for the president's 1992 run for office.

### **California Group Investigates Retirement Community of Our Own**

A Bay Area group is seeking ideas and input from those who are approaching or have reached retirement age who might consider such a venture. They are looking to locate the community within one hour of a large city, and would propose that residences run from \$80,000 to \$200,000.

They envision a community that is perhaps similar to Sun City which has about 4,000 homes and has all the amenities of an active, adult, retirement community.

Contact the Study Group by mail at POB 13, San Anselmo, CA, 94979, or at 415-487-5439.

### **Perot Systems gives gay partner benefits**

A newspaper report says Perot Systems is now offering health insurance benefits to gay and lesbian partners of employees.

The Dallas Morning News reports that Perot Systems is the first major Texas-based company to make such an offer. Company officials could not be reached for comment, but spokeswoman Tara Sexton tells The News, "We want to attract, develop and recognize talented people."

She says taking good care of workers and their loved ones is the way to attract and keep talent. Marriages between persons of the same sex are not valid in most states, so homosexual partners of covered workers can be locked out of benefits packages without such plans as Perot Systems has instituted.

### **Proposed Law Would Expand Rights of Registered Gay Couples**

Homosexual couples in the Netherlands would be permitted to register their relationships as a legally binding union under a proposed law. The proposal has broad backing in Parliament and is expected to become law in January 1998. It would give registered same-sex couples nearly identical rights as married heterosexuals—except that gay couples would not be allowed to adopt children, said a Justice Ministry spokeswoman.

Gay-rights advocates say the law would be a significant step toward recognizing homosexual marriages. The proposed law would give gay couples the same pension, social security and inheritance rights as married couples and enforce alimony payments after a breakup. Homosexuals already are welcome in the military.

### **Brazil Moves Forward on Gay Marriage**

A Senate committee approved a measure that would recognize the union between gay couples, Globo television reported. The measure would allow gay couples to sign a contract of partnership giving them the right to file joint tax returns as well as grant inheritance and pension rights to the surviving partner should one of them die.

Gay couples would not, however, be allowed to adopt children nor use one or the other's surname. The bill must now be voted on in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate where it is expected to meet fierce resistance from the so-called evangelical wing.

A recent survey conducted by the Datafolha institute showed that 51 percent of Brazilian opposed the measure, while 37 percent supported the measure and 11 percent were indifferent.

### **Activists Seek to Host Gay Games in 2002**

Gays and lesbians in Long Beach hope to bring Gay Games VI to Long Beach, an event that would draw about 15,000 athletes from throughout the world.

Andra-Nina Davis, a triathlete and chairwoman of Long Beach Games 2002 Inc., is bringing members of the community together next week to begin preparing a formal proposal to the Federation of Gay Games, the organization that will name the host city next November.

Davis says Long Beach, home to the third-largest gay and lesbian community in California after San Francisco and West Hollywood, is uniquely suited to host the event because of its weather, tourism resources and past success at hosting similar events. The other cities competing to host the nine-day games are Dallas, Minneapolis, Toronto, Montreal and Melbourne and Sydney, Australia.

"We want the whole community—gay and straight—to embrace it," Davis said. "We want to involve Los Angeles and San Diego."

### **South Africa Protects Gays and Lesbians**

A new constitution guaranteeing equal rights in South Africa finally won approval Wednesday from the Constitutional Court. The 150-page constitution drafted over two years is one of the most liberal in the world, outlawing capital punishment and protecting gay and lesbian rights.

## DEARLY BELOVED

*Lost among the passionate cries for legalization of same sex marriage is the private conversation, ambivalent and anxious, that many gays are having.*

*By Achy Obejas, Cultural Affairs Writer*

A friend and I are in a Rogers Park apartment on a wintry day minutes after the TV news has been turned off with a quick click. It's just a fading hole of light on the screen now.

We are contemplating Hawaii. Not the honeymoon getaway of paper umbrella-topped drinks and endless sunny beaches, but our Hawaii, a different kind of paradise, where three same-sex couples have chosen to take their challenge of the existing marriage laws as far up the legal hierarchies as it'll go.

Just prior to the news report about Hawaii, my friend had chided me because I'd forgotten her four- (or was it five?)-year anniversary with her girlfriend. I had not done my part, she noted, in being supportive of her relationship, even though she knows I care about her and her partner very much.

"If you could, would you marry your lover?" I ask, the news report lingering like static between us.

My friend sighs, shrugs. She has her whole soul invested in this woman, whom she unabashedly calls the love of her life.

"Maybe," she says. "Not yet. I don't know. I don't really know what that means."

And this, I think, is essential. Lost among the passionate public cries for legalization of same sex marriage by gay and lesbian activists, this is the private conversation, ambivalent and anxious, that we are reluctant to admit many of us are having.

Certainly same sex marriage is an enormously popular issue in our communities. Legal marriage would fulfill many a romantic promise. It would recognize commitment. And on the practical front, its many benefits—tax breaks and insurance, hospital visits and inheritances, to name but a few—would simplify what is for same sex couples a legal nightmare.

Only a few of the most radical queer activists actually argue against codifying same sex marriage as a civil right. For most of us, the legal

claim is simple: If sanction is afforded to one group, it should be afforded to all groups.

But how will our relationships be affected by the institution of marriage, a kind of emotional apogee for heterosexuals who grow up anticipating it, but more of a mirage, a blip on the fantasy screen, for most gays and lesbians?

Because this is the real trick—to slip into modern marriage, an institution that is essentially designed in the strictest heterosexual image.

Ironically, perhaps before Stonewall (the beginnings of gay liberation in 1969) and before the feminist movement, imagining same sex marriage might have been easier. The notion of equality between men and women was no more advanced in the homosexual communities than in the mainstream.

Back then, many same sex couples mimicked opposite sex couples: one (the male) was strong and dominant, while the other (the female) was passive and submissive. In the simplest, most elementary terms, we called these butch/femme relationships; we called them, aptly enough, roles—as if we knew all along these Adam and Eve archetypes didn't apply.

Not that marriage is exactly biblical. Regardless of what its proponents claim, if the institution were carbon-dated, about the closest thing to what we now know as marriage would come approximately 600 years ago, when the Catholic Church made it a sacrament and required that priests officiate.

That never stopped anybody else from doing it differently, as Arab harems and pre-Utah Mormons can attest. Marriage always has been more fluid, more abstract, than its current advocates would admit.

But legal marriage as defined by the modern state has insisted time and time again that the model be Lucy and Desi, Barbie and Ken, Jamie and Paul Buchman. Just ask any citizen of Utah, which had to conform to precisely those terms before it could be accepted into the Union in 1896.

It would be naive, of course, to pretend that feminism, and to a lesser extent perhaps, gay liberation, haven't affected traditional marriages. Women rarely agree to obey their husbands in non-

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orthodox vows these days, and fewer and fewer men expect to fully take care of their wives in the old-fashioned economic sense.

But even though the wives still end up doing most of the housework, and the husbands most of the yardwork, at least marital expectations are different than they used to be 40 years ago. That seems to be the marriage model frozen in the minds of the signers of the Defense of Marriage Act (many of whom have been divorced), the legally questionable legislation aimed at prohibiting same sex marriage that was passed by Congress and signed by the president.

Feminism, for all its problems, has made us believe that equality between men and women is both noble and possible.

These days, I see my heterosexual friends working to make their marriages survive, not just as a social framework, but as a vital, energizing force. They fight mightily against traditional roles—I see mothers working while fathers stay home, husbands adjusting their careers when their wives advance in theirs, and nobody much expecting a hot meal on the table when they walk through the door after a hard day at work.

I don't know anybody who hasn't at least considered couples counseling during tough times. I see heterosexual couples sometimes separate to solve their problems. I notice that books about heterosexual communications (notably "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus") crowd the best-seller lists year after year.

And everyone feels the statistical weight of half of all legal (i.e. heterosexual) marriages ending in divorce.

The thing is, that even as heterosexuals struggle with their own sexual liberation and a redefinition of the old marital contract, gays and lesbians are caught in a whole other argument: not redefinition, but definition.

What is a gay marriage? A lesbian marriage?

Freed from the struggle for equality within the couple, what—besides the obvious legal advantages—constitutes same sex marriage?

One of the great notions of gay relationships is that when we get together as a couple, we do so for only one reason—love.

We tell ourselves that, unlike heterosexuals, we don't do it for the children because, until recently, we rarely brought them into the world with the idea of raising them together—and that is still a risky proposition. Or economic advantage, because palimony is essentially a heterosexual game; just think Clint Eastwood and Sandra Locke, to name a recent example.

In fact, we probably find day-to-day life, with its tiny but insistent homophobic irritants, really more wearing for us than for heterosexuals. So, what other possible reasons could we have but the sheer desire to be together?

Heterosexuals may marry as an ultimate sign of love and/or commitment, but when gays and lesbians have successful relationships, about all we can do is sing that Joni Mitchell song and hope that's

enough: "We don't need no piece of paper from the City Hall/ Keeping us tied and true."

Frankly, who would go through the hassle of homosexuality if not for love?

In the absence of legal marriage—in other words, having been forced to invent ourselves from scratch—we've created a variety of arrangements with our partners, many that look an awful lot like heterosexual marriage, but many, too, that are outside any conventional view of marriage.

Most of these arrangements are monogamous, a few are not. Many involve co-habitation, some do not. Most involve shared resources, many don't.

Sometimes we call these units marriage. The point is they function like marriage: They provide intimacy and grounding, an economic foundation, a vehicle to express love and lust, to share and debate values, and a way—yes—to raise children.

What all of these gay and lesbian relationships share, though, is a unique negotiation between the partners. Very little goes unsaid, because very little can be taken for granted. Without specific models, nothing is simply understood.

Even those relationships that mirror traditional marriage require a discussion of who will play what role, and to what extent, and with what exceptions.

Marriage proposes a standard. Certain expectations—and I don't mean of fidelity or duration or depth of commitment. After all, heterosexual marriages aren't all necessarily entered into on those terms, and gays and lesbians aren't absent those qualities in relationships.

Gays and lesbians—and bisexuals, transgendered and transsexual people, and anyone else thinking about entering into legal same sex marriage regardless of what they call themselves—haven't defined those standards yet, so as to measure their effect.

I know this can sometimes happen to heterosexuals. I have a friend, Jim, who married his live-in girlfriend after many years. Although nothing changed outwardly—they already had bought a house together, shared a checking account, rewritten their wills—he swears that marriage added something deep and undefinable to the relationship.

There's no question that for some same sex couples, legal marriage will speed up societal and family acceptance—just like the Supreme Court's striking down miscegenation laws in 1967 erased barriers against mixed-race marriages, if not entirely the prejudice against them.

Perhaps for us, marriage will be strictly practical—more like the Romans, with an emphasis on property and responsibilities. Maybe, just maybe, our notions of ultimate love will remain outside marriage, independent of any institution—not because of necessity, but of desire.

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# GLAAD NEWS

GAY & LESBIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST DEFAMATION, INC.

## Mel Gibson to Meet Up-and-Coming Lesbian and Gay Filmmakers — Actor will Host Seminar on "Conspiracy Theory" Set

LOS ANGELES, CA, NOVEMBER 25 1996-The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and actor/director Mel Gibson will host 10 lesbian and gay filmmakers for an on-location seminar on the set of Gibson's new film, Conspiracy Theory. The day-long seminar is scheduled to take place in early January, 1997 in Los Angeles.

Mel Gibson, Conspiracy Theory director Richard Donner and producer Joel Silver will provide up-and-coming lesbian and gay filmmakers with an up-close and personal look into the inner workings of a major Hollywood feature film. Last May, representatives of GLAAD and Mr. Gibson met to discuss the actor's relationship with the lesbian and gay community. The meeting, and the discussions that followed, led to the creation of this groundbreaking seminar.

"GLAAD is proud to offer up-and-coming lesbian and gay filmmakers the opportunity to spend time on set with an actor and director of Mel Gibson's caliber," said William Waybourn, GLAAD's managing director. "We hope that the GLAAD seminar will help lesbian and gay filmmakers get a foot in the door, and Hollywood to more accurately represent lesbians and gay men in film."

Seminar participants will be chosen from a nationwide pool of young lesbian and gay filmmakers. Criteria for selection include geographical balance and ethnic, racial and gender diversity. Waybourn added, "GLAAD is committed to seeing that the event's participants represent the diversity of our community."

In addition to the GLAAD seminar, Gibson recently held day-long lectures at Harvard and USC School of Cinema in an effort to reach out to film students.

GLAAD is the nation's lesbian and gay news bureau and the only national lesbian and gay media watchdog organization. GLAAD promotes fair, accurate, and inclusive representation as a means of challenging discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity.

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## MARRIAGE: THE ULTIMATE PERK

By Patricia Nell Warren

For months now, the news has echoed with angry sound bytes from enemies of same-sex marriage. Homosexual nuptials, it's being said, will tarnish the "sanctity" of heterosexual marriage.

Gosh, do these folks ever read the newspaper? Or a history book? Marriage has already been deeply de-sanctified by centuries of festering heterosexual pragmatism.

Admittedly my views are colored by experience. For 16 years I tried to be the perfect straight wife...gave it the old college try. But I never felt sacred — just felt more and more stifled and dishonest. When my homophobic spouse finally found out, he told me I was "sick." My first and only visit to a shrink revealed that he shared my spouse's opinion. So I ran for my life — divorce and coming out.

Apologists for "traditional values" seem to forget the real history of marriage. Christian civilization was built by royalty and nobility who saw marriage as dynastic. People wedded for titles, wealth, feudal estates, vassals, heirs — to link empires and win wars. Lifelong compulsory monogamy and chastity belts were invented to ensure that a husband passed his power only to his genetic offspring. While these marriages were sprinkled in holy water by ministers of "heaven", many of them were made in hell — as the tortured histories of blueblood families can tell us.

When the American Revolution separated church and state, it also separated marriage from church control. Marriage became basically a civil arrangement. Today, many American nuptials still start with church bells. But the "sanctity" of civil marriage is arguable, since it boils down to a list of heterosexual legalities that judges can rule on. These include inheritance rights, tax breaks, hospital visitation, pensions, joint custody — all things that homosexuals want too, and are told they can't have, in the name of "sanctity." Since when do the arbiters of "holiness" include probate courts, hospital receptionists, company pension plans and the IRS?

Americans also rely on marriage for certain perks and conveniences. For minors, getting married is a way of evading parental custody. For embarrassed parents of a pregnant teen, shotgun marriage (hopefully) preserves the family honor. Marriage can get you free airline travel, a dental plan, diplomatic privileges, free housing on military bases, U.S. citizenship, the boss's daughter, and slave labor in the form of lots of kids. Marriage routinely enhances a celebrity career, even serves as cover for some CIA intelligence work. Repeated marriage-and-divorce allows some folks

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to cloak sexual adventure in legality. Years of living together in "common law" can equal marital status, or at least get you a nasty "palimony" lawsuit. To the man or woman who marries for nice things, marriage may equal prostitution.

Are these profane perks protected by state and federal law? Yes. Are they sacred? Hardly. It is amusing to think how many heterosexual Americans would scream bloody murder if they lost their "right" to this array of conveniences. Yet they would turn around and deny those same perks to gay people.

Closet marriages go beyond perk, into prevarication. "Closet" is how homosexuals historically conformed to the old feudal mandate. Nobody tries harder to make marriage work, than a fag or dyke or bi who is hell-bent to pass! We have even pumped out children to be cannon fodder for feudalism. Indeed, the gay community's love of drag and theater may be instilled in us by long centuries of performing with that sword held to our throat. But an Oscar-winning act is still an act, no matter how brilliantly sequined in "sanctity" it might be.

Interestingly enough, homosexuals don't have monopolize the closet. Marriage is a good place for certain straights to hide too. Like the prostitute with heart of gold who hides her past by marrying Mr. Respectable with heart of gold. Or the "missing person" who hides in a marriage to start a new life, and cover the trail. Or the straight military man who grudgingly marries to advance his career, because the brass don't like to promote bachelors to admiral.

Marriage has no global agreement about what makes it "sacred." It's social silly-putty, squished into a thousand shapes by bias and blind belief. To the Israelites of the Ten Commandments, "sanctity" of marriage included polygamy, and a man's right to kill his wife and children if they got out of line. To feudal lords, the "sacredness" of a serf wedding required the bride to give her virginity to the lord. To the American colonists, a woman could work her way into marriage through contract labor or being an indentured servant. To Southern slaveowners, marriage was out of bounds for black people. To my Irish Catholic forebears, the marriage knot required a priest's "authority". To my Protestant forebears, Catholic sacraments were "evil popery," so only a preacher's words could authorize the knot. But to bride and groom on the high seas, a ship captain's authority is "sacred" enough.

Some of my native American forebears had more sensible views. A couple stood before Creation and married each other on their own authority as human beings. They had no concept of being married by the power of some other person's religion or authority. "Nobody tells a Cheyenne what to do," my cousins used to say. If things went bad, all the aggrieved person had to do was put the partner's

moccasins outside the teepee door...with the toes pointing away.

Can today's American marriage overcome its sorry history as a list of perks? Can a person today make it sacred and wonderful?

Yes, I believe so. Real sacredness is infused into any relationship only by the two people themselves, be they straight or gay. They build a balance between their own self-respect and their respect for each other — and for their children, if they have them. If this sacredness is not deeply felt on the personal level, no law or sermon or tax break can put it there! Not even God and Goddess!

Not every heterosexual wants this kind of relationship. Not every homosexual does either. But those who do deserve the best that marriage can offer.

So yes...marriage in the '90s is darkly tarnished. But denying marriage to gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people will not untarnish it!

Heterosexuals have to take responsibility for the mess they've made of marriage. They were the ones who wanted to have marriage. They have spent 3000 years making it a juggernaut of Judaeo-Christian empire, politics, patriarchy, property, including their "right" to control of wife, children and genetic heritage. Now, in the ultimate paradox, heterosexuals may actually need the help of us homosexuals, if they want to put some sacredness back in marriage.

*Reprinted with the permission of the author Patricia Nell Warren is author of "The Front Runner" and other bestselling books, as well as a widely published commentator. Her publisher is Wildcat Press. Copyright (c) 1996 by Patricia Nell Warren. All Rights Reserved.*

*Contact Ms. Warren at: Wildcat Press, 8306 Wilshire Blvd. Box 8306, Beverly Hills, CA 90211 (email wildcatprs@aol.com)*

## PRIDE-FLINT DISSOLVES

The non-profit organization which served the Flint lesbian and gay community has disbanded as of January 1st. The Board of Directors took the action reluctantly, but saw no alternative in the light of lack of participation in the PRIDE activities and programs as well as lack of interest in serving in leadership positions. Their last letter to its members said that they preferred an orderly termination rather than a lingering death.

With the passing of this fine organization and its newsletter, community organizations un-associated with state universities are very few. Remaining are the Network in Grand Rapids, a very active Lansing Organization of Human Rights, Affirmations in Detroit, the Kalamazoo Resource Center, and of course, Friends North.

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Affirmations Lesbian/Gay Community Center  
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<http://www.webspace.com/~tcc/affirmations/index.htm>  
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e-mail ..... lahr@macatawa.org  
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PO Box 9, Traverse, MI 49685 ..... 616-943-8800  
NOW (National Organization for Women) Gail Trill ..... 616-938-1333

## LOCAL HIV/AIDS HEALTH COUNSELING:

HIV/AIDS Wellness Networks, GTA, Inc., ..... 616-947-1110  
P.O. Box 1632, Traverse City, MI 49685 ..... 1-800-494-1160  
Business Office ..... 616-933-0279  
HIV/AIDS Wellness Networks - HIV Support Group and  
Family and Significant Other Support Group ..... 616-947-1110  
Thomas Judd Care Center, 1211 W Front St., Traverse City,  
Mary Dillinger, RN, Clinical Nurse Specialist ..... 616-935-8140  
David Rushlow, ACSW Social Worker ..... 616-935-6385  
H.A.N.D.S. (HIV/AIDS Support: Petoskey) ..... 1-800-248-6777  
Community Health Clinic ..... 616-929-4448  
(anonymous counseling/testing; same-day results no fee)  
Northern Michigan Planned Parenthood ..... 616-929-1844  
(anonymous counseling & testing)  
Grand Traverse County Health Department ..... 616-922-4831  
(anonymous HIV Testing Center)  
Emmet County Health Department (Petoskey) ..... 616-347-6014  
Also call the District Health Department in your area