



GLSO NEWS

Vol. 14 February 1999

No. 2

A publication of the Lexington Gay and Lesbian Service Organization

Moveable Feast

Moveable Feast, organized and coordinated by Michael Thompson, is a volunteer run organization that delivers hot meals every day to at least 40 people living with AIDS or HIV related illnesses and disabilities. They are located in the basement of the St. Augustine Episcopal Chapel at 472 Rose St. (252-2867). This successful project needs our help to continue their work.

The Episcopal Diocese of Lexington's AIDS Ministry began hosting monthly dinners for People Living with AIDS. In 1996 they were joined by other religious organizations as it became increasingly obvious that more nutritional support was needed.

Michael organized Moveable Feast because he saw that people with AIDS were often declining in health from a lack of nutritious food. Clients consult with nutritionists to develop a diet that addresses their specific needs. Meals are prepared to meet these needs in the modernized kitchen of St Augustines.

Moveable Feast needs your help. Consider giving them a call to assist in food preparation, office work, or delivery. A few hours a month from a number of us could make a big difference. During the day there is a need for people to help with tasks such as
Moveable continued on page 2

Court Cafe Benefit

The second in the Court Café Series will be held February 7 at Regina's at 116 N. Upper. From 7:30 until 10 pm, for a cost of \$7.95, you can enjoy all the Chili you can eat.

This is not your run of the mill "Hormel" variety chili. Regina has a new concept restaurant opening in Indianapolis called Chili Babies. Her family has sampled hundreds of one-of-a-kind chilis for this restaurant and they have chosen some receipts that are both delicious and unique. Regina has agreed to premiere her new menu in Lexington. There will be chilis from around the world: Texas Style, Thai, white, chili with and without beans, etc.

Net proceeds of this benefit will support the designated charities of the RSIC: AVOL, Moveable Feast, and The Pride Center of the Bluegrass. Drinks are not included in the price and there is a one drink minimum to receive this special deal. Sunday night always features drink specials, just ask.

Regina has been hosting popular Sunday nights suppers for a while and she has agreed to let the Court hold monthly fundraising dinners there. So join us on the first Sunday of each month for a benefit dinner and bar night at Regina's. See Community News for another Court function in February.

Men's Chorus in Drag

You have seen the men of the chorus looking dignified in tuxedos on various stages around Lexington. You have heard their beautiful renditions of many types of choral music. But if you missed them in last year's benefit drag show, then you haven't seen them at their campy best.

Don't miss this second annual fundraiser at the Bar Complex on Wednesday February 17 at 9 pm. Admission is \$5 at the door. The Men's Chorus and the Pride Center will benefit from this event.

And this will be an Event! Tuesday and Sundae De La Rouge will be headliners with most members of the chorus performing individual and group numbers. One thing that makes this show special is that these men know and love music. They will entertain you with a wonderful variety of vocal styles along with a few of the more common disco diva delights. So, join us for a great evening, you will not regret it!

Sponsor of the Month

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The GLSO News
Vol.14 Issue 2
Published Monthly by

*The Lexington Gay
Lesbian Service
Organization*
321 Second St.

Editors:
Mary Crone
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Charlie Perkins

**GLSO Annual Dues
and Newsletter: \$15**
**Dues and Newsletter for
Couples: \$20**

Opinions expressed in the GLSO News are those of the authors and don't necessarily represent those of the GLSO Board. Submissions are welcome and become the property of the GLSO. The staff reserves the right to edit submissions and advertisements as well as the right to reject any submissions or advertisements.

Community News and Events

Movable Feast Cont.

chopping vegetables and answering the phone. Early evening from 5 to 7 pm. is delivery time. Volunteers deliver 5 to 6 dinners on a route determined by proximity. If you learn a route it becomes easy and takes less than an hour. Monetary donations are also welcomed.

Find a couple of hours a month that you can donate and give Movable Feast a call at 252-2867.

Discussion/Support Group

Whether you are just coming out or have been living out for a while, this could be the discussion group for you. We met twice in January and had such a good time that we are continuing into February. Join us at the downtown Public Library at 7:30 on Wednesdays February 3 and 10, Conference room C which is across from the elevators.

Come armed with your opinions; there are many issues in our community to discuss and the topic can change quickly. For more information call Mary at 266-5904 or e-mail Jeremy at Ciscoboy@webtv.net.

Networking & Pride Planning

The Networking and Pride Planning meeting will be Tues. Feb. 16 at 7 pm at the Pride Center, 387 Waller Ave. We hope that every community group will send a representative. The Pride Month Committee sets the calendar, plans the picnic, and helps organize the banquet. Individuals wanting to become involved are encouraged to attend. This marks the end of the Gay Nineties and we want Pride Month to be a fitting celebration. Come lend us a hand.

Valentines Day Food and Film

Celebrate Valentine's Day at the Pride Center Sunday, February 14. We'll be serving a chili dinner, \$3 per person, beginning at 5 p.m. and showing the video *Out of the Past*, free of charge, at 6:30. GLSO is sponsoring this event as a fund-raiser for the Pride Center.

Out of the Past is a documentary about the struggle of Kelli Peterson, a Salt Lake City high school student who established a gay-straight alliance that resulted in the banning of all clubs at East High School. This film intersperses her story with short histories of gays and lesbians from our past. This includes the stories of Sarah Juitt and Annie Fields, a 1880's "Boston Marriage," Henry Gerber, a postal worker who started a gay rights organization after World War I, Bayard Rustin, an advisor to Martin Luther King, and Barbara Gittings an activist from the 1950's. (An article about Rustin starts on page 4.)

Everyone's invited -- you don't need to have a Valentine to attend. Who knows, you may meet one while you're there. This is an excellent chance to meet and mingle with others from our LBGT community.

Maryanne Abbid is conducting a survey of lesbians and gay men over the age of 55 concerning their attitudes about social services for the elderly. This survey only takes 15 to 20 min. to complete. If you or someone you know in Kentucky or Tennessee would be interested in participating, or if you would like more information, contact Maryanne at 254-6254 or at Maryannepooter@hotmail.com.

Community News

PINK PAGES

The first meeting of the GLSO Committee to publish the 1999 edition of the *Pink Pages* met in January and has mailed some 150 brochures to potential advertisers. Those responding by March 1 may be eligible for discounted ad rates. (If your business or organization did not receive one, see contact below.)

The committee will meet again on Wednesday, February 24, at 7pm, at the Pride Center, 387 Waller Avenue, and continues to look for people to become involved.

"We particularly need people interested in marketing, but we can use anyone who wants to put some energy--and time--into this community effort," said John Eastwood, editor and GLSO board member. Volunteer work is a great way to meet people!"

The Pink Pages is a fund-raiser to help support the Pride Center of the Bluegrass. The 1999 edition is scheduled to be available during Pride Month! For further information, contact John Eastwood at 606-269-6969 (okay to leave message on machine), or rainbear@qx.net.

Interweave

Join us Sunday, Feb. 21 after the Sunday Service for our next monthly luncheon. We will be making plans to co-host a Coffee House with Wishing Chair in March. For more information call Davina (271-6174)

Miss Valentine

The Royal Sovereign Imperial Court is having a Miss Valentine contest on Wed, Feb 10. Ms. Jordon

Taylor, Miss Valentine of 1998, will be turning over her crown to a new queen. There will be some outstanding performers so come join the fun at Club 141 at 9 pm. The cost is \$3 to benefit the Robert H. Williams Cultural Center. For information and applications call John at 294-0901.

Miss Lexington Supreme

Congratulations to Miss Latoya Bacall who won the Miss Lexington Supreme title with show stopping talent. The first runner up was Taylor Bryce and second runner up was Ginger Grant. Latoya also won Miss Congeniality. Thanks to Leigh Angelique for organizing this pageant.

P-FLAG

Parents, Friends, and Family of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) will meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church (corner of Armstrong Mill and Tates Creek Roads). P-FLAG is open to anyone who has need of support or is willing to offer support to people, including straight spouses, who have friends or family members, who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered.

MCC Events

The Metropolitan Community Church is sponsoring a movie night on the second Friday of the month. February's movie night will take place at 1283 Oaklawn Park, 7:00 pm, the 12th. The film will be "Strawberry & Chocolate" produced by Robert Redford and Miramax Films in Cuba. It was nominated for

best foreign film in 1994. Meet David, a naive college kid out on his own for the first time, Diego, a gay writer anxious to leave Cuba, and Nancy, Diego's neighbor, with a few lessons for David of her own. Also, in honor of Black History month, the short subject film, All God's Children, will be shown.

Black History month will also be observed with special readings, prayers or music at each worship service during February.

The Church also continues to have Games Nights on the fourth Friday of each month. We will meet on Feb 26, 7 pm at the Pride Center. Bring you favorite snack and game. This is a fun way to meet new people. If you have questions you can call Tomas Edison at 226-0978 or e-mail me at (twedis1@pop.uky.edu).

Fairness

Lexington Fairness website is no longer at: <http://lexfair.home.ml.org>. The actual URL is now: <http://qx.net/jeff/fairness/fairness.html>.

DOJ Pride

If you are a member of the public safety field (federal, state or local), we want to help you get the support you need to make it in this stressful line of work. We are working together to make a network of "family" in the business of helping others. All information regarding membership in DOJ Pride is strictly confidential. If you are working in law enforcement, corrections, fire, emergency medical services or any other part of the public safety field call Skeet (277-0450), Scotty (273-6111) or Robin (321-8526) for more information.

Rediscovering Our History

Bayard Rustin

Gay Black Civil Rights Leader

by Mary Crone

Watching *Out of the Past* last month on Public Television, I was surprised and delighted to see Bayard Rustin profiled as a major civil rights activist for four decades who was also an out gay man. Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen, by Jervis Anderson provided information for this brief look at his life.

Bayard Rustin was raised as a Quaker and lived a life of commitment to nonviolence and human rights work. As a young adult he worked and traveled extensively with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He was a conscientious objector during World War II and worked with the War Resister's League. In 1940 he was granted exemption from the service as a conscientious objector; being a quaker was enough to qualify for one of the options offered as alternative service to the country. After consideration Bayard decided not to accept the alternative service, but to make his protest of war more substantial by not accepting what he saw as a privilege not offered to other war resisters, certainly not to many black men. He was incarcerated and spent most of his three year sentence in a federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky. He continued his work in prison, claiming and winning the right to read non-censured books and magazines and working to end racial segregation.

After his release from prison, Rustin returned to the Fellowship of Reconciliation. At that time, he was one of the few blacks in the pacifist movement where he learned the strategies of nonviolent opposition

that he applied within the black civil rights movement. He also worked and became friends with A. Philip Randolph, Brotherhood of Sleeping-car Porters Union, who became a father figure and supporter for the rest of his life.

In 1955-56, Rustin went to Montgomery to join the leadership of the bus boycott. He had already organized numerous protests in the south and was known and respected by other leaders for his creative strategies and commitment to nonviolence. In the months spent in Montgomery, Rustin drew up plans for what became the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and strategized to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a nationally known leader.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott and Dr. King did capture the attention of America. Rustin worked closely with King for the next four years as the civil rights movement gained national support.

The fact that Rustin was gay was never a secret, although it did trouble some of the people with whom he worked. After one arrest for "deviant sexual practices," friends suggested to Rustin that he get therapy to cure him so that he would not embarrass the organizations he worked for further. Although Rustin himself never seems to have been ashamed of his orientation, it was a time when even liberals thought of homosexuality as an illness.

Rustin's homosexuality was made a political issue in 1960, when Congressman Adam Clayton Powell spoke publicly warning of "sinister influences" endangering the civil rights movement. Privately, he threatened to publicize that Rustin and King were having an affair.

Although no one believed this lie, Rustin offered King his resignation and much to his surprise, King accepted it.

For over two years Rustin was not involved in the civil rights leadership, although he had many opportunities for pursuing his commitments to nonviolence and human rights in other areas. In 1963 the Leaders of various Civil Rights organizations debated asking Rustin to help organize the March on Washington. Roy Wilkins (NAACP) and Whitney Young (National Urban League) were reluctant to include him, but A. Philip Randolph spoke of his genius at organizing, saying that he was perhaps the only man who could pull together all the aspects of this effort in the little time they had remaining.

Randolph, with the support of John Lewis, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Dr. King, SCLC, won agreement from his more conservative colleagues that as long as Randolph's name remained as the official director of the March, Rustin should be asked to organize and coordinate the event.

It did not take long for critics of the March to attack Rustin. Senator Strom Thurmond called him a communist, a draft dodger and a sexual pervert. Even though this was exactly what conservative black leaders had feared, this time they all stood strongly behind Rustin. Randolph spoke publically of his pride in the work Bayard Rustin had done for the civil rights movement and was doing for the March. Criticism of the March continued, but Rustin was no longer a target.

There continued to be disagreements but it was clear that Rustin was the only man who could orga-

nize the March. Rustin was criticized for placing Dr. King last on the program, partly because of concern that people would start to leave. But no one wanted to speak after King, knowing the power he possessed. Rustin chose wisely. At the end of the day, when King rose and delivered "I Have A Dream", America listened. We are still listening to those words; a crowning moment in American History.

In *Out of the Past*, John Lewis (SNCC, now a Congressman) says "without Bayard Rustin, the March would have been a bird without wings...He brought us all together. We have not had the raw courage to honor this man, because he was a homosexual."

Rustin continued his work until his death at age 75. He was eulogized by Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO, thus: "He traveled the world on behalf of the helpless, the homeless, the poor, the exploited. He understood and he taught that human freedom was a seamless fabric that all of us have to repair whenever or wherever it is torn."

I have been fascinated to rediscover this piece of our history. I grew up during this time. I watched the water hoses flattening people my age in the streets, and was shocked when five little girls were killed in the bombing of the 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham. After watching the March on Washington, I was able for the first time to speak up in disagreement when a friend, actually a gay boy that I was "dating", made a slight disparaging remark about the March. I told him how moved I was by Dr. King's speech and how I would always remember that day.

I also remember Bayard Rustin from that time period but never knew he was gay until last month. How empowering it would have been for my friend and myself to have known Rustin was gay as we watched his speech at the 93 March

If you would like to see Bayard Rustin and other historic lesbian-gay-trans people on film, come and watch *Out of the Past* at the Pride Center on Sun. Feb 14. Come for chili beginning at 5 p.m. (\$3). Free film will start at 6:30. Story on page 2.

In Business

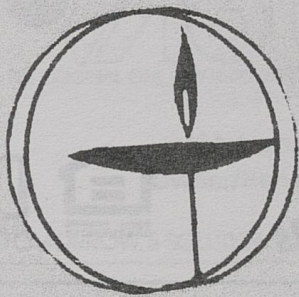
From time to time we like to highlight gay owned and gay friendly businesses, particularly those that have advertised with us. We would encourage you to patronize these businesses, letting them know you saw their ad in the GLSO News.

A new Sponsor of our newsletter is Mr. Goodcents, Subs and Pastas. They are located in The Marketplace next to the Lexington City Brewery. You can enter this shopping area from Broadway or from Virginia Ave. See their ad, including an offer for \$5 off, on page 15. They are open for lunch and dinner, hours are 10 to 9 Mon.-Thrus, 10 to 10 Fri. and Sat.

The Gift Garden at 105 North Limestone has also recently advertised with us. They carry pride items, KY. and UK souvenirs, cards, candles and other gift items. They are in the process of expanding to carry flowers. They are located between Short and Main.

The Sills Inn 1-800 number was misprinted in sponsorship ad last month. It is 1-800-526-9801

**Do you believe in speaking out
in the face of injustice?**



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SERVICES 10:45 SUNDAY

One World Film Festival

The One World Film Festival is another project of the Pew Civic Entrepreneurs, part of the One World Festival that included the successful DanCelebration in November. Our goals are to learn about the variety of cultures now represented in Kentucky, to enjoy some of what these cultures have to offer, and to celebrate our growing diversity. A number of lesbigaytrans organizations have donated to the One World Festival and I hope that members of our community will turn out for one or more movies.

A number of films will be shown between February 26 and March 8. We are in negotiation to get *Serving in Silence*, *The Marguerit Cammermeyer Story*, which we hope to show free at the Public Library. On Feb 28th at the down-

town Library at 2 pm we will show three award winning Appalshop documentaries made by Kentucky teenagers. A number of the teens directors will be present to discuss their work and a reception will follow.

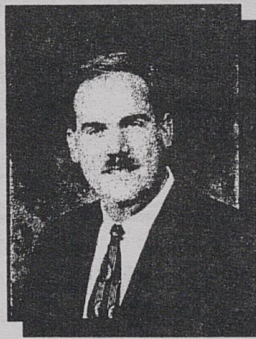
We will also be showing some films at the University of Kentucky as part of their Cultural Diversity Festival. UK has gotten *Down in the Delta*, a new release directed by Maya Angelou and starring Alfe Woodard and Weslie Snipes. This film opened to great reviews but low attendance in a few cities in December. This has been a difficult film to get, it looks like Miramax is shelving it. I encourage you to see it now. Other films are being scheduled. We will publish a complete film schedule in the March issue of GLSO News. You may also call Mary Crone for information.

Lesbian Congresswoman

January 6 marked the historic swearing in of out lesbian Tammy Baldwin (Democrat) as the U.S. Representative for Wisconsin's Second District. Baldwin is the first candidate ever to win initial election to the Congress as an open gay or lesbian. Other gay members of Congress such as Barney Frank came out while in office.

Baldwin told the Washington Post that, "I have frequently said I will do more to advance gay and lesbian civil rights in this country if I become the Congressperson associated with health care for everyone, who just happens to be a lesbian."

Baldwin believes that "The more people who have the opportunity to know and work with openly gay and lesbian people, the more acceptance and tolerance there will be."



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One Perspective

by Reinette F. Jones

There are a guesstimated 300 African American lesbians in the Bluegrass.⁽¹⁾ We can be seen in mass at events such as the Martin Luther King Day celebrations or the Roots and Heritage Festival. The complete opposite is true for attendance at functions that invite lesbians. The difference in audience numbers is more than "just the way it is"; it's about identity.

In this area race, not sexuality, is still one of the primary factors that influences participation decisions. This is not news. Kentucky was built on separation, and today there are still many voids. The lesbian community is a microcosm that contains the same issues as the larger community.

It is ideal to think the term 'lesbian' possess a powerful uniting quality that transcends race, ethnicity, religion, culture, and all else. In the real world we are an amicable and voluntarily segregated community. This includes all lesbians, not just blacks and whites. We have never been one big happy family.

There are shifting and overlapping subdivisions of families, friends,

groups and cliques, who gather often for fun and comradery. There is comfort, affirmation and a feeling of safety from being with those who are most like you. At the same time, these closed clusters of likeness filter out difference. Difference is organic; it promotes growth. It reinforces the reciprocal benefits of organizations that are open to all lesbians and seek varietal representation.

If some degree of unity is to be the goal of the community, then there must be a willingness from all sides to be seen and to be heard. There is nothing golden about silence or invisibility. If unity is not the goal, then we need do nothing and things will continue as is.

So, how are we going to enter the next century?

Intercultural Lesbians!

(1) Latest Bluegrass African American population statistics taken from County City Data Book, 1994: Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Jessamine, Madison, Scott, Woodford counties. Population divided by 2, multiplied by 1/10, minus 1/4 (children).

Ethnic Notions

In honor of Black History Month and to offer our community the opportunity to discuss race relations, GLSO is showing the excellent documentary *Ethnic Notions, Black People in White Minds* at the Pride Center Monday, February 22 at 7:00

p.m. Admission is free.

Directed and produced by Marlon Riggs and narrated by Esther Rolle, this award winning film traces the development of stereotypes which have fueled racist prejudice, ignorance, and hatred in our country over the last 170 years. Using images from cartoons, advertising, household artifacts, films and even children's rhymes, this documentary shows how dehumanizing caricatures of African Americans have been used to influence our beliefs and emotions.

While it may be easy for us to find some of the images created in the 1800s ridiculous (but nonetheless horrifying), we must question if these images are still buried deep in the American psyche. What damaging stereotypes are we perpetuating today?

As a community that suffers from stereotyping and prejudices, we as lesbigaytrans people need to raise our consciousness about *all* forms of oppression. Depending on the success of this event, we could meet regularly to talk about these issues. The GLSO discussion group meeting on Wednesdays is another possible forum for these discussions. (See page 2 for more information.)



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Pink Pages Meeting

Wed. Feb 24, 7:00

at

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	1 MONDAY	2 TUESDAY	3 WEDNESDAY	4 THURSDAY	5 FRIDAY	6 SATURDAY
	7:00 pm Women's Basketball (Seaton Gym) 8:00 pm AA Step Study	7:30 pm PFLAG Chapel (Hill Presbyterian Church)	6:00 pm Frontrunners (wp) 6:00 pm HIV/AIDS Support Group 7:00 pm MCC Study Grp (Downtown Library) 8:00 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	7:00 pm Men's Chorus Rehearsal 7:30 pm UK Lambda (Student Center)	7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	9:00 am Frontrunners (Arboretum) 7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA
7 SUNDAY	8	9	10	11	12	13
10:45 am UU Church 11:30 am LMCC 6:00 pm Dignity 6:00 pm SisterSound rehearsal 7:30 pm Court Chili Supper (Regina's)	7:00 pm GLSO Board Mtg (Pride Center) 7:00 pm Women's Basketball (Seaton Gym) 8:00 pm AA Step Study	7:30 pm Fairness Lexington (Pride Center)	6:00 pm Frontrunners (wp) 6:00 pm HIV/AIDS Support Group 7:00 pm MCC Study Grp (Downtown Library) 8:00 pm Gay/Lesbian AA 9:00 pm Court Miss Valentine (Club 141)	7:00 pm Men's Chorus Rehearsal 7:30 pm UK Lambda (Student Center)	7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	9:00 am Frontrunners (Arboretum) 7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA 8:00 pm Moonshine Bears (Crossings)
14 Valentines Day	15	16	17	18	19	20
10:45 am UU Church 11:30 am LMCC 5:00 pm Chili Dinner (Pride Center) 6:00 pm Film (Pride Center) 6:00 pm SisterSound rehearsal 6:30 pm Film (Pride Ctr)	7:00 pm Women's Basketball (Seaton Gym) 8:00 pm AA Step Study	6:30 pm Networking Potluck (Pride Center) 7:00 pm Pride Planning Session (Pride Center)	6:00 pm Frontrunners (wp) 6:00 pm HIV/AIDS Support Group 7:00 pm MCC Study Grp (Downtown Library RmB) 8:00 pm Gay/Lesbian AA 9:00 pm Men's Chorus Drag Show (Bar Complex)	7:00 pm Men's Chorus Rehearsal 7:30 pm UK Lambda (Student Center)	7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	9:00 am Frontrunners (Arboretum) 7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA
		GLSO NEWS DEADLINE SUBMIT ADDITIONS AND/OR CORRECTIONS FOR NEXT CALENDAR 273-9649				
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10:45 am UU Church 11:30 am LMCC 12:15 pm Interweave Potluck (UU Church) 6:00 pm Dignity 6:00 pm SisterSound rehearsal	7:00 pm Women's Basketball (Seaton Gym) 7:00 pm Film/Discussion (Pride Center) 8:00 pm AA Step Study		6:00 pm Frontrunners (wp) 6:00 pm HIV/AIDS Support Group 7:00 pm Pink Pages Committee Mtg (Pride Ctr.) 7:00 pm MCC Study Grp 7:30 pm Support Group (Downtown Library Rm B) 8:00 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	7:00 pm Men's Chorus Rehearsal 7:30 pm UK Lambda (Student Center)	7:00 pm LMCC Games Night 7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA	9:00 am Frontrunners (Arboretum) 7:30 pm Gay/Lesbian AA One World Film Festival (Downtown Public Library) (see article)
28						
10:45 am UU Church 11:30 am LMCC 6:00 pm SisterSound rehl One World Film Festival (Downtown Public Library) (see article)						

FEBRUARY 1999 - GLSO CALENDAR

please use Directory on last page to confirm

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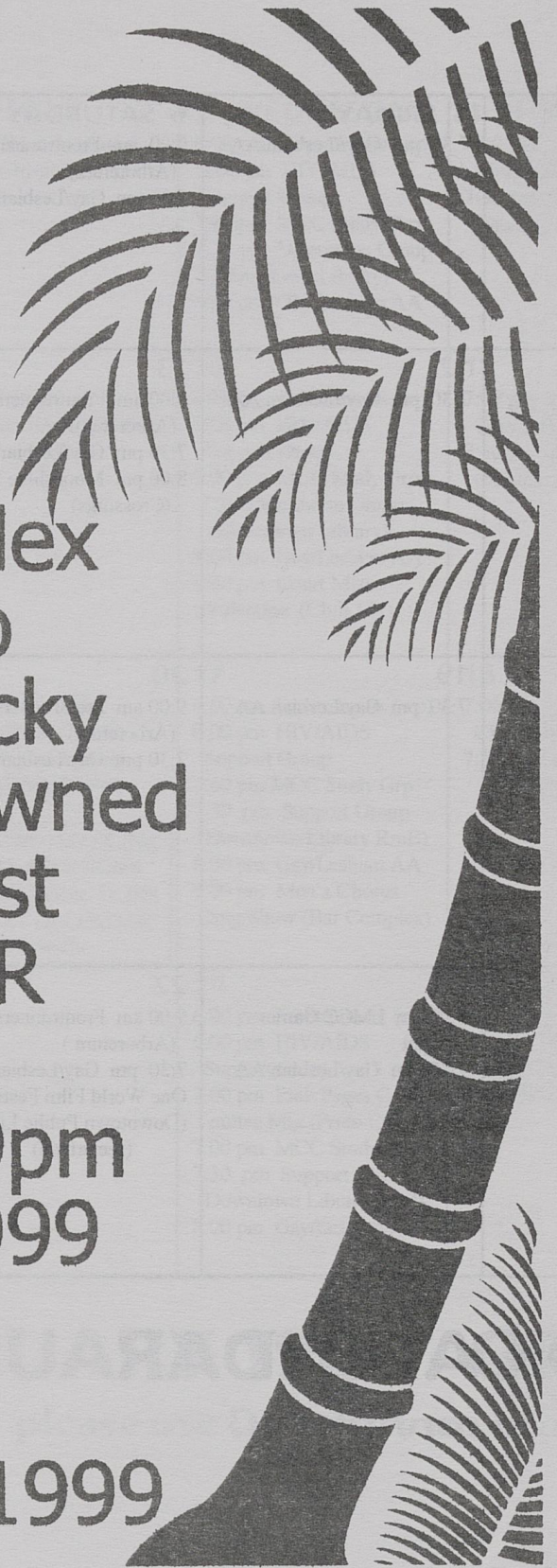
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What Do You Mean, Macaroni & Cheese Isn't a Vegetable???

by Kelly O'Ferrell

"Motivated action is doing it because there is a lack if you don't...trying to perform action that someone else wants you to perform....[Inspired action] you do by talking about what you want and why you want it. That will bring you to the vibrational connection with who you are, and from that place you will be inspired to the how, and the who, and the when, and the where." Abraham
The Science of Deliberate Creation

Tammy, my partner, came through the door a few weeks ago and there I was, sitting on the couch crying, wanting to read to her from the PETA newsletter - People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

"No, Kelly, I mean it," she said. "I don't want to hear anything you've just read."

"But just listen," I pleaded.

"No, now, I mean it. I'm not giving up meat and I don't want to hear those stories. I know animals are mistreated, but I'm not ready to give up meat."

Indeed, we'd tried giving up pork once before after reading an article in The National Humane Society's newsletter about how pigs are kept in a way totally against their natures. But, as time passed, so did our memory of those words and eventually we were eating pork - not thinking or talking about our decision.

But, here was the PETA newsletter with it's excellent writers and photographers who can strip away ignorance in a paragraph. Tam was adamant about it though so I threw out the newsletter; but not before telling her that we could not continue to pretend like nothing was happening.

Tam came home that night after work and told me she was willing to try giving up meat. We've eaten more cheese sandwiches, bean burritos, spaghetti and chili in the last month than I care to remember. For some reason, we've not been willing to go any further.

As a matter of fact, I believe I've done what I've done many times before - went all the way too soon. Instead of slowly not eating meat - going from 7 days to 6 to 5... - I went cold turkey. Tam helped out in the first weeks by reminding us that we were just doing this "one day at a time" - sometimes "one meal" at a time.

I was talking with a vegetarian friend about our decision and my difficulty when she asked me to tell her what vegetables I do like to eat.

"Well, I like green beans, pintos, greens, macaroni and cheese." After that list I was stumped.

"Kelly," she gently offered, "I believe macaroni and cheese is only considered a vegetable in the South."

"But it's in with all the other vegetables in the cafeteria line and listed under vegetables on menus."

"I know, Sweetie, but it's really not a vegetable."

She also said, "If I felt like I was suffering or being denied, I'd eat meat. There's no need to feel deprived."

That's when I began to consider my choices. I could choose to eat meat once a week for a while.

Another vegetarian friend was kind enough to take me to the Good Food's Co-op. I felt like a new comer at an old timers gay bar. I left with tofu, dried milk, wheat germ, soy milk and some other "Tam will never eat these" items. That was over a week ago.

The other night, Tam and I agreed, as we were staring into the fridge, that we couldn't believe we actually had tofu in our refrigerator. It felt like we'd just earned a new badge in the Lesbian Scouts.

Have we eaten any of that new food? Well, I tasted the soy milk and I just added 2 Tbls's of the dry milk powder to my instant oatmeal - mainly because I read that dry milk powder added nutritional value and I happened to have some for the first time.

So, why did we make this agreement with one another? If Tam and I don't speak the words, we will forget. I can feel myself falling off the vegetable wagon. There's hamburger in the freezer calling my name. I need a vegetarian pot luck support group!!!

So, I keep talking about our decision.

I told my co-op friend about my despair and she offered to feed me supper - tofu stir fry. It was the first time I'd ever tried it. I liked it - a lot.

I know tofu isn't the answer. Our willingness to try something different is what's important. That's been a big part of our relationship - willing to try something different. So, I was willing to use tofu the next day in our spaghetti sauce and Tam said she was willing to try it. She didn't care for it too much.

I had to finally leave her alone and just accept that she wasn't as enthusiastic about it as I was. I wanted us to be the perfect little lesbian tofu couple. Tam's enthusiasm would have been nice, but it's not necessary for my enjoyment.

Talking about what I'm doing and why is helping me become willing. Tam's willing to keep trying new dishes and I'm willing, and even excited now, about cooking them.

Out with the Kids... Out with the World

by Dale Rosenberg

Over the years, I have done a fair amount of public speaking about lesbian and gay parenting to school and community groups. One thing the audience always wants to know is just what lesbian and gay parents have in common. How do we differ from other parents, and how do we differ from childless gay men and lesbians?

Comparing us to parents in general, it seems to me that we are, on the whole, people extraordinarily committed to our children and to our role as parents. We who choose to have children after coming out are a self-selecting group. None of us had kids by accident. None of us became parents because it was expected of us. On the contrary, we have had to challenge the expectations of society at large, and frequently those of much of the gay community.

Legal constraints, financial obstacles, and concerns about prejudice against our families and our children have all required that we put a lot of time and effort into our decision to parent and plans to bring children into our families. Although many people in our community express interest in having children, only those lesbians and gay men most committed to parenting actually do so.

I have found over the years that, as a group, we tend to be more out of the closet in more facets of our lives than gays and lesbians who are non-parents, and, the older our children get, the more out we get. Now, I'm not saying that your average Lesbian Avenger or Queer National looks like a closet case compared to gay/lesbian moms and dads. But we do

tend to be very out and very visible in our own quiet sort of way. For some of us this is a choice, but for many of us the experience of parenting pushes us out of the closet.

Many activist groups make a practice of going where straight people are unaccustomed to encountering gay folks, staging kiss-ins or other actions to make themselves known. They do this as an educational tool, a way of letting the straight community know that there are more of us and we are more places than they think.

Well, we do that too, but we don't do it as a demonstration. We do it every day in the course of just living our lives. We meet straight people in the supermarket and on the playground, in the PTA and at the Little League. We bring them a kind of exposure to gay life and the gay community that is beyond the reach of the more visible advocacy groups.

You're never out like you're out with kids. I began to realize this when I was pregnant for the first time. I work in a very conservative industry, and I had always been out at work. I thought I had no one left to come out to, until I was visibly pregnant. A baby, and by extension a pregnancy, is in many ways public property. When you're pregnant, total strangers strike up conversations with you in public. People give you seats on the subway and ask how you're feeling. Colleagues who never spoke about anything but work now ask about your family life. They ask how the pregnancy is going, what your plans are for maternity leave and child care, whether you want a boy or a girl. And somewhere in there, they ask about your husband and his feelings about all of this.

Different lesbians deal with this

in different ways. Some lie, some decline to answer, some give an answer that's technically accurate but doesn't convey the whole truth. I decided to use the opportunity to tell the truth and answer the underlying question. So, when someone said, "Will your husband take off time when the baby is born? What does he do?" I answered by saying, "My spouse is a woman. She's a teacher, and she is going to take at least a year off to be home with our baby."

It wasn't easy to answer like that at first. Now matter how long you've been out, every time you must come out is a time of anxiety, and I must confess I stumbled over my answer a few times. With practice, however, it became second nature, and that's most of why I did it. I was quite sure that I would never lie about my family in front of my children. By working on ways to tell the truth before my son was even born, I figured I could get to a point where coming out to strangers was almost comfortable by the time he was old enough to know what I was saying and how I was saying it.

Once Doran was born, the questions and comments from strangers increased exponentially. People are interested in babies, and wish new parents well. People in the parks, supermarkets, subways ask about babies. The totally innocuous questions they ask are opportunities to come out or to lie: Which of you is the mother? Do you think he looks like you or his father? Does your husband help with the diapers? What arrangements are you making for child care?

Some of us don't start off our parental experience being out in the world. Accustomed to avoidance of questions *continued on next page*

that could lead to coming out, we continue that practice through our children's infancy. As the kids get older, we find the opportunities for coming out increase and so do the negative consequences of closeted behavior. Dealing with potential babysitters, preschools and other parents are all chances to come out or to lie.

Unlike childless gay people, we don't have the luxury of rationalizing to ourselves a decision to be in the closet. Everyone knows closeted people who justify their secrecy with some variant of "It's not that I'm scared, or that I lie about myself, I'm just a very private person, and I don't feel the need to talk about my sex life at work" (or in the neighborhood, to my mother and so on).

Those of us who are raising children in planned gay families cannot hide behind lines like this. The questions we are asked and the situations we are put in have nothing to do with sex. The people asking us questions are not trying to trap us into revealing our sexuality. They are making the ordinary small talk of family life, and it is only our fear of homophobic reactions that makes the situation so

emotionally charged. Our decisions to come out or not to come out make clear that the closet is not a place of personal privacy, but one of shame and degradation.

This becomes most clear when one looks at gay families where the parents have decided, in spite of all the interactions we have with the straight world, to maintain the closeted existence they had before having children. To do so requires highly complex layers of deception. A non-biological mother may describe herself as a childless single woman at work, a very involved aunt at school, a godmother at church. A gay father may present himself as someone who chose single parent adoption, and his lover as a roommate or involved family friend. Whatever the cover story, it is not exclusively, or even primarily, the individual's sexuality that is being concealed. It is the existence of a family that the parent is hiding.

Habitually lying about one's family is not conducive to domestic harmony or high self-esteem. This is true whether the lies are those of commission or merely omission. Continual, repeated denial of the

truth of one's family has the consequence of annihilating any feeling of pride in family life.

The saddest result of this is the effect on the children. I have been amazed and saddened to see children as young as three or four who clearly have no idea of homophobia or closeted practices, internalizing their parent's fear and deception. Without knowing why. They can know while they are still learning to speak that speaking about their family is forbidden. As they grow and encounter hostility from segments of society, these children have no inner core of pride and comfort in their home and family unit to fortify themselves against such an onslaught. No parents wish to embark on a course which will surely undermine their children's self esteem and lead them to feel that the family is a source of shame rather than joy and refuge.

Coming out all the time, everywhere can be a heart-pounding, emotionally draining experience. Still, when we consider the alternative, it doesn't surprise me that the vast majority of us choose to be out with our children and out with the world.

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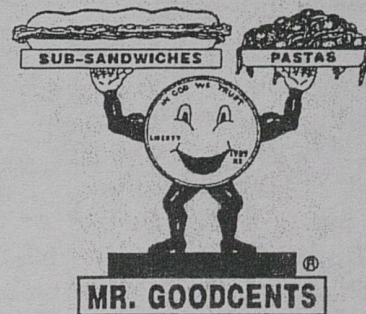
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