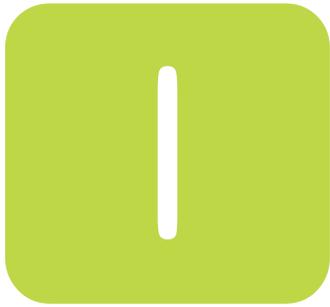


our lives



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Hope for a Northwoods School

Tips for connecting with and counseling youth in crisis

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Find out why you either commit too soon or not at all

The Art of Gourmet Toffee

Leanne Cordisco dishes about Christine's Gourmet Toffee

Madison's LGBT&XYZ Magazine

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Features

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2011



**24 Live to Tell**  
Past Edenfred Director **David Wells** on reinventing himself



**27 My Life in Books**  
Wisconsin Book Festival Director **Alison Jones Chaim** reflects on her life through bibliography



**30 As I Make Art, It Makes Me**  
Photographer and performance artist **Angela Richardson** on self-expression and self-discovery

Departments

- 5 **Publisher's Letter** and **Seasonal Spotlight**
- 6 **Contributors** and **The Ripples Project**

Community

- 8 **Our Artists** Photo artist Lisa A. Frank
- 10 **Our Journeys** Jen Clausen's "Rust Belt Ride"
- 12 **Our Advocates** GSAFE Award Winner Rosemary Doyle
- 14 **Our Stages** StageQ's Tenth Anniversary: A Timeline
- 16 **Our Prose** "Comings and Goings" by Erin Doolin
- 17 **Our Pages and Poems** Recommended books and "Sistah, Sistah" by Petrovnia McIntosh
- 18 **Our Calendar** September
- 20 **Our Calendar** October

Quality of Life

- 36 **Our Elders** Caroline Werner on what our forebears achieved and what they need now
- 38 **Our Rights** Tamara Packard on a traffic stop gone bad
- 40 **Our Careers** Summer Grest on creating change in her workplace
- 42 **Our Issues** Dr. Sue Gill asks, "Do you have commitment issues?"
- 44 **Our Flavor** Marcelle Richards whets her sweet tooth with Christine's Gourmet Toffee
- 46 **Our Future Leaders** Maria Peebles sees the value of cooperating across movements

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Our History

**34 The Kindness of Strangers**  
**Richard Wagner** on the beginnings and growth of gay philanthropy



Improve Your Life at Work



Few organizations that I've been involved with have enriched my life as much as the connections and mentors that I've found through OPEN—the Out Professional and Executive Network. OPEN gave me the architecture to develop relationships with mentors who have helped move me forward in my profession and as a full person. Therefore, *Our Lives* is proud to sponsor **OPEN's Workplace Summit** on September 17 at CUNA Mutual. A very talented team of workplace leaders have developed a program that will help connect you to others who are committed to improving your quality of life and will introduce a few simple strategies for showing your employer how to value their LGBTQ employees. Please mark your calendars, grow your network, and together let's build a vibrant community where LGBTQ leaders are a significant catalyst for strengthening our economy.

**Patrick Farabaugh, PUBLISHER**

SEASONAL SPOTLIGHT by Leanne Cordisco



Pistouille, Serves 6

"You can't be a cook and not love September" said Antonin Careme of early 1800s Paris, and the same is true of Wisconsin today. Our farmers' markets are bursting with eggplants and tomatoes at the peak of their flavor, having taken advantage of our long, hot summer. Combined with fresh basil and garlic, pistouille can be served room temperature as a spread for crostini or hot as an accompaniment to grilled steaks. Try it with provolone or fontina cheese in a panini or scrambled into eggs. Pick juicy, ripe tomatoes for this recipe, which should be very easy to do.

- 1 large eggplant, peeled and diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 3 tomatoes, peeled and diced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 C fresh basil leaves
- 4-6 Tbls olive oil
- 1 Tsp kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
- Freshly cracked black pepper

1. Sprinkle the diced eggplant with 1 Tbsp salt and set aside in a colander to drain for 30 minutes. This crucial step allows the eggplant to brown nicely. Pat dry with paper towels.
2. While the eggplant is draining, gently sauté the diced onion and green pepper in 2 Tbsp olive oil in a large pan until the onions are translucent, about 10 minutes. Add a sprinkle of salt to the onions as they cook to help release their liquid, but take care not to brown the onions. Set aside in a bowl.
3. Turn up the heat in the pan to medium high, add the remaining olive oil to the pan and sauté the eggplant until browned but not burned, approximately 5-10 minutes. Do not salt the eggplant again, it's already been done in the draining step.
4. Add the tomatoes and previously cooked onion and green pepper to the eggplant. Add a pinch of salt and a generous amount of cracked black pepper. Cook this mixture over medium heat until most of the moisture from the tomatoes is evaporated. The final consistency should be a thick and a little moist. Transfer the mixture to a serving bowl.
5. Prepare the pesto. Crush the garlic using a garlic press, mortar and pestle or the side of a knife. Add the basil leaves and a pinch of salt and mash until the mixture is a smooth paste.
6. Stir the pesto into the eggplant and tomato mixture and serve.

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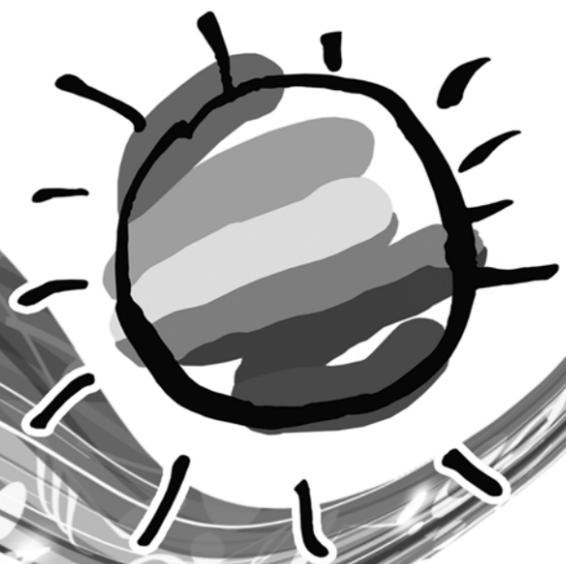
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**Roberto Amezcua** has a love for meeting new people. He believes that everyone hums their own tune. By simply engaging in a conversation, he looks for the melody the person is humming. It is all about making the person feel comfortable and letting their personality come out in the photographs. That is all it takes to find that tune and capture it in a split second. For more information, go to [amezcua photography.com](http://amezcua photography.com).



**Lukas Keapproth** is a freelance photojournalist and member of Red Wave Pictures photo cooperative currently based in Madison. In his work he hopes to capture the expressions, environments, and meaning behind people's daily lives and present those aspects in a clear, simple manner. Lukas is also a senior at UW-Madison double-majoring in journalism and history. You can find his blog at [blog.lukaskeapproth.com](http://blog.lukaskeapproth.com) or view his portfolio at [lukaskeapproth.com](http://lukaskeapproth.com).

**Ian Steven** credits his career as a photojournalist to his supportive parents: his mother for her creative eye, his father for his embellished storytelling. Ian is studying photojournalism at Western Kentucky University. His photographic interests include multimedia storytelling, nature, and political, food, and human-interest stories. His pastimes include Magic the Gathering, camping, riding horses, and eating at every Indian restaurant in Wisconsin. Ian currently lives in Bowling Green, Kentucky, waiting to return to his beloved hometown of Madison.



A Ripples Splash from **Paul Wesselmann**

Ripples is a weekly inspirational email blast. Learn more at [TheRipplesProject.org](http://TheRipplesProject.org)

Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one. -**Stella Adler**

Art is the only way to run away without leaving home. -**Twyla Tharp**

Art completes what nature cannot bring to finish.

The artist gives us knowledge of nature's unrealized ends. -**Aristotle**

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes.

Art is knowing which ones to keep. -**Scott Adams**

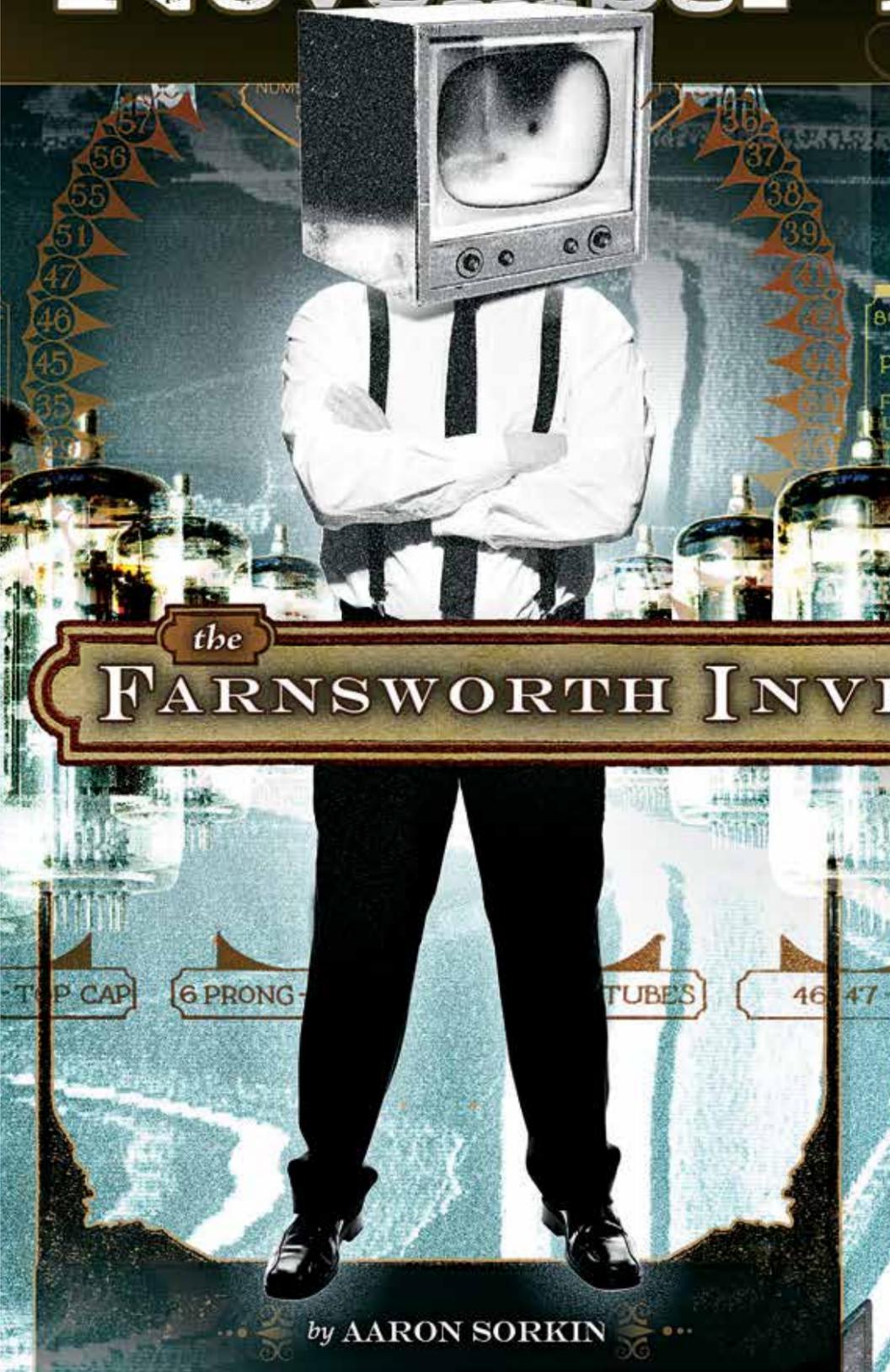
To touch art is to touch the mind; to touch the mind is to touch a life.

-**J. David Arnold**

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## The Pattern that Connects

**Lisa A. Frank's** kaleidoscopic designs reflect the infinite source of wonder she discovered as a child.

She was first drawn into the work of Lisa Frank several years ago on the walls of the Visitor Center in the UW Arboretum—morels, fern fronds, Jack-in-the-pulpits, and more of the most exotic native Wisconsin flora and fungi exquisitely arranged against a deep, dark background. The work filled me with longing for something I could not identify at the time, but after seasoning her work for several years, it seems obvious: connection.

Nature photography on the walls of a building nestled in nature often seems a bit like wallpaper, but Frank's work, which is evocative of the compositions of William Morris's ornate pre-Raphaelite papers, stood out as lovely and mysterious. Like the dichotomous values of the Victorian arts and crafts that Frank's work emulates, one may be both disturbed and comforted looking into her images, for there is chaos and order, mortality and beauty therein.

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# OUR ARTISTS



### Upcoming Exhibitions

- Kohler Arts Center during the group exhibition "One and Only," 10/22/11–1/31/12.
- The Wisconsin Institute of Discovery: (1)der:Patterns in 3D, experienced virtually in the CAVE ("Cave Automatic Virtual Environment"), 12/2/11–12/9/11.
- The Wisconsin Academy's James Watrous Gallery, 5/15/13–6/30/13.

Frank closely observes nature's most beautiful forms, captures them photographically, and catalogues them in her vast digital library. Later, in the mirrored chambers of her mind, she configures their lines, shapes, colors, and textures in unique new ways, and delivers them to the viewer. The effect is much like that of a kaleidoscope, which represents small objects as components of complex patterns that bedazzle the eye.

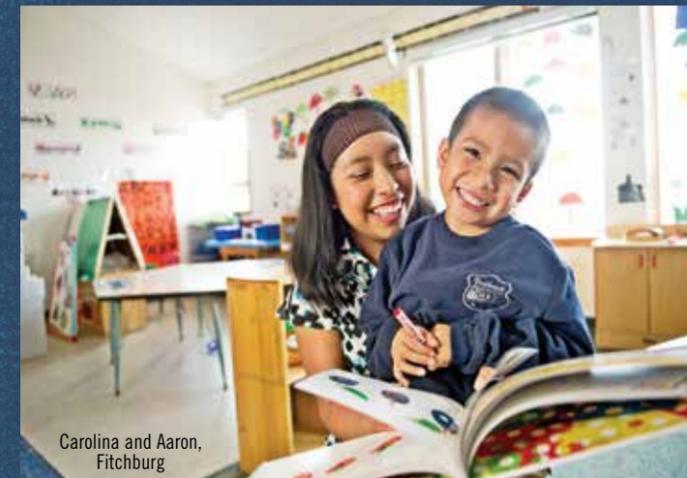
Like many of us, Frank entered the woods as an adolescent via scout camp. It was through those early experiences that she became comfortable being in nature. She learned to identify wildflowers and constellations, how to listen for rattlesnakes, and how to read trail maps. She developed a great appreciation for the natural world that has lasted her entire life. Her counselors instilled in her a positive sense of herself as a girl explorer in the woods and helped her, as a young woman, to discover new and positive ways of looking at her identity. Many years later, she came to realize that many of those counselors were lesbians. From those leaders with a strong sense of self and connection to nature, Frank discovered her own sense of self and her connection to nature.

Throughout her successful career as an artist, from scene painting at the Yale School of Drama, to textile and design work in New York City, and currently as the Director of the University of Wisconsin's School of Human Ecology's Design Gallery, Frank has gone back to nature to tap into the infinite source of wonder and inspiration she discovered as a youth. Her keen observations, translated via layer upon layer of digital manipulation, reflect an experience of the natural world that many of us crave.

For more information about the artist and her work, visit her website at [lisafrankphotography.com](http://lisafrankphotography.com). —Karin Wolf

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## Slow Ride

Meet Madisonian **Jen Clausen** as she bikes and paints her way from Madison to New York on her "Rust Belt Ride."

**Who are you and where are you from?** My name is Jen Clausen, and I am an oil painter, a biker, and an aspiring adventurer. I grew up in Madison and attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in Philadelphia.

**What inspired you to take a bike art trip across the country?** This project incorporates all three of my passions: painting, biking, and going on adventures. I like the slowness and closeness of biking and painting. Our increasingly fast-paced culture encourages and enables speed and results and discourages slowness and process. Riding a bike allows me to fully appreciate the journey I am taking: the start, the finish, and everything in between. It's hard not to notice my surroundings when I'm biking. Painting allows me to document my trip in a slow, process-oriented way. Spending several hours staring at something and making decisions about color mixing and light and shadow distills the memory of that time and place. Painting affords me an intimacy with my surroundings that I can't achieve through the viewfinder of a camera.

**Why the Rust Belt?** The Rust Belt is the area centered around the Great Lakes and the Ohio River. Beginning in the 1970s, this former powerhouse experienced severe, sometimes crippling, economic decline. An exodus of jobs left these cities littered with empty factories and abandoned buildings. The aesthetic of this area of the country intrigues me. I'm biking and painting my way through it to document its forgotten beauty.

**Please share why you are painting along the way.**

I am a very visual person, and painting intrigues me as a means of communication that surpasses language to express a message or idea. In his Realist Manifesto, Gustave Courbet says, "I want to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well." Like Courbet, I want to chronicle my interactions with the world through paint.



**What are you hoping to get out of this experience?** Since this is so much about process, the process of getting somewhere (biking) and

Spending several hours staring at something and making decisions about color mixing and light and shadow distills the memory of that time and place.

the process of documenting something (painting), I haven't really thought about what I want to get out of it when I'm done. I would like to do similar projects in the future—maybe bike and paint my way across the U.S.



**What have you discovered so far about yourself?** I like traveling alone, because I can just about do what I want, when I want. I've had a couple tough days, though. Things happened that might not have happened had I been with a companion. I got caught in a bad neighborhood at dusk in Indiana, and stuck in a maze of sandy beach-like roads in central Michigan. None of these experiences was particularly thrilling at the time, but it's good to know that I can get through challenges.

**What have you learned about the communities and people along the way?** Painting in a public place always piques people's curiosity and they come over and talk to me, so it's a great way to

meet people. After I painted a thummy machine with lots of silos and pipes near Stevensville, Michigan, one of the workers came over to ask me about painting, and I got to ask him about the machine. Turns out it makes molds for foundries. People in general are very friendly; a couple people have bought sodas for me at gas stations after learning that I am biking to New York (apparently soda will help me get there). I look forward to meeting more people and exploring more communities as I continue my trip.

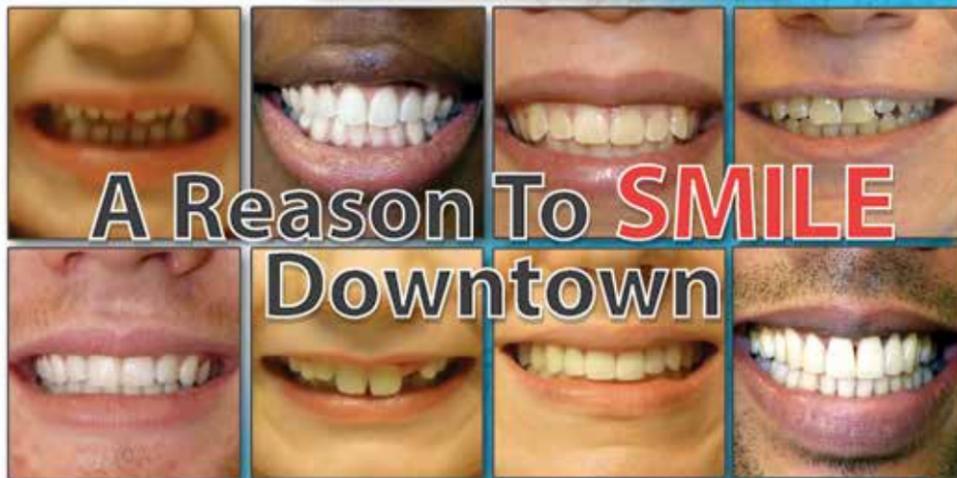
**Do you have a larger mission or message you want to impart? What is it?** Because the Rust Belt is in economic decline, it's often ignored. I would like to draw attention to its beauty. I also hope to encourage people to slow down, take some time, and enjoy the process of getting somewhere or making something! Read her blog at: [rustbeltride.blogspot.com](http://rustbeltride.blogspot.com) ■



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**GSAFE AWARD WINNER**

## Make It Better—Now

Rosemary Doyle, School Counselor at Northwood School in Washburn County, knows what it takes to make a difference in the day-to-day lives of LGBT youth.

I have always been an impatient sort, and never one to wait for dessert or delay speaking up. I love that part of Leonard Cohen’s song “Bird on the Wire” when the lady standing in the door says, “Why not, why not ask for more?” So I guess it comes as no surprise that I want LGBTQ kids not to have to wait either.

I have been a school counselor for 24 years. I also teach community and school counselors at UW-Superior. I live “in the middle of nowhere” in northern Wisconsin where there isn’t a stoplight for 35 miles. I live in beautiful surroundings with no noise, but no diversity, either. There is not enough acceptance for change, and our mental health services are pretty nonexistent, too. I moved up here 30 years ago from Chicago because I was sure it would be better than big-city living. It has been for me—a white, educated, straight, married woman with children. And I am married to a straight white male, at that.

A few eyebrows raised because I kept the name I was born with and I “spout that feminist stuff,” but overall I have a great life. I am also the sister of one straight sister, two straight brothers, and one gay brother. However, we just think of each other by our names and personalities, not our sexuality. We all watched our father struggle with his gay son. At the bottom of it all was shame, and it seeped into my brother’s soul. So it comes as no surprise that as his sister, I consider myself an ally. I also consider myself a good counselor and therapist.

I had to make a choice about 13 years ago about which two of my three jobs I would keep. I loved being a therapist, but my specialty was sexually abused children and I was getting pretty burned out. So I decided to stay on as an instructor in the graduate counseling program at UW-Superior and move into a full-time position as a school counselor. The access to a school counselor in Wisconsin is free and open to any public school student. Kids didn’t need a “ticket” like in the more restricted mental health world, nor a diagnosis.

I love stories, so here is one to ponder. Last October, a mother called and told me her son wasn’t coming to school anymore and if he was forced to, he would kill himself. The problem he identified was bullying. Two weeks later, our principal talked to me about a parent who said their son would be home schooled if the bullying didn’t stop. The basis of the bullying in both cases was perceived “gayness.” So here are two middle school kids—at the developmental stage of life when identity issues, self-awareness, and “here and now” thinking are reaching their peak—not being able to imagine coming to school anymore. In my opinion, the most important

thought I needed to instill in these boys was a sense that change in their circumstances was possible. The bottom line for depressed, suicidal, and hopeless people is to help them acquire a sense of power over circumstances—that they can learn through counseling, life changes, medication, inspirational role models, or a combination of all of those—to make a choice to stay in the game.

So, like so many others, I really like the “It Gets Better” campaign. But when I talk to kids I know that they feel their pain right now and as one of the boys in my story very matter-of-factly said, “I can’t do this for six more years.” As a mental health professional, it borders on malpractice to give false assurances to suicidal people to “hang in there, it will get better.” It really usually does get better, as this magazine’s readers know. But to a minority of kids, especially living in very non-supportive homes and communities, the message falls on ears without the life experience to know that most people do get through their dark nights of the soul and choose to live.

The great news in this story is that there was an organization that came to one of the most rural and poverty-stricken parts of the state and brought hope and, most importantly, skills to kids and their adult allies. Gifted presenter Brian Juchems of the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) came to our area and presented a workshop that taught us the skills we needed. The two boys I mentioned as well as other kids who were concerned about their friends came together with Brian and learned how to make a difference. They courageously wrote a skit that educated others in middle school about what LGBTQ kids go through and why bullying needs to stop and it made a real difference in our school.

The barriers to doing this everywhere in Wisconsin are typical: lack of resources and a big lack of courage on the part of school officials. The Department of Public Instruction has made it possible for lots of us to access funds to get to these trainings, and they deserve a huge thank you from us all.

Here’s the bad news: We need trained, supportive advocates in every school in Wisconsin to work with our kids at risk now—to make it better now. The sad news is we have those very well-trained people in our schools but we have them scheduling classes, supervising

**The bottom line for depressed, suicidal, and hopeless people is to help them acquire a sense of power over circumstances—that they can learn through counseling, life changes, medication, inspirational role models, or a combination all of those—to make a choice to stay in the game.**

study halls and lunch hours, giving caseloads of 400–1000 students to each counselor. Just by mandating and funding a school counselor to student ratio of 250:1 across this state, we can have the trained professionals working to make it better every day.

I train counselors, and they each graduate with a Master’s Degree from accredited universities with stringent courses of study. They know what to do and how to do it but they are chronically overworked and set up for failure by our school funding problems. When my students and I were chosen to receive a Best Practice award by GSAFE, my ratio was 250:1, the one recommended by the state and national standards. Next year my ratio will be 385:1. ■

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# community



StageQ founder Thomas McClurg



"The Stops," 2009



"Last Summer at Bluefish Cove," 2010

## A Divine Decade

StageQ marks 10 years of community theater. How many of these productions did you attend?

- February 2001:** StageQ founder (to-be) Thomas McClurg produces "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" for Mercury Players Theater. Micheal Herman makes his Madison directorial debut with this show. The production breaks all previous attendance records for the Bartell, and McClurg decides there is a need for a gay theater company in Madison.
- Spring 2001:** Thomas McClurg "ropes in" Steve Noll, Tom Mueller, Rob Carrier, and Tony Sheehan to work with him, and they launch StageQ.
- July 2001:** StageQ's debut production, "Two Stories from Dating Hell" opens at the Bartell Theatre. The production features two one-act plays, one of which sparks protests from the lesbian community.
- September 2001:** The first season continues with "Twilight of the Golds," followed by "The Eight: Reindeer Monologues," "Gertrude Stein and a Companion," and "Love! Valour! Compassion!"
- April 2002:** Thomas McClurg continues his commitment to bring new talent to Madison community theater by enlisting Roseann Sheridan to direct "Gertrude Stein and a Companion."
- Summer 2002:** Katy Conley joins the StageQ board and Artistic Committee.
- 2002-2003 Season:** "Torch Song Trilogy," directed by David Lawver, "Why We Have a Body," directed by Christina Martin-Wright, "Seven Moves," directed by Kathy Lynn Sliter, and "The Sum of Us," directed by Micheal Herman. StageQ also produces Jodi Cohen's one-woman show, "This Just In."
- November 2003:** Joseph Martorella makes his Madison directorial debut with "PS, Your Cat Is Dead."
- March 2004:** "Corpus Christi" sells out after right-wing Christians protest the show. StageQ hires security personnel due to bomb threats. The mayor and city council president attend the show in support.
- 2004-2005 Season:** A less controversial but successful season features "Lonely Planet," "Hannah Free," "Oklahoma," and "Bat Boy: The Musical."
- January 2005:** Madison theater icon Sarah Whelan makes her StageQ debut in "Hannah Free." This is also the beginning of StageQ's association with playwright Claudia Allen.
- Spring 2005:** Katy Conley comes up with idea for "Queer Shorts" as a way to bring lesbians and gay men together as audience members.
- December 2005:** StageQ reprises "The Eight: Reindeer Monologues," which is Thomas McClurg's final production as Artistic Director. McClurg passes the reins to Tara Ayres.

## OUR STAGES

MADISON THEATRE GUILD

2011-2012 SEASON

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2011-2012

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10/1	Jim Witter: Feelin' Groovy	1/29	Seussical - The Musical
	Music of Simon & Garfunkel	2/10	Blue Suede Shoes
10/12	BLAST!		The Ultimate Elvis Bash
10/17	The Importance of Being Earnest	2/16	The Comedy of Errors
	Macbeth	2/20	Doubt
10/18	Holland Wind Players	2/22	Ballet Folklorico De Antioquia
10/26	Dailey & Vincent	2/29	Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
10/28	Guys & Does	3/7	The Original Tribute to the Blues Brothers
11/11	Thodos Dance Chicago	4/10	The Rose Ensemble
11/15	Church Basement Ladies	4/21	Hal Holbrook
12/10	Away in the Basement		Mark Twain Tonight

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March 10 & 11, 2012 • 7:00 p.m.

15th Anniversary Concert at the Masonic Centre  
Saturday June 16, 2012 • 7:00 p.m.

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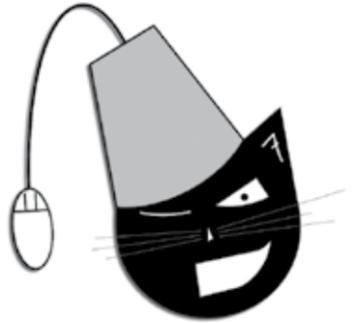
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## community

OUR PROSE

OUR PAGES & POEMS

### A Piece from the LGBTQ Narratives Group

lgbtqnarratives.blogspot.com

**Erin Doolin** is an activist-writer who moonlights as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She hopes that one day her student loan debt will magically turn into surplus so she can buy a cabin on the Oregon Coast and write for a living rather than work for The Man.



### Comings and Goings

The white exterior with black shutters that drew me in, and the fact that the main entry to the house was through the back door. There was always something compelling to me about houses where the entry was through the back; it seemed sophisticated. The house was the epitome of adult, some aspect of being grown up that I also longed for. I projected these feelings onto the house with its flaking white exterior, the entry through the back, and willingly ascended the three concrete steps into a relationship that represented all of these things for me, and carried none of them realistically. Three concrete steps that would know many hard footsteps as I trudged reluctantly home, and continued to walk through that back door.

I would arrive home in the evening, and she would most often be in the kitchen, cooking or talking on the telephone or both simultaneously. The moment I would open the door, the air of her mood would waft out, and I got a taste of what I was walking into. There might be complete silence, a turn of the head at my arrival, or some light laughter with whomever she was speaking to on the phone. There might be slammed pots and pans, or the anger I felt radiate from her stiffened posture and back turned. Sometimes the kitchen was empty, and this absence felt more uneasy than the apparent anger. I would quickly check the freezer for the current bottle of liquor and assess how much had been consumed so I knew how to approach the long walk up the stairs, hoping to find a happy drunk and not one locked in the bedroom—no getting in until she was ready.

The back door became more than just an entryway and means of exiting; it symbolized her frustration when she couldn't control me with a slam and her disappearance for an entire evening. It ushered in her lies when she returned home after sneaking out to meet old lovers. It soaked up the rain that dripped from my clothes after I walked home in a thunderstorm because she wouldn't come pick me up. It supported me as I stumbled through on the first night she told me she loved me, spending the rest of the night vomiting in the bathroom. And it stood there, sturdy and strong, when I told her I was leaving.

She was out of town the weekend I left. I packed up my belongings, washed the entryway carpet and hung it to dry, and exited through the back door for the last time. ■

**LGBTQ Narratives** is a queer activist-writers' group open to all LGBTQ people interested in creative expression and social justice. To get involved, visit [lgbtqnarratives.blogspot.com](http://lgbtqnarratives.blogspot.com), write to [lgbtqnarratives@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtqnarratives@gmail.com), or contact OutReach, Madison's LGBT Community Center.

our lives  
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**Our Lives** is ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS of original, previously unpublished poetry by Madison-area poets. We invite contributions that represent our diversity including: gender and gender identity, sexual preference, racial and ethnic heritage, allies, emerging voices, and poets—young and old. Poems should be no longer than 20 lines. When submitting, please indicate any special group(s) you may represent. This will assist us in selecting works that represent our diverse community.

### Our Lives Recommends:

#### Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality

BY KRISTEN SCHILT

The fact that men and women continue to receive unequal treatment at work is a point of contention among politicians, the media, and scholars. *Just One of the Guys?* sheds new light on this phenomenon by analyzing the unique experiences of transgender men—people designated female at birth whose gender identity is male—on the job. The University of Chicago Press.

#### Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa

BY RIGOBERTO GONZÁLEZ

Heartbreaking, poetic, and intensely personal, *Butterfly Boy* is a unique coming out and coming-of-age story of a first-generation Chicano who trades one life for another, only to discover that history and memory are not exchangeable or forgettable. Winner of the American Book Award. The University of Wisconsin Press.

#### Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-In-Pain as Redemptive Figure

BY KENT L. BRINTNALL

Images of suffering male bodies permeate Western culture, from Francis Bacon's paintings and Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs to the battered heroes of action movies. Drawing on perspectives from a range of disciplines—including religious studies, gender and queer studies, psychoanalysis, art history, and film theory—*Ecce Homo* explores the complex, ambiguous meanings of the enduring figure of the male-body-in-pain. The University of Chicago Press.

#### SISTAH, SISTAH

*Dedicated to all my LGBTQ sistahs;  
every shade of brown who may sometimes  
feel there is no one else like them.*

Sistah, Sistah  
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From where you are hiding!

Don't you know  
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We are surviving.

We have been searching,  
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Looking to bring you home.

Sistah, Sistah  
Please come out  
From where you are hiding!

Today we are having  
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We are honoring our lives together.

We are here.  
We are surviving.  
We stand proud.

Submit your poetry to: **LINDA LENZKE, [llezke@charter.net](mailto:llezke@charter.net)**

#### PETROVNIA McINTOSH

moved to Madison from New York in 1995. She started writing poetry at a very young age. Her poetry deals with many issues such as identifying as Black Lesbian, nature, and politics. She enjoys spending her time with her partner and their young son.



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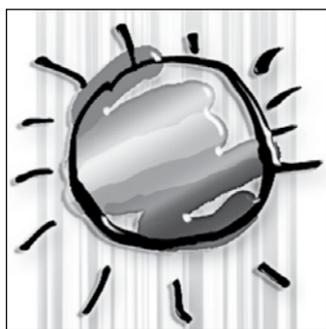
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September Cultural, Social, Service and Nightlife listings



**OutReach Awards Banquet**

September 16, Monona Terrace

Awards will be presented to Man and Woman of the Year, Organization of the Year, OutReach Volunteer of the Year, and Ally of the Year. The Courage Award will be presented in honor of Nikki Baumblatt and Harry Straetz. State Representative Mark Pocan will Emcee.  
lgbtoutreach.org



**OPEN Workplace Summit**

September 17, Cuna Mutual

Network with other LGBTQ professionals interested in advancing their careers. Learn strategies for showing your employer how to value their LGBTQ employees. Choose your track: OPEN's Mentor Match or Employee Resource Groups 101  
openmadison.org



**Community Shares 40th Anniversary Celebration**

September 27, Monona Terrace

Celebrate four decades of raising funds for local nonprofits. CSW will recognize Fair Wisconsin Education Fund at their event with an award. Comments from Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and State Representative Mark Pocan.  
communityshares.com

ORGANIZATIONS

- A representative sampling*
- AIDS Network**  
600 Williamson St., Madison (608) 252-6540  
aidsnetwork.org
  - Bowling Out Loud**  
beckwith.matt@yahoo.com
  - Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls**  
dcandc.org
  - Fair Wisconsin**  
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fairwisconsin.org
  - Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
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  - Gay Volleyball League**  
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  - LGBT Business Alliance**  
madisonbusinessalliance.com
  - Madison Gay Hockey Association**  
madisongayhockey.org
  - Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby**  
minotaursrugby.org
  - New Harvest Foundation**  
newharvestfoundation.org
  - Out Professional and Executive Network (O.P.E.N.)**  
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  - OutReach Community Center**  
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  - Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus**  
perfectharmonychorus.org
  - StageQ - Madison's Queer Theater**  
stageq.com
  - UW - Madison LGBT Campus Center**  
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wisc.edu/lgbt
  - Wisconsin Rainbow Families**  
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Save the Date

- AIDS Network's Camp Bingo**  
Jan, Feb & March | [aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)
- OPEN Annual Dinner**  
January | [openmadison.org](http://openmadison.org)
- New Harvest Foundation's 27th Annual Dinner Dance**  
March | [newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org)
- AIDS Network's Red Ribbon Affair**  
April | [aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)
- GSAFE Celebration of Leadership**  
May | [gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)
- FruitFest**  
June | [planbmadison.com](http://planbmadison.com)

Justin Vivian Bond, September 19, Mitchell Theatre, Madison

Recently described as "The greatest cabaret artist of (v's) generation" by Hilton Als in the New Yorker, singer, songwriter and Tony-nominated performance artist Mx Justin Vivian Bond, is an Obie, Bessie and Ethyl Eichelberger Award winner. [arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew](http://arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew)



Fresco Opera Theatre's Big Top Opera, September 30, Overture Center, Madison

A combination of fine music and circus feats, presenting such acts as Sizzle Cisler the Fire Breather, Princess Charming the Half-Man/Half-Woman, the Strong Man - Ben the Barbarian, The Inseparable Suramese Twins, Amina the Airwalker, Baba the Bearded Lady, Leonora the Tamer of Beasts, and THE WHEEL OF DEATH! [frescooperatheatre.com](http://frescooperatheatre.com)

Patrik-Ian Polk, Sep 26, Vilas Hall, UW-Madison

GLAAD award-winner Polk is currently developing a *Noah's Arc* series spin-off for Logo and a drama series for BET, Black Entertainment Television. His first film *Punks* will make its television debut on August 7, 2011 on the Logo network. And his third feature film *The Skinny*, which completed production on July 15th, hits theaters Labor Day Weekend. [arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew](http://arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew)

Dirty Little Showtunes, Sept. 3, 9, 17 and 23, The Marquis Ballroom, Fitchburg

All your favorite show tunes from *Annie Get Your Gun* to *Zorba The Greek* are turned upside down and colored hot pink and hilarious. Starring Jake Aebly, Scott Bennett, Joe Dahl, Will Endres and Dan Pietrangolo in a musical tribute to the gay pink way of Broadway. "Showtunes" premiered in San Francisco in 1997 and has had sold out runs in Seattle, Chicago and was recently revived last winter at The New Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. [marquisballroom.com](http://marquisballroom.com)

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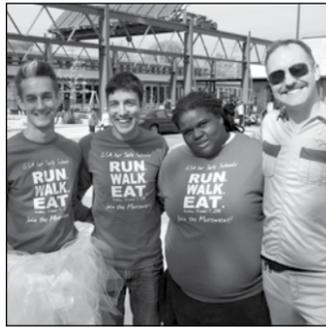
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October Cultural, Social, Service and Nightlife listings



**GSAGE Walk/Run/Eat Oct 16**  
**October 16**  
**Goodman Community Center**  
 Do your part to benefit the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools. This annual fundraiser includes a 5K walk, a 5K run, and a 10K run—and good food afterward provided by Queen Anne's Catering.  
[gsaforsafeschools.com](http://gsaforsafeschools.com)



**Wisconsin Book Festival**  
**October 19-23, Downtown Madison**  
 This is the state's largest literary festival, with approximately 15,000 annual attendees, and one of the largest in the nation. It inspires book lovers from across the region to spend a weekend in downtown Madison and transforms State Street into a vast, public literary salon.  
[wisconsinbookfestival.org](http://wisconsinbookfestival.org)



**An Evening with David Sedaris**  
**October 28, Overture Center**  
 America's preeminent humorist returns by popular demand, following quick consecutive sellouts. The Boston Globe calls him "a connoisseur of human nature at its worst."  
[overturecenter.com](http://overturecenter.com)

ORGANIZATIONS

A representative sampling

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[aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)

**Bowling Out Loud**  
[beckwith.matt@yahoo.com](mailto:beckwith.matt@yahoo.com)

**Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls**  
[dcandc.org](http://dcandc.org)

**Fair Wisconsin**  
 122 State St., Madison (608) 441-0143  
[fairwisconsin.org](http://fairwisconsin.org)

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
[personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg](http://personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg)

**Gay/Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAGE)**  
 301 S. Bedford St., Madison (608) 661-4141  
[gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)

**Gay Softball League**  
[ssblmadison.com](http://ssblmadison.com)

**Gay Volleyball League**  
[madisongayvolleyball.com](http://madisongayvolleyball.com)

**Hermanos Latinos**  
[sneal@aidsnetwork.org](mailto:sneal@aidsnetwork.org)

**Lez In Color Yahoo Group**  
[LezInColor@yahoo.com](mailto:LezInColor@yahoo.com)

**Lez Talk Yahoo Group**  
[leztalkmadison@yahoo.com](mailto:leztalkmadison@yahoo.com)

**LGBT Business Alliance**  
[madisonbusinessalliance.com](http://madisonbusinessalliance.com)

**Madison Gay Hockey Association**  
[madisongayhockey.org](http://madisongayhockey.org)

**Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby**  
[minotaursrugby.org](http://minotaursrugby.org)

**New Harvest Foundation**  
[newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org)

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 (608) 848-2333  
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**Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus**  
[perfectharmonychorus.org](http://perfectharmonychorus.org)

**StageQ - Madison's Queer Theater**  
[stageq.com](http://stageq.com)

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**Wisconsin Capitol Pride**  
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**GSAGE Walk/Run/Eat**  
 October | [gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)

**Fair Wisconsin Leadership Conference**  
 January | [fairwisconsin.com](http://fairwisconsin.com)

Toshi Reagon, October 17, 716 Langdon Street, Madison

Described by *Vibe* magazine as "one helluva rock'n'roller-coaster ride" and by *Pop Matters* as "a treasure waiting to be found," Toshi Reagon is a one-woman celebration of all that's dynamic, progressive and uplifting in American music. Toshi Reagon's honors include a 2009 Out Music Award, the 2007 Black Lily Award for Outstanding Performance, and a 2004 New York Foundation for the Arts award for music composition. She was one of several women honored by the National Women's History Project for "amazing intelligence, talent, courage and tenacity [that testify] to the myriad ways that generations of women have moved history forward." [arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew](http://arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew)



Taylor Mac, October 31, Mitchell Theatre, Madison

"I believe my job as a theater artists is to remind my audience of the range of their humanity." Taylor Mac is a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, and sometime director and producer who has received three GLAAD Media Award Nominations. TimeOut New York has called him, "One of the most exciting theater artists of our time" and American Theater Magazine says, "Mac is one of this country's most heroic and disarmingly funny playwrights." [arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew](http://arts.wisc.edu/artsinstitute/IAR/stew)

Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin, November 4 & 6, Overture Center, Madison

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# Live TO Tell

Past Edenfred Executive Director **David Wells** on reinventing himself as he looks back in order to move forward.

**r**einventing my life is harder now than it was when I was younger. Last fall, due to legal/political concerns outside our control, I had to announce the closing of Edenfred, the arts residency of the Terry Family Foundation, two weeks before I was speaking about our success at the national conference of the Alliance of Artist Communities. The residency was my brainchild, creation, dream job,

living art installation, embodiment of a philosophy about integrating art into the community, and my home. I've been oddly adrift since its closing in December.

## A Dialog with My Younger Self

I don't like writing about myself. As a visual artist, the personal is processed into other forms that reflect the viewers' perceptions as much as the artist's—it's an unspoken communication. First-person narrative is daunting. I began to prepare to talk about my arts career as advice to my younger self, listing tips, maxims, significant experiences, and insights that have helped me along the way. By doing this, I realized how listening to my younger self (and writing this) is crucial as I reinvent and define how to move forward.

## Life Lessons Along the Way

I grew up in a Wisconsin dairy farm, fundamentalist Christian family; I was involved in 4-H, band, choir, drama (bad ham actor in leading roles), forensics, and Badger Boys State; I was a general over-achiever as I figured it was my ticket off the farm and out of the small town. Not

liking farm life from early on, reading was my escape. I wanted to be like the people in books. Two days after graduating from high school, I was a bellman at a second-rate Jewish resort in Elkhart Lake. The rube from the farm began his education about the world. **TAKE-AWAY:** "To thine own self be true."

I started college as a theater major. I realized I was never going to be tall and chic, so short and agile would have to do. Exploring lots of subjects, I felt I was being a good parrot but not truly learning anything. I quit after a year and a half. I became part of a more experimental program in which I designed my own degree in Cultural Analysis and began to make visual art. My final undergrad year was spent also working full time as an advisor to others planning independent degree programs. **TAKE-AWAY:** Listen to your deeply felt, internal voice to make decisions; do not be afraid to take risks; be ambitious; develop an ability to succinctly summarize long meetings and bring them to a point of decision—this is incredibly valuable and gives one power.

Fast forward through a series of jobs and experiences as an artist-in-residence, an art programs coordinator, a gallery assistant, an undergrad art background for grad school, creating collaborative sculptures and costumes for dance, organizing and curating exhibitions, and attending grad school in installation sculpture in Los Angeles.

One of the ways I put myself through grad school was working as a life drawing model (yes, nude). Since I knew art and had some dance training, I was fairly creative at poses and the work was fairly lucrative.

One evening I arrived and saw a note on the board that the instructor was going to be late, so I changed and began directing the class that we'd start with some one-minute poses and they should do gesture drawings to loosen themselves up. After a few of these, a student asked if I was going to be the teacher. When I asked, "Why?" he responded that someone had come into the room and said that the teacher was ill and wouldn't be coming. I called a two-minute pose and decided, "Why not? It's introductory life drawing, first class of the semester, what do I have to lose? If I don't, my trip will be wasted and I won't get paid." I directed the class from the model podium, would then put on my robe and do a round of individual critique, return to the podium, shed the robe and proceed. In retrospect, it was quite empowering. And the college offered me a teaching job the next semester. **TAKE-AWAY:** Learn to trust and float with the universe; if I can teach a class while naked in front of it, I can do anything!

Fast-forward through the freeway flier years—cobbling together a freelance living and a few full-time gigs: making and exhibiting installations; teaching; running galleries; curating art exhibits for academic, public, and commercial galleries; working for other artists and as preparator for a private art museum; working as associate director of a contemporary gallery; working as a consultant to an open Native American art gallery.

One dreary, rainy day in Santa Monica (there aren't many, but there are some) when no one goes out, a couple came into the gallery and I engaged them and began showing them around. There were several works in a back hall that they spoke about as possibilities for a specific place in their home, but didn't agree on which one or two they thought might work. The gallery owner was completely ignoring them because they weren't recognized clients and no one but novice lookers would be out on a rainy day. As I chatted with them, telling them about the artist, processes, and referents, they decided that since they couldn't decide on two that they would buy all five and gave me a credit card to process the sale as they continued discussing the artworks. When I returned to the desk with Vidal Sassoon's credit card and a sale of five paintings, you can imagine how quickly the owner jumped up

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to schmooze the new favorite clients! **TAKE-AWAY:** Do what you are passionate about; never assume anything about anyone; administrative and people skills are the most essential, with aesthetic skills close behind; never burn bridges or networks; helping people learn how to look at, see, and want to live with art they feel challenged by is very rewarding; fully live YOUR life.

Fast forward through parents taking turns having heart attacks; my subsequent return from LA; an art installation exorcising childhood sexual abuse experiences (UW-La Crosse and the UW Memorial Union); creating public art projects with collaborative artist group FIELDWORK; jobs/projects with Madison Symphony Orchestra, WI Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Design Gallery at UW-Madison; creating Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society stage environments; freelance consulting to open contemporary gallery in Portland, ME, and design historical museum for Idyllwild Arts in California; freelance work in Madison as wearer of many hats. **TAKE-AWAY:** Do not underestimate your skills; do the therapy to dump your baggage (or at least get it down to the size of a day-pack); build your community by doing what you do best and sharing it with others; believe in yourself and do what you believe in.

### Edenfred at Last

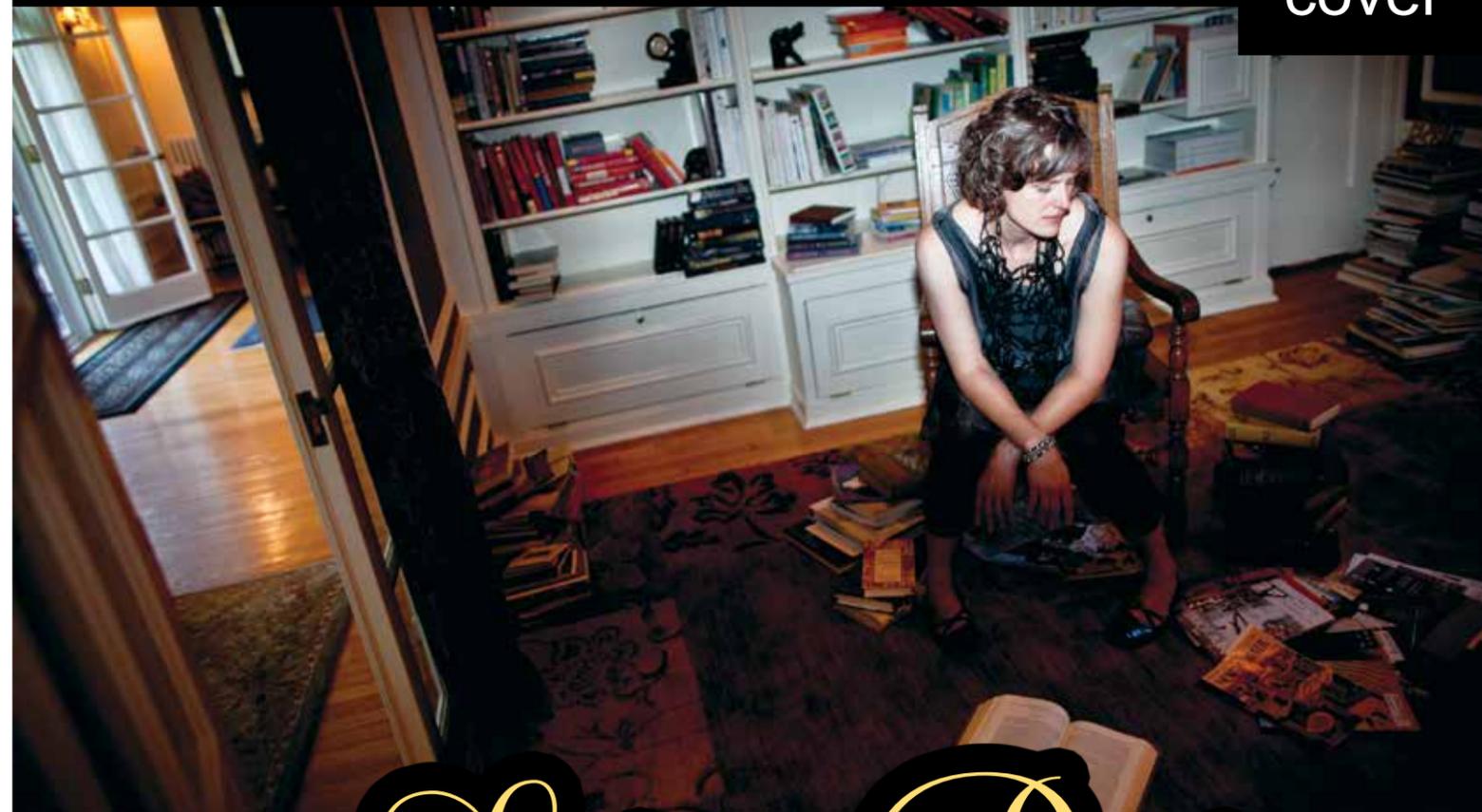
In 2003, I was asked if I'd be interested in helping the Terry Family Foundation create an artists residency program. To be given the opportunity to create one's dream job is a rare opportunity, and the Edenfred arts residency was the result. I created many community partnerships, a multi-faceted residency program, and an environment dedicated to supporting the creative work of artists of all stripes—writers, playwrights, poets, film-makers, visual artists, composers, musicians, and

choreographers. Edenfred also became a nexus for exchanging and developing ideas via "Conversations" for arts curators and choreographers and "Imagine," an effort to begin to understand our regional creative ecology. Professionally rewarding, personally enriching, and embedded within the community, the residency was my living, breathing art installation helping artists manifest ideas in the world. **TAKE-AWAY:** Recognize opportunities and develop them; work to make your dreams real; everything you do is truly in partnership with others.

### After Edenfred

Then, it was my job to bring it all to a close with the same attention and care invested in the creation. The residency had become a community asset and there is as much responsibility in dismantling something as there is in building it properly. This was perhaps the most difficult thing in my career because my professional responsibility was divorced from my personal feelings and emotional investment in the residency. Only after closure could I fully allow myself to feel personal anger, grief, and despair. I took a month off and haven't been very productive for the last six, though one night I ironed every shirt in my closet. Travel has been helpful to develop a new perspective.

Career paths are winding journeys. Those in the arts even more so, always subject to political and economic fluctuations and to public perception and misperception. My path has been filled with deep, rich experiences and relationships, incredible opportunities, and the trust of others. Being chosen by *Our Lives* for this issue has prodded a reflective conversation with my younger self and reminds me to trust the universe, keep dreaming big, and to reconnect with the invincibility of teaching a class naked. **TAKE-AWAY:** I can't see around the bend at the moment, but there are opportunities waiting for me just ahead. ■



# MY Life IN Books

The annotated bibliography of Wisconsin Book Festival Director **Alison Jones Chaim**.

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive." — James Baldwin

#### THE TWINS AT SAINT CLARE'S by Enid Blyton

St. Clare's is a series of six books about a girls' school of that name written in the early 1940s by prolific children's author Enid Blyton. Boarding school series have long been an identifiable genre in British popular literature. Typically, protagonists break school rules for honorable reasons, but often receive severe punishments if caught.

Some of my earliest fantasies involved English boarding schools. I yearned for the life I saw in our family albums: black and white groups of clear-faced uniformed kids laughing together at ancient secrets. At my own school, I never quite fit in—until Jane let me be her friend. And then she didn't. And then she did again. Fifth grade was a roller coaster. And lessons. Jane wrote me notes: tips about first bras, about not holding hands on the playground any more. The boys were calling us lezzies, she explained. I wonder now what I thought that meant.

#### A LITTLE DEMONSTRATION OF AFFECTION by Elizabeth Winthrop

A girl at the edge of puberty from a reserved, stiff-upper-lip family feels alive for the first time, consumed by an intense wanting, and by the certainty that what she wants is wrong.

Middle school, 1979. Health class was taught by a cross between Jerry Garcia and Grizzly Adams. Having passionate feelings for another woman is entirely normal, we were assured. Many adolescent girls go through this phase. It was a phase! "Most girls who feel this way are not lesbians," Ann Landers chimed in. No worries, then, that I was more infatuated with my first boyfriend's stepmom than I was with the boy. My mother noticed. She asked me, "Is she some kind of lesbian?" From her tone it was clear: there was no "good" kind.

#### ORDINARY FAMILIES (Virago Modern Classics edition) by E. Arnot Robertson

A curious if flawed example of the 1930s coming-of-age story, rather more frank than other novels of its kind in dealing with family allegiances and sibling rivalry as well as a young woman's awakening to sexuality.

By the time I admitted it to anyone else, I was 21. I told my summer boyfriend, who was sweet, supportive, and (predictably) intrigued. I returned to my final year of college, determined to date—or at least to

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make out with—a woman. At the tiny isolated campus I'd chosen, this was not easy. When I attended my first BGLU meeting (formerly just GLU, so, bi was ... welcome?), I found myself in a room surrounded by people whom I knew by sight, and who'd known me as straight for almost four years. It was the first time I was stared at for being queer.

**THE COLOR PURPLE** by Alice Walker

An abused woman finds self-acceptance through love with a blues singer: "She say, I love you, Miss Celie. And then she haul off and kiss me on the mouth. Um, she say, like she surprise. I kiss her back, say, um, too. Us kiss and kiss till us can't hardly kiss no more. Then us touch each other."

None of the girls I really wanted to kiss ever showed up at those meetings. Finally there was a woman who took pity on me for a couple of frustratingly chaste months. With her, I marched on Washington for the first time. "We're here, we're queer, get used to it!" But they weren't using the word "queer" to be inclusive. It was because it rhymed with "here." There was no circle in which one could get up and say my name is Alison and I am bisexual, where everyone would reply Welcome, Alison. The most positive response was reassurance that it would be OK to come all the way out and be a lesbian. Lots of women say they're bi at first, I was told. That first step is scary. They understood.

**BI ANY OTHER NAME: BISEXUAL PEOPLE SPEAK OUT**

edited by Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu

New York City, Pride 1990. Thinking that if I showed up with some queers I'd be accepted, I made myself talk to a group of dykes on the subway platform. My style might have been the butch side of femme, but I never set off anybody's gaydar. Despite my Birkenstocks, I always felt like an imposter. I never got the right haircut. It seemed I was like a mixed-race person who could pass, and that people resented me because I could choose the other way if I wanted. Why would you want this life? Someone asked me. Why wouldn't you? I wanted to say back. But I knew.

**IS IT A CHOICE? ANSWERS TO 300 OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS**

by Eric Marcus

At my best friend's fairytale wedding, I sat on the steps down to the tennis court and cried and cried. Was it because I despaired of ever finding a soulmate? Or because I knew I would never have a wedding like that if I were gay? Was I crying because I was queer, or because I wasn't queer enough?

**LESBIAN COUPLES: A GUIDE TO CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

by D. Merilee Clunis and Dorsey Green

My first real girlfriend was an ex-nun chiropractor who ultimately tossed me out of her house and threw away any belongings I'd left behind. My haircut didn't matter. I don't want a lover who's bisexual, she said. She spat out the word like it tasted bad: by-SECK-shoo-ul.

**SEX AND OTHER SACRED GAMES: LOVE, DESIRE, POWER, AND POSSESSION**

by Kim Chernin and Renate Stendhal

This exploration of female sexuality challenges women to invent their own roles and to live out the full range of possibilities in passion.

Over the next few years, my inept attempts to connect with a variety of female mismatches nearly convinced me I was nothing but a curious straight girl after all. Ironically, and simultaneously, I was suddenly being noticed by men. Perhaps the more I tried to be myself, the more attractive I was to others.

**SITA** by Kate Millett

An autobiographical exploration of the dissolution of Millett's obsessive love affair with a female college administrator who ultimately betrays her by leaving for a man.

I did have a lovely storybook wedding, as it turns out. There was a level of dissonance, however, that crept into my life as a heterosexually married mom. I am not going to insult my past, or those who shared it with me, by saying that I was a tortured closeted lesbian. I was bi, I knew it, and I said so. And I am still bi. But I have also changed.

**MARRIED WOMEN WHO LOVE WOMEN** by Carren Strock

Trees drop their leaves every year. Reptiles shed their skin. Hair turns whiter by the decade. "We all change and grow, Ali," an early girl-crush wrote in my 9th grade yearbook. One morning I woke up in a sweat and realized: "This is not a choice. This is what I dream at night. This is what I want."

**SEXUAL FLUIDITY: UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S LOVE AND DESIRE**

by Lisa M. Diamond

For some women, Diamond argues, love and desire are not rigidly heterosexual or homosexual but fluid, changing as women move through the stages of life.

After 25+ years of wrestling, finally I had to decide. And now it wasn't just about me. I agonized over what it would do to my family, the people I loved the most.

It wasn't a question of coming out. I had come out decades ago, and I'd been bi forever. But I had become invisible. Longtime friends assumed I was straight. I could see the selfishness in my desire to be recognized; the ego. And then I thought: what message am I giving the kids?

**DEAR JOHN, I LOVE JANE: WOMEN WRITE ABOUT LEAVING MEN FOR WOMEN**

edited by Candace Walsh and Laura André

I pictured two conversations with my children, ten years into the future, things having gone two different ways. In the first, they say, "Our childhood was perfect until you left. After that, nothing was ever the same again."

In the second, when I come out to them, they stare, shocked. "How could you pretend to be someone you're not, all that time? How could you live a lie?"

And then I knew. Those were the kids I wanted to raise. Kids who expect the truth, from themselves and from those they love. Kids who would never allow themselves, or their future partners, to pretend to be anything other than who they truly are. ■

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Photographed by **Lukas Keapproth**



**T**hrough the process of creative expression I'm able to shape my identity, flesh it out, and experiment with it. By making art I develop a clearer, more complex sense of self and of the world. Personal struggles serve as inspiration. My life experience drives my creative impulses.

I'm a performer, visual artist, and long-time Madison resident. Much of my work focuses on issues of gender identity, sexuality, body image, and on how women are represented in popular media and in the American cultural imagination. I often explore the idea of "community"—how communities are formed, how they operate, and how art plays a role in their vitality.

For me, making art is a way to figure things out and to make meaning of life. My "process" of investigation is just as important as the final "products" that I create. I use the media of performance, photography, movement, and installation as avenues for discovery.

One thing leads to another. Magically, every project of mine seems to carry the seeds of the next within it. Each curiosity I fulfill leads me to other queries yet unanswered. If the muse goes missing, life is always ready to serve up a new challenge. Over time, I've learned to welcome

even the hardest emotions and most difficult situations. Usually, these serve as great raw material for making art.

I moved to Madison in the fall of 1990 to enroll at the UW. As the first member of my family to attend university, I had no idea what to expect from the college experience. Sure enough, my undergraduate years were intense, heartbreaking...and life changing. The education I received prompted me to re-frame my entire worldview! Not an easy or comfortable thing to do but a necessary one. As a student, I was compelled to begin exploring the territory that I continue to traverse as an artist today. It was then, too, that the activist underpinnings of my work were established. "The personal is political."

Women's Studies classes with the late Professor Mimi Orner had a particularly profound impact on me. She invited students to consider theories and ideas from class in relation to our own lives. Our personal stories became grist for the mill. I understood for the first time that I was not alone in my darkest and most painful struggles. Many others shared my lived experiences, too. I started to see how myths about identity—sexuality, race, class, gender, physical ability—are often held as truths, to great harm, and used to reinforce a system of social inequality. I began to understand that oppression has deep systemic roots. I felt wholly betrayed and duped by society. Horrified, I realized that I'd also internalized a slew of misogynistic beliefs. I was furious and afraid. The foundation of ideas on which I'd been standing my whole life began to crumble beneath my feet. Reaching out in search of something solid to hold on to, I found art.

I channeled my fury into making videos. Lots of them! I made pieces about having survived sexual assault, about the double-edged sword of pleasure/burden in feminine stereotypes, about my own sexuality. By making art I found my voice and my power. College is where I figured out that art could be truly transformational and that it was going to be a driving force in my life. The blinders were finally off. It was a very painful time. However, I gained the understanding that in art I had the tool I needed to survive. I was thrilled to discover that I could use art to provoke discussion, create community, and work for social change. I knew that I could use my creative gifts and skills to help others do the same.

In the two decades since, my work has taken many forms. I've played many roles: founder of a women's video production collective, neo-burlesque performer, sexual health outreach educator, media literacy advocate, trapeze artist, feminist activist, arts event producer, and go-go dancing bicycle fiend! I've enjoyed all sorts of interesting opportunities and taken plenty of risks. I've created a large body of work. Here are a few highlights:

**A hundred smiling faces peer in your direction. Top to bottom, left to right, photos of people in the neighborhood enliven a storefront window.**

When I moved to Schenk-Atwood a few years ago, I was eager to meet people and make connections. So, I designed an art project that gave me the perfect excuse to do just that. I spent countless hours exploring the neighborhood, talking to people, and documenting the area's many interesting faces and goings-on. This photographic portrait series called *The Face of a Place* honors and



HAIR BY SCOTT STAPLES. FASHION CREDITS ON PAGE 29.



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acknowledges the importance of individuals in the creation of community. The series captured a view of our neighborhood at a particular moment in its history and generated a representation of the diversity that dwells within it. Supported by a City of Madison BLINK grant for temporary public art, the display found a permanent home on Atwood Avenue in the workshop windows of Martin Glass.

**A sorrowful woman wanders circles through a room filled with salt. Her many tears have dried but the weight of her grief remains.**

In response to a personal loss deeply felt, I created a site-specific installation and performance called *Salt Tears*. Dogged by persistent grief, I had many questions. How much sadness can one endure? How many tears can one cry? Can the work of dealing with intense sorrow ultimately be transformative? The sound of the ocean echoed through the work shed. Piles of salt covered the floor and drifted against the walls. I moved in slow motion tending to distorted domestic tasks. The piece was my meditation on the cyclical nature of grief and the very solitary ways in which individuals cope with personal tragedy. It was performed in the Trachte shed at The Project Lodge as part of the RAW show of live performance art, curated by Christine Olson.

**A crabapple tree in bloom becomes the invitation for people to share publicly their most heartfelt wishes, secret desires, and unspoken longings.**

After the end of a long-term relationship, I moved into a new home. It was a huge transition in my life and a scary, thrilling leap into the unknown. The glorious blooming of a crabapple tree in my backyard marked the change. I imagined how different my life would be the following spring. Heart mended? In love? I was full of hope. But when the tree bloomed again, not much had changed. Looking at the pink blossoms outside my window only amplified my sadness. The tree had become a symbol of expectations unmet. I decided to shift the meaning of the annual bloom in the direction of joy. I created *The Wishing Tree Project*. I invited friends and neighbors to visit my backyard, write wishes on tags I'd prepared, and tie them to the tree. This participatory art installation was inspired by the tradition of "wishing trees" and sacred spaces worldwide. Now, every year I eagerly anticipate the opening of its gorgeous blossoms and all of the sweet revelations and backyard visitors that accompany it.

**A bodacious blonde named Olive in a too-short skirt and crazy-high heels cracks a dirty joke. With a wiggle and a giggle, she makes you blush.**

Curiosities I had about my relationship to my own body, and in particular, defining the self as 'sexual object' led me to explore the world of neo-burlesque. This sex-positive performance art celebrates the body in all of its glorious forms. As a member of Madison's very own Cherry Pop Burlesque troupe I gleefully danced feminist striptease and toyed endlessly with cultural taboos. I did comedy to critique the status quo. And I indulged my hearty appetite for glamour and bling! I enjoyed the company of gifted creative collaborators and was reminded once again that working in community with other artists is always an amazing gift. It is in the interactions where my work comes alive and gains greater meaning.

**A woman dons her ritual garments to dance before the camera. With every shutter, every shudder, she hopes again to catch a glimpse of her true self.**

*A Little Story* is my on-going experiment in self-portraiture. Working with an elaborate set of personal symbols, I perform for the



PHOTO BY CHRIS NORRIS.

camera to piece together a cryptic narrative. Making this series is like working a puzzle. I wonder: What wisdom will my subconscious share given the opportunity? How can I use what I see in these photographs to lead a more authentic life? With these images, I project the self I wish to become and then move toward that image. I imagine the woman I want to be and make a photograph of her in hopes of activating the transformation.

As I make art, it makes me. Through art I perform the story of my own life. I never know exactly where I'm headed next. That's fine with me. It keeps me on my toes! Living and working as an artist requires being especially comfortable with uncertainty. Having set my trajectory years ago, I now feel free to respond to interesting opportunities as they arise. Experience has given me the confidence to trust my instincts as I find my way. May my eyes and heart remain wide open for the journey. ■



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# The Kindness of Strangers

Gay philanthropy follows a trajectory from coat checks and “hat” passing to a multi-million dollar community.



Picture it. A Wisconsin winter. The 1970s. It is cold in the frozen tundra so you have a heavy coat. After all, only so much fabulous style can keep you warm without cloth or leather!

Head to the gay bar where you check your wrap and throw a tip into the coat check basket. You have just become a gay philanthropist of the day. Wisconsin’s early gay activism in the 1970s survived mainly on the proceeds from the winter coat checks at gay bars. Of course being a “gay philanthropist” was a bit of repeat phrase, since the root of the word philanthropy being the Greek *philein* “to love” plus the Greek *anthropos* meaning “man.”

In “A Streetcar Named Desire,” Tennessee Williams gives Blanche Dubois the final line, “I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.” This is after her family and culture have rejected her. All too often gay folks have had to depend on the kindness of strangers to build our movement. At times this has been because even gay people have been unknown or strangers to each other in response to the demands of the closet.

## Borrowed Space

The first gay organization in Madison and Wisconsin, the Madison Alliance for Homosexual Equality (MAHE) was founded in the fall of 1969 right after Stonewall. MAHE depended on the kindness of strangers when it needed to borrow space for meetings. St. Francis House, then and now the campus Episcopal Center—presently facing an uncertain future—was the first public location in town to welcome a gay organization. Later, St. Francis would be a home to Integrity-Dignity, the local organization linked to the national gay Catholic and gay Episcopalian organizations, but here locally run as an ecumenical group.

## Passing the Hat

In 1972 Paul Safransky fought his firing from his job at Southern Colony for being a homosexual. Lawyers, including David Adamany, donated their time for the court proceedings that went all the way to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. However, there were still costs for copying briefs and filing fees to be paid. The UW student bar association paid part and the “hat” was passed at gays

bars in Madison by a new Madison organization, the Gay Liberation Front, to fund these costs.

In March 1977, the “Renaissance Newsletter” of the Gay Center headlined a story “Financial Crisis Hits Gay Center as Pledges Drop.” Penned by Ron McCrea, local activist and journalist, it noted that regular pledges had brought in just \$300 to \$400 a month for several years. The problems of volunteer organizations were highlighted when it was noted there were no contributions in November and December 1976 because the post office box expired due to changeover of treasurers and all checks were returned. Then January brought only \$30 and February another \$80. These paltry sums did not cover even the organization’s tiny budget.



William Wartmann

**Amazingly, these house parties raised \$1,000 or more, which was a big contribution to community resources at the time. We also learned that as community fundraising grew, so did our political power.**

The center’s budget at that time was \$100 a month for supplies plus another \$100 a month for the newsletter. Another \$100 a month went to repay St. Francis House for a loan with a balance of \$850 principal with \$240 in interest due. The original loan had been for \$2,000 to fund a start-up staffer who had since resigned. In June, the newsletter reported a gain of net proceeds of \$59 from a benefit poetry reading at the Cardinal Bar. Later in 1977, advertisers like the Soap Opera, A Room of One’s Own bookstore, the Back Door bar, Gilman Street Books, the Cardinal Bar, and

Pure Pleasure Bookstore bought ads in the newsletter to help out and rescue the publication of the newsletter. Such was the high finance of Madison’s early gay liberation.

## Gay Funds for the Gay Community

The MAGIC Picnic, originally the Back Door Bar Picnic with Rodney Scheel’s leadership, became another source of gay funds for the gay community in this early period of the mid- to late-1970s. The tentative nature of organizational efforts was reflected in the name Madison Area Gay Interim Committee or MAGIC. Volunteer groups would agree to furnish so much labor for the picnic event and proceeds were divided according to each organization’s efforts to pull off the picnic. Of course, highlights like the water balloon toss (wet t-shirts anyone?) and the high-heel race made the event very popular. But major funds were still lacking.

In the late 1970s Dan Curd and yours truly agreed to serve on the advisory board of the Gay Center, a forerunner of OutReach, which met in the basement of the campus Methodist Center. Thank God for friendly, progressive Christians. We were amazed at how small a budget on which the Gay Center operated, less than \$10,000. This clearly pointed to a need for more fundraising.

## Community Fundraisers

Dan and I, then both living in the historically gay-friendly near eastside with houses on the 700 blocks of Jenifer Street and Williamson Street, got into the community fundraising track. One of our first efforts was an event for the United. We threw a themed event called “An Alice B. Toklas Birthday Party,” choosing a day in the year near her birthday. And no, we did not serve that kind of brownies—yonger ones may have to Google this.

For the Gay Center, we next decided to throw a themed party “A Night in Old Key West” at the end of March with promises of “magic and mirth; blossoms and brilliance; stars and southern breezes.” This was 1981 and there was an election for County Executive so Jonathan Barry and Rod Matthews both appeared to campaign for the gay community vote. Candidates were just beginning to figure out how to woo gay voters, following in the footsteps of earlier Paul Soglin and Jim Rowen campaigns that had hit the gay bars.

The suggested donation was \$10 for which one would get cool libations and sumptuous hors d’œuvres. Amazingly, these house parties raised \$1,000 or more, which was a big contribution to community resources at the time. We also learned that as community fundraising grew, so did our political power.

## The United and City of Madison funding

By 1981 The United, another forerunner of OutReach, had built up its budget to \$27,000 with the biggest source of funds being \$13,250 from the City of Madison while membership and fundraising contributed merely \$4,000. The city had decided to support the Lesbian/Gay Crisis line in 1980, the line being virtually the only source for help with coming out or other issues for LGBT people in south-central Wisconsin. However, maintaining even this small contribution and the service was often an annual budget battle as less-friendly city council members for several years proposed budget amendments to remove funding from The United. This being Madison, they failed. Having gay people on the city council helped preserve funding.

## The New Harvest Foundation

After the passage of Wisconsin’s first-in-the-nation gay rights law in 1982 many of us felt we could do anything. We knew Milwaukee had established a Cream City Foundation for their gay community as had a few other places, so why not here in Madison? So after six months of lively discussions in my living room, the New Harvest Foundation was born with Tess Meuer and me as the first co-chairs, gender parity being a foundational principle. Jerry Dahlke, a gay man and professional fundraiser, teased us into having an initial goal of \$10,000, which we thought was madly ambitious. By the time we publicly launched the Foundation at an event at the old Civic Center in 1984 with Mayor Joe Sensenbrenner, Jerry had pushed the goal up to \$25,000 for the initial campaign of three years, of which over one half was committed during the launch.

## Community Dinners

In the 1980s there were many community dinners for special groups like the Urban League, the ACLU, and the NAACP, but none for the gay community, so we had to remedy that. The New Harvest Foundation staged the first gay community dinner in Madison in 1986. The Fess Hotel, now part of the Great Dane on King Street, was reserved for the event. There was the usual formula—cocktails, dinner with a speaker, and (to be daring) dancing, which of course here would be mainly same-sex couples. The guest speaker was Evelyn Beck, editor of *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*. Her book was dedicated to Blanche Goldberg, founding member of Jewish Lesbians of Madison. Today there is a multiplicity of gay community dinners. Still ongoing is the New Harvest dinner, which held the 25th anniversary for the organization in 2009, joined today by dinners for the Gay-Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE), OutReach, the Out Professional and Executive Network (OPEN),

and the Red Ribbon Affair by AIDS Network.

Today the fundraising picture is very different. And why should it not be? We are citizens who pay our taxes unto Caesar—why should our community not get some back in health services and other ways? We also give to the United Way, which funds the AIDS Network, and to other charitable umbrellas through workplace giving campaigns. Four gay community agencies are helped by Community Shares, the friendliest umbrella, including the Fair Wisconsin Education Fund, GSAFE, the New Harvest Foundation, and OutReach.



Evelyn Beck

## Gay Philanthropy

We have had significant gay philanthropy in the bequest of George Mosse. The noted Berlin-born history professor and refugee from fascism gave millions to UW-Madison which helps to fund gay scholarship. The UW Foundation also has had a number of individuals create named scholarship funds directed to gay support at the university, which some of us have nicknamed “the fabulous funds.” Individuals like William Wartmann, gay philanthropist, are praised for their support of many efforts for the LGBT community as well as for the arts and the environment. The New Harvest Foundation has an endowment for its ongoing work of several hundred thousands of dollars. As they say in Cincinnati, “Don’t be caught dead without a bequest...”

The combined budgets today for gay community organizations in this area are well over \$3 million. Yet community needs certainly are not met fully through these efforts. This dollar amount does not count many volunteer hours that also are contributed—probably worth several more millions. Blanche would indeed feel uplifted here by the many kindnesses provided. This growth in philanthropy is a record to be proud of and to build on. And it all started with a few bucks for the coat check. ■

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

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# Thank a Senior

Paving the way for today's LGBTQ community, our forefathers and mothers did a lot to be grateful for. **Caroline Werner** explores what their needs are now.

LGBT culture in the United States originated with people who are now deceased or who are today's seniors. They served in secrecy in all of our nation's wars. They were the people who lived during the genocide of the Holocaust and Auschwitz (1933-1945). They were persecuted and lost their jobs during the McCarthy Era (1950s) when they were being labeled Communists and traitors to their country just for being gay.



and community consciousness-building in their local communities where they live."

As I see it, the AIDS pandemic during the Reagan/Bush era (1980s-1990s) strengthened our fight for access to essential healthcare, healthcare programming, and funding that addressed our specific needs. I joined others in fundraising walks. Although frustrating and sad, it brought sexuality and safe sex into the open for broader discussion than what churches and society would allow. This era was another attempt to repress and separate us, but the disease didn't know repression and separation. It does not care what sexual identity you claim.

Despite the odds, many of our seniors are aging. I'm not sure that we (or society) wanted or expected us to reach old age. Staying young—and promiscuous—precluded thoughts of healthy aging. Some of us committed suicide, became alcoholics and smoked, lived isolated lives, contracted HIV/AIDS, or were killed.

Seniors who formed long-lasting, closeted, same-sex relationships relied on each other for survival. Others formed heterosexual marriages, not knowing their identities or not accepting their identities until years later.

Having lived extremely closeted lives, it is no wonder many seniors remain silent about their identities. An article in *The Capital Times* in 2001 reporting a social event for LGBT seniors mentions Historian George Chauncey's book *The History of the Closet* where he found that "Gay men ages 60 to 95 don't see the same need to disclose their homosexuality that younger men do." In 2010, *The Capital Times* reported on an LGBT project and an 87-year-old lesbian whose name is disguised, saying "Even today Jane would not dream of coming out in the suburban Dane County assisted living facility where she now resides, despite the caring staff and friendly neighbors."

I observed one of my friends, who is now deceased, live in an assisted living facility and remain closeted. She would attend the Retired Old Lesbians Luncheon (ROLLers) when someone could provide transportation. She would invite her friends for an occasional social event in her apartment. She was

**Observing my friends, I realize how important it is that all of us do what we can to assure that we are not isolated and neglected in whatever setting we're in as we age.**

To survive, our seniors formed two liberation organizations—The Mattachine Society (gay men), established in 1950; and The Daughters of Bilitis (lesbians), initiated in 1955. "Their five-day fight with New York police in 1969 at a bar named Stonewall marks the Independence Day of gay and lesbian culture," claims Gerald P. Mallon in *Foundations of Social Work Practice with Lesbian and Gay Persons*.

He goes on to say, "Lesbian and gay communities have always had a keen interest in politics, religion, the military, obtaining civil rights, and in organizing efforts against harassment and violence. The gay and lesbian marches, in 1979, 1987, and in 1993 in Washington, D.C., played a major role in community development not only in bringing gay men and lesbians together from all over the country, but in stimulating growth

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very lonely and missed our company. I regret not having been able to visit her more often. Observing my friends, I realize how important it is that *all of us do what we can* to assure that we are not isolated and neglected in whatever setting we're in as we age.

Many seniors have enjoyed being out in recent years and fear having to go back into the closet when they consider moving to a retirement center or an assisted living facility. The Gay and Gray Discussion at the Madison Senior Center often includes talk of seeking friendly living space. In a 2002

**As I see it, the AIDS pandemic during the Reagan/Bush era (1980-1990s) strengthened our fight for access to essential healthcare, healthcare programming, and funding that addressed our specific needs.**

*Wisconsin State Journal* article entitled, "Out' and About," a senior and member of the OutReach Board is quoted as saying, "You worry about the repercussions...(but) life is too short to have it filled with narrow-minded people."

The activities of our seniors and our future seniors (baby boomers born 1946-1964) suggest where LGBT elders may influence the overall face of aging. Because of their activity to increase visibility and find acceptance, four out of five people in society "know at least one LGBT person, and family acceptance of LGBT people is high," according to "Still Out, Still Aging," in a 2010 MetLife study of LGBT baby boomers. ■

Caroline Werner is a retired social worker who provided case management to Dane County seniors. She is also a past OutReach Volunteer of the Year recipient.

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# In the Passing Lane

What are your rights during a traffic stop? **Tamara Packard** relates a story of innocence and ignorance and reviews what to do if you find yourself in the glare of flashing lights.

**S**he was on her way back from a meeting with other transgender and gender-variant people. They had spent the evening in camaraderie, sharing stories of joy and pain, survival and make-up tips. She was in the home stretch, just a few more turns to her own driveway. Suddenly, the red and blue police lights lit the night. She pulled over, waiting for the officer to speed past, but instead he pulled up behind her. She tensed, wondering what she did wrong,



**With the Model Criminal Code, many "crimes against morality" statutes were repealed, including those requiring correlation between wardrobe and genitalia.**

*but remembered what to do. "Turn off the car, get the registration and your license out, roll your window down, keep your hands on the steering wheel, wait for the officer to come to you, and be polite," she could hear her dad say.*

*At first, there didn't seem to be a major problem. The officer said he'd stopped her for a burned-out taillight. He would have to write her a ticket. But as he spoke with her and looked over her license, he took her in. What he saw was a man wearing women's clothes, speaking like a woman. He was not okay with this, not in his county—wasn't female impersonation a crime? He asked her to step out of the car. "Turn and face the car, put your hands on the hood, spread your*

*legs" he said. Defenseless, she followed his instructions, glancing to see what was in his hands. Was his nightstick poised to strike her? Would she wake hours later, beaten and in the ditch of this rural road? The cuffs clicked around her wrists, and she was placed in the squad car. They drove to the station, where she was placed in a holding cell. After what seemed to be hours, they released her and let her go home, after writing her a ticket for the taillight, of course. Apparently they could find no laws that her wardrobe choices violated.*

**1950s, Indiana? 1960s, Mississippi? Try 2010, Wisconsin.** This is a fictionalized version of a true story recently told to me; the driver gave me permission to share it with *Our Lives* readers. She wanted people to be aware of the hazards out there, and to know their rights. I hope this column helps.

In 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn in New York City, a private gay club favored especially by drag queens. This raid is recognized as the spark that ignited the modern gay rights movement. At that time, "female impersonation" was a crime in many places, and that is what many Stonewall patrons were arrested and jailed for: they were accused of wearing clothes of the opposite sex. Such laws were common throughout the United States until the 1970s, when the new Model Criminal Code was adopted by most states. With the Model Code, many "crimes against morality" statutes were repealed, including those requiring correlation between wardrobe and genitalia. Some municipalities continue to have such laws on the books, but they are rarely enforced. For instance, it took Oakland, California, until last year to repeal their 130-year-old ordinance which outlawed dressing "in the attire of a person of the opposite sex." According to officials there, it was never enforced and few people even knew about it.

Transgender and gender-variant people are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment by those in power, including law enforcement. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals may

have an easier time "passing" and thus avoiding problems with those who might disapprove. Regardless of how easily you can masquerade as a member of the dominant culture, however, it is good to keep certain tips in mind, should you ever find yourself on the wrong end of a law enforcement stop. The following is adapted from information on the American Civil Liberty Union's website, as well as advice from numerous criminal defense attorneys:

**What he saw was a man wearing women's clothes, speaking like a woman. He was not okay with this, not in his county—wasn't female impersonation a crime?**

If you are stopped by law enforcement for questioning, remain calm and be polite. If you are driving, show your license, registration, and proof of insurance if asked. You do not have to consent to a search of your car or body, but if an officer suspects you have a weapon, s/he may pat you down. Do not lie. You have the right to remain silent; if you choose to exercise this right, say so. When the questioning is over, ask if you are free to leave; if you are, leave quietly and calmly. If you are arrested, you have a right to know why. Even if you believe there is no basis for arrest, do not resist the arrest—that is definitely a crime. Ask for a lawyer immediately. Do not sign anything, say anything, or agree to anything without first talking to a lawyer. If you cannot afford a lawyer, a free one must be provided to you. If your civil rights are violated by law enforcement—for instance by a baseless arrest or use of excessive force against you—you will have the ability to vindicate your rights later. It will do no good to argue your case to the officers while they are in control.

The laws may be gone, but in some people the mindset remains. We must continue to educate people, especially those in power, about our lives so they can get beyond their fears. Being out in your community and living your life is one of the best ways to bring about change. ■

Tamara Packard is a Madison civil rights lawyer, activist and partner in the law firm of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach LLP, [www.cwpb.com](http://www.cwpb.com).

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member profile



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OPEN is proud to feature one of our Charter Members. Marty Fox has served as OPEN's President and is currently serving as our Treasurer. She has been the driving force behind our first annual OPEN Workplace Summit. She is building community by making connections between people and organizations.

"OPEN is giving me the opportunity to continue working toward stronger relationships between the LGBTQ and business communities." —Marty Fox

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# Taking the First Step

Summer Grest became a workplace advocate the same way she became a project manager—by recognizing an opportunity and going for it.

I'm writing this as I am flying from Oregon to Denver—then, Denver to Madison. I'll be home by 12:30 a.m. My first meeting tomorrow is at 10 a.m. Not too bad.

My life was different a year ago. I wasn't a project manager, I didn't do any business travel, and I knew almost nothing about the healthcare industry.

So how did I get here? It's funny you should ask. I started out my professional life as an opera singer. Well, as an aspiring opera singer with some successes that didn't outpace the cost of living/upkeep. I worked a day job in an office and became your typical jack-of-all-trades secretary-meet-office manager, with some project managing on the side. I liked the



Days went by before the second employee joined the group, then another week before the third. At last count there were 60+ employee members.

work and I enjoyed the relationships I built with my colleagues. As time passed I had to admit that my *paying* job was the one on which I really wanted to focus my energies. And so began my corporate career.

Almost a year ago I faced a difficult career choice. My role at my former company was being eliminated and there were few roles that fit my particular skill set. I applied to internal and external positions—uneasy about the idea of leaving the friends and co-workers with whom I had built a strong reputation.

To add to my unease, one of my external options was a long-shot job with a company that had a reputation for hiring the best and the brightest right out of college. As a 33-year-old former opera singer, I had little hope that I

would make the cut. The application and interview process was vigorous. Somehow I marshaled my competitive juices and made a strong showing. A few weeks passed and I received an offer I couldn't have hoped to win based upon my established career trajectory. Thrilled to have this opportunity, I took the leap.

A former boss and mentor once told me that if you want to make quick progress in your career you have to be willing to get up and go, moving when the opportunity presents itself. It's not so different from what many of us do when we come out. Some of us choose to leave our hometown, some move to bigger cities that are a safe haven, a place of acceptance. Others carve out new opportunities complete with a new circle of friends and colleagues in which to make their name. The risks we take in making these moves are often rewarded with big payoffs. We find a group of friends that really get us. We meet the love of our lives. We learn more about ourselves after taking that chance than we would have if we decided to remain where all things were familiar.

My first days in my new role were exhilarating. My newfound colleagues energized me. As expected, they were largely in their early 20s and quick-as-a-whip. "Here is a place I can be completely comfortable as an out lesbian," I thought. After all, according to a Gallup poll in 2007, 75 percent of people between the ages of 18 and 34 were accepting of homosexuality.

My new company had an employee directory complete with photos and the ability to join groups noting your alma mater, areas of specialty, and some personal attributes. Some employees would note their expertise in running or interest in performing music at employee events. In the age of Facebook, I felt the urge to fill out my "profile." I added my schools and my interest in running and music. I was starting to craft my virtual employee persona. What was missing? Oh, right: LGBTQ.

I was sure there must already be a group for LGBTQ employees. Given the average age of the employee base, I even expected there to be a strong employee resource group. To my surprise, I couldn't find evidence of either. There I sat staring at my profile, as only a brand new employee has the time to do. I was suddenly faced with a choice. You see, employees have the ability to create these groups. I knew this

because I had created the group for my undergraduate alma mater. It was easy, only a few steps. Just then I had a terrified moment of realization when I knew what I was about to do. I saw it happen in a flash. *I was going to create the group.* I took a few deep breaths and typed in the letters: LGBTQ. There it was. I was out. And I was the only member of the group.

Days went by before the second employee joined the group, then another week before the third. A month went by before we had 10 members. And now I'm always thrilled to see new employees join. I'm so proud that they have a group to join. At last count there were 60+ employee members.

My colleagues are so inspiring that I have been motivated to pool my efforts with Marty Fox, my amazing mentor, to plan OPEN's first Workplace Summit. This half-day conference, on September 17 at CUNA Mutual, will focus on growing employee resource groups, or ERGs, and mentoring for young professionals.

We have so many rich resources at our fingertips as young LGBTQ professionals. We just have to take the leap. Even though it might sometimes feel like you won't find your footing, we are all around you. ■

Summer Grest is a former opera singer turned project manager. She lives in Madison with her partner and their dog and cat.

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# quality of life

## OUR ISSUES

## Do You Have Commitment Issues?

Dr. Sue Gill examines the role commitment plays in relationships.

"Commitment." Does this sound like a dirty word to you? Do you begin to feel trapped if the relationship you are in starts to gain depth? Are you great at hook-ups but terrible at long-term relationships?

Or maybe it seems like the opposite is true for you. A week after meeting someone you are talking about moving in together and dreaming about your future life of bliss as a couple.

I propose that both extremes are indicators of a problem with commitment that can ultimately lead to feelings of chronic loneliness and isolation.



**If you have a history of primarily following your passions, ask yourself how you can actively develop further capacity for intimacy and commitment in relationships.**

The Triangular Theory of Love is a model developed by psychologist Robert Sternberg, and it might be a useful way to understand the role of commitment in relationships. This model identifies three components of love: Intimacy (feeling connected, close, attached to another person), Passion (sexual attraction), and Commitment (the decision to be with another and the long-term plans that result).

This model can be used to describe any type of relationship. For example, most friendships are characterized primarily by intimacy. Some very longstanding friendships have both intimacy and commitment. Some family relationships have an element

of commitment that may or may not also include intimacy. To get a sense of this, think about the family members whom you like to hang out with, and others with whom you don't feel a connection. Although you might get together with all of them for holidays (a type of commitment—you are in a long-term relationship with them), you might only have intimacy and commitment with some of your family.

A hook-up might be understood as a relationship with passion only, while a dating relationship probably has both passion and intimacy. Partners, spouses and significant others have the added element of commitment, but the passion or the intimacy can sometimes erode over time in these relationships.

It seems that many relationships start out with a heavy focus on passion. From there we have stereotypes about how same-sex relationships proceed. Some lesbian relationships seem to go right from passion to commitment, without allowing sufficient time for real intimacy to develop. You know the joke: Q: What does a lesbian bring to a second date? A: A U-Haul. The stereotype for gay men implies something different: Q: What does a gay man bring to a second date? A: What second date? If there are follow-up dates for a gay male, the stereotype is that these will lead to increased intimacy as the couple gets to know one another better, but that commitment will not necessarily ensue.

I do not have any statistics that indicate whether these stereotypes are really true. However, as we are gaining the legal right to marry in more states, and as long-term relationships continue to be significant for many of us, it seems important to learn how to help these relationships be more long-lasting, more fulfilling, and more solid.

Following Sternberg's model, it is possible to have some kind of relationship with any one or two of the elements of love, but the most complete relationship comes when all three elements are present. Relationships also last longer when they entail two or three elements of love, and when each of the elements is actively nurtured.

Let's focus on commitment for a mo-

ment. If the word means "an involuntary lockup" to you, it might be useful to understand why it has that connotation. Remember that to commit simply means to make a pledge or decision to stay together, to make the ongoing choice to stay in the relationship. That can actually feel quite easy for some people if the other two elements are in place.

If you have been part of a committed relationship that felt miserable and lacked intimacy and passion, remember that commitment probably wasn't the real issue; it was the lack of intimacy and passion.

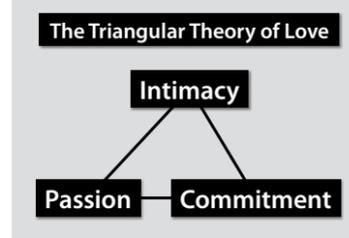
If you are a U-Haul lesbian, remember that the longest lasting relationship has all three elements. Although passion can just happen without effort early in a relationship, and commitment is a choice you can make at any time, real intimacy takes a long time to develop.

If you have a history of primarily following your passions, ask yourself how you can actively develop further capacity for intimacy and commitment in relationships. Do you know what true intimacy looks and

feels like? Are you able to develop intimacy in non-romantic relationships? Have you been so focused on developing the passionate aspect of your relationships that you have neglected to develop the skills necessary for intimacy? If you think that you are commitment phobic, check your ability to foster and maintain intimacy.

A final note for all of you who are already in committed relationships: commitment is a choice that you have made. It's not too hard to stick with that decision once you've made it. However, passion and intimacy need a lot of maintenance work throughout the life of the relationship. It is a good idea to periodically evaluate how you are doing in these areas to make sure you are not neglecting any of them. That will help you to maintain strength in all of the areas that make for a happy and long-term relationship.

Sue and her partner Sheri have lived in Madison since 2000. They keep busy with their two dogs, Frankie and Maslow. Sue is a psychologist in private practice and can be found online at [www.madisontherapy.com](http://www.madisontherapy.com).



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## quality of life



## True Confections of Christine's Gourmet Toffee

*Or, the serendipitous adventure of Leanne Cordisco.*

Leanne Cordisco describes herself as “over the top.” Maybe it’s that “something” her late business partner Sam Jacobsen saw in her when she made her pitch for a ... wine accessory. “Imagine a Zip-lock bag that was big enough to hold a wine bottle but it’s made with bubble wrap and it’s made of super, super thick plastic, like plastic you could make a pool raft out of,” she explains, to protect bottles during travel in checked luggage.

A biomedical engineer by training (and Gay Olympics gold medalist in racquetball to boot), Leanne came up with a design that she hoped would be the ticket for her and her partner to travel the world as their day job.

They ran out of money and Leanne searched for an angel investor instead. Within days, Edgewood College professor, Denis Collins, put her in touch with Sam Jacobsen, founder of PDQ.

The problem was, Sam didn’t like wine. But he liked Leanne. The energetic then-80-year-old rejected her wine accessory idea and asked,

**Her toffees and caramels are available online  
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and the Dane County Regional Airport.**

“How’d you like to start a candy company with me?”

“I walked into the meeting thinking I was going to start a wine accessory business and I walked out owning half of a candy company and I had never made candy before in my life,” Leanne says.

It turned out well, though, due in part to her engineer’s precision and proclivity for producing replicable results that would also be a boon in the temperamental but nevertheless predictable art of candy making.

Christine’s Gourmet Toffee is named after Sam’s mother, who used to make candies for him as a boy: “It’s to honor her memory and keep Sam Jacobsen alive in this company even though he’s gone now,” Leanne says.

After Sam’s passing in January 2010, Leanne saw an opportunity to become a more visible presence in the LGBT community. Although she and Sam “clicked,” Leanne said she never came out to Sam out of respect,

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and he never asked.

“When I would travel, I would look for lesbian-owned restaurants, gay-owned restaurants or gay- and lesbian-owned B&B’s,” Leanne says. “I am glad to have the opportunity to identify as a gay-owned business.”

Her toffees and caramels are available online and at dozens of local retail venues, including Barriques, Jenifer Street Market, and the Dane County Regional Airport—which is a potential gateway to expand distribution nationally.

Going national is Leanne’s goal. And it’s not a long-shot for her, either. Last fall her online sales to the Los Angeles area boomed. That December, a production company sent out her (Usinger’s) bacon toffee in 300 gift bags to their clients and prospective clients.

“The person who got it ate it, loved it, and happens to be the promotional person for this company that does SWAG (“Something We All Get”) events,” Leanne says.

Now, she will be making 200 gift bags to be given out as SWAG at the Emmy Awards this year on September 18. It’s big, but that seems to be Leanne’s unspoken mantra—go big or go home.

It’s what could be seen as fortunate string of fated events; the right people, the right bacon, the right time. Or the story of an angel investor and a fairy SWAG mother.

“It’s just kind of amazing the way it’s all happened. It ended up perfectly,” she says.

*Leanne Cordisco would like to acknowledge Jam Graphics & Design for giving her products the look her customers love. —Marcelle Richards*

Photographed by Roberto Amezcua

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### Strength in Numbers

Maria Peebles, GSAFE scholarship recipient, discovers the benefits of cooperating across movements.

It helped me discover the importance of intersectionality within all social movements—recognizing that we cannot make progress within the queer community without also examining the systems that impact other oppressions.

Two summers ago, I signed up to attend a leadership camp through GSA for Safe Schools (GSAFE) with a heavy heart and an eager mind. As a leader of my school's Gay-Straight Alliance, I was excited to learn more about how we could improve our club and the environment for LGBTQ students at our school. As a queer-identified young person still living in the closet, however, I was worried about my ability to continue hiding who I was in such a supportive community. After four days spent with a group of amazing young activists and the leaders at GSAFE, I walked away not only being honest about my identity, but empowered, alive, and ready to address issues affecting LGBTQ people in Wisconsin.

One of the workshops that I attended at the Leadership Training Institute discussed the impact of slurs and hurtful language in schools. We talked about different ideas for making schools safer spaces for all students, and my mind began turning as I thought about the problems among students in my own Appleton high school.

In the fall, I met with a few other student leaders and our GSA advisor to begin planning what would come to be known as "Words Hurt Week." We created a game plan to meet with other student groups, learn what words were hurting students in our halls, and raise awareness about how to effectively change the climate. As LGBTQ students and allies, we knew of the pain that could come from slurs targeting sexual orientation and gender identity, but we wanted to expand the project to also address race, class, religion, ability, and ethnicity. What started as a small idea began to grow much larger than the four of us working on it ever could have dreamed.

The first annual "Words Hurt Week" at Appleton East High School included trainings for students and staff members, posters made by each academic department and student organization, a PostSecret project, and an entire day of speakers in the auditorium. We put up over 1,000 postcards from students and staff members displaying secrets and packed the auditorium full every hour. Something began to shift in the environment in our school that week. That shift continued through the school year when we formed a committee and put on an even larger event. Statewide, the project was adopted by over 18 schools and has now appeared in schools in New Mexico, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C.

The planning and implementing of the "Words Hurt Week" project changed my life in so many ways. It strengthened me as a young queer person, and I was opened up to the courage and resilience of my peers. It helped me discover the importance of intersectionality within all social movements—recognizing that we cannot make progress within the queer community without also examining the systems that impact other oppressions. My organizing in Wisconsin—that has been largely influenced by GSAFE—has helped shape my future as I go onto study Political Science and Gender Studies at the University of San Francisco.

Eventually, I hope to come back to the state I love to work as an advocate in reproductive rights. I will always be an activist, and I am grateful for the opportunities that I have already had to be involved in my community. I am so excited to see the next group of leaders come forth at both Appleton East High School and in GSA for Safe Schools. Working together, young people truly are a force to be reckoned with. ■

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<sup>1</sup>Line of credit—During the 15-year draw period, the minimum monthly payment for HELOC 80% and HELOC 90% will be the greater of (a) \$50 or (b) the accrued interest on the outstanding balance under the agreement as of the close of the billing cycle. The minimum monthly payment for HELOC 100% will be (a) \$100 or (b) 1.5% of the outstanding balance, whichever is greater. However, if you exceed the maximum principal loan balance allowed under your agreement, you will also be required to pay an amount sufficient to reduce your principal loan balance to the maximum principal loan balance allowed under the agreement. Balances of less than \$100.00 must be paid in full. Late payment fee: \$10 or 5% of the unpaid amount due, whichever is less. Rate indexed to prime. APR is subject to change monthly but cannot exceed 18%. The rate will never fall below 4.49% for HELOC 80%, 4.99% for HELOC 90%, or 7.99% for HELOC 100%. No annual fees.



Your best interest always comes first.™

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## Calling all walkers, runners, people who eat! Join the safe schools movement at the...

### GSA for Safe Schools



**Walk / Run / Eat**



**Who:** You, your friends, your family...anyone who shares GSA for Safe Schools' vision of educational systems where all students thrive regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

**What:** A 5K walk and a 5 and 10K run followed by a picnic-style lunch, generously donated by Queen Anne's Catering.

**When:** Sunday, October 16, 2011

**Where:** Goodman Community Center  
149 Waubesa Street

Interested in taking on the Pacesetter challenge?  
Call Tim Michael at 608.661.4141 for details!

Register now at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/WRE2011>



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