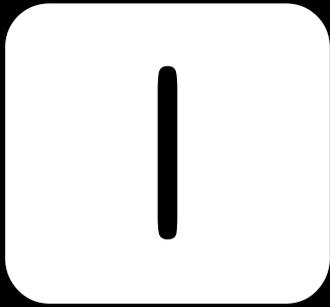


January / February 2008

our lives



Madison's LGBTQA Magazine



Objects of Affection

Gift ideas for Valentine's Day

Downtown Love Affair

Robert Leschke falls for State Street

Homeless in Madison

A Gay Youth Crisis Special Report
by Patrick Erwin

Delayed Adolescence

Dale Decker helps you manage getting off to a late start

Wisconsin Schools on Trial

Tamara Packard revisits a legal precedent

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools'
Cindy Crane evaluates our youth climate

Mount Horeb's
Teddi Hereid shares her school's SAGA

Teddi Hereid

Mount Horeb High School Alum,
now a freshman at UW - Madison

The Future of Us

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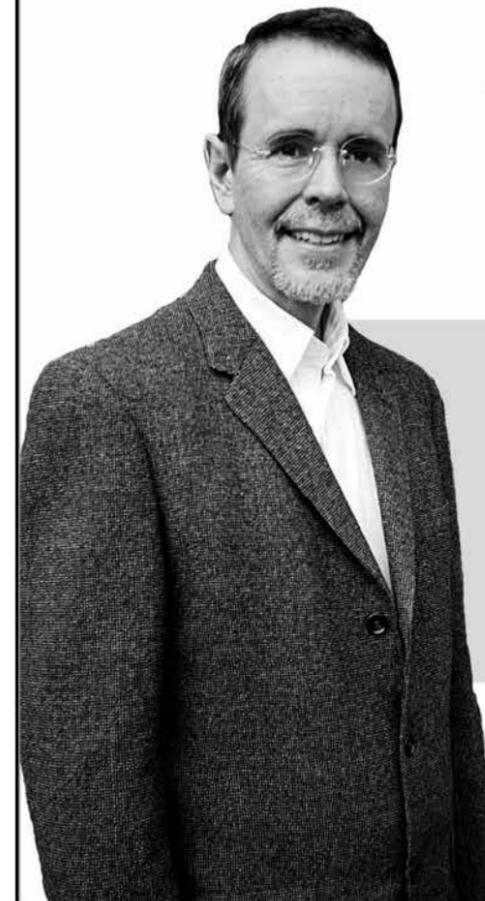
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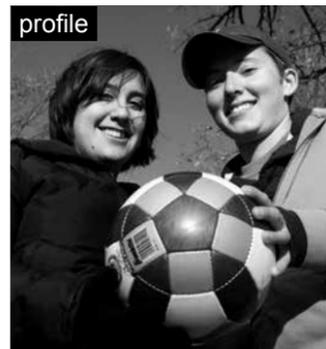
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GSAFE Executive Director **Cindy Crane** identifies the challenges and the progress we're facing in our schools



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our lives Community Forum
PERMISSION TO MARRY
Submitted by **arglenn**

Why does the government allow/control marriages at all? A marriage is a religious sacrament. Fundamentally as a government, we believe in the separation of church and state. So, I ask should the government have a hand in marriage? I say no... I propose that the government control civil unions... And by civil unions, I mean the the current legal rights given to anyone currently recognized as married...

| [Read the entire thread online](#) |

Cover Photo by Jessica Horn
shooterforhire@gmail.com



Madison's LGBTQA Magazine

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My Two Moms

Alta with her parents, Susan & Mary Jane

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editor

The Heart that Loves is Always Young.



I've been homeless.

It is easy to think it is happening somewhere else; or to someone we don't know. But it happened to me, and it is happening to people in our lives. In Patrick Erwin's special report "Young and Homeless, Here" we listen to Zack describe with true detail the challenges he's met while struggling to hold his life together. What he is going through echoes almost anyone who hasn't received the tools and support necessary to realize their potential.

Our cover girl Teddi Hereid, on the other hand, is a shining example of what is possible when those tools and support are available. Her account of what took place last year in Mount Horeb is inspirational, and a testament to the impact a high school gay-straight alliance program can have on the students it reaches.

Both of these narratives illustrate the importance of fostering confidence and self-esteem in our youth before they begin to doubt what they intuitively believe is right for themselves. As you're reading this issue, I invite you to take some time to reconnect with who you were when you were young. Identify what was important to you, and then consider if or why those values may have changed.

With love,

Patrick Farabaugh

PUBLISHER / EDITOR



Contributor Spotlight: Brian Juchems

Brian J. (as in "Juchems") at one time dreamed of being a writer, teacher, or cartoonist. Of the three he wanted most to spend his days telling stories through drawing. But then he discovered youth work and has stayed on that track since the mid-90s. While he from time to time still dabbles in some of his past aspirations, he largely keeps himself busy as Program Director for the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools working to help LGBTQ and straight ally youth find their power to create change in schools. As far as he's concerned it was a pretty good trade off. Besides, his cartoons were never really all that funny in the first place.



Share your thoughts at: OURLIVSMADISON.COM

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2008

contributors

Build a user account and write to our contributors directly. Explore the online forums and profiles to help build *Our Lives*.



Tamara Packard is a partner with the Madison law firm of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach LLP, her dream job. She practices civil litigation including employment and civil rights law, and is proud to be part of a law firm which serves its clients with fearless advocacy and creative solutions in many areas of law. She looks forward to the day when Wisconsin allows her to make an honest woman of her fiancé, Renee. In the meantime, Tamara will continue to work side-by-side with other activists to bring about change.

Matthew Wisniewski is a 20-year-old junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is pursuing a career in photography. He's worked at the *Wisconsin State Journal*, *The Sun Prairie Star*, and the *Daily Cardinal*. Matt loves taking pictures of raw emotion. He focuses everyday on seeing beauty in normal life and finding joy in everything he does. His girlfriend and best friend Megan Janssen showed him how to be happy. You can visit his photoblog at www.flickr.com/photos/matthew-gordon or www.gordonandlucy.com.



Merrin Guice is a professor and musician originally from Detroit, MI. Before moving to Madison in 2004 Merrin lived in Atlanta, GA, and New Brunswick NJ where she was studying music. She is currently finishing her DMA in conducting at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Merrin has a beautiful daughter, Sydney and works at Covenant Presbyterian Church on Madison's west side.

Jenn Rotman started taking photographs when she learned she could tell a story through them. For her, photography is a chance to show something from another perspective; to tell a tale through the lens. When not out with her camera, she also enjoys playing hockey with the Madison Gay Hockey Association, is preparing for the Act 6 Wisconsin AIDS Ride and unpacking and settling into her new house with her partner Loni and their 2 dogs.



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Ashlyn & Bailie with their parents, Brendan & Vance

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How does someone get started in the travel business?
A friend had just started at Carlson Wagonlit Travel and the owner mentioned to her that she was looking to add gay travel to their office. My friend thought of me first thing and the owner gave me a call. I was reluctant to meet because I thought I'd never have enough time to coordinate travel. However we met and discussed being an outside sales agent part-time, which is getting clients through the door for bookings. It was challenging being the only gay agent for several offices. I have to admit the first couple of years were tough—a lot of research, advertising, hosting group tours, talking to tour operators, hotels, restaurants... I learned from it that if you put your mind to doing something and believe it, then you can succeed. The key is don't give up and believe in yourself.

Where did you get the name JustTerry? One night Will & Grace was on television. I was asking friends what to call a website I was having created. Names were zinging when on the TV

came the words just Jack. Jason, a dear friend of mine, said, "I have it! What about Justterry?" I called the person creating my website, Rita, and she checked no one had justterry.com.

Where is your favorite place to go? My all time favorite is Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. In November 2002 I asked 4 friends of mine if they'd like to join me there for a week. They said sure. I had researched Vallarta and found it to be very gay friendly. We had a blast and have been going back each year. Once we returned my friends said lets do this again next year and invite a few of our friends to join us. We jumped from our original 5 to 56 in 2006. It's a wonderful place for LGBT people and our straight friends. I also have a couple more favorites: Amsterdam and Waikiki.

And did anyone special go to Mexico with you this year?
It's kind of funny before 2002 I used to travel by myself. Now I coordinate and Host Group Travel. I would have to say everyone that goes on one of our vacations is special. I've made a lot of friends and contacts this way.

Where might some future destinations be?
For 2008 I'm adding gay group cruises where you can travel with your partner, office mate, friend or family. These are cruises with anywhere from 100-500 LGBT people and 1,500 or more straight allies. I've been on a couple of these cruises and it works out quite well. For 2009 I'm looking into a 10 day Hawaiian Island.

Do you just coordinate group travel? Oh no, I can help you with destination weddings, sports events, family reunions, individual travel, a Disney cruise, or help you set up your own group travel.

How do people find www.Justterry.com? Actually it's been a lot of word of mouth from past travelers. I would like to thank all my friends for helping justterry.com make it possible for so many individuals who have not been able to travel comfortably before. I can honestly say I take pride in building life long friendships that have been and will be made on our vacations. Oh, Honestly! I'm getting too wordy. Happy Travels! ■

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A Reason to Smile

On Madison's East side, Tamim Sifri uses professionalism and compassion to help care for his patients.

How did someone not yet thirty become a dentist and the owner of a dental practice? Dr. Tamim Sifri credits his parents. "My father is one of those people who things happen for." After growing up in a village in Syria, Mr. Sifri (Dr. Sifri's father) moved to the U.S. and made his way to a better situation, ensuring his children could do the same.

That modest explanation isn't the whole story. Dr. Sifri loved arts and sciences in school, but being a pragmatist, he gravitated to the science side and eventually to dentistry. And he's glad he did. "I'm able to bring the two worlds of art and science together. Unlike other professions, I get to provide prevention as part of my treatment.

And there's a quick reward in that patients get out of pain when they come to me. It's very satisfying."

Dr. Sifri is adamant that as a dentist, he is not there to make patients feel badly about the state of their dental health.

A graduate of the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, Dr. Sifri worked at practices in the Chicago area and then Janesville. In July 2007, he took over the practice of Dr. Erickson, who had been in practice in Madison for over 30 years.

It was a quick transition. "Dr. Erickson left on a Friday; I was here on Monday," he recounts.

Dr. Sifri is quick to point out that he is just one of a team of people providing care to the patients at Smart Dental. Sue, the dental hygienist who had worked for 25 years with the former owner, wondered whether she would still get a full hour with each patient after Dr. Sifri bought the practice. He deferred to her expertise in making that decision, and also in other decisions. He says, "I don't know if she'll like me saying this, but she is the matriarch of the practice."

Dr. Sifri involves the staff members in the

whole practice, giving them more than auxiliary roles. He invited Sue and Sarah, the dental assistant at Smart Dental for the past six years, to help in the hiring of an office coordinator who would schedule appointments and handle the complicated task of insurance. They interviewed Ann and knew they'd found the one.

Knowing that Dr. Sifri has a sweet tooth, Sue, Sarah and Ann gave him a cookie bouquet for Boss's Day. Retelling the story, he seems almost embarrassed by being recognized as "the boss." Nonetheless, he knows the importance of his position. "I have to be the team captain, the cheerleader, and the fix-it man. Ultimately, as the owner, the buck stops with me."

However, Dr. Sifri is not the kind of doctor who makes sure you know he is a doctor. You may find him in a white physician coat, but that belies his approach.

When performing a dental check for the first time, Dr. Sifri asks that the patient is upright, never laid back in the chair. When sitting and talking, he adjusts so that he is eye-level with you. These seemingly small gestures are part of his larger philosophy about dentistry.

Dr. Sifri is adamant that as a dentist, he is not there to make patients feel badly about the state of their dental health. He says, "We practice guilt-free dentistry," which means no chiding for not flossing and no judgment for missed check-ups.

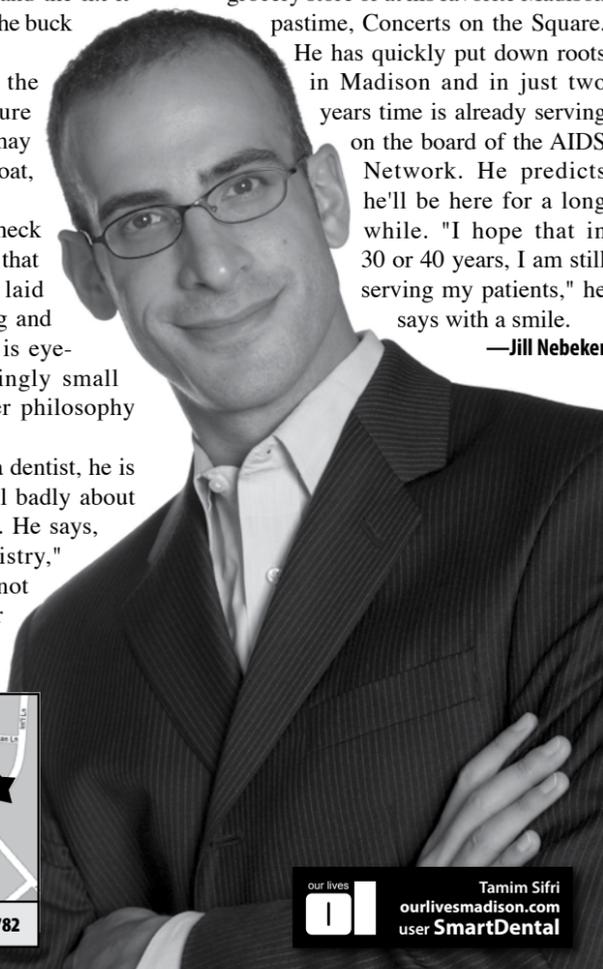


Then, there is the office motto: "Inform before you perform." Dr. Sifri personally goes through the plan for treatment with each patient before any procedure takes place. Ann is charged with explaining insurance coverage. These sessions take as long as is needed for the patient to be clear on all details.

Dr. Sifri lives and works on the East side, not minding that he runs into patients at the grocery store or at his favorite Madison pastime, Concerts on the Square.

He has quickly put down roots in Madison and in just two years time is already serving on the board of the AIDS Network. He predicts he'll be here for a long while. "I hope that in 30 or 40 years, I am still serving my patients," he says with a smile.

—Jill Nebeker



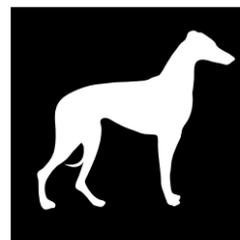
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Playbill and Calendar edited by Callen Harty

PLAYBILL

A Play on Plays

WhoopDeDoo Productions takes aim at musical parody in *Kenosha*

There may be something for everyone in WhoopDeDoo's new production, *Kenosha! (Not Quite Chicago)*, playing at the West Side Club in January and February. For those who love Bob Fosse and Liza Minnelli, a musical theater parody done as musical theater and starts with the song, *All That Cheese*, is bound to find an appreciative audience, especially when developed by local impresario Michael Bruno and his writing partner, Tony Reitano.

The play takes aim at *Some Like It Hot*, *Chicago*, and *Cabaret*, as well as musicals in general. The story about two out-of-work actors who witness a Chicago mob hit and go on the lam from the Cannoli mob (a reference to Bruno and Reitano's *Sweet-Cannoli Nuptials*, which played for five years in Madison). The

duo end up disguised as drag queens in a two-person version of *Cabaret* at the Kenosha Dinner Theater and Souvenir Shop.



According to Bruno, who also directed, the two lead characters are hired because Tom Wopat backs out to do a run of *Follies* at the Wisconsin Union Theater in Madison. The on-the-run actors create a "Reader's Digest Condensed Reduced Shakespeare version" of *Cabaret* in return for the producer hiding them. Bruno believes that gay audiences will be appreciative of the work, stating that WhoopDe-

Doo has a good following in the community. Bruno said the cast, which hails from all over Dane County, "is having a blast with it" and he believes the audience will, too.

Kenosha! (Not Quite Chicago) opens on January 17 at the West Side Club, 437 County M, Madison. Ticket price includes dinner and the show. For more information or to make reservations call (608) 442-5806 or visit WhoopDeDoo's website at www.whoopedoo.org. ■

SPOTLIGHT

Transgender Issues Come Home in Local Production

Play stresses family relationships over politics

The political battle over including the rights of transgender people to be included in non-discrimination laws comes to a stage in Madison, Wisconsin. StageQ, the local not-for-profit LGBT theatre company is taking on the issue of transgender people in a new production entitled "Looking for Normal." But "this is not a political play," says Tara Ayres, Artistic Director for StageQ. "This is a play that shows how the transgender issue affects one family and the relationships and dynamics among those they love."

Up until now, StageQ has never directly addressed transsexuality. With the current battle to include transgender rights in nondiscrimination legislation, StageQ realizes the importance of presenting the human side in this emotional, touching, and sometimes comic story of one family, dealing directly with a transsexual family member.

"Looking for Normal," tells the story of a husband of 25 years who shocks his wife and family when he announces that he believes he

was born in the wrong body. The reactions of his wife, son, and daughter, along with his boss at the tractor factory and their family clergyman, offer a compelling story of what makes a true family. "Looking for Normal" is sure to entertain, educate, shock, anger and ultimately shows love in a story that is becoming more and more normal everyday.

"Looking for Normal" features local theater favorites Doug Holtz and Kathy Sliter as the husband and wife. Dani Holtz, Nick Kaprelian, Scott Bennett, Alex Szele, Jake Jacobson, Jan Levine Thal and the "Grand Dame of Community Theater" Sarah Whelan lend their talented support to this important production directed by Greg Harris.

"Looking For Normal" runs February 8 – March 1, 2008 at the Bartell Theatre, 113 E. Mifflin St. Performances are Thursdays (\$10) at 7:30pm, Fridays and Saturdays (\$15) at 8pm and Sundays (\$10) at 2pm. Tickets and reservations are available at www.StageQ.com or by calling 608-661-9696, x3. ■

THEATRE CALENDAR

A representative sampling compiled by Callen Harty

The Duck Variations

by David Mamet
Madison Theatre Guild
Madison, 1/3-1/12
madisontheatreguild.org

Noises Off

by Michael Frayn
Strollers Theater
Madison, 1/10-2/2
madstage.com/Companies/Strollers.html

Grafton City Blues

by Kevin Ramsey
Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Milwaukee, 1/11-3/9
milwaukeeerep.com

The Pillowman

by Martin McDonagh
Mercury Players
Madison, 1/18-2/2
mercuryplayerstheatre.com

The Maple Bluff Mystery

by Scott Rawson
Broom Street Theater
Madison, 1/18-2/24
broomstreet.org

Chicago

by Kander & Ebb
Broadway Dinner Theater
Wisconsin Dells, 1/26-3/16.

The Fabulous Crone Show 2: Supercrones

by various artists,
Fabulous Crone Show & Positive Aging Theater
Madison, 1/31-2/3

Faith Healer

by Brian Friel
Next Act Theatre
Milwaukee, 2/1-3/2
nextact.org

Evita

by Tim Rice
Overture Center
Madison, 2/8-2/10
overturecenter.com

Escanaba in da Moonlight

by Jeff Daniels
Pegasus Players
La Crosse, 2/8-2/24

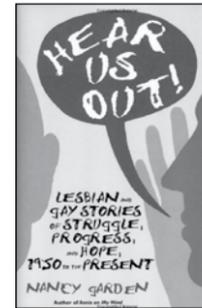
Crime and Punishment

Adapted by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus
Milwaukee Chamber Theatre
Milwaukee, 2/14-3/9

HISTORY

A Walk Through Time

Hear Us Out: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present by Nancy Garden



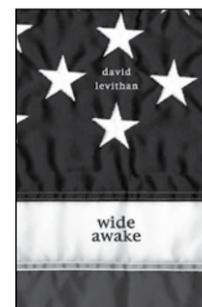
NANCY GARDEN, BELOVED AUTHOR OF *Annie on My Mind*, is back with a retrospective of gay and lesbian history and activism for young adults. Her latest book, *Hear Us Out* is an accessible and informative book for questioning and newly out teens and their families. The novel is divided into sections oriented by decade, each starting with an essay describing what it was like to be gay or lesbian then, followed by two short stories set in that time period.

The historical sections provide useful overviews of gay rights struggles in America, focusing on major events like Stonewall, AIDS, adoption, and legal battles. Garden obviously stuck to what she knew in her fiction, which made the stories relatively disappointing in their representation of LGBT diversity: the majority feature lesbians, with few gay boys and no major bisexual or transgender characters. However, the stories do a good job dealing with an important range of issues, from teen suicide to coming out to STI prevention to crushing on a straight classmate, going to prom and finding community with other gay teens and adults. Garden also treats the issue of teen sex candidly, neither ignoring it nor overstating it. Ultimately, while this book has its blind spots, it does make for a good introduction and resource for teens new to gay identity and activism. It's an excellent resource for young people with limited access to LGBT materials and parents of newly out children. — Gretchen Treu

FICTION

A Glimpse at the Future

Wide Awake by David Levithan



THERE WERE FEW YOUNG ADULT books dealing with being queer prior to the turn of this century. Brent Hartinger, with his *Geography Club* series, Alex Sanchez's *Rainbow Boys* series, and David Levithan in *Boy Meets Boy* met this need, warranting challenges by individuals that felt they shouldn't be read by teens. As a teacher, I've seen the waiting lists for Hartinger's books, suggesting they appeal to a diverse group of kids, many of whom won't be queer.

A new generation of books seems to remind youth—and adults that care about youth—that sexual orientation is but one aspect of life. *Wide Awake* by David Levithan is an excellent example. In the not-so-distant future, the United States is recovering from a depression and another war. The main character is Duncan, a gay, Jewish 15-year-old. He and his boyfriend are active supporters of a presidential candidate who, if elected, will be both the first gay and first Jewish president. Duncan and his friends learn about life, love, and politics. The novel is primarily about political realities and human relationships... The fact that those relationships happen to be lesbian and gay is secondary, but still comforting to those of us who are queer. — Ward Holz



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Cultural, Social, Service and Nightlife listings edited by Patrick Farabaugh



Michelle Balan

New Harvest Dinner Dance
February 16

Keynote Michelle Balan is best known as a 2006 finalist in "Last Comic Standing." A brash, New York stand-up comedian, she has performed on Comedy Central as well as in top comedy clubs, theatres, and festivals. The dinner dance at Monona Terrace is an annual gathering of the Madison area's LGBT communities and their allies.
newharvestfoundation.org



Blades Against AIDS
March 1

Join the Madison Gay Hockey Association for an open skate from 8-10pm at the Madison Ice Arena benefiting the AIDS Network. Music on the main rink, community open house and catered food in the lobby. Afterwards, the event moves to the Hookah Lounge for a prize raffle and official check presentation. Tickets are \$15
madisongayhockey.org



Lutenient Governor Barbara Lawton

MGHA Championship Games
March 2

Hundreds attended last year's games, including the Lutenient Governor Barbara Lawton and Linda Clifford. This year the league is up to six teams, and the skill levels have increased! Come cheer on your favorite players and help the Madison Gay Hockey Association celebrate the last games of their second season.
madisongayhockey.org

Frostiball 2007: Return of Elegance

February 3, Overture Center for the Arts, 201 State St. Madison You are invited to Downtown Madison's most glamorous party. The Overture Center will be transformed into a beautifully lit spectacle. Attendees will be able to enjoy the beat of the world renowned Dick Judson Orchestra, or relax in the Frostiball martini lounge to classy piano sounds. Complimentary champagne, wine, hors d'oeuvres, desserts and coffee drinks will be served throughout the evening, all to the added benefit of supporting Downtown Madison, Inc. frostiball.org

Katherine Fischer Reading

February 11, A Room of One's Own Bookstore, 307 W. Johnson St. Madison Katherine Fischer reads from her book of essays Dreaming the Mississippi. Katherine discusses her life on the river in Minnesota and Illinois.
roomofonesown.com

Madison Polar Plunge
February 17, Olin-Turville Park

Madison The Polar Plunge is a unique opportunity for individuals, organizations, and businesses to support local Special Olympics athletes by jumping or slowly crawling into the frigid and icy waters of Wisconsin.

Since its inception seven years ago, nearly 30,000 have taken the Plunge raising more than \$4 million.
specialolympicswisconsin.org

Wisconsin Wolves Tryouts

February 25, Prairie Athletic Club, Bird Street Sun Prairie Come and join Madison's own women's pro football team the Wisconsin Wolves. Tryouts are being held for the 2007 season. No experience necessary except a desire to win!
wiwolvesfootball.com

"Picturing Sexual Liberation: Radical Artists' Views of Working Women in Early Twentieth-century New York"
March 1, Chazen Museum of Art, 800 University Ave

Madison Nan Enstad, associate professor of history, UW-Madison will explore the role working women played in the artistic imaginations of John Sloan and his circle of radical writers, artists and activists. She will comment on the pictures in the exhibition "New York City Life" and how Sloan and others used their partial and exoticized view of working women in order to articulate a radical notion of sexual liberation to a wide audience. Gallery hours will be extended to 5:30 p.m. before the lecture
chazen.wisc.edu

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus 2008 promises to be a busy year for PHMC. In addition to their usual events, they'll also be launching a fundraising effort, culminating in an appearance at "Festival 8". This national LGBT choral conference, coordinated by GALA Chrous (www.galachorus.org) will be held in July in Miami. As co-conductor Ken Forney says, "Festival 8 will connect our chorus members to other singers from around the world, who are also using music to work for social change." A fundraising cabaret will be held to benefit the work of Perfect Harmony on March 8th and 9th at the West Side Club. perfectharmonychorus.org

ORGANIZATIONS

A Representative Sampling

AIDS Network
600 Williamson St., Madison, (608) 252-6540
aidsnetwork.org

Bowling Out Loud
dand1957@earthlink.net

Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls
dcandc.org

Dykes on Bikes
dykesonbikesmadison.com

Fair Wisconsin
122 State St., Madison, (608) 441-0143
fairwisconsin.org

First Congregational Church
1609 University Ave., Madison, (608) 233-9751
firstcongrmadison.org

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers
personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg

Gay/Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)
301 S. Bedford St., Madison, (608) 661-4141
gsaforsafeschools.org

Gay Outdoors Group
myspace.com/madisonsgayoutdoorgroup

Gay Softball League
ssblmadison.com

Gay Volleyball League
madisonglbtvolleyball.com

Hermanos Latinos
sneal@aidsnetwork.org

Madison Gay Hockey Association
madisongayhockey.org

Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby
madisonminotaursrfg.org

OutReach Community Center
600 Williamson St., Madison, (608) 255-8582
outreachinc.com

PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(608) 848-2333
pflag-madison.org

Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus
perfectharmonychorus.org

Proud Theatre
proudtheater.org

Rural Dykes Association
pswfarm@juno.com

Stage Q
stageq.com

UW - Madison LGBT Campus Center
800 Langdon St., Madison, (608) 265-3344
wisc.edu/lgbt

Women Across Wisconsin
womenacrosswisconsin.org

God-des & She

indie Queer brings the hip-hop duo come home to Madison for a night at the Majestic



PHOTOS BY JESSICA HORN

our lives News, Politics & Social Issues Forum
SINGLE IN THE CITY
Submitted by AmericanRye

Besides the fact we live in a college town, we live in a throw-away society. People do not stick with people through thick and thin anymore. Even if we were able to get legally "Married" it wouldn't make any difference. It isn't until death do us part, it is until I'm not happy anymore. It has a lot to do with being selfish. Men in general are selfish creatures. I think it's safe to say that people in general are selfish.

It takes two very strong individuals to make a relationship work. I had a conversation with a good friend last night about sex and relationships. We seem to have time for sex just not relationships. We are either too busy with work, too busy with school, too busy with family, too busy, too busy, too busy! It makes me wonder at what point in our lives are we never going to be "too busy."

The thing is I once found what I was looking for. Time seemed to twist and turn our perceptions of each other into something that turned out to be the opposite of love. One of the most difficult things about love is realizing that although a person can be so many fantastic things that fit so well with you - there are always going to be flaws that you either learn to accept or choose not to accept. People come into your life for a reason and people walk out for other reasons. The only thing we can do is move on with our heads held high with our pain and suffering left behind.

Part of me still wants to believe that love can be like it is in a Disney movie. Two people can look at each other and just know.

Although enchanting fairy tales do not exist I cannot help but wonder—maybe if we thought less and loved more—we'd find exactly what we're looking for...

Read the entire thread online

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SPECIAL REPORT

Young and Homeless, Here.

As the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force releases an alarming report on homeless LGBT youth, *Our Lives* discovers its affect on our own community

Zack is one of thousands of LGBT youth who were born and grew up in and around Dane County. "Zack" is not his actual name, but unfortunately, his story is all too vivid and real. His tale outlines a sobering statistic: he's one of the millions of homeless LGBT youth.

According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, between 575,000 and 1.6 million youth experience homelessness in America. It's estimated as high as 20 to 40 percent of those youth are LGBT, many experiencing homelessness because of the reaction of their family to their sexuality or gender identity.

The story of Zack's life begins in Madison, where he was born and raised and where his family and friends have always been. Zack was cognizant early on that he was different from other boys. "I would have sleepovers with the neighbor boy, and we would hold each other. I think I knew then that I was gay; I just didn't know what I was feeling. I think my mother knew that I was, shall we say, 'different'."

Everyone was finding a nest to snuggle into, and I had to throw all of my stuff away.

Like many other LGBT teenagers, he endured challenges in high school, where he was the target of derision and, sometimes, of physical abuse. "One kid even threw a dictionary and a stapler at my forehead. Nobody did anything – not even the teacher, no joke."

While still in his teens, Zack's mother discovered a piece of the



our lives
Craig Adamski
ourlivesmadison.com
user CraigAdamski

puzzle regarding his sexuality. Zack told several of his friends he was bisexual, and his mother found out. "Mothers do seem to find everything out in the end, don't they?" She told Zack that as long as he liked "girls more than guys that it was normal".

When he eventually identified as gay to his family, he was not prepared for the reaction. "I became the family joke, really. My brothers made fun of me for years, and had their friends make fun of me. My father refused to believe it." The tension at home made living there untenable, and Zack struck out on his own to try and make a go of it.

Zack soon found being on his own a big challenge. "A lot of my friends already had roommates. Some thought that if I moved in I would turn everyone gay! I was also constantly being harassed about my sexuality at my job, and was pretty much forced to quit." So with no job and no place to live, Zack became homeless. He was heartbroken when he had to ditch all of his belongings. "Everyone was finding a nest to snuggle into, and I had to throw all of my stuff away. All of my years of papers and knick-knacks – posters, clothes, music, my guitar. Everything I thought made me who I was."

Zack has been homeless in Dane County for almost a year now. He found that some of the mainstream outlets for people to get assistance were, in his words, "a big joke". Although there are several existing shelter options for women and children, the main men's homeless shelter in a downtown church proved to be a scary place where one could "get scabies and have all of your stuff stolen." Bureaucratic red tape ensnared several attempts that Zack made to get help. "The Porchlight program, which is supposed to help people find housing would tell me you have to call on a certain day at a certain time once a week. Then I find out you have to have a job in order to qualify for help with housing. Well, if I had a job, why would I be asking them for help in the first place? Hello!"

As Craig Adamski knows, these are commonplace challenges for LGBT homeless youth. Adamski is the facilitator for Teens Like Us, an LGBT youth support group, and Top TEN (Teen Education Network). These two groups offer a number of services, including crisis support for LGBT youth, under the "umbrella" of Briarpatch, the program for homeless and runaway youth in Dane County.

Adamski works with a range of youth, generally ranging from ages 12 to 19. The Teens Like Us group will work with these youth as a result of referrals from the crisis hotline or from other social service agencies. The group setting served over 100 youth last year. Coordinating services for LGBT youth can be an enormous challenge, however. Adamski recalled that "we had a transgendered youth come into the program. They were kicked out at 18, and we can't place youth who are 18 and up in host homes, since they're considered an adult. Because there was so many challenges in just dealing with family, this client had no job skills or people skills – they'd lived their life as a 'hidden person', because the family insisted that they not go public. For them, sleeping in their 'bio' gender

shelter was not safe. Eventually, we worked with our outreach program and were able to help."

In addition to the focus with the TLU group, case management services are also available for youth under age 24, where they can get assistance finding employment and health care. Adamski says that "the needs of youth that are 19 to 24 tend to slip off the radar" at an important developmental time, where individuals are expected to transition into higher education or a traditional job environment.

The Top TEN group often speaks at schools. The presentations are made more powerful by the fact that it's the group members themselves – LGBT youth and allies – that are telling their own stories. As Adamski observes, "sometimes, the staff will be proactive. And sometimes, we're called by a teacher or school staff in response to an

I sat at the cliff by that bridge, thinking about the best angle to jump at.

issue." The groups also coordinate social events, including quarterly dances, a statewide LGBT prom, and overnight "lock-ins", as well as a weekly social group "drop in".

Adamski sees Teens Like Us as a powerful empowerent tool for these youth. Many are so busy dealing with simple issues of survival in a hostile living situation that they aren't able to experience traditional teen life and community. "The group becomes community, and provides an open and safe space to talk." It also allows the teens to process what's happened to them. "When parents are abusive, and children are not accepted in the home, it impacts every area of that child's life – particularly schooling and work."

Zack's education and career have been impacted by his homelessness. With limited job skills and no fixed address, it's a challenge for Zack to find a job. And although he had ev-

ery intention of attending MATC, his financial aid was denied. "The counselors told me I would be getting a lot of financial aid this year. Well, they were wrong. My dreams were crushed. I had really high hopes for my future. And believe it or not, I'm a pretty bright guy. I might have gotten somewhere."

Zack's desolation over having no job and no educational future led him to revert to basic survival skills. For Zack, that included drugs and alcohol and, eventually, sex work. Zack recalls being offered drugs and alcohol, and "waking up at some random guy's house. I got up to leave and noticed I was walking funny. It may be a funny joke in high school, but it was an awful feeling to not know who took advantage of you. Eventually, I lost my inhibitions and just wanted to stay drunk, keep warm, to feel something – anything, really."

Zack is unhappy with the person he's become in order to get through the day. "I'm incredibly lucky that I haven't gotten any non-curable STD's or STI's. I wonder if I would do such a crazy thing if I wasn't homeless. I'd sell myself out for a few drinks, or a pack of cigarettes. Sometimes, I'd find guys who would buy me drinks all night and then I'd bail out on them. This made me feel bad afterwards. I was taking advantage of them now. But I was cold some nights, and the alcohol made me forget about that."

At a low point, Zack's pain and anger about his situation culminated in thoughts of suicide. "After a night of heavy drinking I really reached a low point. I didn't find anyone to take me home that night, and I couldn't stop thinking about

all of the people that were in their homes and their beds – and wondering, what have I done to deserve this? So I went to a bridge I was familiar with. I sat at the cliff by that bridge, thinking about the best angle to jump at. I started to think of which way would be more painful or less painful – and which way did I deserve?" Luckily, the next thing Zack remembered was waking up to daylight the next morning.

Zack appreciates the help he's gotten from programs that have been able to help him, but says that for LGBT youth, "emergency cash assistance or grants would be helpful. Some kind of transitional housing, or a homeless shelter specifically for gay men under 30, would also be a grand thing. I know I am not the only one on the streets in this city. I've met a few other kids with similar stories, some a lot worse than mine."

Adamski hopes that awareness of the TLU and Top TEN groups, and the Briarpatch center, will encourage any youth in crisis to contact them for assistance. For all of us who have already experienced our own challenges as youth, he hopes that we'll make a contribution to help youth like Zack. Adamski urges people interested in supporting these programs to "make financial donations – either via United Way, or through personal donations." There are also volunteer opportunities. People can volunteer for administrative duties, sign up to answer the crisis hotline, or assist with special events and weekly group meetings. (The organization does request a background check from any potential volunteer.) —Patrick Erwin

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our lives
DO YOU HAVE A PHILOSOPHY FOR CHARITABLE GIVING?
Submitted by **dasher**

In recent years, I have chosen only to donate to groups that: **(1)** are specifically LGBT oriented, and **(2)** are in Madison or Wisconsin. It's my impression that local groups are always hurting for funds, so it doesn't make sense to me to send my dollars to national groups, no matter how good they might be. I target my donations to LGBT groups because I figure straight people generally will have other priorities that will lead them to donate to mainstream groups.

| Read the entire thread online |



**Gay Straight Alliance
for Safe Schools**

Cindy Crane outside
the GSAFE office

I think I just heard you say...
"That's so gay!"
Here are some other things you could say:
ludicrous. naive. frivolous.
irrational. interesting. curious.
eccentric. weak. bogus. foolish.
goofy. insipid. absurd. ridiculous.
annoying. asinine. pathetic.
yesterday. surreal. wack(y).

Making Schools GSAFE

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools Executive Director **Cindy Crane** offers a comprehensive look inside the climate of our schools and how GSA programs are shaping systemic change for our entire community



Photo by Steven Meitner

Out of the struggles for school safety among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) students and their allies, a movement has emerged. Gay-straight alliances (GSAs), after school clubs that create a safe space for students to discuss issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, are at the core of that movement.

A GSA develops organically within high schools and middle schools to offer support to youth, but the impact of GSAs goes beyond their being support groups. We often find that these clubs can be the source of education about LGBTQ issues for entire school bodies. Melinda Miceli in her book, *Standing Out, Standing Together*, talks about GSAs as creating significant change in the lives of LGBTQ students, and also in the social and political struggle for the rights of all LGBTQ people in the United States. Miceli says, "Supporting student voices, helping to network their efforts, using the law to define their rights, conducting research, and consolidating information to provide more weight to student testimony are all practices shared by the various organizations involved in a social movement."

Wisconsin is no stranger to the GSA movement. Today in our state there are about 80 GSAs, the vast majority of which are in high schools. Coalitions to support and promote school safety have emerged in several states

and regions. Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) supports existing GSAs directly in South Central Wisconsin and assists youth in finding their own power as leaders through statewide conferences and leadership institutes. GSAFE also partners with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to lead trainings for school professionals. GSAFE is part of a vibrant movement in which the staff meet numerous supportive school professionals. However, we also find that many students who don't fit society's preferred heterosexual models or gender stereotypes still feel unsafe in schools throughout our state. There is yet a lot of work to do, and the work matters.

The 2005 Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) national school climate survey and the 2003 GLSEN Wisconsin school climate survey revealed correlations between LGBT students having supportive teachers and/or GSAs and their sense of safety and academic achievement. The 2003 survey on Wisconsin LGBT students in middle schools and high schools showed that

- Over half of Wisconsin LGBT youth reported feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation and over one third reported feeling unsafe because of their gender expression.
- Unchecked harassment correlates with poor performance and diminished aspirations: LGBT youth who report significant harassment are twice as likely to report they do not intend to go to college and their GPAs are significantly lower.

Nationally, LGBT middle school and high school students were five times more likely to report having skipped school because they feared for their safety than the general population of students (GLSEN 2005 National School Climate Survey).

The good news is that both national and Wisconsin GLSEN school climate surveys showed that:

- The presence of supportive staff contributed to a greater sense of safety for LGBT youths.
- Students in schools with a GSA were less likely to miss school, and more likely to feel like they belonged than students in schools with no such clubs
- LGBT students with one or more supportive faculty or staff had grade point averages 10% higher than peers without supportive staff, and they were more likely to attend college.

There is more of a gap in data related to students being LGBT and their having high risk behavior. In Wisconsin we have relied on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which is conducted as part of a national effort by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to

monitor health-risk behaviors of the nation's high school students. Some questions on the survey vary according to state. For the first time since 2001, this year's YRBS for high school students in Wisconsin will include questions that will assist us in finding correlations between high risk behavior and students being harassed for not fitting into heterosexual stereotypes. In the 2001 YRBS survey Wisconsin students who reported being threatened or hurt for being perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual were significantly more likely than other students to report: **1)** carrying a weapon in the past 30 days, including on school property; **2)** being threatened at school; **3)** missing school because they felt unsafe; **4)** feeling depressed; **5)** considering suicide; or **6)** using tobacco and binge drinking.

Whether a student is overtly bullied for identifying as or appearing to be LGBTQ, anti-gay language is rampant. Recently, at the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) convention, GSAFE had displayed a poster that reads, "I think I just heard you say, 'That's so gay!' Here are some other things you can say, ludicrous, naïve, frivolous, irrational..."

The poster was inspired by students at Velma Hamilton Middle School in Madison and designed by Kate Erickson, a high school student activist in Eau Claire. It was difficult to count the number of teachers who stopped by the GSAFE table to express their frustration with students saying, "That's so gay." However, some people believe the phrase has become so common that it doesn't mean anything. Our students wouldn't agree. At statewide GSA conferences organized by GSAFE, LGBTQ students and their allies regularly report that they are frustrated when hearing the word



At Monona Terrace for GSAFE's Celebration of Leadership Awards: Ellie Crean, Teddi Hereid, Jared Genova, Kat Miller, Beth Franklin and Ben Pollok

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

High school students who reported being threatened because someone thought they were LGB reported:

- Being threatened or injured at school (**24.7%**) compared to their nonthreatened peers (**7.0%**).
- Not going to school because they felt unsafe (**15.3%**) compared to their nonthreatened peers (**3.7%**).
- Seriously considering suicide (**41.1%**) compared to their non-threatened peers (**21.2%**) and attempted suicide (**21.8%**) compared to their non-threatened peers (**7.7%**).
- Being current smokers (**45.3%**) compared to their non-threatened peers (**35.1%**).
- Using marijuana (**47%**) than their non-threatened peers (**35.1%**).
- Feeling so sad they stopped doing usual activities (**41.8%**) compared to their non-threatened peers (**26.6%**).
- Binge drinking in the last 30 days (**39.7%**) compared to their non-threatened peers (**32.9%**).
- At the same time many LGBTQ students are thriving.



Jasmine Christian speaks out at the Breaking the Silence rally.

"gay" associated with what disgusts their peers, especially when adults don't correct the slurs. Language matters, and LGBTQ youth, their allies, and children of same sex parents are listening when others grunt in disdain, "That's so gay."

The law backs up school professionals who try to stop anti-gay language. Within Wisconsin's pupil nondiscrimination law (Statute 118.13) and its interpretation, schools are obligated to protect students from being harassed based on their sexual orientation. Wisconsin is one of 10 states that require administrators to ensure a safe environment for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. The other nine states include California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, and Washington. Many school districts in states without such laws have policies that protect students based on sexual orientation.

Only California, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, and New Jersey provide laws that protect transgender students (students who do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth). In Wisconsin adding gender identity and expression to S 118.13 would be immense support to transgender students, students who do not identify as the gender assigned them at birth. At least three school districts, including Madison Metropolitan School District, in Wisconsin include gender identity in their protective policies.

Laws protect people when the laws are enforced. When anti-discrimination laws and policies are both in place and practiced, school professionals, whatever their own personal beliefs, are at the very least required to accept all students.

Throughout Wisconsin we understand that there are teachers, both sexual minority and heterosexual, who actually fear that they are putting their jobs at risk when discussing LGBTQ issues in their classrooms. Teachers may wait until they have tenure after three years working in a school before even considering starting a GSA or bringing up the subject of discrimination of LGBTQ while teaching. In some schools, even after being tenured, teachers who bring up LGBTQ issues in the classroom may be concerned about repercussions from parents. The threat teachers and other school staff experience will vary according to school district and school. Having both a supportive administration and knowing student rights help teachers who want to do the right thing.

Several months ago a school staff person called our office to ask for advice on how to handle an angry parent whose son the school disciplined for continually harassing another student for looking gay. The school staff person's

Photo by Jessica Horn
shooterforhire@gmail.com

our lives
Teddi Hereid
ourlivesmadison.com
user Teddi

administration was united against the bullying behavior, but the staff person still wanted more assistance with how to talk to the disgruntled parent. When we told her about S 118.13 she expressed confidence in having support from both the law and her school administration to clearly counter the parent's defense of her son spewing out, "fag, queer, and gay," at another student.

One complaint that people have when addressing LGBTQ issues in schools is that many students are too young to talk about homosexuality. However, harassment with anti-gay language begins young. When a girl in elementary school is teased by her peers and told she doesn't have a real family because she has two mothers; and when a parent calls the GSAFE office about her 7th grade son who hasn't identified as any orientation yet but looks gay to his peers and has been physically attacked by his peers while being called "gay," how young is too young to talk about discrimination against LGBTQ people?

When recognizing how students have been bullied with anti-gay language it is important to address gender. Quite a bit of teasing of students with anti-gay language is heaped upon boys and girls who do not fit gender stereotypes; gender is often confused with sexual orientation. Of course, a person doesn't have to be LGBTQ to be oppressed by not fitting neatly into a gender dichotomy.

Two GSAFE staff and one student planner attended a gathering hosted by the National GSA Network this summer. We participated in an exercise in which we were asked to think of our first experiences as activists. It was striking how the majority of the 50 people, both heterosexual and LGBTQ, related their first experience in activism to protesting how they felt others were limiting them because of their gender. Creating safe spaces for conversations around gender and sexual orientation dissipates misunderstandings and advances tolerance and a sense of common ground between people of all letters of the LGBTQ and straight allies.

Student leaders can make a remarkable difference in the climate of their schools. Often times students are the ones who educate their peers as well as adults about pupil nondiscrimination laws and the need to accept diversity. Youths, school professionals, education agencies such as GSAFE, and many allies from the community involved in schools are part of a vital movement. The motivation behind our work always needs to be to promote school safety. However, the fruits of the movement will extend far beyond school walls. ■



High school is where emerging adults learn about their world, their peers, and themselves. It's a place where it should be safe to delve into learning and feel secure in expressing and exploring identity. Unfortunately, for some, the experience of attending high school proves contrary. This is experienced by an inordinate number of LGBTQ students. My story is one that reflects the importance of having active gay-straight alliances in high schools. Over the course of a school year, I witnessed the dramatic change that was made in a school that started with no gay-straight alliance and ended the year with an active and enthusiastic one. It is a story that has moved me to do things that I never thought I could. It has inspired me to see the deepest care and willingness to create change that I would have never discovered in my peers and teachers.

During my first three years at Mount Horeb High School, a system of interactions developed towards LGBTQ students that was tolerant but not necessarily inclusive. The most common attitude about expressing sexuality and gender identity was to keep "hushed" about it. As a young student coming out to myself about my sexual identity, it was difficult to be honest about how I felt and what sort of individual I was developing into in this sort of climate. To hear students mutter homophobic statements to each other in class and to discuss family life styles excluding the family that I envisioned for my own future became very distracting. It made me uncomfortable. When I began to date my first girlfriend, I incessantly felt sheer fright at holding her hand or giving her a hug in the hallway. Attending a dance openly with her for the first time has been one of the greatest obstacles in my life. I can distinctly remember the alarmed stares and questioning glances as I put my arms on top of her shoulders for a slow dance. Soon the school grew used to my public relationship with another female, but I was never welcome to discuss it or acknowledge it publicly.

The years passed without any substantial change in the culture of our school. It was an election year and soon I found myself immersed in the activities of the 2006 election. My heart and soul were channeled instantly and completely into efforts to defeat the marriage ban and to elect supportive officials. The politics surrounding the amendment were talked about around the school profusely. It felt nice to have my issues and concerns recognized and discussed in school. I was adamant about my stance on many issues and took many lessons away from the election and what fighting against the ban meant. From this experience I gained the strength and understanding that I would need to begin the journey of establishing a Straight and Gay Alliance—a SAGA.

The day after the election when the amendment passed, I was resting in a coffee shop on State Street pondering the incredibly heartbreaking decision that Wisconsin had just made to constitutionally ban gay marriage. Considering the effort, trust, and hope that we had all put into defeating the ban, it was easy to feel powerless in the situation, even helpless. During the course of these thoughts, Tim, a mentor of mine that I had met through my involvement in Fair Wisconsin, sat

One School's SAGA

When **Teddi Hereid** experienced discomfort from her classmates in Mount Horeb, she chose to help initiate one of the most active and enthusiastic clubs in her school. Now, as a freshmen at UW-Madison, she is offering a student's perspective on the impact of GSAs.



down next to me to share his outlook on the election results. It was during this conversation that I was reminded that there was in fact something I could do to influence change in the world and make things safer for LGBTQ people. The creation of change and the powerful tool to influence was to be found in my own generation, in my hometown, in my school. To change the minds and attitudes of my generation was to change the minds and attitudes for future generations. As a result of this empowerment, our SAGA was born.

Shortly after the decision to organize, it was obvious to me and the executive board that had been quickly created, that there was a lot of work to do. "That's so gay" was heard frequently and consistently in our hallways and classrooms. Prejudice against anomalies in gender expression and perceived sexuality made teasing and bullying common. Students all but

It was in the days following this first meeting that I knew we were on our way to profoundly changing our little piece of the world.

ignored the existence of LGBTQ people. With the support of our advisor, Mr. Sauer, we began advertising ambitiously for our first meeting. When the day came for our first meeting I waited with the rest of the officers at the front of the room for our new members to arrive. Cautiously, as not to disappoint ourselves, we estimated a meeting attendance of about 20 people. To our great surprise, students continued to walk through the doors far past the 20th person. At the conclusion, 50 members had shown up to offer their support for SAGA. I felt elated and incredibly excited by the end of the night. My peers truly did care about the culture and safety of our school. It was in the days following this first meeting that I knew we were

on our way to profoundly changing our little piece of the world.

After the first meeting we dove in head first. We knew that visibility was incredibly important. SAGA had decided upon a mission statement encompassing the need to change our school climate and so concluded that outreach to the various cultures within our school was essential. A SAGA bulletin board was placed in the hallway, a newsletter was made publicly accessible to both students and staff. SafeZone posters were placed in many classrooms around the school, and announcements were made frequently to publicize our meetings and activities. The school was buzzing with talk about us. Some controversy arose around the newness of our group, but the majority of feedback was very positive and even a bit thankful. Little by little it was visible that LGBTQ students in Mount Horeb High School were becoming more comfortable with their identity. A few same-sex couples held hands affectionately in the hallway and students were noticeably becoming more confident with their individual gender expression.

A very important issue to SAGA was to constructively change the homophobic dialogue between students. We found the term "that's so gay" to be very damaging and offensive to all students. We adopted a very effective idea from the Madison middle school GSAs and placed posters in numerous places around school that stated alternative things to say besides "that's so gay" that were not offensive to any particular group of people. Simply making ourselves and the issue visible created a high degree of awareness in the student body about speaking respectfully to one another. Teachers were an essential element in the success of the posters. Their eagerness to enforce the boundaries of our mission and to be an incredible tool to climate change made everything we did possible.

The true essence of the change that SAGA made culminated on the Day of Silence. This was a project that we spent months working on. The importance of it was deeply discussed and we engaged in many conversations about what it meant to each of us individually. While Day of Silence has come to mean different things to different GSAs around the country, our primary goal in participating was to honor the silence that LGBTQ individuals and other oppressed groups of people face every day, through being silent for an entire day. We wanted this day to be a school-wide event in order to set a precedent for the years that would follow.

The morning of Day of Silence finally arrived and the members of SAGA gathered in our advisor's classroom. We spent a portion of time creating posters, distributing SAGA ribbons to the members, and smiling in eagerness and solidarity. The community that we formed during the course of the year could be felt tangibly that morning. In united silence we walked to the flagpole and shared a moment of serenity before the difficult and trying day was to begin. However positive the message that we were trying to send, it was certainly not easy to remain soundless for an entire day. What we witnessed that day was unbelievably inspiring. An overwhelming majority of the school participated in one way or another: teachers and administrators were wearing "Day of Silence" shirts, students of all backgrounds were wearing black shirts to show their support, many other students bombarded us with requests for ribbons, and the general atmosphere of the school was very supportive and eager to make change.

At the end of the school day we gathered at a nearby park for a silent picnic. There was food, games and a banner anyone could sign to explain what Day of Silence had meant to them. Our advisor and another teacher attended the picnic to show their support. A camera crew for a film series called democracy it is! filmed the picnic. The members of SAGA were incredibly proud of the recognition they received for their hard work. We knew that we had not left that school year behind unchanged.

Looking back on my high school years and when I was afraid to hold my girlfriend's hand in the hallway, it's hard to believe that is the same place that engaged in the activities that SAGA initiated so enthusiastically—how warmly everyone embraced the Day of Silence events. That year and what it meant has forever changed me. What is more important reflecting now, though, is that I know we changed Mount Horeb High School in lasting ways that will make it a safer and more inclusive place for LGBTQ students. It is with this knowledge that I can honestly say gay-straight alliances are not only helpful, but essential to all of our high schools today. ■



Two Madison West High School seniors, Isabel Medina and Miles Walser, are attempting to push the boundaries for queer youth with a Wisconsin first: The Young Queer Sports Club.

Changing the Game



“Young Queer Sports Club (YQSC) is not your typical athletic club,” Isabel Medina points out. That’s for sure. Huddled at a west side coffee shop Medina and fellow YQSC co-founder Miles Walser laid out their plans for Madison’s newest recreational sports league. Only this one is solely for queer youth and is organized by two youth leaders with rather disparate views on what the club could be.

If Walser had it his way, YQSC would be like boot camp.

“Laps! Laps!” the two bark playfully indicating Walser’s likely approach.

As for Medina, this self-described non-sports person (“I hate exercise for the most part.”) envisions something more arts and crafts in nature with sports play optional. “I can see us occasionally asking, ‘So, do we want to play today?’” she jokes.

But together the Madison West High School seniors are quite serious about blending their individual visions in order to create a space where queer youth can try on a new identity—athlete—in a safe and affirming setting.

The idea for YQSC came to them during Madison’s Pride Weekend this past July when a friend asked Walser if he planned to continue rowing after high school. When Walser, who identifies as a transgender male and rows with a local female crew team, explained that he wanted to focus on coming out as a trans man in college and didn’t want to have to continue rowing with the girls, his friend exclaimed, “There should be a transgender league!”

The idea instantly clicked and the two set out to make it happen.

“I row for one of the most open girls rowing clubs in town,” says Walser. “If our coach refers to us as ladies my teammates will say, ‘You mean ladies and man?’” Except in instances where his given name and birth gender have to be used, the team and coaches use his preferred name and male pronouns whenever they can.

“It’s really important for me to be on this team,” states Walser. “I want my peers to have this experience, too.”

While a high school trans-only league sounded like a good idea, the two quickly realized that the number of possible players would be decidedly small. So they instead opened up the league to all LGBTQ high school-aged youth.

Both are quick to stress that the league is open to people of varying levels of athletic

softball and possibly even rugby.

Medina shares that they’ve already been contacted by the Madison Minotaurs, a gay rugby club. “They love what we are doing. They want to put on a rugby 101 for us.”

When asked why they use the word “queer” in the club name Walser jumps in.

“At first I had trouble using it,” he confesses. “But ‘queer’ is all-encompassing. It’s not just all sexual orientation – it also includes all kinds of gender identity and expression.”

Both note pressure from the adult community to identify with one of the common labels, which they feel are too narrow. “You have to be L, G, B, or T,” Medina shares. “People who might not identify with the usual labels are more likely to identify with ‘queer.’”

“Besides, ‘LGBTQSC’ doesn’t have a good ring to it,” Walser adds.

While the club is youth-led, the co-founders’ ages necessitate the involvement of a few key adult volunteers. Adults are needed to open a bank account for the club and to help handle league fees and expenses. Since many of the club members can’t drive adults are also needed to help provide rides and assist with phone trees.

“We’re looking for positive adults—both with and without sports experience—who are comfortable working with youth,” says Walser.

They are also looking for financial support. Initial costs include renting a school gym—which includes overtime pay for weekend custodians—as well as providing league jerseys. “We want people to be able to feel like they are a part of a team,” says Walser.

“At \$70, the league is a deal,” Walser points out. “It’s cheaper than the YMCA.” Both acknowledge that the cost might put the club out of reach of some teens. They hope to provide scholarships but would first need to receive donations to be able to do so.

Despite these start up obstacles, one can’t help but sense the two are forefront of another youth movement.

“I hope this inspires others to start similar clubs elsewhere,” states Walser. ■



I want my queer peers to get to have that athlete identity, too

experience and ability. The club motto is: No experience is necessary, but a willingness to learn is. “I’m excited to play and not have to worry about messing up,” says Medina.

“I love my identity as an athlete as much as my identity as a transgender person. I want my queer peers to get to have that athlete identity, too,” says Walser.

Current club plans include renting a school gym on Sunday afternoons. The first club meeting is scheduled for mid-December. Indoor soccer is up first. The first two weeks will focus on teaching basic skills like passing, dribbling, and shooting while the last eight will involve actual team play.

Next up are ultimate Frisbee, kickball,



our lives Isabel Medina ourlivesmadison.com user Isabel

our lives Miles Walser ourlivesmadison.com user Miles

Learn More

To get involved with the Young Queer Sports Club: myspace.com/yqsc

To support the YQSC, contact Brian Juchems at: brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org

Story by Brian Juchems. Photos by Matthew Wisniewski.

Holding Schools Accountable

After an Ashland student was harrassed and beaten by his classmates, he took his school to task. **Tamara Packard** takes a look at a legal precedent

Often think that our founding fathers were a whole lot smarter than those who govern us now. The United States Constitution includes the following language, which was added as part of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1868: "No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Simple. Elegant. Comprehensive. No footnote says "except gays."

In a groundbreaking case set in Ashland, Wisconsin, based on horrible student-on-student violence and a handful of school



The school principal told Jamie and his parents more than once that he should expect such treatment for being openly gay



administrators who had the duty to stop it, but didn't, it was firmly established that gay students are protected by this part of the United States Constitution, the Equal Protection Clause. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Jamie Nabozny, the Ashland Public Schools student who survived years of harassment and beatings due to being gay, for having the courage to stand up not just for himself, but for all LGBT students who would come after him.

Jamie's story is heartbreaking. Yet he believed that the Equal Protection Clause protected him, and pursued this belief in court.

Now students, teachers, school administrators, and parents across the country look to the decision in his case for guidance. I hope by repeating his story here, you too will learn from it, and do everything in your power to be sure no student ever has to go through what Jamie did in order to get justice.

Jamie Nabozny attended middle and high school in the Ashland Public School District. He realized he was gay by the time he was in seventh grade, and proudly chose not to hide his orientation. From seventh grade until he finally withdrew from high school in his junior year, fellow students continually harassed him, calling him "faggot," and physically assaulting him. These assaults ranged from spitting on him, to knocking him over into a urinal and urinating on him, to simulating gang rape before a room full of other students, to a severe beating causing internal injuries. The school had a policy of investigating and punishing student-on-student battery and sexual harassment, and as required by Wisconsin Statute §118.03(1), the school district also had a policy prohibiting discrimination against students on the basis of sexual orientation.

Jamie and his parents frequently demanded that school authorities take action to punish the assaulting students, and to protect Jamie from further abuse. The authorities repeatedly promised to take action, and then repeatedly did nothing. In fact, the school principal told Jamie and his parents more than once that he should expect such treatment for being openly gay. After Jamie experienced the mock rape, as twenty other students watched and laughed, the principal told him that "boys will be boys." In tenth grade, after Jamie was beaten by eight boys so severely that he collapsed weeks later due to internal bleeding, another school official laughed at Jamie and told him he deserved the beating because he was gay. Jamie left the Ashland Public Schools and found a good lawyer. He sued the School District and the officials who should have protected him, but instead did nothing.

The Federal trial court judge who first considered Jamie's case thought that the law did not protect him, and did not allow

him to have a trial. Yet Jamie persisted and appealed. At the Court of Appeals in 1996, he finally found justice and made history. After reviewing the facts of Jamie's harassment and the inactions of the various school district officials, the Court of Appeals held that Jamie did have a case, and he should be allowed to present it to a jury. The Court of Appeals explained that under the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution, the government, including government officials like school district employees, cannot single out an identifiable group of people and choose to act in a way which results in harm to, or "adversely affects," that group. Rather, "the Equal Protection Clause . . . require[s] the state to treat each person with equal regard, as having equal worth, regardless of his or her status."

While the state can treat different groups differently if there is at least a rational basis for different treatment, the court in Jamie's case, perhaps stating what is obvious now, found that there was absolutely no rational basis for allowing students to assault gay students but not other students. For the first time in history, a court found that a public school system and its officials could be held accountable for failing to stop anti-gay abuse. Jamie got his day in court, and the jury found that the officials did violate Jamie's right to equal protection under the laws. The School District paid nearly \$1 million for the harm it did to Jamie. Courts and juries all over the country have followed suit in similar cases, resulting in tens and even hundreds of thousands of dollars paid to harassed students, as well as improved conditions for LGBT students at school.

You have a right to be free from harassment, assault, and other discrimination at school based on your sexual orientation. The Equal Protection Clause likely also protects students against discrimination based on their gender identity, so transgendered kids should have the same legal rights and remedies if their school officials do nothing to prevent harm to them at school. For more information about the laws protecting LGBT students, Lambda Legal and the ACLU have useful information on their websites. If you think your legal rights have been violated, you should also consider talking with a civil rights lawyer about your case. ■

Tamara Packard is a Madison civil rights lawyer, activist, and partner in the law firm of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach LLP, www.cwpb.com

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Romancing State Street

Recent Milwaukee transplant Robert Leschke finds his home in our cultural core.



A few weeks ago, I was having lunch with my boyfriend at the Orpheum. He works downtown, so occasionally we get together for a bite somewhere close by. "What are you going to do with the rest of this beautiful day?" he asked.

Just over a year ago, I relocated to Madison. After 18 years in Milwaukee, I pulled up my roots and transplanted them to the near east side. The hardest thing about that move was saying goodbye to familiar places. But every goodbye offers the chance for new greetings. I was excited by the prospect of finding new favorites. My journey would find me initially in those first few weeks tentatively exploring close to home. The warm summer air made it easy to walk the half mile downtown to State Street.



I found the same bestsellers as at the larger chains, as well as a rich selection of styles that goes beyond a mainstream store.



Sashe Misur at A Room of One's Own

One of the first places I went when I moved here was the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. The towering Cesar Pelli glass encased stairway jutting out onto State St. soaked up the sun and begged me to walk inside. With free admission, summer movies on the roof, and the chic Fresco restaurant perched at the top, I knew MMOCA would become my new escape from the bustling traffic at State and Johnson.

Just a block away was A Room of One's Own, a feminist and pro LGBT bookseller that's locally owned and operated. I found the same bestsellers as well as a rich selection of styles that goes beyond a mainstream store.

From there, my boyfriend steered me to a small storefront restaurant called Himal Chuli. I had never eaten Nepalese food before, but after some roti and a cup of dal, I was hooked. While waiting for our take out lunch, we popped over to Pop Deluxe and browsed unique one-of-a-kind cards and accessories for any occasion.

No afternoon on State St. is complete without a relaxing stop at any of Madison's Free Trade coffeeshops. I considered kibbutzing with hipsters at Steep and Brew or just perusing a copy of *Our Lives* at Michaelangelo's while sipping a beverage made with conscience.



Flash forward again to lunch with my boyfriend. Sitting at the beautiful Orpheum, I contemplated his question. How would I spend the rest of this beautiful day? Since moving here I have come to call those few blocks of State St. closest to the capital one of my favorite places. I might stop in at MMoCA. Because of those first weeks, I took a job as a volunteer there. I get in depth education about art and the new exhibits, then provide tours to share that same excitement and love that I have for contemporary art with others. I might sit at a coffee shop because since those first weeks, I purchased a laptop computer to encourage me to write more and be more creative. I might pop into Room to see what's on this month's bestseller list because since those first weeks, I made a pact with myself to purchase all of my books through my local pro LGBT bookseller to do my part in helping them stay afloat. I might do a bit of shopping at Pop Deluxe or any of the diverse local vendors on these first few blocks. Full from lunch though, I'll have to skip Himal Chuli today. It does, however, remind me of the importance of trying new things. There's always room for new favorites. ■

Since making his home in Madison, Bob Leschke has learned to recycle, shop at a co-op, and enjoy fresh air. He digs travel, free stuff, and watching his favorite shows on-line.

Since making his home in Madison, Bob Leschke has learned to recycle, shop at a co-op, and enjoy fresh air. He digs travel, free stuff, and watching his favorite shows on-line.

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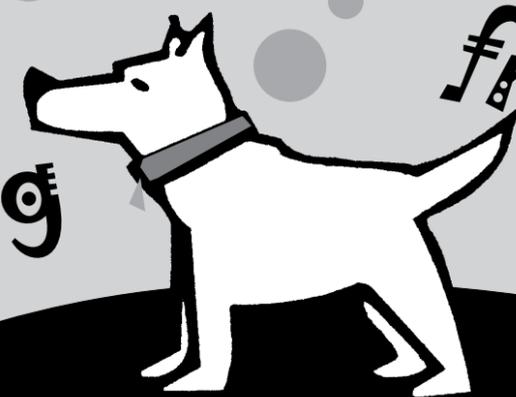
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Better Late Than Never

Getting a later start on building your own life creates some unique challenges. Dale Decker offers a few ways to handle a delayed adolescence

"It's never too late to have a happy childhood."
—Berke Breathed, cartoonist.

If you ask me, that cliché should read, "It's never too late to have a happy adolescence." It's nearly impossible to stop the growth in our bodies and minds as children; happy or not childhood is pretty much on rails and you're along for the ride. Even the biological events that signal the end of childhood are out of our control. Ready or not here comes puberty! Adolescence, on the other hand, can be stunted, delayed, or avoided indefinitely. Unfortunately, queer folks regularly miss out on adolescence for a variety of reasons such as growing up in places where it wasn't safe to be out, or discovering their true nature later in life.



We must first become an individual separate from our family, figure out who we are, and then bond with our peers.



What exactly is adolescence anyway and why can't you just skip it? Adolescence is the time when we forge our individuality and find our path; we can't fully express ourselves without going through it. Psychologically speaking, adolescence is about our relationship to others. We must first become an individual separate from our family, figure out who we are, and then bond with our peers. The withdrawal,

recklessness and defiance that teenagers display serves to tear us away from our family long enough to form our own likes, dislikes and value systems. It's the human equivalent of the mother bird pushing her fledglings out of the nest.

Most teenagers have a fairly clear script for how to behave once outside the nest: Rebel, withdraw from your parents, fall in love, dress like an idiot, experiment with sex, and try out lots of different personalities in the process. Queer people, however, must navigate a world of relationships that is radically different from the straight world that they explored—or avoided—in their youth. Not only are we generally older than the average adolescent, the road map we learned from our straight peers doesn't necessarily fit. Fear not, no matter what your age when you begin, you'll make your way out the other side to adulthood. There are some simple (but not necessarily easy) things you can do to help make adult adolescence flow more smoothly.

How We Can Help Ourselves

Find some parents. Really lucky queer people have a parent who is comfortable discussing intimate details—particularly body image, dating, and sexuality. Unfortunately, sometimes the parents you grew up with just aren't up to the task and that's the time to seek out more mature (not necessarily older) peers to guide you. Find your own "queer parent" and a good circle of friends to share the ride. I was fortunate to find a coming out support group where I met my "gay mothers" who were confidants and teachers in my early days as a gay man. They helped me re-learn social skills and adjust to a different culture. As I recall the concept of friendly bitchiness was particularly foreign to me and I needed lots of coaching and reassurance.

Do damage control. As a 15-year-old, you can get away with stealing dad's car and driving like an idiot; as a 30-year-old, you'll go to jail for that! Adolescents aren't known for their impeccable judgment which means you'll have to put some effort into finding ways to explore new identities and behaviors without

risking your relationships, job, and physical security. Here's where those parents come in handy. I can still hear mine saying, "Oh, honey stay away from him, he's trouble. And don't wear that plaid shirt again!" Of course at the time I thought they were idiots. Hey, I was an adolescent after all.

Make sure you're going somewhere. It's possible to get stuck in youthful behaviors, they can be really fun! At some point though they are simply habits and become a barrier to happiness. For most people, having a steady sense of self is important and keeping that in flux for too long can be unsettling. Your

Not only are we generally older than the average adolescent, the road map we learned from our straight peers doesn't necessarily fit.

parents can help push you forward when you need it, or hold you back when your experimentation is getting out of hand. Listen when your mother says, "Don't you think it's time to pick just one hair color?"

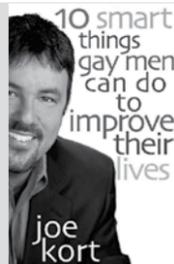
Enjoy yourself. Try as many things as you can. Err on the side of making mistakes; it's much worse to regret an opportunity lost. Adolescence should be exhilarating and terrifying. These strong emotions help us bond to others and give us the courage we need to step outside expectations and old patterns. You might get some glares, or make a few messes, but it's a small price to pay to find your true self and bond to your peers. If someone accuses you of acting like a teenager, just flip your hair, snap your gum, give a withering look and say, "As if!" It's never too late to have a happy adolescence. ■

Dale Decker has been a psychotherapist and substance abuse counselor in our community since 1994. He can be found online at www.daledecker.net

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our lives
Merrin Guice
ourlivesmadison.com
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Candinas Chocolatier (factory)
2435 Old PB, Verona
608-845-1545
candinas.com

Kay Jewelers
18 E Towne Mall #E514, Madison
608.249.9279
65 W Towne Mall, Madison
608.388.1788
kay.com

Savoir Faire
1701 Deming Way # 102, Middleton
608.831.7800
savoirfaire.biz

J Kinney Florist
1835 Monroe Street, Madison
608.255.7500
jkinneyflorist.com

Godiva Chocolatier
42 W Towne Way, Madison
608.833.4125
godiva.com

Gail Ambrosius Chocolatier
2086 Atwood Avenue, Madison
608.249.3500
gailambrosius.com

Chalmers Jewelers
6202 University Avenue, Middleton
608.233.4700
chalmersjewelers.com

Choles Flowers
1135 Regent Street, Madison
608.256.7016
choles.com

Simply Irresistible
223 E Main Street, Sun Prairie
608.837.5051

L'Occitane
638 N Midvale Boulevard, Madison
(Hilldale Mall)
608.233.1642
usa.loccitane.com

The Soap Opera
319 State Street, Madison
608.251.4051
thesoapopera.com

Bath & Body Works
66 W Towne Mall, Madison
608.826.0626
62 E Towne Mall, Madison
608.244.4010
bathandbodyworks.com

Goodman's Jewelers
220 State Street, Madison
608.257.3644
goodmansjewelers.com

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- The median combined household income of gay couples is nearly **60% higher** than non-gay double income couples, (OpusComm Group)
- "The historical role and place of the homosexual in society is not in its regenerative sustenance but in its contributions to cultural revitalization and entrepreneurial or intellectual rejuvenation." (Virtually Normal by Andrew Sullivan)

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A Taste of the Exotic

Hookah dips Madison cuisine into the Mediterranean

PERCHED ON THE BLUFFS OVERLOOKING MADISON'S WEST Beltline, the Mediterranean Hookah Lounge and Café is housed in an unobtrusive building which belies the unusual treasures found within.

Start your culinary adventure with one of the traditional Mediterranean appetizers, such as the popular Hummus or Baba Ghannouge, both made in-house daily. Both are the perfect complement to the warm pita slices which welcome you to the table. The large salads could be a meal by themselves. The Lebanese Fettush Salad, flavored with mint and olive oil, is tossed with toasted pita chips "croutons" for a delicious crunch. Or try the Greek Salad, with feta cheese and kalamata olives providing a lush, salty backdrop to some virtuous vegetables.



But save room for the entrees! The Shawarma Platter serves up crispy strips of roasted beef and lamb (similar to gyro meat) with hummus, vegetables and the sesame sauce Tahini on the side; building the perfect bite atop each pita wedge is half the fun. The Surf and Turf platter delivers classic flavors with a large seared beef tenderloin alongside three truly enormous prawns, fried in a delicate, crisp batter coating.

Round out your feast with lokum, one of the oldest candies on earth. Listed on the menu as

Turkish Delight, these are soft chewy candies that are neither sticky nor overly sweet, and come in flavors like rosewater and hazelnut. These treats are the perfect way to end your meal on a sweet note. If you have a little more room left, the subtle flavors of the Italian Cream Cake or the rich, honeyed taste of Lebanese Baklava are a wonderful companion to coffee.

During and after your meal, there's more to enjoy. The restaurant is comprised of four parts: the restaurant itself, a martini bar, a lounge area, and a traditional Wisconsin tavern in the back. Every Thursday through Saturday night, skilled belly dancers undulate their way through the dining room, enhancing the exotic flavors of your meal.

As the name suggests, patrons may also experience the age-old tradition of sharing a hookah (a traditional Middle Eastern smoking pipe) anywhere in the building. But since tobacco is simply heated, not burned, the atmosphere in the restaurant remains surprisingly clean. —Amy VanKauwenbergh

EATING WELL

Central

Amy's Cafe
414 W. Gilman St., 255-8172
American \$
www.amyscafe.com

Angelic
322 W. Johnson St., 257-2707
American, Pizza \$
angelicbrewing.com

Bab's French Quarter Kitchen
1353 Williamson St., 251-1222
French, Creole \$

Bandung Restaurant
600 Williamson St., 255-6910
Indonesian \$\$
bandungrestaurant.com

Bellini Restaurant
401 E. Washington Ave., 250-0097
Italian, Pasta \$\$\$
bellinirestaurant.com

Blue Velvet Lounge
430 W. Gilman, 250-9900
American, Tapas \$
thebluevelvetlounge.com

The Brass Ring
701 E. Washington Ave., 256-9359
American, Burgers \$
thebrassingmadison.com

Brocach Irish Pub
7 W. Main St., 255-2015
Irish \$\$
brocach.com

Buraka
543 State St., 255-3646
East African \$
buraka.com

Burrito Drive
310 S. Brearly St., 260-8586
Mexican \$
burritodrive.com

Cafe Continental
108 King St., 251-4880
Continental \$\$

Cafe Costa Rica
141 S. Butler St., 356-9830
Costa Rican \$

Cafe Montmartre
127 E. Mifflin St., 255-5900
French, Tapas \$
themomo.com

Cafe Porta Alba
15 N. Butler St., 441-0202
Pizza \$\$
cafeportaalba.com

Cafe Soleil
25 N. Pinckney St., 251-2700
Bread, Sandwiches/Deli \$
letoile-restaurant.com

Cocoliquot
225 King St., 255-2626
French, Croissants \$\$\$
cocoliquot.com

Crave Restaurant
201 W. Gorham, 268-2728
Seafood, Burgers \$\$\$
cravemadison.com

Dotty Dumpling's Dowry
317 N. Frances St., 259-0000
American, Burgers \$
dottedumplingsdowry.com

Eldorado Grill
744 Williamson St., 280-9378
Tex-Mex \$\$\$
eldoradogrillmadison.com

Fresco
227 State St., 663-7374
American \$\$\$
frescomadison.com

Frida Mexican Grill
117 State St., 256-4000
Mexican, Southwestern \$
fridamexicangrill.com

Great Dane
123 E. Doty St., 284-0000
Brewery, Burgers \$\$
greatdanepub.com

Harvest
21 N. Pinckney St., 255-6075
American, French \$\$\$
harvest-restaurant.com

Himal Chuli
318 State St., 251-9225
Nepalese, Vegetarian \$

Husnu's
547 State St., 256-0900
Turkish, Italian \$

Ian's Pizza by the Slice
100 State St., 442-3535
Pizza \$
iansdelivery.com

Johnny Delmonico's
130 S. Pinckney St., 257-8325
Steak, American \$\$\$
johnnydelmonicos.com

Johnny O's
620 University Ave., 251-0943
American, Steak \$
www.madavenue.com

Jolly Bob's
1210 Williamson St., 251-3902
Caribbean, Jamaican \$\$

Kabul Restaurant
541 State St., 256-6322
Afghanistani \$

Lazy Jane's Cafe
1358 Williamson St., 257-5263
Sandwiches, Deli \$

Le Chardonay
320 W. Johnson St., 268-0372
Mediterranean, French \$\$\$
lechardonaymadison.com

L'Etoile
25 N. Pinckney St., 251-0500
French, American \$\$\$
letoile-restaurant.com

Madison's
119 King St., 229-0900
American, Burgers \$
madisonsdowntown.com

Maharani
380 W. Washington Ave., 251-9999
Indian \$\$

Marigold Kitchen
118 S. Pinckney St., 661-5559
Sandwiches, Soup \$
marigoldkitchen.com

Maza
558 State St., 256-9330
Afghanistani \$

Michael's Frozen Custard
2531 Monroe St., 231-3500
Frozen custard, Burgers \$

New Orleans Takeout
1517 Monroe St., 280-8000
New Orleans Cuisine \$
eatmobettah.com

Ocean Grill
117 MLK Jr. Blvd. 285-2582
Seafood \$\$
oceangrillmadison.com

The Old Fashioned
23 N. Pinckney St., 310-4545
Steak, American \$\$
theoldfashioned.com

Opus Lounge
116 King St., 441-6787
Tapas \$
opuslounge.com

Parthenon Gyros
316 State St., 251-6311
Greek \$

Restaurant Muramoto
106 King St., 260-2680
Asian Fusion, Vegetarian \$

Roman Candle
1054 Williamson St., 258-2000
Pizza \$
theromancandle.com

Sardine
517 Williamson St., 441-1600
French \$\$\$

Shamrock Bar
117 W. Main St., 255-5029
Sunday Brunch \$
shamrockbar.com

Sunprint Cafe
1 S. Pinckney St., 268-0114
Sandwiches, Vegetarian \$

Takara
315 State St., 268-0188
Japanese, Sushi \$

Tornado Club
116 S. Hamilton St., 256-3570
Steak \$\$\$
apartmentrenting.com/tornado

Weary Traveler
1201 Williamson St., 442-6207
International \$

Wisconsin Union
800 Langdon St., 265-3000
American, Sandwiches \$
www.union.wisc.edu

East

Bunky's Cafe
2827 Atwood Ave., 204-7004
Italian, Mediterranean \$\$
bunkyscafe.net

Ella's Deli
2902 E. Washington Ave., 241-5291
Kosher/Deli, Ice cream \$
ellasdeliandicecreamparlor.com

Fork and Spoon Cafe
1133 E. Wilson St., 257-7216
Italian, Pasta \$
forkandspooncafe.com

Glass Nickel
2916 Atwood Ave., 245-0880
glassnickelpizza.com

Harmony Bar & Grill
2201 Atwood Ave., 249-4333
Pizza, Burgers \$

Lao Laan-Xang
2098 Atwood Ave., 819-0140
Laotian, Vegetarian \$\$

Mariner's Inn
5339 Lighthouse Bay Dr., 246-3120
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/mariners

Michael's Frozen Custard
3826 Atwood Ave., 222-4110
Frozen custard, Burgers \$
ilovemichaels.com

Monty's Blue Plate
2089 Atwood Ave., 244-8505
American, Pies \$
montysblueplatediner.com

Nau-Ti-Gal
5360 Westport Rd., 246-3130
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/nautigal

Tex Tubbs Taco Palace
2009 Atwood Ave., 242-1800
Tex-Mex \$
textubbstacos.com

Wonders Pub
1980 Atwood Ave., 244-8563
American, Burgers \$

West

Bar Bistro 608
430 N. Midvale Blvd., 316-6900
Seafood, Steak \$\$\$
sundancecinemas.com

Biaggi's
601 Junction Rd., 664-9288
Italian, Pasta \$\$
www.biaggis.com

Bluephies
2701 Monroe St., 231-3663
American, Vegetarian \$\$
bluephies.com

Captain Bill's
2701 Century Harbor Rd., 831-7327
Seafood \$\$
vrv-madison.com/capbills

Flat Top Grill
538 N. Midvale Blvd., 236-4008
Asian Fusion \$
flattopgrill.com

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Inka Heritage
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Peruvian \$\$\$

J.T. Whitney's Brewpub
674 S. Whitney Way, 274-1776
Brewery, American \$\$
jtwhitneys.com

Jordan's Big Ten Pub
1330 Regent St., 251-6375
American, Burgers \$
jordansbigten.com

La Hacienda
515 S. Park St., 255-8227
Mexican \$

Madeleine's Patisserie
3742 Speedway Rd., 441-0909
Bread, Pastries \$
madeleinesmadison.com

Mickey's Dairy Bar
1511 Monroe St., 256-9476
Breakfast, Burgers \$

Tex Tubbs Taco Palace
2701 University Ave., 231-3473
Tex-Mex \$
textubbstacos.com

Zuzu Cafe
1336 Drake St., 260-9898
Sandwiches/Deli \$

Coffeshop Corner

Ancora Coffee Roasters
112 King St, 255-0285
1859 Monroe St, 258-9881
3314 University Ave, 233-5287

Barriques Coffee Trader
127 W Washington Ave, 259-9394
1831 Monroe St, 284-9463
1901 Cayuga St, Middleton, 824-9463
8410 Old Sauk Rd, 828-9502
5957 McKee Rd, Fitchburg, 277-9463

Cafe Zoma
2326 Atwood Ave., 246-2009

Electric Earth Cafe
546 W Washington Ave, 255-2310

Escape Cafe
916 Williamson St., 255-0997

Espresso Royale Caffè
208 State St., 259-0800
650 State St., 259-0300

EVP Coffee
1250 E Washington, 294-6868
3809 Mineral Point Road, 236-9690

Fair Trade
418 State St., 268-0477

Ground Zero
744 Williamson St., 294-8668

Indie Coffee
1225 Regent St., 259-9621



Java Cat
3918 Monona Dr., 223-5553

Meeting Grounds
494 Commerce Dr., 826-4200

Mermaid Cafe
1927 Winnebago St., 249-9719

Michelangelo's
114 State St., 251-5299

The Sow's Ear
125 S. Main St., Verona, 848-2755

Washington Hotel Coffee Room
402 W Lakeside St., 441-7599

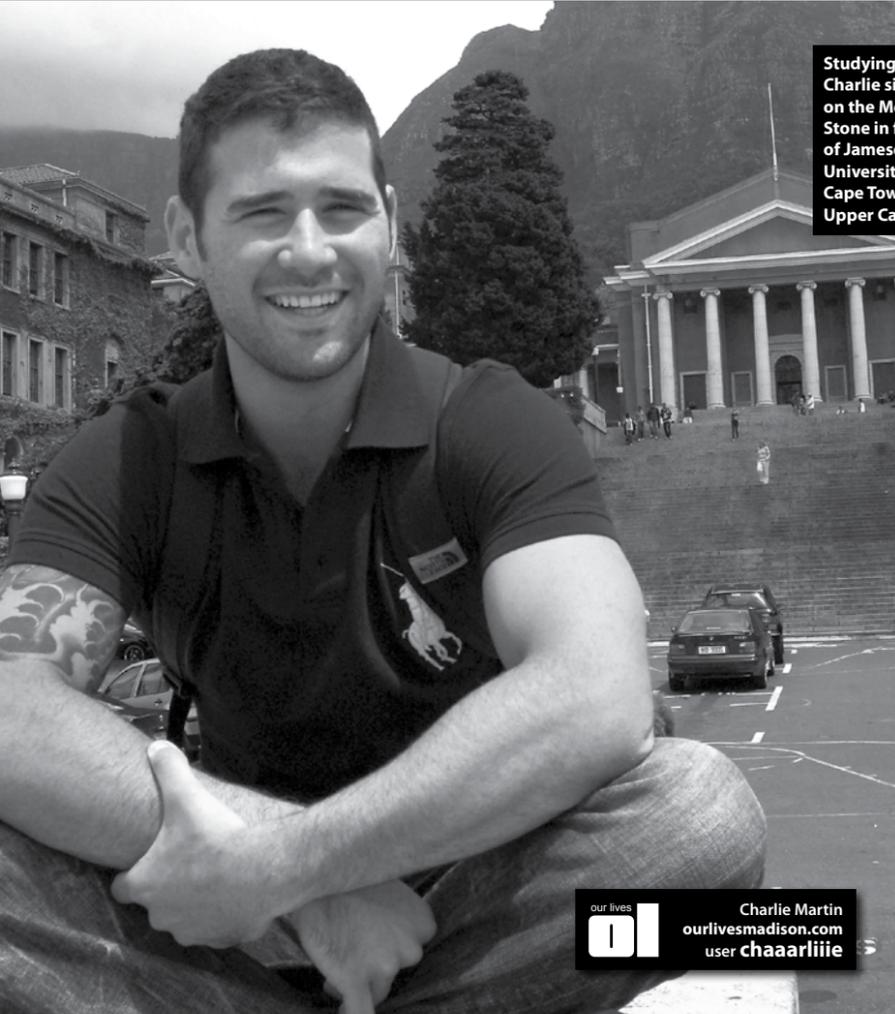
PHOTOS BY ROLANDO C.

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Studying abroad: Charlie sitting on the Memorial Stone in front of Jameson Hall, University of Cape Town, Upper Campus

our lives **Charlie Martin**
ourlivesmadison.com
user **chaarliie**

Who I Am Today

UW-Madison student **Charlie Martin** found his unexpected confidence after given a kick out of the closet

It was August 2005, about two days before I was moving back to Madison for my sophomore year of college. I decided earlier in the summer that I would no longer try to force myself to believe that I might possibly still have a little bit of a “straight” gene in me. I tried relationships with girls who never lived close to me. Only having to see them once every two weeks really made the front easier to keep up. I had begun to get pretty close with a particular girl and I panicked. Suddenly, I had a glimpse into my future and saw myself: 40 years old, “happily” married, three kids, and stuck in suburbia. No one really knew who I was and had no real connections with anyone. I don’t think that’s something anybody wants for themselves. So the panic attack made me realize this wasn’t something I could change. I’m a gay man—that’s that.

Back to August 2005. I’m packing my things at my parents’ house. This was the last week that I would ever truly live at their home. On the second to last day I went to grab something I had stored between my mattresses and much to my surprise, it was missing! I was shocked. I knew my mother had found it and was waiting for the right time to bring it up. I’m not sure how long she knew, but about 2 hours before we were

leaving to shop for all the essentials for my first apartment we were having a nice quiet lunch and she sprung it on me. “Charlie, are you gay?” I paused for 5 seconds. God, it felt like an eternity. I sat back in my chair, crossed my arms, looked her in the eye, and said, “Yes.” I couldn’t believe I told her, that I told anyone! I felt awful, nauseous, and nervous; I knew things were about to change. My heart was racing as I sat there hoping for the best, expecting the worst. She asked a couple typical questions: How long? How did you know? But after that 5-minute exchange, not a word was spoken between us for 3 hours except for things like “Do you want silverware with plastic handles? Sometimes they can melt in a dishwasher.” At the end of the day, she asked if she could tell my father. I said, “Absolutely, he has every right to know.”

The connections I have with my friends are stronger than ever now because I can actually open myself up to them

The next day, my father and I had a few moments alone. He turned to me to say what my mother told him I said. He asked me to see a counselor because I have a tendency to act a bit spontaneously without thinking through my actions 100%. I realize only now that’s really what he meant, but at the time I couldn’t have been more offended. I went anyway. The UW-Madison counselor at University Health Services was incredibly helpful. He helped me become comfortable saying the words out loud, “I’m Gay.” After two sessions, he told me that he doesn’t think I need to be attending these sessions regularly, but to call him on an as-needed basis. That was the last I set foot in his office. Within two weeks I came out to one of my roommates who reluctantly reciprocated but nonetheless reciprocated. We told the rest of the house that night, and began slowly spreading the word around Madison to all of our friends. Although many didn’t believe me at first

because I had a girlfriend for a fair portion of the previous year, they were all incredibly supportive. I feel very lucky to have found the group of friends that I did in Madison. By the following spring, everyone I was in contact with knew who I was, including my friends from the small private catholic high school I went to.

So I’m sitting here now, on the Camps Bay Beach in Cape Town, South Africa on my study abroad program (which everyone should do!) trying to think why I should write my story. What’s so special about me? Then it dawned on me; its because it has made me who I am today. These last two years have really made a huge impact and difference in my life. I’m much more confident in myself and comfortable in my own skin. I’m no longer hiding behind a complete lie just to fit in, and the connections I have with my friends are stronger than ever now because I can actually open myself up to them without a fear of being judged. I finish this article with a grin stretching from ear to ear, which I owe to my mother and father. I don’t think it was their intention, but honestly, that kick out of the closet and into a 10x10 room with a counselor sparked the freshest and best chapter of my life. ■

PHOTOS BY PETER OTTOSEN (VOLDIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, NORWAY)

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