

Continued from "Youth," page 1:

memorialized in the memoriam; why did he commit suicide, was he gay, was he bullied? Putting together a meaningful writing based on so many uncertainties seemed like a difficult if not impossible process.

A few days after our meeting I pulled up my Outlook calendar at the office and a banner popped up that read "Tyler Clementi's birthday." Clementi was the young man who last Sept. 22 jumped to his death from the George Washington Bridge after he learned a roommate streamed a video of an intimate encounter Tyler had with another young man in his Rutgers University dorm room. While criminal charges against the roommate are still pending, it is clear that the cyberbullying inflicted so much hurt on Tyler that he felt his only option to stop the hurt was to end it all.

On December 19 Tyler would have been 20 years old.

I'm not quite sure why Tyler's death still moves me. I didn't know him personally. And his death, while tragic, is not uncommon among lgbt and questioning teens who are oftentimes subjected to ridicule, ostracized by their teen peers, or rejected by their families. Maybe it's because I'm still outraged that Tyler's attempt to be his true self – to be intimate and loving with another man – was thrown up on the Internet as a way to shame and ridicule him. Through that action his roommate sought to minimize Tyler, to reduce his sexual orientation to mere comic fodder for those who refuse to open their minds to understand and appreciate all types of people.

The response to Tyler's death was overwhelming. New, fresh light was shone on the topic of lgbt teen suicide. Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller created the It Gets Better Project (www.itgetsbetter.org) as a way to inspire hope for young people like Tyler who are facing harassment. News of Tyler's death produced a renewed interest in the Trevor Project (www.trevorproject.org), an organization determined to end suicide among LGBT youth by providing life-saving and life-affirming resources including a nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention lifeline, digital community and advocacy/educational programs that create a safe, supportive and positive environment for everyone.

On the local level we are blessed to have several resources that provide support for LGBT and questioning youth. Many of our BloNo high schools now have gay/straight alliances, and the Central Illinois Safe Schools Alliance continues to monitor the local educational landscape in its effort to end bullying and provide safe environments for our LGBT youth. A group of local activists is also planning to resurrect our BloNo chapter of PFLAG, a nationwide organization that strives to help parents, family and friends of LGBT youth better understand sexual orientation and gender identity issues and provide support for their LGBT loved ones.

The efforts of these local and national organizations are producing an environment that is decidedly less hostile toward LGBT youth. Their work is to ensure that the other Tyler Clementis in our society know that they are loved, valued, and respected for being themselves. Still, as we begin a new year it's hard not to think about the youth we lost, the LGBT teens who weren't blessed with the support network that loving families, friends, and organizations can provide. If you know an LGBT teen, particularly one who is struggling, reach out to them and offer them your support.

As for the young man who was memorialized in the newspaper column mentioned at the beginning of this column...we have no indication what drove him to resort to suicide as an answer to whatever he was facing. We can only hope that as a society we can be a little kinder, a little more caring, and a lot more aware of the hurdles encountered by our young people, particularly those who might be perceived as different in others' eyes.

Jeanette L. Roberts

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Psychotherapy for Individuals, Couples, and Groups

200 West Monroe, Suite 305
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

(309) 820-8162



New Covenant Community

An Open and Affirming/More Light congregation which welcomes all persons into full participation in the life of our community, regardless of race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

Worship Sundays, 10 a.m.

Sunday School and childcare provided during worship

Chapel of the Campus Religious Center
210 W. Mulberry St., Normal, IL 61761 | (309) 454-7362
www.nccnormal.org

Open Worship Church of Hope
An Affirming Church Where ALL Are Welcome !!!



Sunday Worship Service 10 AM
722 W. Chestnut Street
Bloomington, IL 61701

www.owcoh.com / (309) 827-6236

The Rainbow Connection

McLean County AIDS Task Force Office Moves to Normal



by David Remesch, Task Force Chairperson

At the December MCATF Board of Directors meeting, The McLean County AIDS Task Force board made the difficult decision to downsize the agency's facilities and services. During the month of January we will move to an office within the Unity Church building located in Normandy Village at 1100 N. Beech Street in Normal. We are hoping to retain our current phone number, but that is still not a certainty. All changes, including address, contact information and services, will be posted very soon on our website: www.mcatf.org

With the continued lack of funding, it has become necessary to move from our current location to a much smaller office space. This move will greatly decrease

our overhead and ensure the immediate future for the task force. Donations and grants are even more critical now than ever.

As a result of our reduced space we will no longer be able to host most of our support groups, nor will we be able to provide meeting space for other groups and organizations. For those of you who have keys to the building for your groups, the keys need to be returned before January 1. The most convenient way to do this would be to put them in an envelope and drop them in our locked mailbox at the office.

Our downsizing and cost reduction efforts will also provide an opportunity to re-evaluate our mission and our priorities. We will always include client services, as much as possible, and prevention outreach education in our efforts. At this time the Client Wellness group will be our main focus for support groups. We will continue to support Bruce's efforts to maintain a Men's Group and will post times and the location when that is decided. Please share this information with your groups and with others that will need to know. We thank you for all of your support in the past and trust that that support will continue in the future.

Overcoming the Struggles of Youth

by Dave Bentlin

At one of our ACHR meetings a board member shared an "In Memoriam" that recently ran in the obituary pages of The Pantagraph. It was to honor a young man who one year ago ended his 46 years on this earth by taking his own life. The piece included a short writing by Father Ron Rolheiser that attempted to make sense of suicide and bring comfort to those who have lost a loved one. The full text of Rolheiser's writing can be found at www.ronrolheiser.com.

The board member who shared this writing with us urged that we make it a focus of an article in this month's newsletter...but how to do that? None of us knew the young man

Story continued on page 6

January, 2012

The Rainbow Connection is published by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR). Send correspondence to P.O. Box 5048, Bloomington, IL 61702-5048, or e-mail info@achr-il.com

ACHR Board: Dave Bentlin; Peggy Burton; Gary Gletty; Margo Mendoza; Donna O'Crowly; Elizabeth Anvick; Suzie Hutton; Olemuel Ashford; Ryan Mishler; Tony Thieman-Somora; Tony Somora

Local PFLAG Chapter Set to Begin

Many in the Bloomington-Normal community have for years felt the need for there to be an established PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), but a group has had a hard time forming.

But happily, a PFLAG chapter is set to start up right here! If you are interested in attending the first Bloomington-Normal PFLAG meeting, please join us on Monday, Jan. 16 at 5:30 p.m. at the Unitarian-Universalist Church, located at 1613 East Emerson Street in Bloomington. We are very excited to get this group off the ground; please feel free to attend or to forward this information to friends and family members who might be interested in being involved. The local organization CISSA (Central Illinois Safe Schools Alliance) as well as the sponsors for local GSA groups in the area have been included in this meeting, and we're hoping for a great turnout!

Area Church Celebrates Anniversary

The Open Worship Church of Hope, located at 722 W. Chestnut Street in Bloomington will be celebrating their second year anniversary on Sunday, Jan 15 at 10 a.m. at the church.

Featured during the special service will be the praise team from Bridges of Hope Ministries in Indianapolis

as well as nationally recognized recording artist Kenny Bishop.

Kenny Bishop, a Dove Award and Grammy nominee, performs songs that spread a message of grace to many who consider themselves unwanted or neglected by God.

The Open Worship Church of Hope is a reconciling and inclusive fellowship of Christian believers welcoming all of God's children. They are an open and accepting church that welcomes all.

Following the second anniversary celebration service, Open Worship will be hosting a catered dinner following the service. If you would like to attend the service or dinner, please RSVP using the church's Facebook page at Open Worship Church.



Law office of
Allison & Mosby-Scott

Jon D. McLaughlin

Attorney at Law
Caring help when you need it most

Phone: (309) 662-5084 · Cell: (309) 319-6206 · Fax: (309) 662-2994
Jon@allisonmosby-scott.com · www.allisonmosby-scott.com



Law office of
Allison & Mosby-Scott

Michelle Mosby-Scott

Attorney at Law
Caring help when you need it most

Phone: (309) 662-5084 · Cell: (309) 310-1154 · Fax: (309) 662-2994
Michelle@allisonmosby-scott.com · www.allisonmosby-scott.com

January, 2012

Calendar

- **New Year's Eve:** The Bistro, 316 North Main Street, will open at 9 p.m. Festivities will kick off with a champagne fountain, party favors, food catered from Lancaster's, DJ Rakestraw and DJ Squeesa.
- **2nd Fridays:** Hot Spot at the Bistro, hosted by Sharon Share a Like
- **Friday, Jan. 20:** Instead of their regular King show, the Bistro will be doing a benefit to help send Kristi (Devin Graberass) to Nationals.
- **Also at the Bistro:** Karaoke Wednesdays starting at 10 p.m. and Bingo Thursdays at 9 p.m. followed by karaoke.
- **Monday, Jan. 9:** The Heartland Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) Small Faith Community of Bloomington Normal worship at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Church.
- **Tuesday, Jan. 10:** Hate Crimes Summit at Illinois Central College.
- **Sunday, Jan. 15:** Open Worship Church of Hope 2nd anniversary celebration at 10 a.m.
- **Monday, Jan. 16:** Inaugural PFLAG meeting at 5:30 at the Unitarian Universalist Church.
- **Thursday, Jan. 19:** Poet Andrea Gibson performs at Illinois Wesleyan at 6:30 p.m.

"Trick," by Gene Naden

It happened in San Jose, California two days before Christmas, a few years before the AIDS epidemic started.

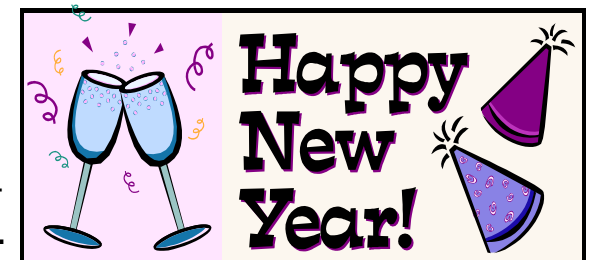
I was lonely, so lonely I could taste it and almost feel it in my bones, so I visited a gay bar called the Candy Shop. In those days all it took to lift my spirits was a few beers and the sound of relaxed conversations. At this bar there was a live show featuring a man costumed as an ape. He was singing something like "Gorilla my dreams, won't you come out with me?" The gorilla's pun so vividly reminded me of all the times I had tried to fall in love with a girl or woman, all of my experiments, that I laughed harder than I had in a long time.

A young soldier, let's call him George, picked me up that night. George was a medic in the Army, home on leave. He later told me that my laughter was what first attracted him to me. We liked each other and we began a passionate affair. At that point in time I hadn't had much experience and everything we did seemed new and wonderful to me. Apparently, George felt the same way.

We talked about what it was like to be gay and how that might have come about in our lives. Of course, being in the Army was kind of restrictive for George and he wanted out. We visited an attorney in San Francisco who had promised to help him. George told me how to get tested for free at the Public Health Service.

We didn't talk about love, or much about the future. I think we both expected that the future would take care of itself. After a couple of weeks, his leave was up and he returned to his duty in Texas.

The popular song *All By Myself* starts out, "When I was young I never needed anyone and making love was just for fun..." I quickly forgot the sense of isolation that drove me to the gay bar in the first place. In the next couple of years I had several lovers and one serious relationship but I never recaptured the magical quality of my brief time with George. We could have been in love, who knows?



Rainbow Connection

Poet Activist Andrea Gibson to perform at IWU



ious performance venues coast to coast with powerful readings on war, class, gender, bullying, white privilege, sexuality, love, and spirituality.

Her work has been featured on the BBC, Air America, C-SPAN, Free Speech TV and in 2010 was read by a state representative in lieu of morning prayer at the Utah State Legislature.

On her fifth full-length album *FLOWER BOY* and her second book *THE MADNESS VASE*, Gibson's poems continue to be a rally cry for action and a welcome mat at the door of the heart's most compassionate room.

The specific location of Gibson's presentation was not available at press time. For more information visit Gibson's web site www.andreagibson.org or the IWU Pride Alliance facebook page.

Queer poet Andrea Gibson will visit Illinois Wesleyan University for a presentation at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 19.

Gibson was the first winner of the Women's World Poetry Slam and has headlined prestig-

Hate Crimes Summit Scheduled at ICC

Bullying, Violence, Hate: A Community Response is the title of a hate crimes summit on Tuesday, Jan. 10 at Illinois Central College, 1 College Drive in East Peoria.

Crimes of hatred and prejudice are not just occurrences of America's past history but continue to take place in various parts of our nation, including Central Illinois. The Hate Crimes Summit is a commitment to prevent such crimes and bring to justice those who commit them. The Summit explores the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of hate crimes and introduces key strategies and legislation which address this important topic.

The Hate Crimes Summit is sponsored by U.S. Attorney Jim Lewis, Illinois Central College, and Easter Seals of Peoria. Notable presenters will provide panel discussions, workshops, and a keynote address that will focus on Bullying and Hate Crimes prevention in Central Illinois.

Central Illinois residents, parents, students, educators, school districts, law enforcement, government officials, human relations commissions, civil rights activists, and social service agencies are invited to attend this conference. The cost is free. For more information, please go to our website: <http://apps.icc.edu/register/hcs/index.php>.

January, 2012

Heartland Metropolitan Community Church Offers New Program

By Rev. Tony Thieman-Somora

The Heartland Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) Small Faith Community of Bloomington/Normal has organized a new program and site beginning on January 9th, 2012. They will be meeting on Monday evenings at 7:00pm for worship, followed by an adult spiritual formation program called "Living the Questions" beginning at 8pm. The Heartland MCC Small Faith Community will be meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington Normal at 1613 E. Emerson, in Bloomington.

The Heartland Metropolitan Community Church is a part of the denomination called the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC). The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, which has been in existence for 43 years, is a global Christian church of loving, affirming and welcoming communities of faith.

MCC is "Tearing Down Walls" of oppression and injustice in communities around the world. Because MCC is a people of the Good News, MCC is working with the Divine Creator to "Build Up Hope" among our siblings worldwide.

We are a people of hope. We are a people of faith.

MCC churches are located in over 40 countries on six continents, and we are made up of congregants from many different walks of life. Because of this, MCC has a fellowship of churches that celebrate diversity both within their local congregations and among our global community.

For more information on MCC or the program we are offering, please call the Heartland

MCC Small Faith Community of Bloomington Normal at 309-319-6042, or email us at MCCBloomington@yahoo.com.

Gretchen Shelly
Owner
309-661-1726 • 309-661-1729

merry maids.

1702 W. College Ave
Suite A-3
Normal, IL 61761
mmofbn@yahoo.com

A ServicerMASTER BRAND

TREY POLESKY, MSW, LSW

Individual, Couples, and Family Counseling

2416 E. Washington Street
Suite A2
Bloomington, IL 61704

treypolesky@gmail.com
www.tinyurl.com/counseling1
Phone (773) 819-5428
Fax (206) 426-1837



Bob Ryder, PMCT
309.530.1963
bob@pawstrans.com
www.pawstrans.com

PAWSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONS

Bringing out the best in our best friends

We offer in-home Good Manners (obedience) training and behavior modification for aggression and anxiety issues.