




The Rainbow Connection

March, 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

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Illinois Primary Fast Approaching

The March 20 Illinois primary is fast approaching and the local political landscape has changed as a result of the redistricting process.

Redistricting has again split McLean County into two congressional districts, both of which have hotly-contested races that include current congressmen, political newcomers, and returning candidates.

The 13th congressional district, which includes portions of west Normal, west and south-west Bloomington, and the southwest portion of McLean County, features Republican Tim Johnson running against fellow Republicans Mike Firsching and Frank Metzger. On the Democratic side, Dr. David Gill, who was a congressional candidate in 2010, 2008 and 2006, faces off against political newcomer Matt Goetten.

The remaining parts of Bloomington/Normal and McLean County fall under the 18th congressional district, where Republican Aaron Schock – who is running unopposed in the primary – will face the winner of the Democratic primary featuring candidates Matt Woodmancy and Steve Waterworth.

The Advocacy Council contacted each candidate's campaign and requested they complete a questionnaire covering LGBT issues that are important to our community. We hope their responses – or non re-

sponses – will help you as decide how to cast your vote in these races.

Check out pages 2 and 3 for the full ACHR candidate questionnaire with answers to our relevant questions.

14th Annual ISU Drag Show

You're invited to Pride's 14th Annual Charity Drag Show at 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 24 in the Brown Ballroom at ISU's Bone Student Center.

Hosted by Sharon ShareAlike and sponsored by Pride, ISU's only lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) registered student organization, this year's show will showcase performances from multiple professional drag queens and kings as well as student performers.

Tickets can be purchased for \$5 in advance in the ISU quad (Schroeder Plaza) or for \$7 at the door the night of the event. Doors open at 6 PM, so make sure to get there early! Ticket sales will be during the week of March 19th - 23rd. We will be selling tickets on Schroeder Plaza and all executive board members will have them available as well. Proceeds of the event will be donated to a local organization that is dedicated to the implementation of full civil rights protections for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people (the GLBT community).

For more information, visit the organization's website at www.ilstupride.org or email them at pride@ilstu.edu. You can also follow Pride on Facebook- www.facebook.com/isupride or on Twitter-www.twitter.com/isupride for up-to-date information.

If you need a special accommodation to fully participate in this event, please contact Pride at pride@ilstu.edu. Please allow sufficient time to arrange the accommodation.

Rainbow Connection

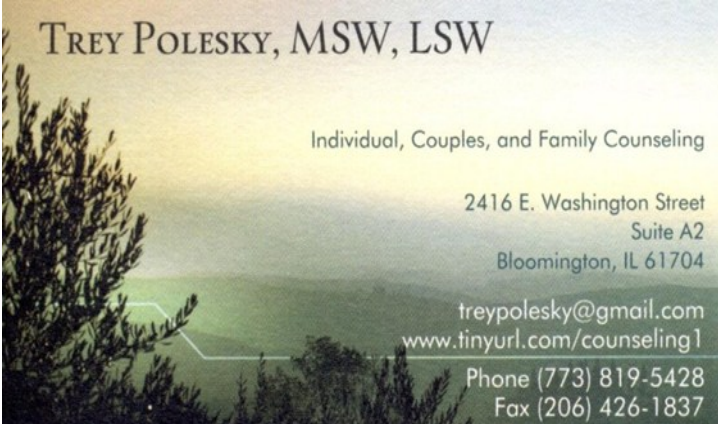
	13 th Congressional District Candidates				
Question	Johnson (R)	Firsching (R)	Metzger (R)	Gill (D)	Goetten (D)
Do you support or oppose the Employment Non Discrimination Act?	No Response	Oppose	No Response	Support	No Response
Do you support or oppose a federal constitutional amendment that would define marriage as a union between a man and a woman?	No Response	Oppose	No Response	Oppose	No Response
Do you support or oppose legislation that provides the legal rights for same-sex couples to marry?	No Response	Only at the state level	No Response	Support	No Response
Do you support or oppose legislation that would establish civil unions but not full marriage equality?	No Response	Not an issue to be considered at federal level	No Response	Support as a path to full marriage equality	No Response



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18 th Congressional District Candidates		
Schock (R)	Woodmancy (D)	Waterworth (D)
No Response	Support	Support
No Response	Oppose	Oppose
No Response	Support	Support
No Response	Oppose	Oppose

Pantagraph Changes Milestones Guidelines

In response to an inquiry from the Advocacy Council, The *Pantagraph* has updated its "Milestones" guidelines that run each Sunday to be LGBT-inclusive.

Prior to the March 4 issue The *Pantagraph's* guidelines included information on running paid wedding, anniversary, and birth announcements but omitted guidelines for paid civil unions announcements.

Editor Mark Pickering explained that the omission was an oversight and immediately worked with Features Editor Chuck Blystone to update the guidelines in the print edition. The updated version was first published March 4.

Couples who have secured a civil unions license are welcome to submit their photograph and announcement to the newspaper. The handling fee for such announcements is \$30...the same fee the newspaper charges for married couples.

**Make your-
self heard!**



Remember

to vote on March 20!



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Support for Marriage Equality on the Rise According to Poll

Almost half of Bloomington registered voters who participated in a recent survey favor allowing gay couples to legally marry.

The survey, conducted Feb. 20-23 by students in Illinois Wesleyan University Professor Tari Renner's political science class, consisted of 447 interviews of registered Bloomington voters who were asked questions on a variety of issues on the local, state, and national levels.

A near majority, 44 percent, agreed with the statement that "gay couples should be allowed to legally marry."

An additional 29 percent agreed that "gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry," while only 18 percent said "there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship."

Marriage equality is clearly gaining momentum locally. The 44 percent figure is a sizable increase from a similar 2010 IWU poll, where only 35 percent favored allowing gay couples to legally marry. Best of all, the percentage of those who favor no legal recognition continues to decrease since the IWU poll was first taken in the early 2000s.

Other polls are finding similar support for marriage equality and civil unions. A 2010 survey of Illinois voters conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute found that 67.5 percent agreed that gay couples should have either legal marriage or civil unions protection.

The 2012 survey has a +/- 5 percent margin of error.

McLean County AIDS Taskforce Finds New Home



In an effort to reduce our overhead costs, the McLean County AIDS Taskforce has moved to a smaller office at a different location. We are now located within the Unity Church in Normandy Village. Our new address is 1100 N Beech St, Suite 11B, Normal, IL 61761. Our phone number (309 827 2437) and our website (www.mcatf.org) remain the same.

We are still very much in need of your support, especially since we still have no state funding, and we trust we can count on your continued backing. We are currently seeking donations, grants and support for our fundraising events to keep this vital effort alive.

One of our major efforts to maintain our financial stability is to rebuild our membership participation. We ask that you contact us with your name, contact information, including email address, by emailing membership@mcatf.org.

Your membership donation of \$25 will greatly help cover our overhead costs and can be sent by check to the above address or by PayPal by visiting our website. Please feel free to contact us at 827-2437 or mcatf@mcatf.org with any questions, suggestions or information on volunteering.

ACHR Participates in Library Fundraiser

The Feb. 12 "Putt With the Prose" fundraiser earned \$4,185 for the Bloomington Public Library.

For \$5 per person, golfers of all ages were admitted to play a round of miniature golf inside the library.

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights

was among local businesses and organizations that sponsored a hole to help make the fundraiser a success.

The proceeds from the event, now in its third year, will be used to purchase eBooks for the Children's Department of the library.

Bloomington-Normal Reboots PFLAG Chapter

After a multi-year hiatus, organizers have rebooted a local chapter of PFLAG—Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—in Bloomington-Normal.

The group meets once a month on the 2nd Monday of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal—1613 E. Emerson St., Bloomington, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Chief organizer Bonnie Garneau is thrilled that a community as large and diverse as the

twin cities can now offer PFLAG services to people of the community. Although the group has only met a handful of times so far this year, they have already elected officers, launched a website, and established a regular meeting time and place.

Officers of the Bloomington-Normal PFLAG are President Dee Calcari, Treasurer Peggy Burton, and Secretary Adam Gray.

For more information about PFLAG, you can e-mail info @pflagbn.com, or check out the website: www.pflagbn.com.

PFLAG meetings are open to anyone; people in the community are urged to get involved and find ways to help!



Calendar

Be sure to mark your calendars for these events:

- Celebrations at the Bistro include:
Talent Night March 9th
St. Patricks Day March 17th
ISU Drag Show March 24th
Karaoke on Wednesday and Thursdays
Bingo on Thursdays
Momma's 60th birthday bash on the 30th
- PFLAG meeting on Monday, March 12 at the Unitarian Church at 5:30 p.m.



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New Research on LGBT Youth Suicidality and Self-harm

By Gene Naden

Massive amounts of verbiage on the topic of LGBT youth suicide risk appeared on the Web and in other media in 2011. We all know it is a fact of life. Till now, we have known less about why the risk is so great, where the risk has been most pronounced and what factors influence it. At last, we have some scientific results, published just this week in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine**. Richard T. Liu and Brian Mustanski, of the Northwestern University School of Medicine, followed the lives of 246 LGBT youth for two and one half years, systematically surveying their experiences and behavior. The results tell us that we are on the right track, that we know what is going on and that the conclusions we might draw from common sense are, in fact, true.

I will finish with a summary of Liu and Mustanski's findings, but first I need to fill you in with some background. I recently spent 110 hours in as a participant in an LGBT therapy group in Chicago. I have spent hundreds of hours in the University of Illinois Health Sciences Library poring over journals. I live on the edge of Boystown and participate several times a week in predominantly LGBT 12-Step groups having various focuses. Armed with those experiences and empowered by the magic of Facebook, I feel I have my finger on this culture's pulse.

First of all, it is not just about people actually offing themselves. There are degrees of self-harm. For example, many people deliberately cut themselves to get relief from loneliness or emptiness, to get a sense of control or perhaps as a kind of partial death, a compromise with suicide if you will. The study states "nonsuicidal self-harm occurs in 13% to 45% of this age group."

Second, all youth are at risk, whether or not they belong to a sexual minority. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death in adolescents, after accidents and homicide.

Third, the term "LGBT youth" is a metaphor for any age. Anyone can be "young." Youth is a particular status in life, the status of finding oneself and of establishing a network of life-building relationships and commitments. For example, a 60-year-old person considering coming out as transgender would be a "youth" in terms of the psychological tasks she or he faces (though not included in the study of course). And, other factors being equal, that person would be at a greater risk for suicide or self-harm than someone not thus challenged.

Allow me to speak for myself. I have had severe anxiety and depression nearly every day for decades, since childhood. A painless way to end it all has always been attractive. On the other hand, in recent years I have built up a complex web of relationships and expectations in Chicago, Bloomington and Normal. This building process began in 2005 at the Connections Community Center, aka McLean Country AIDS Task Force offices. I would hate to see

the edifice I have built come crashing down prematurely.

Now let's get to the results of the study. The Center on Halsted gave a fine summary:

"What protects lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youths from considering suicide and, conversely, what makes them most vulnerable to it? The question is of paramount concern because these youths are at least twice as likely to attempt suicide as heterosexual youths, prompting the national "It Gets Better Project" with encouraging video messages from such public figures as Lady Gaga and President Barack Obama.

Now the first longitudinal study to look at suicide ideation and self-harm in this population shows support from friends and family offers the most protection in preventing youths from thinking about suicide. Adolescents who know they can talk to their parents about problems and know they have friends who care about them are less likely to consider ending their lives, according to new Northwestern Medicine research.

Adolescents most likely to consider killing themselves and engage in self-harm behaviors are those who feel victimized for being gay. About 94 percent of LGBT youths have had at least one experience in which people said cruel things to them, spit on them, destroyed their property and threatened or assaulted them – all related to them being gay, according to prior Northwestern research.

Suicidal thoughts are a key predictor of a suicide attempt. Cutting behaviors also are a risk factor. Previous studies of LGBT adolescents looked at their risk of making suicide attempts, not predictors that make them vulnerable to it or protect them from it. "Our research shows how critical it is for these young people to have social support and for schools to have programs to reduce bullying," said Brian Mustanski, associate professor of medical social sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. "We believe this will help save young lives."

* Am J Prev Med 2012;42(3):221-228

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