



The Rainbow Connection is published by the Prairie Pride Coalition (PPC).

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Rainbow Connection

AUGUST, 2012

8 Comes to the Twin Cities



The Prairie Pride Coalition, with license from the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) and Broadway Impact, is proud to announce a one-night-only reading of "8," a play chronicling the historic trial in the federal constitutional challenge to California's Proposition 8, written by Academy Award-winning screenwriter and AFER Founding Board Member Dustin Lance Black.

The staged reading of "8" will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 8 in the theater at ISU's Center for Performing Arts. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted in the theater lobby.

"8" is an unprecedented account of the Federal District Court trial in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* (now *Perry v. Brown*), the case filed by AFER to overturn Proposition 8, which stripped gay and lesbian Californians of the fundamental freedom to marry.

Please see "Staged Reading," continued on page 4

ISU Alum to Participate in Staged Reading

Tom Chiola, an ISU alum and retired circuit court judge from Chicago, will portray the role of Judge Vaughn Walker in the Sept. 8 staged reading of 8 at Illinois State University.

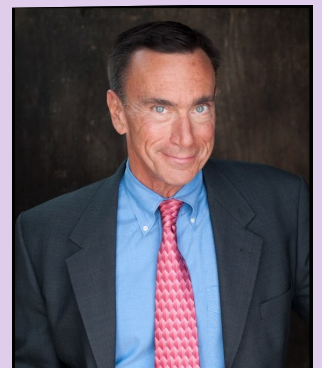
Chiola, who graduated from ISU in 1974, became the first openly-gay candidate elected to public office in Illinois in 1994 when he won his judge's seat.

Chiola served for 15 years, retiring in 2009. Since then he has revisited his childhood love of acting, appearing in

movies and plays including the upcoming holiday film *Scrooge and Marley*.

For more information about Chiola's life and career, visit his website at

www.tomchiola.com.



AIDS Run/Walk a Success



Despite the heat, the McLean County AIDS Task Force (MCATF) raised almost \$5000 at the AIDS Walk/Run for Life!

This event was held at Tipton Park on Saturday, July 21st. The contributions made will help provide financial assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS in M c L e a n

County. MCATF also offers wellness groups to those living with HIV/AIDS, and HIV prevention education to the community.

Please acknowledge our sponsors by supporting their businesses: Lancaster's, The Bistro, the River City Bears, PIP Printingg, and AlignLife, which offered free chair massages. Par-

ticipants who donated an additional \$25 to MCATF received \$300 worth of chiropractic services from AlignLife. Great Harvest Bread Company donated six loaves of their bread.

Special thanks to all of the runners, walkers and volunteers. They helped make this event, in its fifth year, a success!



A BIG THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THE ANNUAL PPC FAMILY REUNION PICNIC ON JULY 15 A SUCCESS. BURGERS, HOTDOGS AND OTHER GOODIES WERE GRILLED UP TO THE BIG CROWD, AND FUN WAS HAD BY ALL, DESPITE THE HEAT. THIRTEENTH DISTRICT CONGRESSIONAL HOPEFUL DR. DAVID GILL ALSO MADE TIME TO ATTEND THE PICNIC, SHARING A FEW WORDS ABOUT HIS CAMPAIGN.



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Gender Identity in History—in Our Own Backyard

by Dave Bentlin

While many of my friends escaped the heat this summer by vacationing in Saugatuck, Rehobeth Beach, Alaska, and other cooler climes, I decided to stick closer to home and take a handful of three-day weekends for short road trips and tackling some home improvement projects. The home improvement projects have mostly gone uncompleted, but my travels did include a recent Monday afternoon drive to the small community of Saunemin, a sleepy, tidy-looking town of 450 about 15 miles east of Pontiac.

There I visited the grave and recently-reconstructed home of and memorial for Civil War veteran Albert Cashier, who was born in 1843 in Ireland as Jennie Rodgers, but immigrated to the United States and eventually assumed the identity of Cashier to serve in the war effort (at that time women were not allowed in the military).

By all accounts Cashier was a scrappy, brave soldier who fought in several skirmishes, including the Battle of Vicksburg. Cashier was able to keep his biological gender a secret, and after the war's end he settled in Saunemin and continued to live as a single man.

According to all accounts, Cashier led a quiet and unassuming life in Saunemin until 1910, when he was in an automobile accident and upon examination the town doctor discovered Cashier was a biological female. The doctor kept Cashier's secret, but he never truly healed from his injuries and eventually was placed in a veterans' nursing home in Quincy.

The staff there kept Cashier's secret, but his mental health deteriorated and eventually he was transferred to a state asylum near Moline; there, Cashier's secret was leaked which resulted in controversy and newspaper coverage. At one point the government attempted to revoke his veterans pension, arguing that he entered the military as a fraud; luckily, Cashier's fellow veterans from the 95th Infantry testified on his behalf and Cashier was allowed to keep his pension.

Despite getting to keep his pension, Cashier's last years were probably not happy ones. His mental condition continued to deteriorate, and the staff at the asylum forced Cashier to wear dresses rather than pants. At least one account claims that Cashier's awkwardness in dressing as a female contributed to a fall at the asylum that resulted in Cashier breaking a hip.

Cashier passed away in 1915; he was buried in his uniform and

given full military rites by his veterans in the 95th Infantry. A plain marker was erected, but a more elaborate gravestone was installed in the 1970s that included both of his identities: Jennie Rodgers and Albert Cashier.

In 2010 the Village of Saunemin created a memorial to Cashier that includes a flag display, signage, brick sponsor walkway, and Cashier's reconstructed home. The home contains both new materials and some clapboards from Cashier's one-room home that had been in storage for many years.

Cashier has been the source of controversy and uneasiness among the townspeople of Saunemin. Some who were interviewed expressed trepidation over honoring a cross dresser, while others see Cashier as a pioneer who challenged the premise of his day and lived as he wanted.

Some have even questioned if Cashier's decision to live as a man constitutes what we today label as being transgender. Historians argue that Cashier's gender choice was based as much on economics and survival as much as on any feelings of preferring one gender identity over another. The fact that Cashier could neither read nor write means that we don't have much historical, first-person information. What we do know is that Cashier experienced ostracism, discrimination, and mistreatment because of his gender identity. His story needs to be remembered.

Cashier's grave is located in Sunny Slope Cemetery in Saunemin. The Albert D.J. Cashier Memorial Home and Historical Site is located at the corner of Maple and Center streets on the town's east side. More information about Cashier can be found online (search Albert Cashier).



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Calendar

- **Friday, August 3, First Fridays** – join the fun at the **Bistro, 316 N. Main Street, Bloomington**, for appetizers and drink specials. Hosted this month by **State Farm Pride**.
- **Monday, August 13** – **PFLAG, the Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays**, meets on the second Monday of each month at the **Unitarian Church – 1613 E. Emerson**, from 5:30 – 7:30.
- **Saturday, August 11** – Transgender support group meets on the second Saturday of each month. Contact tginbnil@hotmail.com for more information.
- **Saturday and Sunday, August 25 and 26**—The **Uptown Normal Sweetcorn Festival**. Visit the booth sponsored by **PFLAG of Bloomington-Normal** !
- **Every Wednesday and Thursday** – **Bingo and Karaoke at the Bistro**, starting at 9 p.m.

Staged Reading, continued from pg. 1

Black, who penned the Academy Award-winning feature film *Milk* and the film *J. Edgar*, based “8” on the actual words of the trial transcripts, first-hand observations of the courtroom drama and interviews with the plaintiffs and their families.

The coalition is working with the production's ISU co-sponsors - School of Theatre and Dance, College of Fine Arts, Diversity Advocacy, the LGBT Queer Studies and Services Institute, and University Housing Services - to bring together a cast of faculty members and notable ISU acting alums (see accompanying article).

“8” had its much-heralded Broadway world premiere on September 19, 2011, at the sold-out Eugene O'Neill Theatre in New York City. The production brought in over \$1 million to support AFER's efforts to achieve full federal marriage equality.

For the latest news on our event, check out our facebook page at www.facebook.com/PrairiePrideCoalition and our NEW web site www.ppc-il.org.

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