MANDY'S STORY
An Adult Adjusts to her Parents' Divorce

Just for Us spoke with Mandy Hollingshead of Vancouver, British Columbia about her parents' recent divorce, and how it has affected her life. Mandy is 22, and is working towards her bachelor's degree in music. After college, she is planning to teach music in elementary schools. The oldest of three siblings, Mandy currently lives with Martin, her boyfriend of 6 years, and their two cats Founder and Milda.

JPW: How did you first become aware of your parents’ divorce?
Mandy: My parents divorced this year, but they separated with the intention of divorce when I was 10. I had no idea it was coming, it was like a slap in the face. I found out on Thanksgiving Day. It was my Mom telling me over the phone that my Dad had moved out and she had helped him. I didn't know at that point that he was gay.

NOBODY TOLD ME...
by Molly Hennessy-Fiske

I began with my trip to France or rather, return trip. Ever came back from a big voyage determined to surprise? That was me. Two months missing seven infants terrible as an au pair gave me the will and the means at age 18. Dirty blonde mop became a trim black pixie cut as I traded my overall for a diminutive mini skirt and extra Sugar gum for Lucky Stripes. No wonder Mom cried when she spotted me.

Actually, it had nothing to do with me. Mom was a wreck. She'd been contemplating a break-up for months while I'd been planning my trip. I was oblivious. Just like when my parents divorced a decade before. Back then, I'd thought they were sitting my sister and me down to announce the birth of a dreaded third sibling. Ick - more sharing. Instead, I got two brothers, two televisiters and two happier parents. Why should this split be any different?

Well, she wasn’t married. Committed, yes and settled. Exhibit a house. No kids, no dog. All this she shared with a woman from the time I was 12 until that day in the car at Kennedy International continued on page 4
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Summer is all around us. Long days, warm nights, summer camp, family week, times for the whole family. Well, maybe the whole family. In this issue of Just For Us, we open to the new features, we are examining issues of breakup. A lot of children, young, and adults face parental breakups—sometimes opposite sex parents break up because one or more of them come out, sometimes same-sex parents move apart, sometimes a parent and a "step-parent" split up.

There are endless variations, but what these situations have in common is that decisions between adults affect us, the kids. They maintain close relationships with each other. Sometimes the transition goes well—but turns to difficulties and we keep maintaining relationships with each other. Sometimes we kids are hoping for a breakup, harboring anger that parents are staying together "for the sake of the children," even if it's obvious to everyone that it is long past time for a separation. Sometimes, we are caught in bitter battles for custody or visitation, torn between people we love and swept up in a roominess that has nothing to do with us.

On top of all of these delicate emotional landscapes is our experience of homophobia. When our friends ask us why our dad is moving out, what do we say? "Because he's gay" isn't often the safest response. Guiltily the pain of the breakup is mixed into a confusing and frustrating out of situations about sexuality or coming out issues. It isn't unusual in same-sex breakups to experience extended family or friends' ignorance of our familial relationships. "Why do you care so much that Mary is moving out? She's not your real mom. I don't understand why you're so upset." Ouch.

Then there are the legal troubles. Young children whose relationship to their non-apparent adoptive parent is not legally recognized might lose person as a parent or lose that parent altogether in their lives. Sometimes our legal parents go to court and uses the often homophile legal system to deny our other parent visitation or shared custody of us. Suddenly a person we grew up knowing as mom disappears forever from our life.

Please read this issue of Just For Us closely. It is filled with the words of people who are struggling to come to terms with transitions in their families and to find a new path toward healing. Breakup is never easy, and it can be even harder when you to cloak the truth in secrecy and lies. At COLAGE we have a commitment to violence and opportunities for our participants to voice their experiences in their own words. If we can't get it here, where can we?

If your family is in a time of change or transition, we hope you feel a little less alone by the time you're done reading this publication. If you want to talk with other young people directly about what you're experiencing, look to see if a chapter near you, request a pen a pad, or join one of our on-line discussion groups. I guarantee you, you'll find someone who understands.

Wishing you and your family love through the good times and bad.

Yours truly,
Felicia Park-Rogers
Executive Director

COLAGE
(Children) of Lesbians And Gays Everywhere is a non-profit organization providing support, education, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations.
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SPEAK OUT!

This issue's SPEAK OUT! postcard was posted to the COLAGE e-mail distribution list for people over 14 or with LGBT parents. The question was, "Does anyone else feel like you want your parents to divorce? It may sound weird to think this way, but lately I've thought it's not actually - because a divorce would bring a resolution of some sort. That's all."

Below are some of the responses that people posted to the list:
My parents divorced after 23 years, and only stayed together one last year after my dad came out to my mother. This year was necessary to lie low and end sex and sell the family business. I've never, like never, had toOur parents just celebrated their 21st anniversary three days ago. They plan on staying married. The least I can say is that they are happy in their marriage, and that they are more at ease now that my father is out to us. I often wonder how my mom is strong enough to stay married to a gay man. I have so much respect for her! I guess that things are much better between my parents now that they were when my father was still in the closet and was feeling so lonely and depressed. But the outside, their marriage still seems "normal."

I, too, have at times thought that it would be easier for my parents to get a divorce. Part of me has felt that it would make sense for them to get divorced...that maybe they are just being stubborn. I've noticed that there is a lot of pressure on same-sex couples that must occur between them. I've mentioned this to my therapist, my parents, and my two sisters, and none of them see where I'm coming from. They say something like "interesting..." or "huh, that's pretty strange."

I don't really want them to divorce, but then again I never really wanted my father to be gay...we'll just see what happens, and we'll still love each other.

Part of me has always known my parents wouldn't always be together. But the other part of me says "No, they can't break up. That would break my heart that it will come someday. And quite frankly right now I wish it would." I know it's hard for other kids of GLBT parents who feel like they've already divorced and are angry with them because of it in order to understand where we are coming from. You all must think we're CRAZY! But, trust me it's hard having your parents stay married when you know one parent is hurting deep inside. And it may sound crazy that both my parents are nicer when they aren't around each other. Weird, but true.

To join the COLAGE e-mail discussion groups and participate in discussions like this one, visit the COLAGE web page at www.colage.org. To contribute to our SPEAK OUT! write to Rosanne Johnson at jf6@colage.org.

CHAPTER UPDATE
Sweet Chicago by Tina Fakird-Deed
In an effort to provide support in every city and town across the globe, COLAGE finds a home in Chicago, "land of da' bulls", da' bears, those cows, and the loop. The new COLAGE chapter was created by daughter of a fabulous lesbian and Chicago native, Tina Fakird-Deed. Tina decided to form the organization after attending a Family Pride Conference in the Chicagoland area last October. The new group serves youth ages 13 and up and currently has five committed members. We recently planned to grow to at least 15 members by the year's end and focus on increasing cultural diversity among COLAGE.

Monthly activities for the upcoming year include a poetry slam, family picnic, a roller-skating jam, school survival session, miniature golf and much more! COLAGE Chicago outings are held on the second Saturday of each month.

We want to provide a safe, comfortable haven for youth to discuss important issues, feel supported, and to have some fun! For more information on COLAGE Chicago or if you would like to co-coordinate something, please call Tina Fakird-Deed at (773) 381-2005 or e-mail her at chicago@colage.org.

Tina Fakird-Deed, Chicago Chapter Coordinator
Noboby Told Me continued from page 1

Airport when she explained through tears that we were on our own. I had seen my mother upset, but never like this. I had to congratulate this strong woman who taught me to stand up for myself and love who I choose to be no matter the consequences.

Days later I left her to start college. In the few months I spent hours on the phone with my mother doing my best to avoid talking about the woman that left us. When my mother’s ex-partner called, I hung up. She wrote, and I buried myself in my nutrition economics homework. By the time I came home that winter, she knew not to bother coming around. My sister arranged visits elsewhere with loves like ice cream and movies. Mom pleaded with me to go alone. So did my sister. I still wondered whether she did just this to annoy me. Must have. Little sister wasn’t allowed to be right.

But cut me some slack here: nobody told me how to act when a figure is obliterated from the family picture. My parents divorced, but Dad was always there, driving for a visit or in the other end of the phone. Relatives still ask how he’s doing. Those who couldn’t place my Mom’s former partner didn’t seem to miss her. Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthday outings came and went. No one mentioned her. Although I eventually relented and we reconciled when she and Mom tried dating again, it was over. Nobody told me. It just was.

Nobody told me when crisis strikes, out pops the small child in each of us muttering that refrain. Well, I’m here to say you’ve been warned. Divorce happens to gay couples and their kids. It wrecks you in ways that straight divorce can’t touch. The worst part: when the process turns you inside out — and it will — those inside look pretty depressing. Fear, Shame, Ignorance. What I saw in stark relief were all the times I’d failed my mother and the woman she loved by being an egotistical, self-absorbed brat. In other words, your typical teenager.

But as my mother says, every story is a place to learn. What I learned was the art of internal housekeeping. My mother’s partner helped raise me. She shepherded me through the schizophrenia that is adolescence, taught me to laugh through tears. The worst part? She’s a nurse. She is important. I was willing to shed my insecurities if it meant keeping her in my life.

That’s all it takes, really: a conscious choice. Antidote to regret, especially during homecomings to three different homes, but that’s what choosing to be related is about. Very good. Up next, I get to be a “granddaughter.” I get to hear her voice, smell her perfume, and supportive visits and news of her in her world. Sy

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." — Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi, 1909-1948, was an Indian political and spiritual leader. His belief in and practice of nonviolent civil disobedience as a path to social justice has influenced and inspired civil rights activists throughout the world. What change do you want to see in the world?

SPAWN TALK by Abigail Garner

DIVORCE: LEAVE IT TO THE GROWN-UPS

It was five when my father left our house and moved into Russ’ house just a couple miles away. The following year, I was put in a support group at school for children whose parents were divorcing. It seemed that the facilitator’s goal was to make sure we walked away with one concept: “It’s not your fault.”

It hadn’t even occurred to me that the divorce was “my fault.” I knew I had nothing to do with it. And, to the best of my memory, my father’s departure from our home was a release. As an only child, my father was able to put the energy he needed into being a dad instead of wasting his energy hiding his true self from us. My closeted father was a distant, unpredictable, emotional time bomb. When he came out, he became whole.

At group, we watched these special educational films with bad acting and even worse scripts. The scripts typically involved kids trying to talk their parents into getting back together and the kids being reassured that it wasn’t their fault.

If it was normal for kids to think their divorce was their fault, I wondered, was I normal? I wondered that the facilitator, as well as my mother — a child development specialist — would notice that I didn’t think it was my fault and they would conclude that I was abnormal. Between feeling emotionally abnormal and feeling hesitant to talk about the real reason for the divorce, there wasn’t much I could say in group.

I know that some young kids wonder if they had anything to do with their parents’ breakup, so “It’s not your fault” is an important message to snare with them. The message that would have been more helpful for me, however, would have been, “It’s not your responsibility.”

My anxiety about the break-up was not about the actual divorce, but about all the issues that arose as a result of the divorce. I wish I would have known that it was not my responsibility to worry about how the testing kids were going to get paid since there were now two households to maintain. I wish I would have known that it was not my responsibility to smooth out tensions between my mother and my Russ. I wish I would have known that it was not my responsibility to protect my family from the big bad world that might do-who-knows-what after finding out my daddy is gay.

When parents break up — whether they are same-sex or opposite sex — it is an issue between the parents. Divorce is for the grown-ups to figure out, but unfortunately we, as their children, often become wrapped up in it. Divorce is never a child’s fault. What’s more, the difficulties that arise as a result of the divorce are also the responsibilities of the grown-ups, not their children.

That is what I wish someone told me that when I was nine, because it took me a long time to figure out on my own. And sometimes — even 23 years later — I still have to remind myself.

— Abigail Garner, 29, lives in Minneapolis. She is the creator of a website for LGBT families: www.farsi-jews.com

By Heather Eston

Have you ever had the feeling you have to hide your family for who they are? Then this book is for you. It’s about a 12 year old girl named Holly, who along with her two moms and brother moves to a small town in Massachusetts. Holly is now faced with the problem of telling her new friends about her family. When she meets new friends, she comes up with a “plan” to reinvent herself, including not telling her friends about her moms. When Holly gets in a tangled mess of lies with friends, she now has to deal with telling them the truth.

This book was written very well: it is for the age group of 10 to 12 year olds. The author realizes that telling about coming out is a difficult thing. The characters in this book are very easy to relate to and they make you feel like this is your happening life. Will Holly lose her friends because she has two moms? I suggest that anyone who has ever faced this problem read Holly’s Secret.

Heather Eston, 4, Westfield, MA, is the COLAGE West Mass Chapter Coordinator. She lives with her lesbian mom, sister Sara, and her dog Molly. Heather enjoys reading, playing lacrosse, and swimming in her free time. To contact her email westmass@colage.org.
WHAT YOU CAN DO - MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

PARENTS BREAKING UP? KNOW YOUR "RIGHTS"!

To maintain relationships with any and all of your parents.

In a perfect world, parents and partners would never try to hurt each other by denying each other access to children they've helped to raise. But sadly, this does sometimes happen, if you are being denied the opportunity to see or speak to an important person in your life. SPEAK UP! If the situation doesn't get better, GET HELP from a trusted ally, like a family member, teacher, or counselor who can help moderate between you and your parents.

The same applies if there's someone that you absolutely do not want to see. If a parent, partner, or ex-partner makes you feel unsafe — again, GET HELP.

- To feel angry, sad, confused, hurt, relieved... and however else you want to feel.

Everyone deals with loss in the family differently. It's no "right" or "wrong" way to cope with parents' coming out, divorce, or separations. Your parents may be initiating the change, but it affects you on many levels. You have the right to your own feelings and thoughts about it.

To be heard.

They can't know how you feel if you don't tell them. You can write it in a letter, you can yell it out loud. You can say it through tears or giggles. You can tell them on the phone or via email. Whatever you do, don't try to hide your feelings from your family. Any expression is better than no expression at all. Tip: sometimes the best way to get yourself heard is to start out by listening.

To reach out for support.

Your issues are different than your parents' issues. If a parent is coming out for the first time, they may have a sense of freedom. But you may feel confused, embarrassed, and helpless. Perhaps your parent is relieved to be ending their relationship, but you aren't welcoming the change or all of their "RIGHTS".

As COLAGE continues to try and improve our services and programs, we need your help. Please take a few minutes to complete this short questionnaire and let us know what you think about COLAGE and what you want from COLAGE.

Your honest feedback will be invaluable in our efforts to ensure that we are doing the best job we can for you and all of the people we work with.

This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete and all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. No one will contact you as a result of your participation in this survey.

If you woould prefer, you can complete this survey online. You will find the "member survey" on the COLAGE Web site <colage.org>. If there are others in your house that would like to complete this survey, they can fill it out online or call us at 415-861-5437 for more copies.

Thank you,
Felicia Park-Rogers
Executive Director, COLAGE

If you are a young COLAGER, you may want a parent to help you with this survey.

To complete this survey, simply mark the circle or box that best fits your answer.

Circles are used when you should choose just one answer and boxes are used wherever you can select more than one answer.

First, about how often do you access COLAGE or use COLAGE services?
Please select one:
0 Once a week or more
0 About once a month
0 A few times a year
0 Once a year

When you think of COLAGE, what age groups do you think we serve?
Please select all that apply:

- Children under 5
- 5 - 12 year olds
- 13 - 18 year olds
- 19 - 25 year olds
- People 26 years old or older

How much do you think COLAGE should be serving the people in the following age groups?
Please select one answer for each age group.

A Lot

Children under 5
- 5 - 12 year olds
- 13 - 18 year olds
- 19 - 25 year olds
- People 26 years old or older

A Little

Not at all

Lesbian Step Families: An Ethnography of Love
- The authors present a report on their research into the experiences of lesbian and gay parents and children who are in same-sex relationships. The report includes interviews with parents and children about their relationships and how they have been affected by societal attitudes and laws.

Valentine's Day is a special time to celebrate love and the importance of relationships. This month's focus is on building and maintaining healthy relationships in the LGBTQ+ community. Whether you are in a current partnership or just starting out, there are many resources available to help you navigate the complexities of queerness and romantic relationships.


In the Family A ‘Magazine for Queer People and Their Loved Ones’ that features material about all queer family issues from a therapeutic perspective. ITP, P.O. Box 5387, Takoma Park MD 20913 (301) 270-4771 Website: http://www.inthefamily.com


The next few questions will ask you how you feel about COLAGE.

How much do you think COLAGE is like each of the words listed below?
Please select one answer from 0 to 10 for each word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Like This at all</th>
<th>Exactly Like This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clue-y</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting edge</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorky</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exciting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too radical</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresponsive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And how much do you agree with these next things?
Please select one answer from 0 to 10 for each phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLAGE makes people feel welcome no matter...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how much money they have</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where they live</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what their family is like</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>their color/race</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COLAGE is too focused on...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>young kids, not enough</th>
<th>on older kids, not enough</th>
<th>on younger kids, not enough</th>
<th>parents, not enough</th>
<th>on kids, not enough on advocacy</th>
<th>San Francisco area, not enough on other places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

Now, we'd like to ask you a few questions about what you think COLAGE should be doing.

How important is it to you that COLAGE do the following support activities?
Please select one answer from 0 to 10 for each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize social gatherings for COLAGERS and their families</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote a sense of community among COLAGERS and their families</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce the &quot;Just For Us&quot; newsletter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide scholarships to COLAGERS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide internships to COLAGERS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a Kids Club for children under 12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a pen pal program</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize and monitor an e-mail discussion group for people 13 and younger</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize and monitor an e-mail discussion group for people 14 and older</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize &quot;Family Week&quot; at Provincetown</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize &quot;Family Week&quot; in Saugatuck, Michigan</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize regional conferences</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a national conference</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide groups or resources to COLAGERS with an HIV+ parent</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How important is it to you that COLAGE do the following advocacy activities?
Please select one answer from 0 to 10 for each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help young people become leaders in their communities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with other national groups</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize and support local chapters</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute e-mail alerts about urgent issues related to COLAGERS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize telephone and letter-writing campaigns around issues related to COLAGERS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and distribute resources to help COLAGERS and their families become advocates</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help mobilize COLAGERS to fight for their rights in their communities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help young people learn to speak about their experiences in the LGBT community and what it is like to grow up with LGBT parents</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize COLAGERS to testify in their state on behalf of LGBT family issues</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And how important is it to you that COLAGE do the following educational activities?

Please select one answer from 0 to 10 for each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the COLAGE Web site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with researchers who are studying</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLAGE-related issues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and distribute educational videos to schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and distribute educational booklets and resource/fact packets to schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and distribute resource/fact packets to the media/press</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help schools establish clubs like GSA's (Gay Straight Alliance)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide interviews for radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make public speeches and presentations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What else should COLAGE be doing?

Please write your answer below.

How would you rate the job that COLAGE is doing in the following areas?

Please select one answer for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing social support/fostering a sense of community for members</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for the rights of members and their families</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing and participating in educational programs</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of these COLAGE services have you used?

Please check all of the services or activities that you have used in the past.
For the ones that you have not used, please select the main reason you have not used it.

I Have Used It                                                                 | I Didn't Know About It | I Don't Have Access to It | It is not Relevant to Me
| Local support group                                                   | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| "Just For Us" newsletter                                               | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| Kids Club (for children under 12)                                      | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| COLAGE Connections pen pal program                                     | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| E-mail discussion group                                                | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| COLAGE Web site (www.colage.org)                                       | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| Family Week (Provincetown, MA or Saugatuck, MI)                       | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| COLAGE NetNews                                                         | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| National gatherings (like the 2000 March on Washington)               | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| COLAGE sponsored letter writing or telephone campaign                  | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| Personally testifying in your state on behalf of LGBT family issues    | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |
| Personally providing interviews to the media                          | 0                    | 0                    | 0 |

How useful were the services that you have used?

Please rate only the services that you selected in the previous question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
<th>Not Very Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Extremely Useful</th>
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<tr>
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<td>&quot;Just For Us&quot; newsletter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Many organizations like COLAGE have membership dues that allow those who can afford to, to make an annual contribution to support the non-profit organization. If COLAGE were to do this, what do you think the base-level membership dues should be?

Please enter dollar amounts.

$_______ per year for a family  $_______ per year for an individual
The following questions will help us understand who uses COLAGE. Please remember all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

How old are you? ______ years

If COLAGE had a youth advisory board, would you be interested in serving on it? Please select one.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I am not a "youth"

Which of the following best describes the area that you live in? Please select one.

- [ ] Urban
- [ ] Suburban
- [ ] Rural

Are you a . . . Please select all that apply

- [ ] COLAGE! (Child of a LGBT person)
- [ ] Parent of a COLAGE!
- [ ] Not a COLAGE! or parent, just a supporter

Are you . . . Please select one.

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Transgender
- [ ] Other

Are you . . . Please select all that apply

- [ ] Biexual
- [ ] Lesbian/Gay
- [ ] Straight
- [ ] Questioning
- [ ] Don't know yet

Is your LGBT parent(s) . . . Please select all that apply

- [ ] Lesbian
- [ ] Gay
- [ ] Bisexual
- [ ] Transgender

Who is the COLAGE! in your family? Is she/he someone who was . . . Please select one.

- [ ] Adopted
- [ ] Child from a previous marriage
- [ ] Child from known donor insemination
- [ ] Child from anonymous donor insemination
- [ ] Other

With which race do you most closely identify? Please select one.

- [ ] Asian / Pacific Islander
- [ ] Black / African American
- [ ] Hispanic / Latino
- [ ] Native American
- [ ] Mixed Heritage
- [ ] Other

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

To return your completed survey please mail it to:

COLAGE
3543 18th St #1
San Francisco, CA 94110

Or you can Fax it to:
415-255-8345

You can also submit your completed survey online at www.colage.org. It will take about 5 minutes.

I never really came out of anywhere. In my family you're going against the norm by dating someone of the opposite sex. My mother definitely couldnt understand it. When I was 2 years old, my dad came out. My parents love it. Memories of the two of them together, and young and happy are pasted inside old photo albums. The past I hold so dearly, dotted with stranger visions like liberal Midwestern moms voting for the sensitive silver-haired, new age single gay father PTA parent of the year. My father. I see him in our kitchen alone but laughing at the faces my sister and I make after he admits that Kevin Costner is his handsome fairy prince.

I also see my mom with her friends who are women but look at her for long, serious, piercing moments. As I grow older I register these awkward memories as women who came into my mothers life before she was ready and left for reasons I could not understand at the time. Because I was a teenager my method for unpacking uncomfortable information from its cramped up storage was teasing. Which I did shamelessly. I sent her a postcard from camp the summer before she came out and read, "I can see it now, LESBIAN in lights. How's it going?" She wrote back about the weather. The past three years have been a blossoming for her. These days she wears a black leather jacket, drives a maroon Roy Re and goes on Olivia cruises with her partner all the way to Lesbos, Greece.

My sister was always the sure fire heterosexual of the family until last year. She quit the Banana Republic, bought a red Cheny truck, moved from San Francisco to Vermont, found work on a non-profit arts organization and started dating a woman for the first time. The oldest daughter, my sister, our perfect feminine, came home for Christmas to pats on the back from my two moms who raised their eyebrows, giggled and whispered, "Now you understand our jokes!"

Having at least one gay parent my whole life was interesting enough to other people to divert them from inquiring about my own personal preference. I've had a private "They don't ask, I can't tell" policy. As long as other people didn't care enough to ask, why the hell should I? Embarking on the journey towards sexual self-awareness would be like volunteering to sort through two month old compost to see if any tea wrappers were still intact.

I was perfectly content avoiding clarity and was more than happy to preach to anyone about the meaninglessness of labels. My bluntest and blustery stonewall did not last. At age 17, I was disrupted. My friend roped me into being a token teen for a section of "Dyke Night", a sold-out annual performance at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis. "You like to write, right? And you act. I'll just be like combining the two in front of an audience." It was such an innocent proposition. I did love to write. I didn't mind the stage, spotlights, or a crowd. I accepted.

At our first meeting we sat in a circle on the grass of the sculpture garden and introduced ourselves. I mean, this was a serious collection of real life dykes who, at my continued on p8
age had already kissed girls in drunken stupors more than once or had their tires slashed in the parking lot of their suburban school for plastering their car with rainbow bumper stickers in the shape of Minnesota, a Heart, a Fist, a dog, and so on. One of them wore a stoic expression, a black leather vest, and a black leather beret that she decorated with a rainbow pin strategically placed in the middle of her forehead. The girl next to her was straight off the rugby pitch and as big as I imagined Snuffleupagus would be in real life. She had a deep voice and was writing a novel. Next up was the hottest chick there who carefully “barely” managed her totally stylish spiky black hair. This girl was witty. When her grandma asked her what delicate night was all about she goes, “Oh, that’s a fundraiser for food victims, Grams.” She actually made out with a girl in the hallway of public school. Damn, then there was my friend who brought me there in the first place. She had been out as long as I’d known her and was deep in the middle of a two year relationship. At that point, all I had was a gay dad and every single Indigo Girls album.

It was finally my turn to talk so I said, “I’m Molly and I guess I just follow love regardless of the gender. I mean, it doesn’t really matter if they’re a guy or a girl as long as we share a deep meaningful, inner connection.” Hot and spicy mumbling, “oh, one of those” under her breath. But I heard her. Every other day I told myself I was beyond definition but that day, all I had was a plain colored tee shirt, tennis shoes, short hair and glasses. I didn’t have definition. No leather, no muscles, no girlfriend or boyfriend, no idea how to fit into everyone else’s categories.

For years I straddled to the borders of both sexes scared as hell of falling head first into the great divide. But, the truth, my truth—sexuality is boring. Clinging to the edge zones means missing the culture in the middle of the country. After all, what is a nomad without a tribe? Never satisfied, always hungry, and always foraging.

I fell in love with my best friend. I dated a bald-headed girl who owned a tie rack and several sets of sterling silver cuff links. I was dumped by a basketball star. Now, I dance like a maniac, move my hips, wear tight pants, throw darts that ricochet off the wall dance and land on the sticky floor at gay bars. I look for women, I look at women, I am moved by the female form.

So I did come out of somewhere. It just wasn’t a closet. It was more like an efficiency apartment. No closets, no walls, just way too much undefined space for me. Molly Van Avery, a lesbian, to fill.

When Molly Van Avery is not hanging out with her 100% post nuclear queer family in Minneapolis, she can be found farming in the city along side a rowdy bunch of kids with dirt on their hands and tomato juice on their chins.

Rob continued from page 1

However, assisted me in understanding the immense stigma associated with homosexuality. At our age, we were simply consuls for societal homophobia, but it shocked me nonetheless. This was one of the pivotal moments in my life. Needless to say, I immediately stopped laughing, Ryka, and my friends lost interest too. More importantly though, from that point on, it became very important to me to surround myself with friends who accepted and understood the fact that my mom was a lesbian. I never wanted to be forced to conceal anything, and I think that led me to some of the best friendships I could ever have hoped for.

I didn’t get along very well with my mom’s first partner, but her second one, Linda, who lived with us for several years, is still good friends with my sister and I. My mom’s current partner, Pat, is living with us now, along with her dog, our dog, and two obese cats. As a senior in high school, I feel like I have nothing to hide. I’m very open, and all of my friends know my mom’s sexual orientation.

For those with parents divorcing or divorced because one parent is gay, I would say the most important thing is to communicate with your parents. I lived only a year after the divorce much resentment my father had buried within himself. When my mother came out to him before they split up, his first reaction was to say, “No, you’re not.” Divorces that occur in this type of situation can be especially hard on both parents. Stay open, remember that your parents are people too, with emotions of their own, and most of all, talk to them about your feelings.

Rob DeRook of Ithaca, New York, is graduating from high school this June. After visiting Balboa this summer, he will be starting Swarthmore College in the fall.

Dateline Dan continued from page 7

(People often asked if I was a guardian of the group) We tried a whole lot of variations, and were truly shocked when told by some that they felt they COULDN’T join be one they were still questioning their own sexuality and joining SG would have made it a distinct decision. So, to make it a short description we now say “Queer and Questioning kids of LGBT parents.”

I personally like that terminology. Aside from shortening the length of the sentence, the word “queer” does have a more generational and universal utility. Being queer doesn’t always make you gay. And vice versa. It gave us a more decisive position: as queer, as kids, as part of the community.

Fill that niche! Like any group of kids, Sigers come from all backgrounds. Some of us grew up in “traditional” households but one for both of our parents came out later. Others were raised in LGBT homes with open parents. We even had one member raised on a lesbian commune! A visible tapestry of lives. But often the times we did get noticed by the media, they only wanted specific facts and even then they wanted them to be scandalous. “My mom forced me into a life of homosexuality!” This was not why we were here!

These types of incidents are EXACTLY what kept me running this group. For every outrage out there, I knew that some Siger felt slighted, all alone, kept out of the very community supposedly helping us.

And that’s why you’ll always see a SG article in this newsletter, by me or others. We are part of the group, we are part of your lives and we’re not going anywhere soon.

DasCherebin is a gay guy with 3 moms and a wrestling cat. He has been described as “the coolest librarian in NYC,” “a gay parent’s worst nightmare,” and “a tattooed 50 icon.”

I AM STRONG

By Heather Zeigler, 9, Chambersburg, PA

You may hurt me with your words,
Maybe leave some cuts and scarpes.

But when you laugh at me,
I’ll pull down the drapes.

You may think your perfect,
And that I’m a freak.

But one thing you should know is that,
I am strong and you are weak.
MEET OLIVIA

Hi. Let me introduce myself. My name is Olivia Woods. I’m 10 years old, and after 6 years of feeling different, alone, depressed, unloved and unwanted, I’m finally beginning to live with my parents’ divorce.

Now I realize that I was never any of the above. In fact, I was more loved. More wanted. My parents split up so I could grow up in the healthiest environment possible; no fighting, hating, etc. etc. I’m not different than any other human being. Everyone has problems, many much worse than mine. And I am DEFINITELY not alone. More than half of the nation’s kids have divorced, trans, bi, or gay parents. Look at COLAGE. It’s thriving!

There are a few ways I have come to live with divorce. Firstly, I realized that being depressed and sulking about it wasn’t helping anything. In fact, since I hated divorce so much, why even think about it? So I started to search around, looking for ways to distract myself from it. For me, music, writing, and horseback riding were the best. With music and writing, I not only feel I’ve accomplished something when I learn a tune or finish a page, but I am drawn into the music or the story in the process. With horseback riding, the feeling of excitement in my chest leaves no room for depression.

You’ll notice that I don’t use the term “Broken home” instead of “Divorced.” That’s because I need to save that expression for all the homes where the parent’s fight or abuse each other. Divorced parents do not mean a broken home. They mean a healthier home. It’s like being a vegetarian (I am). It’s healthier. There are problems linked with it (lack of protein, etc.), but for the most part, it’s better.

Divorce is hard, but I am slowly learning to live with it. I have found ways to express my feelings, which help me not to feel depressed. Of course, some people have to look harder than others for this realization. For instance, I had to find some grown-up friends who I could trust with my problems, because I don’t have any brothers or sisters to talk to. I think that the most important thing that I learned from talking to people is this: the more self-esteem and self-respect you have, the better you’ll feel. When I had, whenever I had a bad thought about anything I just took a look at myself and said: You are a great person. You don’t have to think these thoughts. You’re better than that. And what I say to myself is true. I am a great person. I don’t have to think these thoughts. I am better than that.

Now I split my time equally between my parents (Thursday - Sunday with dad, Monday - Wednesday with mom), write and play my hammered dulcimer daily, talk to some adult friends about my problems weekly, and go horseback riding monthly. And you know what? I’m finally happy!

OLIVIA Woods lives in New Hampshire.

SEN SE US ART! See your creations in the Fun Page!

CREA T WHAT? Draw, paint, write (under 200 words) a short story, poem, or play, make a maze, word search or paper dolls...let your imagination run wild and send your us your creation! Please attach the title of your artwork plus your first name, last name, address, city, state, zip code, country, email address.

INSTRUCTIONS: We need Fun Pages ideas. What do you want in the fun pages? Do you have suggestions or ideas? COLAGE, wants to hear from you!

Send Pen Pal info, artwork, and Fun Pages ideas to: COLAGE, 35431st St, #1, San Francisco, CA 94110 or email funpages@colage.org

JOIN COLAGE FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

We all need to work harder and give more. Now you can call COLAGE and check out our new volleyball tourney. Each staff position has a personal cause for COLAGE and your support is much appreciated.

REACH OUT AND TOUCH COLAGE

COLAGE VOICEMAIL

Director of Extensions 1 Contact Info 2 Mission & Activities 3 Upcoming Events 4 General Message 5 Staff Extensions

Felicia Park-Rogers 101 Jude Koski 102 Cathy Sakamura 103 Catlin Bailey, Megan Brown 105, 104

CATHY SAKUMRA JOINS COLAGE STAFF

CATHY SAKUMRA JOINS COLAGE STAFF

WELCOME SUMMER INTERNs

Caitlin Bailey, 18, of San Geronimo, CA, joins COLAGE after her first year at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. She has a lesbian mom, straight dad, brother, two steps-moms, and a step-sister. Caitlin enjoys doing activism through art, especially painting, collage, murals, and graffiti. She hopes to learn more about grassroots organizing in the queer family movement through her internship this summer.

Megan Brown, 21, of Princeton Junction, NJ, comes to us with three years of social justice organizing experience at Juniata College in Pennsylvania. She has a brother and mom and in NJ a wonderful girlfriend who she will be spending the summer with in the Bay Area. Megan spends her free time dancing and writing.

She is especially looking forward to helping with families and building upon the organizing skills.

IT’S IMPOSsIBLE TO NOT BE IMPRESSED WITH THIS WOMAN’S AMBITION AND DETERMINATION. DON’T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO WORK WITH CAITLIN AND MEGAN! COLAGE Summer Interns 2001

WILL BE WORKING IN COLAGE’S FAMILY PROGRAMS, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, YOUTH ORGANIZING, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.

WILL BE WORKING IN COLAGE’S FAMILY PROGRAMS, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, YOUTH ORGANIZING, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.

Become a COLAGE LEADER - JOIN THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

Would you like to have a say in what COLAGE does, who we serve, and what values we share and reach? Can you see yourself as an ambassador to the world on behalf of children with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents? Would you enjoy discovering new resources and ways to help reach and support new and old COLAGE members? Finally, do you like to learn new things, meet new people and have fun?

"You could do all of this — and more — by becoming a member of COLAGE's national Board of Directors. The COLAGE Board is an amazing multi-ethnic, multi-ethnic, multi-ethnic group of people who are passionately committed to COLAGE’s mission. We meet in person twice a year and by phone via conference calls. The Board consists of COLAGE program volunteers, and our friends and allies to make sure COLAGE survives and thrives. We learn from and teach each other about communication, teamwork, and leadership while playing games, making collages, and bringing about social change for our families.

COLAGE needs motivated youth and adults to help guide our organization in providing advocacy, education, and support for children of LGBT parents in the Bay Area. Cathy is devoted to COLAGE’s fight for the equality of all families and is enthusiastic about working with youth and the LGBT community. You can contact Cathy at 415-860-5437, ext 103 or by email, cathy@colage.org.

If you would like more information about joining the COLAGE Board of Directors, please contact the COLAGE Office: Today Call 415 456-4545 or e-mail director@colage.org.