



JUST FOR US

FOCUS ON EXTENDED FAMILY

Vol. 15 #1
2003

FOR PEOPLE WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PARENTS



LOSING FAMILY GAINING FAMILY

by Whitney & Landon
Modena-Kurpinsky

Landon: My name is Landon Modena-Kurpinsky, I am 21 years old, and I live in San Francisco. Last year I joined COLAGE's new group, the Youth Leadership in Action Program (YLAP). When I was in high school, I never felt comfortable to speak out for LGBT families, maybe because they were not accepted within my own family.

Whitney: Hi, my name is Whitney Modena-Kurpinsky, and I am 17 years old. I am a junior at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Francisco. I joined COLAGE because of my sister. She gave me such positive feedback that I felt the need to find out what it was all about. From that day on, I have been interested in helping as much as I can within the COLAGE program.

Landon: Until I was ten, my parents lived together in what many people referred to as the "perfect marriage". We lived in a little suburb south of San Francisco and attended Catholic schools in the city. My dad and mom both coached our school athletic teams, we went on numerous vacations, and often went on Sunday bike rides in Golden Gate Park.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE

by Ryan LaLonde

Just a year ago....

Grandpa lies in the hospital bed with an oxygen tube in his nose. He has been admitted to the hospital because of complaints of chest pains. Formally diagnosed as arthritis in his chest, the doctors now realize that it is actually Cancer, and it spreads fast. I fly in to see him. My mood is low; I know I am going to lose Grandpa. He refuses chemotherapy and at his request is being prepped to return to the family farm to die with dignity in the house he was born in. It is hard to take. Grandpa has always been a strong silent member of the family. He is the patriarch on my dad's side; we all look up to him. And now, I look down at him, weak and frail in a hospital bed. He holds my hand for about 5 hours straight; he is



in so much pain, it is a testament to his strength and will.

I can only stay a couple of days. Grandpa's cancer is taking over his lungs and the medication has him going in and out of consciousness. Before I leave for the airport, Grandpa awakes. I try to take this opportunity to say goodbye, but all I can say is "I'm proud of you" as tears run down my face. He whispers back, "I have always been proud of you". This is the first time I have ever heard these words from Grandpa. I know that my being gay has been a difficult thing for him besides having to deal with my parents' divorce and Mom being gay. He has always been so silent about how he felt about me. Yet, Grandpa finally breaks that silence with that one sentence.

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SHE'LL ALWAYS BE MY DADDY

by Laurie Cicotello

As a fourteen-year-old Ms. Pacman junkie, I was always running out of money, and so I started raiding my house, including my parents' bedroom. One afternoon, as I was rummaging through my dad's nightstand drawer, I found three glossy "she-male" porno magazines. I thought it was kind of weird but rationalized that maybe my dad was just reading them for the articles. Then, farther down in the drawer, I unearthed professional photos of my dad dressed as a woman. My mind began racing, trying to figure out what was going on. Is my dad actually turned on by these magazines? I shuddered at the thought.

Then, in a drawer in the small oak credenza in the dining room, I found a

small, fat, blue-covered notebook. It was my dad's diary, all about his longing to be a woman. He was worried that my mom would leave him and even more terrified of what would happen "if Laurie ever finds out about me." The kicker, though, came toward the end of the book. He actually wrote that he might kill himself if I ever knew. I started bawling like crazy. I couldn't wait to talk to someone. I called MacGregor that afternoon and told him about everything I'd found.

It seems odd to me now that I was able to trust a fourteen-year-old guy with this type of secret, but MacGregor never turned on me. He

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear COLAGE community-

This past October marked the tenth year of my involvement with COLAGE. Thanks to

COLAGE members (Lynn, Terri, Jesse and Maraya), back in 1993, I learned about a woman who was looking for adults with lesbian and gay parents to be interviewed for the creation of a play called "Out of My Parent's Closet." Just a few months later, I performed proudly in that play and stepped solidly onto the COLAGE stage. Today, I am honored and delighted to be your Executive Director and look forward to working, playing and sharing with all of you.

In 2003, due to amazing shifts in attitudes and laws there's been incredible public focus on families in general and on our families in particular. While this is definitely cause for celebration, there is also cause for concern as many political leaders continue to promote policies and pass laws that only protect, benefit and validate families defined in very narrow terms. As cultural and legal debates about our families rage in the media and in halls of justice, it's no wonder that COLAGERS look to our extended family members for support and affirmation of our legitimacy!

In this issue of Just For Us we take pause and focus on the relationships COLAGERS have with relatives

and extended family. Contributors in this issue share and explore many of the unique ways children of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents relate to, depend on and are affected by members of our extended family.

While everyone defines family differently, for this issue we asked the contributors to consider 'extended family' to be aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings, and cousins, including step-relatives (people related through our straight or gay parent/s' partner/s) and chosen family (friends of the family who claim family status).

What I have learned from my fellow COLAGERS is that extended family members, whether they're related by blood, law, tradition or any other form of commitment, can be just as or even more important and influential in our lives than our parents or guardians. Both everyday interactions and special family occasions or milestones can be cause for celebration or total break down.

Read for yourself; the stories in this JFU are both heart warming and heart breaking, disturbing and triumphant. The extent of our family's disrespect ranges from disregard to discrimination. Some of us have been disconnected and disowned, many of us have either been ourselves or seen our parents ignored and excluded from family gatherings. Others have been torn away from their parents by family members that use the legal system to gain custody. While many have felt pressured to be straight. On the positive side, many of us have had

family members stick up for us in public or in private (which is especially helpful if we're otherwise feeling or being attacked). Some of us have celebrated the bond we share by marching together in Pride parades with grandparents, parents, and cousins or by giving educational talks. Others have learned to appreciate and be sensitive to our family members' different forms of support, learning patience and tolerance regarding relatives' personal communication styles and coming out process. All of us need and value authentic and honest relations with our extended family members.

In an effort to help you respond and react to the overwhelming silence, tension or conflict we often experience with members of our extended families, on P. 8 and 9 we offer tools and resources to help COLAGERS and the members of our family communicate with each other in loving, honest and respectful ways. This kind of communication is essential for making peace and finding love beyond the homophobia that hurts and gets between us all.

As I reflect on the theme of this Just For Us and think about the best ways to move forward with COLAGE, I wish for us all and commit to providing: honest and frequent communication and all the support needed to grow and develop into healthy and vibrant selves, families, and communities.

Yours truly,

Beth Teper

COLAGE

MISSION

COLAGE ENGAGES, CONNECTS, AND EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR CHILDREN OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PARENTS AND FAMILIES.

CONTACT US:

3543 18th Street #1, San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 861-KIDS (5437) | Fax: (415) 255-8345
Website: www.colage.org | E-mail: colage@colage.org

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COLAGE DEBUTS CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS

Respect All Families Poster Series



COLAGE is thrilled to present the *Respect All Families* poster series, a set of two educational posters created by youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) parents to raise awareness about LGBT families. This project is one of the fruits of the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program's Visibility Campaign.

With the posters, COLAGE also presents two new resources: The Respect All Families Action Guide and Tips for

Making Schools Safer for Youth with LGBT Parents. The first provides ideas and resources for youth groups, COLAGE Chapters, schools and other groups that would like to use the posters to promote awareness in their community. The school guide, aims to educate and provide practical tools for teachers and educators who would like to improve the environment for youth with LGBT parents in their school.

"We made posters to create positive images and promote visibility of families like ours, to fight the homophobia we face in our schools and communities, and to counter the isolation and prejudice that youth with queer parents often face. We hope that by raising visibility, the posters will make it known that families like ours exist and flourish. We also want to tell other youth who have queer parents: you are not alone; there are others like you. We hope these posters will open the minds of students who have not met diverse families like ours."

- Youth Leadership and Action Program Participants



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THAT'S SO GAY: Portraits of Youth with LGBT Parents

COLAGE proudly announces a new art exhibit by youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents that is an amazing resource and tool for raising awareness, building community, and sparking dialogue. *That's So Gay: Portraits of Youth with LGBT Parents* is another creation of the COLAGE Bay Area Youth Leadership and Action Program and was debuted in June 2003 in San Francisco. The exhibit includes images, text, and art by youth with LGBT parents that attempt to provide a glimpse into the lives and experiences of the children of queer families. You can see much of the exhibit and photos from its gala opening at:

www.colage.org/ylap

COLAGE and the youth in YLAP invite you to bring *That's So Gay* to your town. A traveling version of the show is available on CD-Rom featuring the photo and text portrait series from the exhibit. An action guide accompanies the CD that suggests ways to print and display the show in your community with ideas for events and discussions.

"Perhaps by seeing our faces and learning about our experiences, the next time someone says, 'That's So Gay' they'll think of us and all of the people that homophobia and prejudice affect."

- That's So Gay Artists



Order your CD today! - YLAP participants show off their portraits which can be viewed on the CD-Rom version of the *That's So Gay* Art Exhibit

Bring These Resources To Your Community Today!

To order the poster series or art exhibit CD-Rom, contact Meredith Fenton, COLAGE Program Coordinator, at 415-861-5437, x102 or email RespectAllFamilies@colage.org or ThatsSoGay@colage.org

POLITICAL UPDATE

Heroes, Hope, and A.B. 205 by Marina Gatto

When I was 8 years old other kids had heroes like the Power Rangers or Superman. My hero was San Francisco Supervisor Mark Leno. He was someone that I saw from the LGBT community who cared about our families and who fought for change. I wanted to be just like him.

At 14 years old I was invited to work with Mark Leno who was now a California State Assembly member on A.B. 205, The Domestic Partnership Rights and Responsibilities Act. In California alone, there are over one hundred thousand same sex couples, many of whom have children. A.B. 205 is a bill that gives these couples much needed rights, as well as responsibilities, to help protect their families. Protection that children from other families never have to consider, like what would happen to them if they lost one of their parents? The reality for countless kids like me, who come from LGBT families, is that if we lost a parent, we'd be put into foster care, because the law does not legally recognize our other parent.

In following in the footsteps of my hero Assembly member Leno, I lobbied at the State Capital with my moms, Geoffrey Kors of Equality California, and Beth Teper, Executive Director of COLAGE. I spoke to various legislators, sharing insight with them on how A.B. 205 affects real kids and real families. I also helped people understand the importance of this bill through

television, radio, and newspapers by educating about a side of our community people don't often think about, the children.

A.B. 205 passed, and it passed by one vote. I like to think that my moms and I were a big part of that happening. It makes me happy to know that so many couples, families and children will be positively affected by the work that we've done. For us as a family, A.B. 205 won't have much affect. You see one of my moms is not an American citizen. The laws unequal to LGBT people prevent my parents from being able to register as domestic partners. So along with my hero Mark Leno, I want to continue work to help change laws that are unequal and unfair to our community. Super heroes never give up!! Hope is a gift that has been given to me from leaders of the LGBT community, and hope is something that I'd like to give back.

Marina Gatto is a 15 year old LGBT rights activist and COLAGEr who lives in the San Carlos, CA with her moms, Ramona and Arzu. You may have seen her on the Nick News Special "My Family Is Different" in 2002 with Rosie O'Donnell.



Marina (left) with her hero, Mark Leno (right)

She'll Always Be My Daddy, from p1

encouraged me to talk to my Grandma Cicotello—after all, she was my dad's mother, and if anyone could explain what was going on, she could. I mustered the courage to call her and say that we needed to talk.

We sat in her kitchen, and I was really nervous about admitting to her that I'd been snooping around my parents' things. But I just took a deep breath and said in a rush, "Grandma, I found pictures and a diary of my dad's. Do you know anything about him wearing women's clothes?" Once the words were out, the tears came too. Then I realized Grandma



Laurie (far left) with other COLAGE Board members.

was also crying.

"God," she exclaimed, "You weren't supposed to find out!"

"Find out what?" I demanded.

"That your dad wants to be a woman," she said, matter-of-factly. "I knew from the time your dad was very young. Your granddad never knew, or he never said."

After talking and crying for hours, Grandma dabbed at her puffy eyes and looked at me. "Laurie," she said in a slightly shaky voice, "I think it's time we talked to your father." I nodded. The next day, we invited my dad to go miniature golfing, and then we sprung it on him in the parking lot at the Kennedy golf course. Grandma was choked up and could barely talk. My dad was sobbing. I was sniffing into my wad of shredded tissues. Then we went and played the worst round of miniature golf in the history of the world. Miss the windmill, cry. Miss the hole, cry. It was a terrible day.

It was also the capstone of the worst year

my dad ever had. He had just been fired from his dream job. He'd spent a great deal of time having lunches with his female coworkers, studying and learning their mannerisms and speech patterns so that he could eventually fit in as a woman. The men in his office, however, saw him as a womanizer and would not sympathize when he was suddenly laid off.

My dad sank into an awful depression. He spent a year in a daze. It was during this time when I found the pictures and the diary telling how he'd kill himself if I ever found out. When I did find out, I felt as though I'd signed a death warrant on my own father. And in a way I did, because Dan, my father, died, and Dana, my parent, took his place.

Excerpt reprinted from Out of the Ordinary: Essays on Growing Up With Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Parents, copyright 2000, with permission from Laurie Cicotello, the individual author of this essay. Laurie lives in Hastings, Nebraska and is an active member on the COLAGE Board.



SPEAK OUT

We asked COLAGERS, "Has there been anyone in your extended family who has been helpful to you in living life with LGBT parents? If yes, who, and how have they been helpful?"

Kyle, 13, Cedar Park, Texas: "One of my cousins has been very supportive of me and my family. He has helped me through the toughest time in my life and has always been there for me when I needed a shoulder to lean on. Although his side of my family isn't always the most accepting he has been and always will be there for me and for that I am so incredibly thankful."

Brandi, 17, Parkersburg, West Virginia: "No one in my family has ever been very helpful to me. My family is very small and the ones that are left alive I don't get along with that well. If I ever need anything I turn to my friends for support. To me they are my family!"

Amber, 22, Lawrence, Kansas: "My mom and step-father have been extremely supportive of my dad. They include my dad, his friends, and his partner in holidays and special family events. My mom and step-father are appreciative and understanding of

the diversity that my dad brings to our unique family."

Sarah, 25, San Jose, California: "My whole family really loved my dad (now deceased), but they pretend that he wasn't gay, and they never talk about it. It's hard to keep fighting in a family that's so homophobic."

Kimberly, 17, Virginia Beach, Virginia: "My whole family is very open with it. My mother is a lesbian and so is her sister. All of my friends know about my mother and they are perfectly comfortable. I started telling people when I was 11 and nobody reacted the way I thought they would. My friends and family are ALWAYS there for me."

Melissa, Age 14, Arkansas: "Actually no one really has been very helpful. Not many people know, just a few people and they are okay with it. I love my mom a lot although it is kind of hard to live life with people asking where is your dad?"

Wes, Age 14, Atlanta, Georgia: "Yes, my father because he has accepted my mother regardless of who she chooses to love. It is very nice to know that she receives support from my father and the rest of my family."

NEW COLAGE T-SHIRTS

Now Available!

Front says "Queerspawn." Back has COLAGE Logo. Be the first on your block with one of these fabulous shirts!

Cost: \$12 for one; \$20 for two.

Available in Black with Red writing OR



Light Blue with Orange writing.



To order, contact COLAGE at 415-861-5437 or colage@colage.org.

CHAPTER UPDATE

Madison's COLAGE chapter started in 1999. Although, we've had many changes in the youth who attend our gatherings, we've maintained a highly active core group of 12 - 15 COLAGERS and a mailing list of between 30 - 40 youth through the past four years. A strength of our COLAGE chapter is that we know how to combine activism, support, and fun. One of our best-attended events of this past year was a peace poster making party. After a festive night of exchanging passionate political conversation, humor, and creative ideas for posters, we gathered together the next day with our

families for a Peace March. Our proud and powerful posters and boldly sung chants inspired many other youth to come and join our queer family contingent.

Our fall is already off to strong start. Recently, homophobic anti-gay marriage legislation was introduced into our Wisconsin State Legislature. As COLAGERS we felt deeply troubled by this attack on our families and organized a youth lobby training workshop at a statewide Gay Straight Alliance event to encourage youth in the queer community to let their voices be heard. Other upcoming events are our second annual queer poetry slam night, a solstice sleep over, ice skating/sledding party, community service activity for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and organizing work on a gender expression/identity inclusion campaign for the Madison School District. One of the traditions in our chapter is to have a special time at all of our gatherings to be able to share or explore concerns on our hearts around our queer experience. We have a brilliant rainbow top hat in which COLAGERS have an opportunity to anonymously put a topic, concern, story, or question to be addressed during our group sharing time. We love this ritual and it deepens our "family" connections.

Sincerely,

COLAGE Madison and Sol Kelley-Jones, Chapter Coordinator



COLAGE Programming at Family Week 2003

SAUGATUCK & PROVINCETOWN

Showing off COLAGE silly putty.



Photo by Jenny Laden

Christian and Aaron in Lake Michigan



HIGHLIGHTS

- At Family Pride Coalition's Provincetown Family Week COLAGE debuted the first Youth in Action Day - a full day of workshops and activities allowing teens to explore their relationship to activism, brainstorm ways to raise awareness about LGBT families, and gain new skills in specific leadership areas.
- This year's Ptown Family Week also offered more activities for 9-12 year old COLAGErs including art workshops, an afternoon of sports, and Do Something workshops in creative writing, art, and drama.
- In Saugatuck, through the Do Something workshop, the group created and performed an original play about the experiences of a student who was adopted into a gay family.



Chillin' - (L-R) Debra, Maria, and Tiffany

"This year's COLAGE has been truly inspiring! For the first time we have come to understand how much Family Week & COLAGE have impacted & affected our lives in such a beautiful & positive way. We have learned and gained so much from workshops & our new friends that we are motivated & empowered to take our newfound knowledge and spread it all around in our communities and schools. This has been a profoundly educational and enjoyable experience and we are deeply saddened that it has come to a close. Each and every one of you have influenced and improved our lives. We cannot thank you enough for all you have given us. We eagerly anticipate the coming years with COLAGE and we look forward to all the adventures we are bound to share."

- Provincetown Teen Participants

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR

FACILITATORS & VOLUNTEERS

Monica Canfield-Lenfest
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 Rob DeVoogd
 Doug Fenton
 Meredith Fenton, Coordinator
 Ryn Gluckman
 Amanda Kelly
 Jenny Laden
 Whitney Moses
 Danielle Silber
 David Siegenberg
 Beth Teper
 Andrea Wachter

TEEN PANELISTS

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 Brooke Gordon, 13, MI
 Janet Gordon, 14, MI
 Joe Herrington, 15, MA
 Kyle Larimer, 13, AK
 Emily McGranachan, 13, MA
 Kyle Michaels, 13, TX
 Nathaniel Obler, 15, MA
 Wes Ridley, 14, GA
 Hope Steinman-Iacullo, 16, NY
 Jessie Voors, 14, IN



Ptown Teens

MORE SPECIAL THANKS

To Amber Davis, the Gay Fathers of Greater Boston, Karen Grenier, and Wayne and Sal Steinman-Iacullo for hosting fundraisers for COLAGE in Provincetown.

To the Logan-Woodward Family for offering a \$5,000 challenge grant during the week, which was both matched and exceeded in generous donations from Family Week families.



(L-R) Nathaniel, Avi, Keott, and Michael in Ptown

Casey and Diamond Paint a Pot



Forget the Brady Bunch, it's the Test Tube Bunch

COLAGE helps staff the information table



COLAGErs at the Ptown Dance

Photo by Amber Davis

Photo by Jenny Laden



SPAWN TALK by Abigail Garner

Family of Choice

Last spring after a two-year rollercoaster ride with cancer, my dad's brother faced the last few months of his life. As my uncle sat in the waiting room for what would be one of his last visits to the doctor, he paged through the stack of month-old magazines. He came across the issue of Newsweek that ran my commentary about growing up with a gay dad. My uncle knew the article had been published, but he hadn't seen it.

Deciding to take the article home with him, he began to rip it out. Only then did he notice how quiet an oncology waiting room is. Worried he would be scolded for defacing expired reading material, he fake-coughed repeatedly to cover up the sound of tearing the page out bit by bit. It suddenly occurred to him that a nurse might come by to retrieve him at any moment, discovering him in mid-rip. In a panic, he turned the page over to skim the article on the other side. If anyone asked him what he was doing, he planned to have an excuse about his interest in that other article rather than drawing attention to the one I wrote.

My uncle was laughing when he called to tell my dad about what he considered a near-miss disaster of

"getting caught." Dad relayed it to me because he, too, thought it was a funny story. Not funny as in:

"How ridiculous that a dying man cares so much about hiding the fact that he has a gay brother." No, my dad thought it was funny as in: "What a comical situation my brother got himself into."

I wasn't laughing. I asked Dad, "Is he so ashamed that he wouldn't want anyone to know the article was written by his niece?" It hadn't occurred to my father that this "funny story" was actually quite pitiful and sad -- and a slap in the face to both my father and me.

In the past few years, that uncle, another uncle and my grandfather have died. During these times when a family is supposed to come together to give and get support, I have remained remarkably disconnected. I feel like I must be missing a compassion gene when people offer me their sympathies for my loss. The condolences offered to me don't even register because relationships with extended family members have never really been there for me to lose.

My grandparents, my cousins, and my aunts and uncles are not explicitly homophobic. It's more like this fuzzy unarticulated discomfort that has impeded my ability to have authentic relationships with them. I feel on my guard in a way that I don't think anyone should have to be with family. My

father has settled into the awkwardness and tries not to notice. To be fair to Dad, I probably would be much more inclined to tolerate them if they were my immediate family too.

Being "culturally queer", I'm connected to my friends - my family of choice - in many of the ways that people in straight families are connected to their biological family. Last year, for example, I dropped everything to drive eleven hours one-way with a dear friend to attend the wake and funeral of his partner's mother. I thought nothing of abruptly taking off work for three days to be with my chosen family. Being with them was the only place I wanted to be.

I'm not sure which came first: Did I seek out family of choice to fill the void left by my extended family? Or has creating my chosen family felt so right that I haven't tried hard enough to cultivate relationships with my relatives? Either way, I know that my indifference toward my extended family may be unconventional, but it isn't tragic.

*Abigail Garner is the creator of a website for LGBT families: www.familieslikemine.com. Be on the look out for Abigail Garner's book, *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is* (HarperCollins). Abigail addresses issues about growing up with LGBT parents based on her personal experience as well as interviews with other grown children. The book will be available everywhere - including at your locally-owned queer or feminist bookstore - in March 2004*

Loosing Family Gaining Family, from p1

The day my mom came out was during the summer we spent with my grandparents in Lake Tahoe. Mostly what I remember from that day is my mom saying that she was a lesbian and was moving out, followed by me asking if we were going to take a family vacation ever again. I remember my mom then telling me yes, but the family that we went with would be different than it had been to this point.

Whitney: I was about 7 at the time, and very open about the whole thing. Not once have I ever disapproved of my mom's life. In fact, I think it's pretty cool. I never hid that my mom was a lesbian. Since I was young, I just thought it was a normal thing.

Landon: My relationship with my grandmother changed shortly after my mom came out to her. At first, my grandmother assured my sister and I that my mom was just sick and she would get over it. I also remember being told that my mom was going through a phase and she would someday realize that she was sinning and would go back to my dad and everything would be fine. I don't think that my grandmother realized that the more she spoke badly about my mother, the more she distanced herself from my family. The lack of relationship with

my grandparents always hits me harder during the holidays, when we really aren't welcome at their house anymore.

Whitney: Before my mom came out, my grandparents were very active in my life. It did bother me when they started to distance themselves from us gradually. It made me cry to think that my grandparents could be so selfish and not accept their own daughter for who she was. It also made me upset that they were telling little kids that their mother was sick, even though we all knew she wasn't.

Landon: Since my mom started dating Kelly, our family has grown. Kelly's family has taken us in like we have been family since the beginning of our lives. They have been very accepting of my mom and Kelly, and have been an active part of my brother Cian's life.

Just because I have an LGBT family does not make me any less of a person. I think that in order to begin to educate people about our families, we have to start within our own. **Without the support of a loving family, it feels like you against the world.** I think that it is

important to make family where we can, and to remember that although we might not be related to someone by blood, it doesn't make them any less family.

Whitney: Sure I could sit here and talk about many different moments where I felt defenseless against my grandparents while they made horrible comments about my mom. Yes my sister, my brother, and me used to cry many nights because my grandparents were so harsh to us. Yes my grandparents stopped talking to my mom. Sure I wish things would have been a little better growing up, but it made me who I am today. I have learned from all of this how to be strong, to accept other individuals that might be different from me, and to be myself. All my experiences have taught me to speak up for what I believe is true. That's why I joined COLAGE. It helps me vent, and show my true feelings about how things happened when I was growing up, and how **just because my family is different, doesn't mean we aren't special.**

Both Landon and Whitney are returning for another year in COLAGE's YLAP program. They live in San Francisco with their mom, her partner, Kelly and their two brothers. Landon also helps facilitate the COLAGE middle school group.

Many articles in this issue of *Just For Us* deal with the importance of family communication, both directly and indirectly. Some vividly portray what happens when we remain silent on issues important to us or assume that silence is always disapproving. Others teach us that while conflict can at times tear families apart, there is opportunity to rebuild bridges and reconnect with those important to us if we learn to talk to one another, open and honestly.

Conflict is a natural part of life. We all have differences of opinion - if we didn't the world would be a pretty boring place. It is how we handle conflict that is important. Instead of perceiving it as something to be avoided at all cost, try to view it as an opportunity to grow in our relationships and build trust and understanding. Overcoming differences of opinion by finding common ground or simply just agreeing to disagree can provide all those involved with a sense of satisfaction, of knowing that we really can all get along even with our differences.

Making regular dates to discuss family matters is one way to promote open communication amongst family members. Here, we provide a tool as a starting point to facilitate these family meetings that can aid in resolving disputes. VOSP (Voice, Ownership, Shoes, Plan) is a tool that is easy to learn and use. Everyone involved must know

and agree to use all parts of the process until a mutual agreement and understanding is reached. Finding another person to mediate or guide your family through these steps will be the most helpful.

It is also important to come into family meetings calm. If the situation makes you feel wild with intense feelings, wait a few days or try to blow off some steam by writing in a journal, talking with friends you feel safe with, exercising, meditating, or even hitting a pillow. The more relaxed you are during the VOSP process the more able you will be to stay focused on the initial conflict and be open to reaching an agreement.

The VOSP method is a tool that people of all ages can use both one-on-one or in a group and it's easy to teach family members. If implemented in a way that allows all participants who are open to change and compromise to be involved in the discussion, this method can be a valuable resource for promoting trust, strengthening family bonds and helping to sustain lasting relationships that we can rely on in times of crisis or celebration.

COLAGE provides this tool as a suggestion for resolving disputes, if the conflict cannot be resolved through these means or other communicative processes, please seek a counselor or other professional help.

1 VOICE First everyone has a Voice. In that respect, everyone in the group takes their turn to describe what happened and how they feel about the issue being discussed. The use of "I" statements in discussing delicate issues and personal feelings with others is a fundamental principle and should be used during the entire VOSP process. For example, "I feel upset when you ignore me" rather than "You make me so upset." During this step, all participants should be listening to the speaker with their eyes, ears, and heart - looking at the speaker, listening to what they are saying and trying to understand. It is important to resist the temptation to defend yourself or "shut down" the other person when it's their turn to share even if their words may hurt.

2 OWNERSHIP After everyone has had a chance to voice their view and feelings about the situation, the next step is taking responsibility for your actions. Whether it is realizing you have hurt someone's feelings or apologizing for a mistake, being able to admit your part is an important aspect of growing as individuals. Someone in this step might say, "I realize that when I ignore you it makes you upset."

3 SHOES The third step in this process refers to everyone allowing themselves to see things from someone else's shoes. This may take a lot of courage and sometimes requires us to let go of our egos for a moment so that we may see how our actions have impacted someone else. Here, one might say, "If I was in your shoes and someone ignored me, I would feel upset too."

4 PLAN The final step is cooperatively formulating a plan for how the conflict can be resolved that is acceptable to all members of the group. During this step everyone should be focused on future solutions rather than past blame. Agreeing to and following through with the plan is essential to the success of this conflict resolution process. An agreement or plan for the above scenario may be, "I will be aware that sometimes you are busy and don't mean to ignore me" and the other person agreeing, "I will pay more attention to your feelings." Of course, if the first plan doesn't work it does not mean you failed, it simply means that you need to make a new plan OR possibly begin the process again because the real issues that are bothering those involved are not being addressed.

VOSP is depicted here thanks to the Bay Area Girls Center, an outdoor organization in San Francisco. website: www.bayareagirlscenter.org.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY by Brenna Gould

I am Brenna. I have a gay dad. To me it is not a fun thing. Even my so-called friends make fun of me. I have told them not to because it makes me very upset when they say those kind of things. They really don't care though.

The thing that makes it harder is that my mom got re-married after her and my dad got divorced. The person she married already had seven kids. Not all of them live at my house though, only two live with us. Both of the kids that live with us find it very funny to tell people about my dad being gay. But they never get in trouble for it. The other problem with having all of those brothers and sisters is that my mom and stepdad have never tried to tell them that my dad is gay. So when they come over to visit they use a lot of rude names for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

My mother has never approved of people being gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender. She is a strict Christian and believes that LGBT people will go to hell. When we go to her church on Sundays she has people pray for my dad and me

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Brenna (middle) with her sister, Hayley (left) and her brother, Joe (right) at the Saugatuck Family Week Dance.



TOOLS FOR RESOLVING DISPUTES

A HANDBOOK FOR YOUTH is a resource for youth that offers ways to handle and resolve conflict.

Website: www.jocofamily.net/youthconflict.html

Step-Family-Matters is a website devoted to issues and conflicts that may arise when families blend.

Website: www.step-family-matters.com

Conflict Resolution Tips for Parents provides ways to role model healthy family conflict resolution at

<http://ericcass.uncg.edu/virtuallib/conflict/1013.html>

NCLR has sample legal contracts and forms at www.nclrights.org/publications/lifelines.htm that can protect parents and children and prevent problems.

Tel: 415-392-8442

Website: www.nclrights.org

CONNECTIONS: Relate to others in similar situations

First and Foremost, COLAGE! We offer many helpful resources for people with LGBT parents to share experiences such as pen pals, email chat lists, and chapters around the country (see group listings on the back page of this JFU). Check us out!

Tel: 415-861-KIDS (5437)

Website: www.colage.org

PFLAG offers many publications on their website for both relatives of LGBT people and LGBT people themselves. Of particular interest around the Holiday season is their "Tips For A Happy Holiday" at www.pflag.org/education/publications.html

Tel: 202-467-8180

Website: www.pflag.org

Straight Spouse Network can provide a valuable outlet to discuss with other straight spouses, in a safe and accepting environment, the wide array of feelings and emotions experienced when a partner comes out.

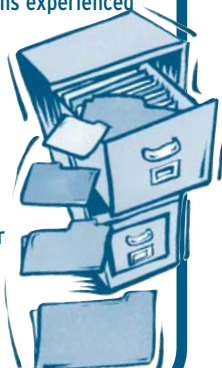
Tel: 510-525-0200

Website: www.ssnetwork.org

Family Pride Coalition is an organization providing LGBT families with information on parenting groups, news, and other issues related to our families.

Tel: 202-331-5015

Website: www.familypride.org



A GRANDPARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Ann Idzik



Ann Idzik (left) with her two grandchildren -

My lesbian daughter and her partner have two sons. These boys, ages five and seven are biological half brothers, they are two of my eleven grandchildren.

I went on a camping trip in the redwoods with these grandsons and their seven-year old cousin, Eli. Talk around the campfire was, on two occasions, centered on fathers. Although clear on the subject and proud of both of their moms, these boys would comment about fathers; they didn't need them but they might like to have them. Eli "gets" the picture; he has two Aunts and everyone around him is comfortable honoring this gay family. However, for the last few years he would bring up the topic when the three of them were alone. "Now, tell me again, why don't you have a dad? Where is he? How can you have two moms?" And the boys would patiently explain.

I wonder how often this conversation is repeated in the life of my grandchildren. They seem to be totally clear and matter-of-fact describing their gay family constellation. Already they are teachers—a role my grandsons will probably live with the rest of their lives. They will be instructing peers, teachers, and even strangers on the makeup of their family. I wonder what is ahead for them.

This journey of seeing life through a different lens has not been easy for me. My daughter came out after she graduated from college. We had just come through a particularly difficult time in our family and I greeted her news with some contempt, telling her I thought she was over-reacting to our family distress. I was too deep into my own pain to be supportive. Her plans to marry her partner were greeted with a similar response. However she and her partner wanted to be married and have been in a committed relationship for 15 years.

I also remember my part of the disparaging dialogue around them wanting to have children. Again, I tried to impose my belief system: "Adopt, there are so many children in need of loving families". Each of them has birthed a child and I can't imagine my life without them! Their quiet revolution has created a huge learning curve in my life and work. I now speak out encouraging people to look at families differently. At our recent family reunion there

were 18 children present from eight different family constellations. How can anyone define what is "normal"?

As COLAGE members, you are familiar teachers explaining your family values and mores. Bigoted feelings probably come at you from a number of directions. Over the years I have come to admire children of gay parents who relish this role of instructing others. They realize they do not have to take on the negative feelings thrust their way by unknowing individuals. There is a revolution taking place and COLAGE members are in the forefront of change. I have listened to stories of children growing up in gay families and admire their unique insights and fortitude of character. As grandparents find their way in these different and complex relationship configurations, many have come to find they welcome new ways of seeing families.

There is a revolution taking place and COLAGE members are in the forefront of change.

Grandparents of children of gay families can be strong advocates for change. We have the time, energy, and credibility to step forward and work to combat homophobia. We need to tell our stories whenever there is an opportunity. Change of attitudes can occur but it may take a long time. When my grandchildren encounter prejudices I try to be a good role model for them. Anger begets anger. In coping with anti-gay sentiments, I reframe the discussion and acknowledge the problem rests with other people's prejudices, NOT with our family structure.

Ann Idzik, grandmother of eleven, lives in California and is currently working on a book about grandparenting. An engaging speaker, she has talked with varied audiences about gay/straight/blended families, drawing stories from many individuals she has interviewed throughout the country.

2nd Generation

A SPECIAL SECTION FOR QUEER AND QUESTIONING KIDS OF LGBT PARENTS

I am bringing my girlfriend home for Thanksgiving. For many people, gay or straight, this is a nerve-wrecking experience. The idea of introducing your partner to the people who know exactly where you come from sends jolts and jitters down most people's spines.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: Reflections on Love and Silence by Ryn Gluckman

But I am not "most people" and my family is not, "most families." And, while it's totally chill to hang with my girlfriend, my queer sister, and my lesbian moms over turkey, I know it will be a different story to sit with my uncle, my step aunt, and three of my huge football-playing cousins in our crowded living room on Thanksgiving day.

I love my extended family. They are part of who I am and where I come from. I love my Uncle Jeff, who cried on the day I graduated and told me how proud he was of me. Yet not once have my uncle and I ever spoken about my mother being a dyke or about her partner of fourteen years, my stepmother. And so, because the conversation has not been had, I can only imagine what he thinks about our family and what he thinks about me.

I have never come out to him, though my profession and my politics encourage people to be queer and loud about it. Like many other COLAGERS, there is a small part of me that wants to be "normal" (I mean "straight") in order to prove to the world that lesbian mothers can turn out perfectly fabulous children. So I live an open life with my immediate family, friends, and coworkers but I cannot bring myself to tell my Uncle Jeff that I love this girl who is sitting next to me at the dinner table. The silence is a mutual one.

My mother recently reminded me of an event a few years back, when I graduated from college and my uncle and his family drove to Massachusetts to attend the ceremony. I watched him from across the dinner table, intent and markedly silent, as he listened to a heated discussion my friends were having about transgender politics. My mother was watching too. She saw her outspoken and sometimes-bigoted brother listen respectfully to a discussion about an issue that he probably doesn't know much about and might seem bizarre to him. He did not have to listen or be at all thoughtful about the dialogue around him, but he was there

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NEW 2nd Gen Online Chat List

Join 2nd Gen COLAGERS of all ages to find support and community, engage in discussions of issues affecting us, and explore the connections that make our experiences as 2nd Generation special, unique, and diverse.

To subscribe
secondgen-subscribe@topica.com

DATELINE DAN

By Dan Cherubin



All in the Family

As I get older, I find that more and more people have "created" their own families. And I don't necessarily mean they got married and had kids. Rather, they found friends, companions and compatriots with whom to share their lives, both good and bad. They've created a private "inner" group that replaces a biological family.

Yet, all of us are related to a group of people through blood, and no matter how we create our societal family, we are forever bonded to this biological family. You may love them or hate them, but there they are.

Many years ago, I wrote a piece about how, in my extended family of 3rd cousins, great-aunts, uncle

in-laws and the like, my two mothers and I were the only LGBT folk in the entire clan. Now statistically, that can't really be true, but to this day, we three are the only openly queer family members out of several dozen. And that can play with one's comfort level.

My relationship with my biological family varies across the entire spectrum. There are some relatives I adore and I try to keep in close contact with them. There are others I deliberately haven't spoken to in years. And there are lots in the middle. I don't think my interaction or lack thereof is inherently hinged upon my or my moms' sexuality, but it definitely plays some sort of role.

For example, my grandfather, while initially shocked and upset by my mother's lesbianism, is far more accepting of her than of my being gay. In his words, he understands why two women would "get together," but he's not sure why I wouldn't be with a woman given the chance. Not that he doesn't love me, he just thinks it odd and, as such,

never talks to me about my sexuality.

My great-aunt on my father's side, who always said, "Dan's such a good kid, he knows what he's doing," talked to other family members about my gayness as me "being infected by my mother". After all, nothing like that ever happened on her side of the family! And a lot of the cousins-once-removed don't let their kids play around me. Do I hate them for this? No, but I'd much rather spend the holidays with a "family" of my choosing.

In any event, I can never escape my biological family. My worldview, my palate, my interactive skills, they all come from growing up around these people. I may never see them on holidays, but I know that, deep down, like it or not, these are people that made me the way I am. ■

Dan Cherubin works as a librarian and is currently working on his second Master's Degree. He started Second Generation over 10 years ago to meet other "queers of queers." He lives in NYC with a hockey-playing cat.

LEE DUBIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Students Rewarded for Activism in the LGBT Community

Each year, COLAGE and Family Pride Coalition award scholarships to undergraduate college students who demonstrate their ability in and commitment to affecting change in the community. Join us in congratulating the 2003 awardees.

MORGAN EARLY - Belmont, CA

The daughter of two dads and a lesbian mom, Morgan served as the president of the Rainbow Alliance at her high school and was a member of the Bay Area COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program. From teaching a classroom of 7th graders about tolerance to introducing people to her dads who have never been exposed to families like hers, she has seen how sharing her personal experiences can affect change. This fall she started at UCLA and is looking forward to getting involved with the L.A. chapter of COLAGE. "Having gay parents has definitely impacted my sense of civic responsibility. I have experienced prejudice first hand, and it has made me realize the ridiculous nature of blind hate."



ERIN CHIODO - Yarmouth, ME

Being raised by a single lesbian mother, Erin went through stages that many COLAGERS go through when their parents come out, including being confused and embarrassed. But as she grew to understand her mother and herself, she began to see her mom as "a unique individual who has tremendous love for the world around her, and overcomes obstacles everyday." This perspective is what brought her to be apart of the GSA at her high school, where she was president for two years. This fall she began attending Berklee College of Music. Erin believes that "battling hate speech is her civic responsibility" and as such has made a point of intervening whenever possible to educate people about the hurtful impact caused by their use of homophobic slurs.



SAMUEL STEPHENSON - Courtland, VA

Sam's mother came out of the closet as a lesbian when he was 10 years old. While many changes in the family dynamic ensued, he respected his mother for the strength it took to confront her life at the age of 32. "I take great pride in being a child of lesbian parents. Because of [them], I have grown up to be accepting of all people." Sam has been apart of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life for the past five years. After helping coach the local little league baseball team for the past 6 years, 2003 was his first summer as a camp counselor for 4-H Camp. He is now a Computer Engineering major at Old Dominion University.



MARTIN BROWN - Yellow Springs, OH

Growing up in a Lutheran Midwestern town, Martin became personally affected by the prejudice his mother faced when she came out. Dealing with rejection from relatives, family friends and members of his father's church community, he learned the importance of standing up against bigotry. A particularly proud moment for Martin was when he and a friend organized their fellow students to speak out against a bigoted guest performer at his high school. His well-documented protests helped bring the attention of the ACLU to the actions of the activities director who has since left the district. Martin's experiences living in a lesbian family have "prepared [him] to recognize intolerance and stand up to injustice." Since high school he has been working for Americorps and now attends Antioch College with a Photojournalism major.

REBECCA MEIKSIN - Pittsburgh, PA

Rebecca, a second year student at Oberlin College, was raised in a progressive home that included active political involvement for positive change as one of its family values. Growing up, she attended many protests with her lesbian mother, who showed her the importance of fighting against homophobia and sexism. Throughout high school Rebecca worked with the Student Hunger Action Coalition as well as co-chaired her school's first GSA and Gender Issues Forum. "Growing up with a gay parent is what taught me the importance of acceptance and openness, but these values extend beyond LGBT issues to how I look at and perceive the broader world."

Breaking the Silence, from p1

A week later, I return for his funeral. The obituary lists all of Grandpa's great accomplishments and all of his kin, including my partner Chris. This is amazing to me. It is another verbal acknowledgment of support, in the county newspaper for the entire community to read.

Complete love and acceptance has always come from my rural-Michigan, proud farming-family. Family support may come in many different forms and it is up to us to find it in the verbal and non-verbal action of our family. At times we might feel that there is a lack of support, but it may be there. We are just looking for a certain form of acceptance and encouragement. We're blinded by our expectations and don't realize that the support our family is giving may just be in a different form. It takes a change of perspective and sometimes a great loss to see what you really have.

I miss you Grandpa LaLonde.

Ryan lives in Washington, D.C. with his partner Chris where he is the chapter coordinator for COLAGE DC. Recently elected treasurer of the national COLAGE Board, Ryan has assisted tremendously in helping COLAGE to reach its vision, including organizing the recent That's So Gay art exhibit in his area.

HELP FULFILL COLAGE'S MISSION

**Become a Member by Sending Your
Donation in the Enclosed Envelope Today.**

DIVIDED BY OPINIONS by Barbara

My name is Barbara and I live in Illinois. I'm a freshman in high school. I love to write and I'm really into art. I have two brothers.

My dad came out and my parents divorced when I was in sixth grade. I wasn't angry with my dad, but I was devastated about my parents' split. My brothers were angry with my dad and I guess they still feel angered and probably awkward about him being gay.

As for me, I never really had a problem with it. My dad is my dad, and I can't change who he is or what he does, but I will try to support him in whatever he does. I try to understand how my brothers feel, and see things from their point of view, but it's hard.

My brothers and I don't get along anymore. Our separate opinions have put up an invisible barrier between us. They really don't like the fact that I live with my dad and I'm sure they feel abandoned and betrayed. It hurts me to know that I hurt them but living with my dad is what I feel is right for me. Everything between my brothers and I is so strained that most of the time we don't even talk.

I wrote this poem about how I feel about my brothers. We are separated, but we are still family.

We are made up of the same blood, yet, we are divided by different opinions.

After years of growing up with you two by my side,

this is the one thing that separates us.

There is no empathy on your part, and there is much misunderstanding.

We lived together our whole lives, and without any effort to stop it, this is coming between us.

Mistakes have been made, but, in time, I believe all will be well again.

As a family,

we must stick together,

and as my brothers,

you should learn to understand.

I really hope that they will be able to see past all of the hardship and continue to fight through this struggle of ours. I pray that they will be able to realize that we can "agree to disagree", and this doesn't change the fact that we are still family. I just hope in the future they will be able to look past the differences and realize that the differences make us who we are.

Barbara lives in the Midwest with her gay dad and has attended Family Week in Saugatuck.

Home for the Holidays, from p10

because I was important to him. Remembering this, I realized how my fear about what he might think made me miss who he actually is.



My uncle's silence may be more than uneducated homophobia. Maybe it is his way of respecting my mother's sexuality and my own. Perhaps he is telling me, in an unspoken language, that what my family and I look like and whom I bring home is not that important compared to his love for me. I wonder how my own assumptions have led me to believe that the silence between us is negative and disapproving. I may have overlooked the ways that he has accepted my stepmother into our family and the numerous times he has driven hours to spend important occasions with us.

I don't know if I will "come out" to him over Thanksgiving, but it does help to consider that my Uncle Jeff and the rest of my extended family come to me from a place of love. I can appreciate the ways that his silence and steady love has nurtured me when families like mine constantly fall under personal and political attack. This doesn't dismiss the importance of having open conversations, but it does allow me to bring my girlfriend home with a little less fear and apprehension. It gives me faith in the process and promise of having queer parents, of being queer myself, and the possibility of keeping love in the family.

A key new officer on the COLAGE board, Ryn lives in Massachusetts. Her contribution to COLAGE has been invaluable, including her work in the national office during the summers of 1998 and 1999.

It's Not Always Easy, from p8

so that he is not gay anymore and I don't have to live with him being gay.

My dad and his partner both go to school to drop us off and when we are about two minutes away from school my stomach starts to twist and turn because I am afraid that someone will see me with two guys in the car.

When I get older I don't want to have a boyfriend. At least not until I get out of High School because I do not want them to meet my dad and not want to go out with me because they are scared of my dad being gay. I am hoping that my neighbor at my dad's house will ask me out because his uncle is gay and he knows my dad is gay.

People always tell me you just have to stand up to people who make fun of you. But it is just not that easy to stand up to them because I am afraid of what they are going to say. My dad says that they are going to think that it is cool that I have gay parents. But how can they think it is cool if I don't even think it is cool. Everyday I wish that I was a normal kid and had a normal family. But I will never get that. I will always have a gay dad and there is nothing I can do about it.

Brenna, 12, lives in Michigan. She is very excited for people to read her article. If you'd like to tell Brenna about your family or ask her more about hers, write to "Brenna c/o COLAGE" at colage@colage.org or 3543 18th Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94110. We will forward your letter directly to Brenna.

Artwork from *That's So Gay* Exhibit. Check out page 3 for more information!



FUNPAGE

for kids with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents



Question: "You have two moms? Where's your dad?"

Answer: "With my other dad of course."

Joke submitted by Charlotte Bell, age 11, from Sunderland, England.

Untitled

By Hannah Lowens-Marchetti, age 12

As like a caged bird willing to fly, you are loved.

Even though you are different.

They, your supposed family all have the classic features. You, however, have awkward qualities. You are black, they are white. The mirror never lies. Its like a stranger went to the coffee shop downtown and bought a black and white cookie, and saw your family. You feel like you have rained on their idea of a perfect family. A handsome athlete father, a modell actress mom and two perfect kids. But then again, you have taken a large piece of their heart. Why should they love you?

The question remains unanswered until you find a place to tell your story to someone who will show you the way to look for the courage deep inside yourself.

Hannah wrote this poem during a COLAGE creative writing workshop at Provincetown's Family Week this year. She lives in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York.

Kyle P., age 12

"I love to play soccer and football. My family is really cool because we are different from others. When people say that gay people are weird, I really don't care because they are people too. But you can't be mad at those kids because they really don't know what they are saying.

When my mom told me she was gay I told her, "that is ok because you are still a good mom and love me." When my mom told her Dad, he was really mean. He even said he was going to steal me from my mom. But then my Grandpa realized my mom can't change who she is, so now we always spend time with him during the summer in Virginia, it is a lot of fun."

Kyle is a member of COLAGE DC and created art work for the That's So Gay Art Exhibit when it traveled to Washington D.C. to join with local families like his to celebrate and educate about the diversity of our families



Hannah shares her poem during Show-and-Tell at P-town's Family Week.

HELP COLAGE RAISE \$10,000

Do you like a challenge? Do you want COLAGE to continue providing creative opportunities for youth to raise visibility and advocate for our families? Do you value the print and electronic tools COLAGE uses to connect with you?

If so, donate to COLAGE today and the Bothin Foundation will double your gift! That's right, as soon as we raise \$5000, the Bothin Foundation will donate another \$5000 to COLAGE.

This means your donation of \$100 today becomes \$200 tomorrow.

Please help COLAGE improve our youth programs and member outreach by mailing a special \$25, \$40, \$60, \$100 gift to COLAGE today. (Use the envelope at center of this Just For Us or donate online at www.colage.org/join.)

Thank you!

THANK YOU!

YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY MAKE ALL OUR VALUABLE WORK POSSIBLE.

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Thank You Redman-Gress Family

COLAGE wishes to thank Warren, Jim and Christopher Redman-Gress for including COLAGE in Christopher's Adoption Day Celebration. The Redman-Gress family and their guests generously donated to COLAGE on behalf of Christopher's special day. Christopher was born on December 18th, 1999 and celebrates his adoption day in August. We thank Christopher and his dads for all their contributions to our growing organization.

COLAGE NOTES

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Rosanne,

After 3 years of hard work, persistence and dedication to getting the Just For Us Newsletter out to all of COLAGE's members, friends and families, we will dearly miss you, Rosanne, as you step down as volunteer Editor. We wish you great success in your new job as Grantwriter for Chabot Space and Science Museum and offer immense appreciation for a fabulous job done at COLAGE. On behalf of every past, present and future COLAGE member, friend, family, volunteer, donor, staff, board member and every Just For Us contributor or reader, we THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

COLAGE staff—Beth, Meredith and Marilyn

Rosanne Johnson is a Bay Area COLAGER who lives in Oakland with her partner, Kelly. With great regret she resigns from her volunteer position as Just For Us Editor.

COLAGE BOARD GROWS!

2003 has been an exciting year. The COLAGE Board of Directors is pleased to report we have met all our 2003 goals for board development, including the expansion of our board of directors to fifteen members, an increase in the number of high school age youth on the board, the creation of a youth position on the executive committee and the addition of half our board to COLAGE's monthly giving program. We are also thrilled that Beth Teper decided to continue to serve as COLAGE's Executive Director.

Our new board members bring a wealth of personal and professional talent and expertise to COLAGE. Together, we are a multi-cultural, inter-generational board committed to working closely with COLAGE's exceptional staff and supporters to take COLAGE solidly into the future.

With immense gratitude, the Board gratefully honors and acknowledges the unique and critical contributions of both outgoing officers Kate Ranson-Walsh and Miye Goishi who respectively served 6 and 4 years on the board. Without question, COLAGE owes much of its vision and progress to these two outstanding leaders and advocates.

Your participation, enthusiasm, and resources make COLAGE possible. Please contact us anytime, via colage@colage.org, whether you're nearby or far. We look forward to growing COLAGE with you!

Sincerely,

Kate Kuvalanka and Orson Morrison, Co-Chairs

COLAGE INTERNS MAKE IT HAPPEN

Marilyn Smith is a 22-year-old recent graduate from Virginia Tech's

Architecture program with a minor in Psychology. Her hometown is near Philadelphia, PA, where most of her family still resides, including her gay dads, her straight mom and step-dad,

and her two younger brothers. "I have greatly enjoyed using my design background to develop an upcoming Middle School Survival Guide and help edit and produce this issue of JFU. Working with all the youth in various activities has also been very rewarding. I look forward to helping COLAGE reach out to all those kids who, like I once was, are still unaware of this precious and supportive, not to mention diverse, community."

Jordan Eisenberg, a 20-year-old junior at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, came to intern at COLAGE this summer through a grant from the Reproductive Rights Activist Services Coalition. Jordan is a gender-queer ally with straight parents who spent his free time "enjoying good vegetarian food, finding free books, and learning the streets of San Francisco."

Amanda Kelly is a sophomore at the University of Southern California majoring in Broadcast Journalism and Creative Writing. She has a gay dad, straight mom, and brother. Amanda came to COLAGE because of her desire to work with other children of LGBT parents, while pursuing her media interests. "I quickly found that non-profit organizations greatly rely on journalists and vice versa," says Amanda, "and I have enjoyed furthering COLAGE's media exposure, as well as working on great projects

such as Family Week and fundraising."

Whitney Moses is a 22-year-old New Yorker who recently moved to the West Coast from Boston. She chose this internship because she likes working with kids, wants to learn more about non-profits, and has a personal interest in children with LGBT parents—her father was bisexual. Whitney was very excited to be with COLAGE and says, "now that I am in California, I'm hoping to go back to school, as well as get involved with local theater and politics."



Summer interns: (L-R) Jordan, Amanda and Whitney



Marilyn (center) with her two brothers, Andrew (left) and Luke (right).

STACY M. CLEMENT, MA, PHD 1953-2003

COLAGE remembers the life of Stacy Clement, a former member of our Board of Directors. As a consequence of her depression and other personal challenges, Stacy took her own life at her home in Oregon. Stacy leaves behind her son and partner. As a professional, Stacy taught courses in Human Sexuality and Psychology at various community colleges and universities and was very active in educating others on LGBT issues. At the time of her death, Stacy had just received a doctorate degree in Humanistic Psychology at the Saybrook Graduate School in San Francisco, California. Stacy's primary area of research and expertise was on Transgender Issues, focusing on the families of cross-dressers.

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Tara Rose & Emily Gold
(310) 824-5433
la@colage.org

COLAGE SF/Bay Area
Meredith Fenton
(415) 861-KIDS
colage@colage.org

COLAGE Tulare County
Joey and Shelly Routh
(559) 734-3037
routhfam@pacbell.net

COLAGE Novato
Annan Paterson
(415) 898-2502
annanpaterson@aol.com

COLAGE Metro DC
Ryan LaLonde
(202) 332-7380
metrodc@colage.org

FamilyPride of the South (formerly Atlanta FamilyPride)
Lisa Prince, M.Ed.
(770) 640-1915
info@familypridesouth.org
www.familypridesouth.org

Central Illinois COLAGE
Erica and Kim

(309) 287-0620
Bloominginnrml@yahoo.com

COLAGE Chicago
Tina Fakhrid-Deen
(773) 548-3349
chicago@colage.org

COLAGE New Orleans
Dale Liuzza
daleliuzza@yahoo.com

COLAGE Boston
Anna & Molly Heller
(617) 628-3251

COLAGE Western Mass
Heather Estan
(413) 572-0849
westmass@colage.org

Chesapeake COLAGE
Beth Schul & Wayne Schwandt
(410) 610-2327
Rainbowfamilies@verizon.net

COLAGE Baltimore
Heather and M Lloyd
(443) 271-9001
colagebaltimore@aol.com

COLAGE Greater Portland
(207) 653-9079
Pinkpwr128@aol.com

COLAGE Ann-Arbor
Pat Gordon
aacolage@yahoo.com
(734) 998-3459

COLAGE Ferndale: Affirmations
Cassandra Varner
(248) 398-7105
Cass.Varner@GoAffirmations.org
www.GoAffirmations.org

COLAGE - Rainbow Kids NC, Asheville
Alicia Schordine
aliciaschordine@yahoo.com
Pamela Hunter
phunter2379@yahoo.com

NHCOLAGERS
Cami Thibeault
(603) 525-4270
RFofNH@yahoo.com

NH COLAGERS Seacoast
Debora Masterson
(603) 264-3148
nhcolageseacoast@comcast.net

COLAGE New Jersey
Karen & Marilyn
(973) 763-8511
LFNJCOLAGE@aol.com

COLAGE Albuquerque
Melissa Threet
(505) 265-9519
Albuquerque@colage.org

COLAGE NYC/Center Kids
Claire Knight
(646) 345-2411
nyc@colage.org

COLAGE Ithaca
Ms. Robbie Sanders
sakaro@aol.com
(607) 273-4966

COLAGE Mid Hudson Valley
Li Pipman-Allis
lallis@hvc.rr.com
(845) 452-2928

COLAGE of the Western NY Area
Cathy (716) 674-8017
mac6119@aol.com

COLAGE Akron
Pam and Annie
(330) 785-4140
Lezbrennow@neo.rr.com

PFLAG Tulsa Kids Group
Nancy McDonald
(918) 749-4901
nancymcdo@aol.com

COLAGE Portland
Coordinator - Sima Teherani
(503) 228-3892
sima@LMFamily.org

JFU Houston
Connie Danielson
(936) 231-4238
houston@colage.org

Rainbow of Friends, Montgomery County
Connie and Kim Gayheart
(936) 231-4238
Rainbowoffriends@evl.net

COLAGE El Paso
(915) 543-3062
tonyramos@ppcep.org
www.desertrainbow.org

COLAGE Salt Lake City
Kimberly Hinkins
(801) 539-8800 ext. 22
colageut@glccu.com

COLAGE Virginia Beach
Jamie and Kimberly
(757) 737-9154
trippinroses@msn.com
www.colage-vb.fateback.com

COLAGE Seattle
Tammy Zoch (206) 320-1270
seattle@colage.org
www.geocities.com/seattle_colage

COLAGE Madison
Sol Kelley-Jones
(608) 276-8010
madison@colage.org

COLAGE Milwaukee
Loree Cook-Daniels
milwaukee@colage.org

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(Chippewa Valley)
Nikki Smith
(715) 232-0825
colagecv@colage.org

GLOBAL

CANADA
COLAGE Toronto
(416) 767-2244
toronto@colage.org

COLAGE Winnipeg
Coco and Leigh
cocokiss@mts.net

SWEDEN & ENGLAND
COLAGE Sweden & England
Anna Carlsson
anna.carlsson@lycos.com

Chapters are autonomous local groups that affiliate with COLAGE and are self-run. We strive to keep updated on local contact information. If you have difficulty reaching the contact listed please let us know. Thank you.

Want to start a chapter in your community? Have questions? Please contact COLAGE at 415-861-KIDS or email colage@colage.org.