



JUST FOR US

2005 YEAR IN REVIEW

Vol. 17 #3
2005

EQUALITY & JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND/OR TRANSGENDER PARENTS & OUR FAMILIES

EXTRAORDINARY YOUTH ACTIVISM MAKES CHANGE

by Marina Gatto

What follows is the story of AB 849, The Civil Marriage and Religious Freedom Protection Act which was passed by the California legislature on September 1st, 2005. It marked the closest gay and lesbian couples have come to marriage equality by law, rather than through courtroom advocacy. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger immediately voiced his plan to veto the measure. In response, COLAGE joined EQCA and other community partners in celebration of our victory and protest of the governor's plans. On Tuesday, September 20, 2005, dozens of children and their LGBT parents delivered nearly 40,000 signed postcards in support of marriage equality to Governor Schwarzenegger's offices in six locations around the state. Not only did the visits on Tuesday give the Governor visible reminders of the families who seek equality, he now possesses tangible evidence of our presence.



The advances made by the LGBT community in 2005 in the fight for equal rights were historic and extraordinary. As a youth of the LGBT community, and as a COLAGER, I am proud to be an instrumental part of the groundbreaking

work being done in California for our community. Assembly Bill 849- The Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act, a bill that would grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples and authored by California Assemblymember Mark Leno, sailed through the California State Senate. Three months earlier as Assembly Bill 19, it had come up three votes shy of passing the California State Assembly. Gutted and amended, and now having passed the senate, A.B. 849 stood the very real chance of being the first bill in history granting same sex couples marriage licenses, to ever pass both a state's senate and assembly! With strong support

from the NAACP, United Farm Workers, & countless organizations and individuals from both in and outside of the LGBT community, we went back to the assembly to look for our needed votes. To those people who don't understand the difference that you can make in the world as just one youth, I can tell you that there is no one more qualified to speak about discrimination than a child directly affected by it. My moms and I spoke with four assemblymembers who had planned to abstain from voting. Some of them simply did not understand the issue and needed to be fully educated on it. Several were uncomfortable in supporting same sex marriage because of religious beliefs. All believed that this was an issue that did not affect them. After hearing firsthand from a youth directly affected by inequality, after understanding that this was not a religious issue, but instead a civil rights issue, most were brought to tears. All ended up giving us needed votes for this bill.

On September 6th, 2005, the day that A.B. 849 was to be voted on, I was *continued on page 10*

RESPONDING TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Hurricane Katrina was the worst disaster to strike the United States in 2005, hitting the gulf coast states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana as a Category 5 storm



Callum Macintyre (pictured above) and his moms, Kate and Laura were one of many COLAGE families affected by Katrina

on August 27th. The hurricane flattened and flooded thousands of towns and communities, displaced millions of residents, and left many of its survivors without homes or jobs.

COLAGE staff joined the nation and the world, watching in horror as more and more news of the devastation came across the radio and television waves. Our fear and worry was amplified by concern for our new and ever-growing New Orleans chapter, who had been planning an event for August 27th, the day Katrina hit. We asked ourselves and each other questions we were not hearing on the news: how would LGBT families fare through this? Would they be able to get services as families? Would the outpouring of compassion and, more importantly, money be reserved only for straight-parented families? Of the states affected by the storm, 100% have passed legislation or constitutional amendments banning recognition of same-sex couples, none have explicit protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation, and only three (TX, LA, and FL) have ever allowed second-parent adoption. Undoubtedly, LGBT families in Katrina-affected states were going to face fear and discrimination as they went about the business of rebuilding their lives.

COLAGE's New Orleans chapter was started by Dale Liuzza and family in April of 2004. Under Dale's leadership, the chapter has grown to over 60 families who gather monthly for activities such as BBQs, pool *continued on page 10*

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear friends and families,

As another amazing year draws to a close, I continue to be awed and inspired by the amazing children, youth and adults with LGBT parents that I am blessed to work with and meet through COLAGE. For COLAGE, the LGBT community, and the world, 2005 was a year filled with major accomplishments as well as intense challenges. I am proud and honored to be a member of the diverse, change-making COLAGEr community during this particular time in our history.

Looking ahead to 2006, it is clear that many of the challenges of 2005 are not yet behind us. Yet another slate of state and national elections will bring us yet another round of homophobic and anti-family legislation. Arizona, Florida, California, Minnesota, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin are already targeted for anti-marriage bills and ballot initiatives; Michigan, Indiana, Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania are likely to see legislation restricting adoption and foster care for same-sex and/or unmarried couples. Other states that might be affected include Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, Kansas, and Georgia. Every day the list grows. In 2006 it will be more important than ever for COLAGErs to stay informed, connected, and supportive of each other so that we can stand up and speak up when the time comes to defend our families and our rights.

Even as scary (and numerous) bills hostile to our families make their way through state legislatures around the country, we as members of a community have reason to hold hope and joy in our hearts. After the disappointing 2004 elections, the resilient LGBT movement continued to make strides toward greater equality and justice in 2005. COLAGE instigated and joined education and advocacy efforts across the country, led by community members such as you who refused to give up in the face of homophobia, discrimination, and injustice. As we complete our 15th Anniversary year and launch into 2006, there is much to celebrate. From the California legislature being the first state government to enact marriage equality to Connecticut joining the ranks of states offering civil union protections to LGBT couples, COLAGErs and our families are making great strides.

As you read this issue of *Just For Us*, I hope that you find many reasons to be inspired, to reflect on the challenges that 2005 presented, and feel excited and prepared to face the coming year with new resolve to create a safe and just world for all children and families. Join me and the rest of COLAGE in 2006 with your participation, your activism, your time and your financial support. Together we'll continue to struggle and celebrate together through setbacks and accomplishments alike.

Happy Holidays and a Joyful New Year to you and yours,

Beth Teper

COLAGE

MISSION

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

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-Chairs: Kate Kovalanka, VA and Janet Stock, MI
Treasurer: Gary Knoblock, CA
Secretary: Ryan LaLonde, MI
Under Secretary: Nathaniel Obler, MA

Christine Bachman, MA Oren Slozberg, CA
Dale Liuzza, LA Hope Steinman-Iacullo, NY
Orson Morrison, IL Jessie Voors, IN
Whitney Moses, CA Janine Williams, NY
Troy O'Leary, CA

STAFF

Executive Director: Beth Teper
Program Director: Meredith Fenton
Membership Coordinator: Jesse Carr
Program Coordinator: Ember Cook
Intern: Diana Brittain
JFU Design: Arin Fishkin, o2 design collective
JFU Editor: Jesse Carr & Meredith Fenton

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Pen Pal Coordinators: Ellen Freytag, Cathy Sakimura
Kids-of-Gays Chatlist Moderator: Kristin Joos
COLAGE Youth Chatlist Moderator: Mary Schafer
Adult COLAGEr Chatlist Moderator: Elisabeth Hunt
Webmaster: Pito (Freddy) Ferrao

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WHY THE COLAGE BOARD IS AWESOME!!

By Jessie Voors and Janet Stock

Howdy fabulous readers of the amazing *Just For Us!* It's Jessie Voors and Janet Stock, two of your teen members on the board of directors of COLAGE here to update you on October's fall board retreat in Washington, DC. We were originally going to meet in New Orleans to welcome one of our new board members, Dale, a gay dad of an adorable son, though because of obvious recent weather issues we ended up in Washington DC (for more information about COLAGE New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina, see page 1).

Though not all of our board could come, we still got a lot of work done. For instance, we had elections and our Co-chairs are Kate Kovalanka and Janet Stock. The treasurer will remain Gary Knoblock, and the Secretary Ryan LaLonde. A new board position was created, named "Undersecretary," and filled by Nathaniel Obler.

Nathaniel is also a teen board member who some of you might know if you've ever attended Provincetown Family Week. Two of our youth board members, Hope Steinman-Iacullo and Christine Bachman, have gone to college. They will remain on the board, but their Ad-Hoc positions were filled by yours truly, Jessie



The COLAGE board of directors met in Washington, DC in October. Pictured from left right are Gary Knoblock, Dale Liuzza, Beth Teper, Ryan LaLonde, Orson Morrison, Janet Stock, Kate Kovalanka, and Nathaniel Obler. Bottom, center: Jessie Voors. Missing are Janine Williams, Whitney Moses, and Oren Slozberg

Voors, and Oren Slozberg.

We were joined at our retreat by a new board member, Dale Liuzza, coordinator of the COLAGE New Orleans chapter. Though she was not able to make this board meeting, we also welcomed Whitney Moses to the Board. While we did get to welcome a couple new board members we had to say good bye to our lovely Laurie Cicotello. We'll miss you Laurie!!

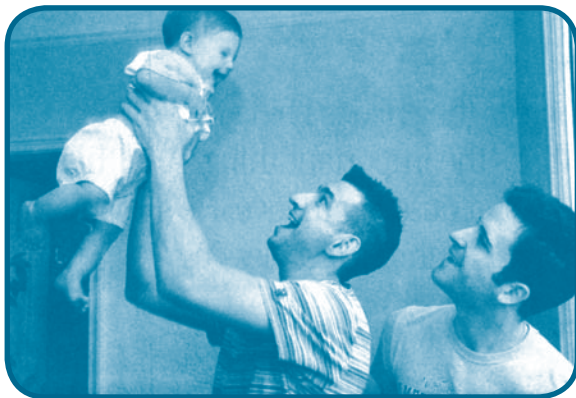
In addition to the work we did at the retreat, we also got some time to chill as a board and spread the word about COLAGE. We got to rock some clay painting and karaoked it up at a Mexican restaurant.

Now we want to share this great experience with you!!!! Yes, that's right you!!! COLAGE would like to welcome members of our diverse community to put their leadership

skills to work! Come hang out with awesome people like us, and help out a great cause all at the same time, what more could you want??? If you are interested in joining the COLAGE Board, contact Beth (hi Beth) or the COLAGE office (hi office) at 415-861-5437 or director@colage.org.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

DALE LIUZZA: A 24 year old resident of New Orleans, LA, Dale is a gay stay-at-home parent to his 2 year old son Seth Liuzza. He



Dale Liuzza (right) is pictured here with his family: baby queerspaw Seth, 18 months old, and Chris, Dale's partner and co-parent.

and his spouse Christopher Liuzza have been together for 8 years and both dreamed and longed to be parents since they can both remember. Dale started the chapter of COLAGE in New Orleans just before his son was born because they felt there was a strong need for a COLAGE presence in their area. He also wanted a place for his son to have fun with kids from all different family backgrounds, to grow up and learn together to defend themselves and others with different families. Starting off with just 2 families at their first meeting in March 04', Dale has worked tirelessly to grow the chapter's current membership to just over 50 children and 60 families from the Greater New Orleans area. He will be a valuable new member of COLAGE's Board.

WHITNEY MOSES: A 24 year old resident of Oakland, CA, and a certified massage therapist, Whitney Moses has worked with COLAGE as an intern, volunteer, and Family Week staff member. Whitney's father, who was bisexual, died of AIDS in 1990. Whitney's remaining family consists of her mother, who has since remarried, her sister Vanessa, and two step-siblings. Whitney is a long-time activist, educator, and community organizer. She has worked as a HIV/AIDS and positive sexuality peer educator, and contributed her time and energy to diverse social justice issues, including disability rights, peace, and anti-racism. We're thrilled to welcome this long-time COLAGER to our Board!



Whitney (left) with her sister, Vanessa. This portrait is featured in COLAGE's *That's So Gay* photo-text exhibit.

15 YEARS OF MAKING CHANGE:

COLAGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2005

1 COLAGE premieres a new youth-produced documentary, *In My Shoes*, which wins the audience award for Best Short Film at the Frameline International LGBT film festival.

2 COLAGE debuts a brand new website.

3 TWO new staff are packed into our crowded office - Program Coordinator, Ember Cook and Membership Coordinator, Jesse Carr.

4 An anonymous funder awards COLAGE its largest grant EVER - \$200,000 over two years.

5 Provincetown Family Week celebrates its 10th year.

6 438 youth participated in COLAGE programming at events in Washington DC, Los Angeles, Dallas, Palm Springs, Saugatuck, Provincetown, and New Jersey (twice!).

7 To this date, COLAGE has distributed thousands of Respect All Families posters, and hundreds of That's So Gay cds to community activists, families, and organizations in 34 states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico, England, and Canada.

8 As of October 2005, 45 active chapters are active and an additional 11 are just getting started.

9 Sol Kelley Jones, who testified before the Wisconsin senate at age 10, joined

COLAGE's first board of directors at 11 and has run the Madison, WI, COLAGE chapter for ages, is awarded the Fisher-Davenport Award for Outstanding Contributions to Our Families during our annual Family Week celebration.

10 Marina Gatto, who joined the Bay Area COLAGE chapter at age nine, received the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce's Creating Change award at the national conference of the same name. She was honored for her advocacy in the 2005 legislative campaign to pass AB 849, the Civil Marriage and Religious Freedom Protection Act.



COLAGERS celebrate themselves and each other at the DC 15th anniversary party

11 Our Bay Area chapter has expanded to include a new East Bay group for Middle Schoolers, bringing the total number of Bay Area groups to eight.

12 The Support Our Community Campaign raises \$10,000 and brings 150 new members to COLAGE.



Rainbow Families/DC, Family Pride Coalition, Whitman-Walker Clinic, and COLAGE hosted the 1st DC regional conference for LGBT parents, their children, and allies. Here Victor holds a picture he completed during a COLAGE 'Tell Your Story' workshop."

13 COLAGE files amicus briefs in TWO successful court cases in Washington and California. The judges in each case ruled that the relationship between a non-biological parent and their same-sex partner's child was deserving of rights, responsibilities, and protections.

14 COLAGE took an active role in supporting LGBT families affected by Hurricane Katrina (for more info see p. 1).

15 COLAGE continues to connect hundreds of youth and adults to others with families like theirs through our email lists and penpal program. During 2005, we matched more than 180 new penpals in 31 states, the UK, Sweden, Mexico, Israel and Canada. Our email lists now include 583 subscribers.

COLAGE'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE

This year, COLAGE was thrilled to celebrate our 15th Anniversary. COLAGE grew out of a Gay and Lesbian parents group called GLPCI back in 1988! That was the year that six young adults - dragged to a conference by their parents - found themselves in a room with each other, and realized it was the first time ANY of them had been around a group of kids from LGBT families. The next year they came back and, for the first time in the history of the conference, some of the parents helped organize workshops and activities for the youth. The year after that, the youth decided to organize their OWN workshops. They formed a separate organization called "Just For Us", elected a steering committee, and started the work of organizing a huge community, and a national movement, of youth from LGBT families working for equality and justice. The group changed its name to COLAGE in 1993 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1999. We've

been going strong ever since!

2005 was a year of incredible growth and expansion for COLAGE: we hired two new staff, and have plans for more. Our new documentary won an award at Frameline's International LGBT Film Festival - our most recent request for information about it came from the Oprah Show! COLAGE Program Director Meredith Fenton went out of town for so many programs and conferences we considered getting her a private office in the airport.

Yet, in the midst of all this hard work, we never forgot what really makes an anniversary special - PARTIES! COLAGE fans and supporters joined us in San Francisco,



Young COLAGERS have fun with arts and crafts during the world premiere of *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*. COLAGE held a 15th Anniversary party in San Francisco to celebrate the debut of our new youth-produced documentary.

Washington DC, and Provincetown to celebrate 15 years of making a difference for people with LGBT parents.

ADVOCACY FORECAST: GEARING UP FOR 2006

ADOPTION

In many states, 2006 will be a monumental year for LGBT family rights. LGBT Family Movement leaders expect at least five states (Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky and Kansas are the most likely) to propose anti-gay adoption and/or foster care Constitutional amendments. These would deny lesbian and gay people (only the Ohio bill explicitly mentions transgender or bisexual people) from becoming adoptive parents. These laws might also take steps that would prevent their state from recognizing LGBT adoptions that were performed in other states. States such as Michigan, Indiana, Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania will likely see state-level legislation addressing LGBT adoption and foster care.

Currently most states leave decisions about adoption and foster care up to the discretion of case workers who make approvals of individuals wishing to become parents. In these states the law is presently silent about LGBT folks and adoption. Florida is the only state with a blanket ban on adoption while Utah bans couples who are unmarried and cohabitate, Mississippi bans same-gender couples and Oklahoma doesn't recognize out-of-state adoptions by same-sex couples.

MARRIAGE

Anti-gay marriage amendments are also expected to appear in up to 14 states. In California, proposed ballot measures would not only ban marriage for same-sex couples but would also outlaw domestic partnership rights and would strip these rights from the thousands of couples who enjoy these protections. Additional anti-gay marriage amendments are expected in states including Arizona, Minnesota, South Carolina, Tennessee,

Wisconsin and Florida.

Several states have optimistic outlooks in regards to same-sex partner recognition. Connecticut joined the ranks of states with civil unions late in 2005, and states such as Washington, New Jersey, and Colorado are organizing to secure these rights for LGBT couples in 2006.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1 Join the COLAGE Speak Out Program

In 2006 it will be more important than ever that youth and adults with LGBT parents are trained, ready and willing to speak out about our experiences. As a member of COLAGE Speak Out you will be connected to both local and national opportunities to do public speaking, media activism, lobbying, and other organizing to protect the rights of kids of LGBT parents and our families. For more information: www.colage.org/programs/youth/speakout



2 Subscribe to COLAGE Net News

In 2006, we know there will be many actions, important news, and calls for support on both state and national levels as both anti-gay and positive pieces of legislation, court cases and ballot

measures progress. The best way to stay up-to-date on all the latest news of interest and import to LGBT families is COLAGE Net News. This email action and alert list is sent 2-3 times a month and is full of important COLAGE updates and community news and alerts. Sign up at: <http://colage.org/programs/advocacy/netnews.htm>

3 Connect to your state-based LGBT advocacy group.

Most states now have an organization committed to protecting and fighting for the rights of LGBT people on a state-wide level. They range in size and structure but are an important tool for connecting to other folks in your state who care about LGBT issues and are organizing to secure rights and fight attacks. An easy way to look up the group in your state is to visit www.federationlgbt.org/.

4 Be out!

COLAGers are important ambassadors between communities - gay and straight; young and old; If we start talking about our families and our experiences to our classmates, teachers, neighbors, coworkers, etc. we will be spreading a message of tolerance and equality.

5 Support COLAGE

When facing attacks such as the 2006 initiatives about adoption and foster care, you need strong national organizations that are poised to make a difference in the fight for equality and justice. Your financial support of COLAGE makes a huge impact in our ability to engage, connect and empower people to make the world a better place for children of LGBT parents. Make a donation today! <http://colage.org/support/>

> COLAGers make new friends at the LAMBDA Families of New Jersey conference in October.



~ Sol Kelly-Jones accepts the Fisher-Davenport award at Family Week

< The COLAGE teen group in Dallas takes a moment just to be silly.



~ COLAGers gather on September 20th to deliver postcards to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in protest of his decision to veto the historic marriage equality legislation passed by the California legislature earlier that month. More than 40,000 postcards were delivered to six statewide offices by youth and adult COLAGers, our families and allies.



THANKS TO ALL OUR

If it weren't for the many hours put in by our volunteers, They share their time and creativity in the service of building community and making

THANK YOU: KRISTIN JOOS



What is your volunteer role at COLAGE?

I have been the list manager for the COLAGE E-kids (elementary aged) and COLAGE Jr-Kids (jr. high or middle school aged) online communities since 1999.

What is your favorite part?

My favorite part of being the list manager has been helping kids connect to other kids.

I have received literally hundreds of emails from kids all over the world who feel like they're the "only one"-- they are desperately seeking to get in touch with other kids with LGBTQ parents. Some kids are from rural areas or communities where LGBTQ families are invisible. It is very rewarding to add someone who feels very alone to the list and then watch as they email back and forth with all of their new friends, who reassure them and give support. There are conversations on the list that come and go-- "how do I tell my friends that my dad is gay?" "people at school are making fun of me because I have lesbian moms, what can I do about it?" -- and though they're repetitious, each time they help someone to feel like they're not alone.

How did you get involved with COLAGE?

It seems like forever ago that I decided to volunteer with COLAGE. When I heard of the opening for a listserv manager, I knew right away that I was interested-- as I had just found COLAGE myself (at age 23). I grew up in the south and did not know other kids of LGBTQ parent(s) until I was in middle school; we were invisible. In many areas, it's different now, but for some kids, there is still a lot of alienation and pain. No matter where someone lives, whether it's rural Alabama or the British Isles, COLAGE's listservs and websites bring us all together to build a sense of community and belonging.

Kristin is 29 years old, lives in Florida, and has a gay dad.

Creating Change Conference Host Committee Representative

Kate Ranson-Walsh

Online Communities and Website

Caroline Cox-Orrell

Elizabeth Hunt

Kristin Joos

Mary Shafer

Pito (Freddy) Ferraro

Whitney Modena-Kurpinsky

THANK YOU: ELEANOR GERBER-SIFF



What is your volunteer role at COLAGE?

I am one of three awesome facilitators of the Middle School group in San Francisco. We get together once a month for games, art, activism, and an all-around good time. I'm also volunteering in the San Francisco COLAGE office, doing whatever is clever that day.

What is your favorite part?

The middle school group is a rockin' bunch of youth, and I have a great time hanging out with them. I wish I had been in the middle school group when I was actually in middle school. It would have helped me get through a particularly rough time, when I was self-conscious about being out about my family.

How did you get involved with COLAGE?

I had been wanting to be more involved with COLAGE, and this semester I found out that my school, San Francisco State, has a program where you can get academic credit through volunteering with a community organization. Of course, my first phone call was to COLAGE, and the rest is history.

Eleanor is 20 years old, lives in San Francisco and has a lesbian mom.

Pen Pal Coordinators

Cathy Sakimura

Ellen Freytag

YLAP Consultant

Jen Gilomen

VOLUNTEERS IN 2005!

many important COLAGE programs would not take place.
ing the world a better place for children and youth with one or more LGBT parent.

Bay Area Group Facilitators 2005/06 school year

Mary Belton (San Francisco COLAGE Crew)
Wade Meyers (East Bay COLAGE Crew)
Shivonne and Eleanor Gerber-Siff
(San Francisco Middle School group)
Jesse Carr (Transgenerations)
Roberta Chambers (East Bay Middle School group)
Sarah Doty, Erika Taylor, & Kelly Densmore (South Bay)

Chapter Coordinators (see back page for more info)

Becca Lazarus
Beth Lanier
Cassandra Varner
Chelsia Rice
Claire Knight
Daniel Miles
Dale Liuzza
Danielle Silber
Deanna Makinen
Deborah Masterson
Elizabeth Boston
Gretchen Shelly
Heather Koeberle
Judi von Gaia
Katie Watson
Kimberly Kinkins
Lakisha Goss
Leza Frazee
Li Pipman-Allis
Liz Wall
Luz Rivera
Michelle Provencher
Monica Canfield-Lenfest
Pat Gordon
Paula Davy
Robbie Sanders
Ruby Cymrot-Wu
Ryan LaLonde
Sandie Hines
Sandi Parker
Sol Kelley-Jones
Tina Fakhrid-Deen
Tristan Tippet

Special Events - Bay Area

Abby Lawton
Ariel Bott
Eleanor Gerber-Siff
Gabriel Press Becker
Maraya Massin Levey
Maria De La O
Marilyn Smith
Nicole Smith
Rachel Bartleman
Robin Walker
Ruby Cymrot-Wu
Sarah Gogin
Shivonne Quintero
Wade Meyer

Special Events and Conferences - National

Amanda Kelly
Amber Pecoraro
Dakota Fine
Douglas Fenton
Jenny Laden
Kate Kovalanka
Kate Ranson-Walsh
Kelly Densmore
Whitney Moses

THANK YOU: PITO FERRAO



What do you do as a volunteer? I am the Webmaster of COLAGE. I maintain, develop, and update COLAGE's website content.

What is your favorite part of your volunteer role with COLAGE?

My favorite part of my volunteer role with COLAGE is knowing I am making a difference to a great national non-profit organization that helps the LGBT community.

Why did you decide to volunteer with COLAGE?

I decided to volunteer with COLAGE because I wanted to help COLAGE grow and at the same time provide myself with personal growth. I have grown with COLAGE as COLAGE has grown with me. COLAGE is a wonderful organization that has helped many types of diverse people, to be a part of this organization is a pleasure to me everyday.

Pito is 22 years old, lives in Connecticut and has straight parents.

Bay Area Group Facilitators, 2004/05 school year

Ramzi Fawaz and Khobi Brooklyn (San Francisco Middle School group)
Mary Belton (Second Tuesday)
Sarah Doty, Erika Taylor and Kelly Densmore (South Bay)
Jesse Carr (Transgenerations)

If YOU would like to find out more about volunteering with COLAGE, contact colage@colage.org, or go to www.colage.org/join/volunteer.htm

You can intern at COLAGE! www.colage.org/programs/academic

Extraordinary Youth Activism Makes Change from page 1

in Sacramento at the state capitol attempting to help gain the support of legislators. I paid an unscheduled visit that morning to my friend, Assemblymember Simon Salinas. Though Assemblymember Salinas had abstained on A.B. 19, and though he had publicly stated that he planned to abstain again, I believed in his leadership, and that he would do the right thing. As my moms and I sat with Assemblymember Salinas, I spoke from my heart. I talked about the hundreds of thousands of people and children in this state who needed his leadership. There was the opportunity to make a place in history for himself as a man who stood for justice and righteousness. I asked Assemblymember Salinas that if one vote was needed to pass the bill, he would picture my family and me, and if he would vote with his heart. I reminded him that I believed in him, and in his integrity. He made me a promise that, when the time came to vote, he would vote with his heart and with his conscience.

Hours later, as Assembly Bill 849 went to a vote, I sat with my moms and watched as the votes rapidly tallied. The votes stopped at 40, one vote shy of passing for what seemed like an eternity. I held my breath, and 30 seconds later, the gallery and the assembly floor erupted with people crying &

cheering. We had our 41st vote! As I hugged my moms with joy, and in disbelief, I looked over to the voting board to see who had cast the passing vote. It had been Assemblymember Simon Salinas!

The greatest leaders in history have been men and women who have refused to stand idly by and watch as people suffer. Instead they have courageously stood up, regardless of personal or political risk. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, popular, or political; but because it is right." Assemblymember Simon Salinas is a great man and a great leader. He is a hero to our community, and I am proud to call him my friend. I am incredibly proud of my Godfather, Assemblymember Mark Leno, for his continued leadership & his vision for our community. Sadly, three weeks later, betraying the families of California, and against the wisdom of the California legislature, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed A.B. 849.

Despite sheer ignorance and a cowardly act by our governor, the gains made by Assembly Bill 849's historic passing of the California Legislature cannot be overlooked or underestimated. This was a monumental step forward; it was history in the making, and there is no going back. For every

person and every leader that stands up against discrimination and bigotry, we are one step closer to ending it. We must continue to fight for full and complete equality for all people, by educating the world one person at a time. Our greatest gains as a community will continue to be made when as people, as youth, and as families, we stand up visibly and proudly. Each of us must get involved in the fight for equality, and we must encourage others to do the same. We have the ability to change hearts and minds everywhere by sharing our stories with others. One person can make a difference. One person can change the world. With great leadership from California State Assemblymember Mark Leno, and the California legislature's LGBT caucus, and with support from great leaders like Assemblymember Simon Salinas, California will continue to be at the forefront of the equal rights movement, leading the way for other states and other legislatures to follow in treating all people, all families and all children, with the dignity and respect that all deserve.

Marina Gatto is a 17 year old nationally recognized LGBT rights activist & leader and the proud teen daughter of two lesbian moms. To learn more about how to get involved in the marriage equality fight log onto: www.MarinaGatto.com

Responding to Hurricane Katrina from page 1

parties, and even a trip to the beach! Before Katrina hit, COLAGE had selected New Orleans as the site for our Fall 2005 Board of Directors retreat and our next 15th anniversary party.

With the hurricane looming, the August event for COLAGE New Orleans was postponed. Neither Dale, nor COLAGE, could predict just how bad the news would turn out to be. We were not in touch with Dale again for several days, and when we finally heard from him the message was brief. Dale wrote: "I am sorry to admit that our city is pretty much gone for a while....I'm sure you've seen all the stories....its horrible...unbelievable....I don't know what to say.... I hope we can talk soon....everything in our life is changing by the hour....we're in Alabama now... probably driving tomorrow to a city in Louisiana... someone's got a trailer for us to live in for a while...I just don't know..."

COLAGE Executive Director Beth Teper immediately put out a call to COLAGers and their families around the country: help our New Orleans families! We encouraged families in areas affected by the hurricane to tell us what they needed, and families from the rest of the country to tell us what they could offer. Emails poured in, both from families affected by the disaster, and other COLAGE families who wanted to connect with LGBT families who had relocated to their

area. Dozens and dozens of families contacted us offering their guest rooms, children's toys, and hand-me-downs. COLAGE staff worked to match families with each other, and Dale provided important ongoing updates about the fates of each of the New Orleans chapter families.

Additionally, COLAGE responded to the leadership of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition and joined their campaign to do relief fundraising specifically for LGBT families and youth affected by Katrina. In 2006, COLAGE will administer a \$35,000 grant aimed at providing relief to these populations.

For much of the country, Hurricane Katrina is a distant memory. For those directly affected by the storm, there is still much work to be done. After 3 months of being separated due to Hurricane Katrina, COLAGE New Orleans families reunited on October 29th for a Halloween Event. Dale Liuzza reported to COLAGE that, "16 kids attended the very first event since July 22nd and we were all so delighted to reunite and just be together again. The kids picked pumpkins from a pumpkin patch, painted their very own pumpkins, posed for pictures, some had their face painted and then we all took an awesome hay-ride together--it was GREAT--and it's soo wonderful to be back."

We are still mourning the many losses experienced

not just by COLAGE families in the Gulf Coast but all people affected by the disaster, and the failures of our government to protect and advocate for the individuals and families most devastated in the wake of Katrina. Our thoughts and prayers salute the courage and resiliency of everyone who survived Katrina, and everyone who helped make that survival possible.

If you are located in any of these areas where COLAGE New Orleans families have relocated, please let us know if you would be willing to be connected with a new LGBT family in your area who was affected by Katrina. Evacuated families are (or were) located in:

North Carolina
Birmingham, Alabama
Homer, Louisiana
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Tampa, Florida
Seattle, Washington
Pensacola, Florida
Atlanta, Georgia
Fort Worth, Texas
Austin, Texas
Jackson, Mississippi
Surprise, Arizona

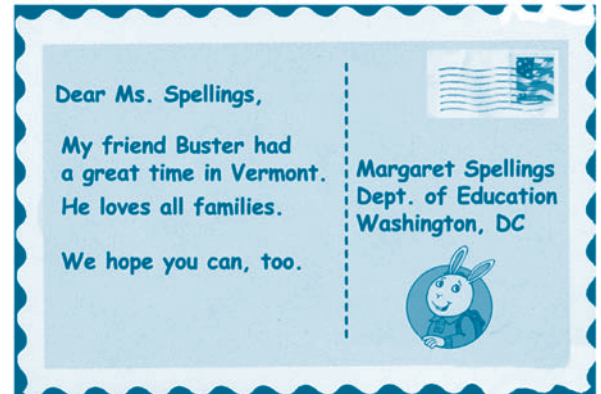
RECEIVING A POSTCARD FROM BUSTER

By Emma Riesner, July 2005

Early in 2005, the PBS cartoon series "Postcards from Buster" became the center of controversy. The show features the animated bunny, Buster (remember Arthur's old friend?), visiting a different home in each episode. In January, an episode featured Buster learning how to make maple sugar on a farmhouse in Vermont with three siblings, David, Emma, and James. At one point Buster is brought into their home and introduced to their 'mom and Gillian.' Although the focus of the show was not about LGBT families, the episode was yanked from the airwaves because the three kids living in the Vermont farmhouse happened to have two moms.

Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, went so far as to suggest that PBS should return any federal money that might have gone into producing the episode. Wayne Godwin, PBS' chief operating officer, explained that, "The presence of a couple headed by two mothers would not be appropriate curricular purpose that PBS should provide." Many local and regional PBS stations chose to air the episode even without the support of their parent organization, and often in the face of pressure from homophobic members of their own communities.

Here, Emma Reisner, age 10, tells what it was like to suddenly have her family become the center of attention and the target of censorship. COLAGE salutes the courage and resilience shown by this family, who were selected to receive the "Families of Courage" award by Family Pride Coalition at the 10th annual Family Week in Provincetown in August.



My name is Emma Riesner. I was a main character in a small children's show called "Postcards from Buster". My family was first discovered from a book called America 24/7. A broadcasting station called WGBH saw a picture that my mom took, in the book, of a lesbian family. WGBH called our family and they asked us if we wanted to be in the TV show. I was pretty excited about being on the TV show because I love Arthur. I thought it was a good idea to do a show about his best friend, Buster.



Pictured above, the Pieper-Pike Family: (from l to r) Gillian, Emma, Karen, David, and James

I do not think it is such a big deal that I have two moms. There is nothing wrong with having two moms. We are no different from any other American family living the average life. However, Margaret Spellings, US Secretary of Education, and Pat Mitchell, President of PBS, didn't want children to see my moms. So they canceled our episode.

I thought that people would think that I was weird because I had two moms. But when everyone started reading about the episode in hundreds of newspaper articles around the country, they thought it was really cool. A lot of people came up to me and said stuff like, "I wish I had two moms," and "What is it like having two moms?"

To be honest, I got really tired of all the interviews and reporters.

The phone was ringing off the hook and I didn't like that my moms had to go away to protest so much. I felt like screaming at Margaret Spellings, "Hey, put that back on the air." Luckily I live in Vermont, a state that aired it anyway.

Even though the episode was canceled, lots of people helped me feel better. I got a case of ice cream from Ben & Jerry's with a letter saying they were proud of our family. I got a teddy bear from a straight father with two teenagers in Pennsylvania. I got a trip

to Washington D.C. to show the episode in the Church of the Pilgrims. We were all invited on the Rosie O'Donnell's R Family Cruise for the vacation of a lifetime (and Rosie is awesome). Finally, my whole family was invited to Provincetown, MA to receive the Family Pride Coalition's "Families of Courage" award. So, I learned that even though Margaret Spellings is prejudiced toward lesbian and gay families, there are lots of people like Buster who love ALL families.

Now when I watch the episode, I see things I wish I could do over. I am like "oh, I wish I could have done that differently," and "oh, I wish I could have said that instead." So it still would be fun to do it again, even though it was really hard work. If we had another chance to do this again we would take it, and we would give Margaret Spellings a piece of our minds.

Chapter Update: COLAGE TAMPA BAY

Hello to all fellow COLAGERS. My name is Daniel Miles-Thomas. I am the "founder" of COLAGE Tampa Bay. I am 15 years old and live with my two moms in St. Petersburg Florida. Planning for COLAGE Tampa Bay began in April 2005. The group had its first meeting in July 2005. I started COLAGE Tampa Bay because of the need for it in our community. The Tampa Bay area has a large population of LGBT people, many of whom have kids. I know that kids of LGBT families often feel alone and isolated from the rest of society. So, I was very excited when my mom told me about COLAGE; and I had to form a local chapter in Florida!

We have done many things, both in the local area and statewide. We had Karen Doering, a staff attorney for the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), speak at one of our meetings on how we can reverse the ridiculous ban on gay adoption in Florida. I stress the word "can" in the last sentence, because we don't want to "help" reverse the ban, we are "going" to reverse it! We don't care how long it takes, it will be done!! That meeting with Karen Doering led us to write a letter to the Florida Legislature, telling them what we think about the ban, giving proven scientific research showing that kids growing up in LGBT families are the same, if not better, than kids in heterosexual households. We also wrote a letter to our neighboring county's commissioner, Kathy Castor, thanking her for standing up to another county commissioner, Rhonda Storms, who proposed to ban all 'gay pride' events! Kathy Castor was the only person to vote against it.

We have also been to our local PRIDE events, passing out information on COLAGE in general and about our chapter and had some media coverage on our group. *Watermark*, a local LGBT newspaper, published an article on our group after our August meeting with Karen Doering. We were very excited after the article was published! We weren't expecting something like this to happen to us in our second month.

We have many plans for our group. We plan to go to Tallahassee Florida and lobby at the capital. We plan to have a group for children ages 9 and younger. We want to get more involved in the community, spreading knowledge, and trying to eliminate and reduce ignorance.

To get involved with COLAGE Tampa Bay email Daniel at tampabay@colage.org or call (727) 547-6280.



A few members of COLAGE Tampa Bay at Pride 2005



SPEAK OUT

QUESTION: *What is one of your favorite memories of 2005 (Especially memories connected to COLAGE or to having an LGBT parent)? What hopes or goals do you have for 2006?*

Terrece, age 12, Janesville, WI

My Favorite Memories about COLAGE is getting a new pen pal. I think it's very exciting to get a new penpal.

Aaron, age 16, Monroe, New York

My favorite memory of 2005 was Family Week in Provincetown. P-town has proven year after year to be the highlight of my summer. Connecting with all the other COLAGERS was a great experience, and my goal for 2006 is to go again, in my final year as just a participant, then to join COLAGE and become a facilitator to help other COLAGERS learn that having gay/lesbian/bi parents is totally fine. In fact... it's AMAZING!!!!

Brenna, age 14, Vicksburg, Michigan

This year I told almost all of my friends about my dad being gay and next year I hope to tell even more people. This year I also got a lot more involved with the other kids at Family Week in Saugatuck and had a ton of fun!

Pamela, age 20, New York, NY

I discovered COLAGE for the first time this year and it has been a major eye-opener to not only find other families with queer parents, but to find such an active and vibrant network of families. I came across COLAGE while conducting a random google search one night and since then have had a very exciting experiencing contacting the first queerspawn I've ever known of other than myself and my brother. So, I'd have to say that my favorite COLAGE experience this year was a acquiring a new community to talk to and a new queerspawn vocabulary to talk in.

Chelsea, age 9, Bronx NY

One of my favorite memories in 2005 is when my 2 moms took me to Provincetown MA for Family Pride Week. It was totally awesome. I never knew there were so many other children like me that have 2 mommies or 2 daddies!!! I met many friends there and the workshops that COLAGE had, offered me the chance to express who I am and where I come from! I am now even more PROUD to have 2 GREAT MOMS. In 2006, I don't want to go to Disney as my moms are planning. I hope to go to Family Pride Week 2006 and meet the friends I met this past Summer and make new Friends and go to Herring Cove Beach with my old and new friends and build sand castles.

Aimee, age 14, Apple Valley, California.

One of my favorite times in 2005 has been becoming president of my high school's GSA (Gay/Straight Alliance.) The girl who started our GSA in the previous year was unable to stay at our school and I was voted president a month or two after the school year started. Being president of a club is a lot of responsibility and work but for this club it's worth it. Our goal is to spread tolerance and acceptance, and I believe we are achieving our goal. We have tremendous support from the students and staff, more than I expected. It just shows that the world is changing. My goal for 2006 is to gain more students in the club and get our campus involed and aware of our GSA and what its purpose is.



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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.