

PFLAG ORLANDO

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends.

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Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends. This is done through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Support meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the Month at the First United Methodist Church of Downtown Orlando 142 East Jackson Street, Orlando, FL, Wesley Building, Room 205 and start at 7:30pm

Our next few meetings are 12/19/07 and 1/16/08.

Palm Beach County School Board to weigh policy on blocking Web sites By Marc Freeman

Every so often, controversies emerge over whether certain Web sites belong on Palm Beach County school computers. Soon, decisions to block or unblock them may be made by a new group of district officials.

The Sensitive Topics Committee — middle and high school principals and administrators from academic departments — is part of a proposed School Board policy concerning Internet security. Board members today will discuss the proposal, which stems from a challenge last year over the blocking of so-called "gay-supportive" Web sites on School District-owned computers.

sun-sentinel.com

Gay-pride event mixes politics with partying The stepfather of a man killed this year in Polk will speak Sunday at Lake Eola. Jeff Kunerth

The stepfather of Ryan Keith Skipper, a 25-year-old gay man killed in Polk County earlier this year, is scheduled to speak at Sunday's Come Out With Pride event at Lake Eola Park.

Lynn Mulder is expected to address a crowd of 25,000. Two men have been charged with first-degree murder of Skipper, whose death spurred calls for the inclusion of sexual orientation as a hate crime. On Sept. 27, the U.S. Senate did just that -- passing the Matthew Shepard Act, named for the Wyoming man brutally murdered in 1998.

Come Out With Pride 2007 -- which is part party, part political rally -- will include speeches by local politicians, a parade around Lake Eola, glamorized swan boats, a medley of Broadway show tunes, and a concert by Jennifer Holliday, who won a Tony and Grammy in 1982 for her stage performance in Dreamgirls.

orlandosentinel.com

Stearns votes against job discrimination bill for gays Congressman says vague bill could infringe upon religious freedoms. BY MABEL PEREZ

Ocala - Ocala Congressman Cliff Stearns voted against a bill Wednesday that would prohibit gay men, lesbians and bisexuals from being discriminated in the workplace, despite strong majority support in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In a news release, the Republican congressman said, "Although workers should be protected from unfair employment discrimination, it should not come at the cost of our Constitutional right to practice religion." ocala.com

Nadine Smith: "This desire to speak up ...": The Influencers: Columns: Creative Loafing Tampa
BY ERIC SNIDER

Who? Nadine Smith, 42, has been the executive director of Equality Florida since its inception in 1997. The organization's mission statement says, "Equality Florida is our statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights organization working to change Florida law so that no one suffers harassment or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression."

Sphere of influence: Equality Florida reaches more than 60,000 GLBT-supportive households in Florida. Smith is visible wherever GLBT rights are challenged. During the Susan Stanton hearings in Largo, she was arrested for distributing fliers. The charges were later dropped. Smith is also an effective legislative lobbyist and lives in Tallahassee during sessions.

How she makes a difference: Every advocacy group needs a tireless, organized and effective leader, and Smith has embraced the role. In '95, she was campaign manager for Citizens for a Fair Tampa, a group that successfully prevented the city of Tampa from repealing its human rights ordinance, which includes sexual orientation. Smith does not restrict her efforts to GLBT concerns. Her work also encompasses crime, poverty, education, race, the environment and other social issues.

tampa.creativeloafing.com

Efforts for gays lead to awards

ORLANDO - -More than 30 people were recognized Friday for their contributions to the local gay community in an awards ceremony sponsored by Orlando's Gay Lesbian Bisexual Community Center.

Spectrum Awards were given to members of 15 groups. Debbie Simmons, head of the Metropolitan Business Association, and Leigh Shannon, who owns Ritzzy Rags, Wigs & More, were honored with "Heart of the Community" awards.

The awards, started in 1994, were discontinued about seven years ago. They were revived this year by the gay-community center, which under new leadership is sponsoring more social events. orlandosentinel.com

Florida School Bans "Sex Clubs"

The Okeechobee County School Board got creative when it banned a gay straight alliance:

The Okeechobee County School Board has banned so-called "sex-based" clubs, a move the ACLU has called another attack on members of the Gay-Straight Alliance of Okeechobee High School.

In a unanimous vote Tuesday, school board members adopted the policy that bans any club that is "sex-based or based upon any sexual grouping, orientation or activity of any kind."

District officials have said the new policy, which takes effect immediately, aims to ban clubs that challenge the district's abstinence-only education.

So, the school not only gets to ban the group, but successfully boiled sexual identity down to sex acts. A for effort, F for equality. queerty.com

Amendment banning same-sex marriages closing in on ballot spot in November 2008

Opponents stress that measure could affect straight couples By ANNA SCOTT
anna.scott@heraldtribune.com

A constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in Florida is closing in on a spot on the 2008 ballot, triggering a political battle that could sway voters in a presidential year.

Florida4Marriage, the group pushing the amendment, has 597,000 signatures and needs only 13,000 more to put it before voters.

Proponents of the ban are heartened by polls showing that the amendment has a good chance of getting the 60 percent of votes necessary for passage.

heraldtribune.com

Democrats focus on defeating amendment By By Bill Cotterell

- A constitutional amendment banning gay marriage in Florida is certain to get on the ballot but will lose at the polls if enough voters become worried about its impact on heterosexual couples, campaign strategists told delegates to the state Democratic Party convention Sunday.

"This amendment really has to be the focal point for all Democrats in Florida for 2008," said Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida, at a briefing on the amendment campaign. "The reason this will be on the ballot has nothing to do with protecting anyone's marriage and everything to do with turning out the most conservative voters in Florida."

news-press.com

LGBT parenting in Florida

Lesbian and gay adoption may slowly become a reality in Florida. Proposed legislation would allow it under circumstances.

A new bill may pave the way toward lesbian and gay adoption in Florida.

The proposed bill - SB 200 - states a homosexual man or woman is eligible to adopt a child under certain circumstances.

According to Bay News 9, the scenarios include - but they're not limited to - if the child has resided with the person, the child's parents are deceased, and the person proposing to adopt the child is the guardian.

proudparenting.com

Several news sites move articles behind firewall creating broken links. Please go to their site and use the search boxes to find more on articles found here.

\$1m plan to make Noosa gay mecca By Kathy Sundstrom

Noosa Council and developer Stockwell have financially backed an American philosophy aimed at attracting more professional, unattached 20 to 30-year-olds, including the "oft-overlooked gays and bohemians".

The philosophy is the brainchild of American intellectual and author Richard Florida who believes there is a strong correlation between a region's prosperity and its receptiveness to artists, gays, bohemian-types and well-educated, single professionals.

Taxpayers will help fund the cost of bringing Florida to Noosa in November where he will deliver a separate \$1 million program called "Noosa Creative Alliance: Inspiring a Knowledge Economy".

Florida's Creative Class Group has already been engaged to undertake research to "measure Noosa's creativity and its potential to attract creative industries".

Florida's says his "creativity index" takes into account the "proportion of gay people in the population" as well as the share of people employed in creative endeavours, the numbers of patents granted per capita and the amount of high-tech industrial output.

thedaily.com.au

Gays are diverse group, study finds

To judge from the images on network television and corporate advertising, lesbians and gay men share the same demographic niche: affluent, educated, urban -- and usually white. Wrong, wrong, wrong and wrong, says a new national demographic study that suggests lesbians and gays are more likely to be older, "responsible" suburbanites sharing a mortgage payment and listening to country music than young turks partying in the Castro or Chelsea.

orlandosentinel.com

"I always wanted to be one of those people who would make things change for my gay friends - I just wasn't sure how or where to do it."

Sound familiar?

Chances are it is. Across the country, thousands of allies - straight individuals who don't necessarily have a family member who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT) - are seeing big changes in the way that their GLBT friends and colleagues are treated. While many of these changes are good, there's still a long way to go before equality is reached.

The problem is that many of these allies want to help, but just don't know how, or if they're needed, or, for that matter, where to start.

Allies, you've come to the right place. Straight for Equality is the answer for you.

Straight for Equality is a national outreach and education project to empower allies in supporting and advocating for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in three primary arenas:

- Our homes
- Our workplaces
- Our communities

Basically, if there's a place where you can talk to someone else, there's an opportunity for you to put some of the things you can get from Straight for Equality into action.

We're not talking about major political protests (although that's certainly an option) but the tiny everyday changes - like not omitting the fact that your best friend is gay when you're telling grandma about him - raise awareness and challenge assumptions and stereotypes. Maybe it means objecting when someone at the office tells that really over-the-top gay joke...again. Or perhaps it is about paying attention to how a candidate stands on equality issues and making your opinion heard with your vote.

Really, the possibilities for what you can do are endless.

Welcome to Straight for Equality - we're glad you're here and can't wait for you to start learning more.

community.pflag.org

Florida village boasts art and diversity By DIANE DANIEL

Gulfport, Fla. — It used to be that locals avoided this former rough-and-tumble fishing town wedged between St. Petersburg and St. Pete Beach in west central Florida.

But for the past decade, Gulfport, a city of 13,000 residents, has been steadily transforming itself into an arts community, attracting visitors from Tampa Bay and faraway.

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Along the way, it has drawn so many gay and lesbian year-round and winter residents (an estimated 30 percent of the population) that it has earned such titles as Provincetown South and Gayberry. The downtown merchant's association is involved with the regional gay pride festivities (www.stpetepride.com), and late last year Gulfport became one of the few municipalities in Florida, and the first in the Tampa Bay area, to adopt a human rights ordinance that protects not only gays and lesbians but also transgendered people.

Sink takes one small step for domestic partners By Bill Cotterell

Jones predicted that the time would soon come when state government, Florida's largest employer, would have to adapt its personnel policies to what's going on in society.

This month, Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink took a very small first step toward such an adaptation. She announced that employees of the Department of Financial Services may use sick leave to care for domestic partners.

The significance of this is probably more symbolic than practical. People were probably already doing it anyway. It's not as if a flood of employees will phone in and say, "My partner is sick today." But now, instead of making up something, they can say they're tending to an ill partner. tallahassee.com