



The OUTbox

AN **OUTniagara** PUBLICATION

Fall Edition
September 2009

2009 Pride in Niagara had something for everyone

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Mayor Brian McMullan and Pride supporters at the raising of the Rainbow flag in June 2009.

Our Precious Time By Michel Lukacsy

June..., the anniversary of the summer of Stonewall
A community reassembles
To celebrate who we are,
How far we have journeyed,
Our diversity, our heartfelt pride

We remember those
Who, before and for us,
Struggled and fought
For the rights, the freedom
From which we benefit this day

Smiling faces, warm embraces
Together, we rejoice in knowing
That we will, some day,
Overcome all obstacles
In our precious time...

2009 Pride continued on page 2 ...

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2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued

Stonewall, decriminalization remembered during flag raising

Following is the text of the address given by Melissa Gray of OUTniagara during the June 2009 raising of the rainbow flag:



Partner organizations brought their banners. This is a small fraction of the people that make the Pride Community great.

Welcome to Pride in Niagara's 5th annual raising of the Rainbow Flag here at St. Catharines City Hall! I'm so glad to be here again this year with Mayor Brian McMullan to commemorate this important occasion.

I'm Melissa Gray and I am the Vice-Chair for OUTniagara, as well as this year's Pride in Niagara committee chair. Please help me welcome our Mayor of St. Catharines, Brian McMullan.

We are here today not only to celebrate diversity and show our pride, but to remind ourselves of the struggle that continues for people to feel safe at work and school, in their church and their neighbourhood. We are here to continue the struggle to attain equal rights for everyone!

We are able to be here in part because of courageous, determined individuals much like us who saw the need to advocate for change. They struggled they fought and they protested until the bill was passed to decriminalize homosexuality. It's hard for some of us to believe that this year only marks the 40th anniversary of that law. Before 1969, a person was considered a criminal just for loving his or her partner.

We all know the importance of celebrating diversity in our communities. Our country's leaders and elected officials must recognize that *all* citizens are of value and worthy of inclusion. We applaud the vision of the Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations that states that "all persons are equal and have a right to live, work and visit in an environment that respects diversity and is free of discrimination and harassment."

Gay, lesbian, bi, trans, queer, questioning and intersex persons all are an important part of our diverse landscape. Although some of us in the sexual- and gender-diverse community have gained rights, freedoms and acceptance, there are still struggles for some, like our underserved trans community members.

Homophobia/transphobia is a societal problem. And it is particularly destructive in schools, where the victims are children and youth who are at the most insecure and vulnerable stage in their lives.

We are here today, helping to create safe and safer spaces. This is a celebration of diversity!

The GLBTQ community contributes just as much as the broader community does, as taxpayers, as good citizens and hard-working volunteers. Just look at our GLBTQ community members here today, and all our supporters. We are your teachers, your small-business owners, steel and auto sector workers, and your community volunteers. We help make this city and this country a beautiful and diverse place to live, work and raise our families.

Inclusion. Acceptance. Support. Protection. These rights are for all of us.

Pride in Niagara is an exciting time. We have a great lineup of diverse events throughout this month. Today is just the beginning of our celebration. This weekend is full of fun for everyone, and we do mean everyone.

Our Pride Dance is this Friday at the CAW Hall. We invite everyone to come out and dance the night away with great prizes to be won. And as always, this event is open to our youth.

Saturday we have a Snappy, Sassy Supper at the Keefer Mansion and then a Latin Fiesta at the Vous.

One of Pride's most loved events, the Pride Picnic, will be held this Sunday with a BBQ, kids' games, doggie show and so much more. Wow, and that's just the first weekend!

Too many amazing events to mention, but I do want to say a few words about a new event that is creating so much excitement. It is our first year as a team participating in the Relay for Life! I can't tell you how fabulous it will be in tent city at Brock University with so many of us participating in this important and fun fundraiser. Support the Canadian Cancer Society and Team OUTreach by donating to such a worthy cause!

So these are just a few of the Pride month's events. For the full list of events and to get more detailed information, please go to OUTniagara's website at www.outniagara.ca

Celebrate, unite, show your pride here today, and throughout this month at all our Pride in Niagara Events. And everyday continue to embrace diversity and encourage inclusion for every person.

United we stand strong and proud.

"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." —**Dr. Seuss**

2009 Pride continued on page 3 ...

2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued

Niagara Pride family picnic



Hard-working volunteers from PFLAG at the ticket table



The Jump and Bounce kept the young and young at heart busy all afternoon



The "Tyke of a Dyke" brings smiles to the faces of volunteers



Food is prepared for the hungry hordes

more Pride Family Picnic photos on page 6 ...

2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued

Team OUTreach a huge success in first Relay for Life event

By Joan Wiley

'Round and' round and' round we went — for 12 hours.

As part of this year's Pride in Niagara festivities, a team representing many of the Niagara's LGBTQ organizations participated in Relay for Life, a fundraising marathon for the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS). The event was technically co-captained by Cathy Mackenzie of PFLAG St. Catharines and myself representing TransParent Canada. Technically, I say, because Cathy did the lion's share of the organizational work.

Team OUTreach, as we were known, was hugely successful in its first appearance at Relay for Life on June 19, raising more than \$2,000 online and hundreds of dollars in cash donations. Uniting all of the more than 100 participating teams was a common cause – to raise funds for cancer research and programs of the CCS. In all, participating teams raised more than \$300,000.

Long before the actual walk, Melissa, Adriana, Kaitlynn, Kyle, Cathy and Michael all brought or helped to set up tents at the Brock University site in mid-afternoon. Organization banners were strung between trees for a festive appearance. Information was set out on tables for passers-by to peruse. Rainbow flags were draped from shoulders and tents.

We changed into our Team OUTreach T-shirts that were created by Paula. Many thanks also to Kaitlynn who set up and printed the transfers and ironed them on the shirts.



Joan Wiley, wearing a rainbow flag, prepares to march in the Survivor Lap

The event began with the first lap, called the Survivors' Victory Walk for those currently living with cancer or who have beaten it. I was honoured to wear the yellow Survivor T-shirt to represent Team OUTreach, and I was joined by Gabrielle's mom and other individuals ranging from bald-headed youngsters to seniors in wheelchairs. Supporters applauded, many wept. It was a tremendously moving experience.

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2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued

Team OUTreach in first Relay for Life event continued from page 4

And then the real work began. A schedule that had been drawn up to ensure that at least one OUTreach team member was on the course was almost immediately discarded—we had at least three volunteers on the track at all time, even at 4 a.m. in the miserable rain. Go team!

We were well cared for. No one went hungry with all the snacks from Natalie, the fruit from Stephanie and the pizza from Brian.

Ali, Shelley, Joey, Robyn, Tyler, Gabrielle, Denise and Brandon were tireless as they and the rest of us walked around the circuit. A rainbow flag was always draped over someone's shoulder, raising our profile at the relay and the broader community as well.

Another emotional moment occurred during the lighting of the thousands of luminaries that lined the course. Printed on each bag was the name of an individual who had lost the battle with cancer or who was living with the disease. Hundreds of people paused for a moment of silence, broken only by the sound of bagpipes.

Team OUTreach accomplished what we set out to do. We raised money for cancer research, we showed everyone at the event that members of the LGBTQ community are engaged and contributing citizens, and we had fun. What could be better?

Even in the darkest part of the night, Team OUTreach members were always on the track



More picture from the Pride Family Picnic on the next page ...

2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued



Two friends reunite at the picnic



The dog show was a crowd pleaser, as usual



More than 400 children, youth, adults, family members and friends gathered to celebrate our diversity in Niagara at the annual family picnic organized by Niagara Pride Support Service/Rainbow Youth.



2009 Pride in Niagara ... continued

Pride dance 09

Getting their groove on



Chris and Scott





Obama declares June 2009 LGBT Pride month

Following is the text of the proclamation by U.S. President Barack Obama declaring June 1, 2009 LGBT Pride month:



Forty years ago, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City resisted police harassment that had become all too common for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Out of this resistance, the LGBT rights movement in America was born. During LGBT Pride Month, we commemorate the events of June 1969 and commit to achieving equal justice under law for LGBT Americans.

LGBT Americans have made, and continue to make, great and lasting contributions that continue to strengthen the fabric of American society. There are many well-respected LGBT leaders in all professional fields, including the arts and business communities. LGBT Americans also mobilized the Nation to respond to the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic and have played a vital role in broadening this country's response to the HIV pandemic.

Due in no small part to the determination and dedication of the LGBT rights movement, more LGBT Americans are living their lives openly today than ever before. I am proud to be the first President to appoint openly LGBT candidates to Senate-confirmed positions in the first 100 days of an Administration. These individuals embody the best qualities we seek in public servants, and across my Administration — in both the White House and the Federal agencies — openly LGBT employees are doing their jobs with distinction and professionalism.

The LGBT rights movement has achieved great progress, but there is more work to be done. LGBT youth should feel safe to learn without the fear of harassment, and LGBT families and seniors should be allowed to live their lives with dignity and respect.

My Administration has partnered with the LGBT community to advance a wide range of initiatives. At the international level, I have joined efforts at the United Nations to decriminalize homosexuality around the world. Here at home, I continue to support measures to bring the full spectrum of equal rights to LGBT Americans. These measures include enhancing hate crimes laws, supporting civil unions and Federal rights for LGBT couples, outlawing discrimination in the workplace, ensuring adoption rights, and ending the existing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in a way that strengthens our Armed Forces and our national security. We must also commit ourselves to fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic by both reducing the number of HIV infections and providing care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS across the United States.

These issues affect not only the LGBT community, but also our entire Nation. As long as the promise of equality for all remains unfulfilled, all Americans are affected. If we can work together to advance the principles upon which our Nation was founded, every American will benefit. During LGBT Pride Month, I call upon the LGBT community, the Congress, and the American people to work together to promote equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2009 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. I call upon the people of the United States to turn back discrimination and prejudice everywhere it exists.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

BARACK OBAMA

France declassifies transsexuality as mental illness



Transsexualism will no longer be classified in France as a mental illness, a government decision hailed in May 2009 as "historic" by the associations concerned, on the eve of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

The Minister of Health, Roselyne Bachelot, had appealed to the High Authority of Health in order to make a decree that transsexualism be removed from the category of psychiatric disorders, a spokesman for the department stated.

This classification, arising from that of the World Health Organization (WHO), was also linked to the fact that transsexualism appeared on the list of pathologies identified in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) to which the medical profession refers, as was the case for homosexuality a few years ago.

WHO decided on May 17, 1990 to remove homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses. This date has been retained for the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

Sherbourne launches guide for trans health care



The LGBT Health Program at Sherbourne Health Centre (SHC) announced in May the launch of Guidelines and Protocols for Comprehensive Primary Health Care for Trans Clients, a guide to help Ontario clinicians in their day-to-day practice with their transgender and transsexual clients.

"These guidelines summarize the current clinical practice at Sherbourne Health Centre and they are meant to reflect our management of transsexual clients and to thus help other physicians by demystifying our practice," said Dr. Kate Greenaway, family physician at SHC.

An earlier version of the guidelines was developed in 2003 by a working group of health-care providers at SHC, working together with trans community members. This revision of the original document was created in response to the many requests from health-care providers across Ontario and Canada for advice around providing primary care to clients receiving hormone therapy.

"We hope that this document will enable more family physicians to be involved in care of transsexual clients," said Dr. Sydney Tam, family physician at SHC. "It is a rewarding experience to assist someone with the integration of their gender identity, and we feel privileged to be a part our clients' transitions. We wish to share this experience with other clinicians."

The guidelines include protocols for treatment with hormone therapy for both male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals, as well as guidelines for providing resources, support and advocacy for trans clients. The guidelines also include sample letters and forms and a glossary of frequently used terms.

The guidelines are currently available as a PDF download on the Sherbourne Health Centre website at: www.sherbourne.on.ca and in the online resource database at: www.RainbowHealthOntario.ca/resources/searchDB.cfm.

"We hope that this document will enable more family physicians to be involved in care of transsexual clients"

The realization

By Cameron David Campbell

I am sick of mainstream gay media. I am sick of the fact that the vast, vast majority of books, magazines and movies targeted towards gay men demand self-hatred of their consumers. I hate how I (religiously) purchased gay magazines like *Instinct*, *The Advocate*, *Out* and *Genre* for more than four years and was made to feel like the only way I could have worth in the gay community was to become shallow, narcissistic, promiscuous, thin and "straight acting." I could never understand why I should have to leave one closet simply to enter another.

As I was contemplating this last night I realized something. After being openly gay for seven years it had finally happened, I had finally moved from Stage 5 (identity pride) to Stage 6 (identity synthesis) on the Cass Identity Model. I no longer needed to define myself as a gay man but simply as a man who among other things happened to be gay.

Yes, I listen to Madonna. Yes, I am flamboyant. Yes, most of my friends are women. Yes, my bedroom looks like a campy rave. Yes, I wear dress shoes, pants and shirts every day. But it's not because I'm gay, it's because I'm Cameron David Campbell. I'm no longer proud of myself for being gay, now I am simply just proud of myself for being myself, and I fully refuse to conform to any cultural ideals, gay or straight. I've come a long way over the last seven years, and I realize that coming out is a continual process (both internal and external). It is more important to be true to yourself than to follow what society expects from you. The day I never thought would come just came. I've finally grown up.

Anglican blessing for gay, lesbian couples in Niagara

As of Sept. 1, gay and lesbian couples in Niagara are now able to have their marriages blessed by Anglican priests.

The Niagara Rite of Blessing, introduced by Bishop Michael Bird, head of the Niagara diocese, paves the way for the blessings. The Niagara diocese will be only the second diocese in Canada to bless unions — the New Westminster diocese in British Columbia was the first.

In a newspaper interview in July, Bird said: "The short answer is we believe God is calling us to move in this direction. There's a strong sense of that across the diocese."

People need to be free to "experience the presence of God in their own way," he added.

The Diocese of Niagara has 50,000 Anglicans. The area includes the Niagara peninsula, east to Oakville, north of Guelph and west to Nanticoke.

In the same newspaper interview, Bird said that welcoming gays and lesbians is a social justice issue. Reaching out to people, he said, is consistent with the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Niagara diocese will be only the second diocese in Canada to bless unions — the New Westminster diocese in British Columbia was the first.



Peeling off the label

(The author, who lives in Niagara, has requested anonymity)

I'm not the brightest crayon in the box,
But I have something to make up for that.
I'm funny, outgoing, amazing.
I'll tell you something —
I'm NOT one of those labels you put on people.
I'm myself and proud of it.
I love to bang on my drums and play the guitar.
I love any kind of music and
I write my own music.
I'm still in school.
I love my friends,
They are what keeps me motivated.
Never Ever let people tell you you're not worth it,
Because you are worth it all.
We are all valuable,
And have gifts that need to be found.
We can change the world and make it a better place,
If you all just be who you are,
And not worry 'bout what people think.
So stay cool.
Be your self.
That's all there is to it.

Rainbow Youth Niagara



Would you like to connect with other GLBTQ Youth?

Would you like to participate in activities?

Do you have any ideas for fun activities to do together?

Do you need someone supportive to talk to?

If so, please contact Stephanie at Rainbow Youth Niagara, as she would love to connect with you!

905-380-4576 (can text as well)

ryn@niagarapride.ca

www.niagarapride.ca

Passages

Matthew Cutler

received the Pride Toronto Award of Excellence in Youth Leadership at the 5th Annual Gala & Awards. The award was presented in recognition of the important contributions that made to both the Toronto and Niagara communities and his enormous potential for future leadership. For the full story, please see

<http://www.pridetoronto.com/news/matthew-cutler-excellence-in-youth-leadership/>

Joan Wiley,

founder of TransParent Canada, won the international Interweave competition for Unitarian sermons that focus on the LGBTQ community. She was invited to deliver her presentation at the annual Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Salt Lake City, Utah, in June.

Melissa Gray

has accepted an offer from Scotiabank and will be making an exciting career move



In Time

By Michel Lukacsy

How would I have continued
To live my life
My existence
Neglecting who I am

A second chance
I was given
In the darkness of despair
Light beamed

I saw it in time

An **OUT**niagara Publication

We want to hear from you!

The copy/photo submission deadline for the mid-December 2009 issue of *The OUTbox* is Saturday, November 7.

Tell us all about the recent activities of your organizations; send in poetry, photos or opinion pieces; submit items for our Passages column that marks and celebrates milestones in people's lives – weddings, births, deaths, adoptions, graduations, new jobs, and so on. Don't be shy. Items can be sent to:

joan@outniagara.ca or outbox@outniagara.ca.

We look forward to hearing from you.