

lymph nodes) in his lower GI tract. I was very uncomfortable around this guy.

With the exceptions noted above, I tried to see it as someone else's issue, at least until I came to Bloomington, Illinois in 2006. Even then I tried to forget about it, which was hard since the Saturday night movie club met at the AIDS Task Force headquarters.

This year (2009) I felt differently. I picked up a copy of a book I had first seen in the Task Force library. It was "And the Band Played On - Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic" by Randy Shiels. Having read it now, I react to the people who could have prevented the epidemic, limited its spread or mitigated the effects of infection. The book was all about denial, a belief that some obvious, dramatically serious problem is minor or not exist at all. There is a joke about denial. It goes like this: there is an elephant in the family living room but everyone pretends the elephant is not there. Nobody talks about it.

I want to mention the more visceral component of my reaction to the facts Shiels presented. I realize that the joyful freedom that I had in the 1970's is gone, permanently, and that anyone older than 40 or so in some way bears the mark of the epidemic.

The detailed account has shown me that all that is political is painful. It is endless compromise, uneasy alliances, trusting people who often let you down, people who compete with one another at exactly the wrong time, half-truths, opportunism, choices dictated by money and vanity. The machinations of Dr. Robert Gallo of the National Cancer Institute are an example of the competition and vanity that was ultimately destructive.

Regarding this political pain, I have a choice to make: Stay with the pain or choose anger. The latter choice would meet my immediate emotional needs but would diminish any usefulness to the community that I might have. There is a third choice, namely passion, which is a sort of amalgam of pain, anger and hope. This is what Carl Jung was onto with his annoyingly persistent discussion of alchemy. Tonight I will throw in my lot with Jung.

**Serving Our Community**

**Insurance and Financial Services**

**Scott Simons**  
**Financial Services Associate**  
**The Prudential Insurance Company of America**  
**2305 Village Green Place, Suite A**  
**Champaign, IL 61822**  
**217-398-2500**  
<http://www.prudential.com/us/scott.simons>  
**scott.simons@prudential.com**



Insurance issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ and its affiliates. IFS-A113832 Ed. 10/2007

A fully customized  
cleaning in a  
one-size-fits-all world.

Come home to a customized service that is  
guaranteed to fit you perfectly.

**\$60 off**  
 \$20 off first 3 cleanings  
 Weekly or biweekly service  
 309-661-1726



merrymaids.com **merry maids**  
Relax. It's Done.™

New customers only. Not valid with other offers. \*661 only at this location. Cash value of 1/1000 of 1 cent. ©2009 Merry Maids of America, LLC 11/2009



**New Covenant Community**

An Open and Affirming/More Light congregation which welcomes all persons into full participation in the life of our community, regardless of race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

**Worship Sundays, 10:30 a.m.**  
 Sunday School and childcare provided during worship

Chapel of the Campus Religious Center  
 210 W. Mulberry St., Normal, IL 61761 | (309) 454-7362  
[www.nccnormal.org](http://www.nccnormal.org)

# The Rainbow Connection

July 2009

ACHR Board of Directors: Dave Bentlin; Peggy Burton; Gary Gletty; Margo Mendoza; Donna O'Crowly

The Rainbow Connection is published by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR). Correspondence can be sent to P.O. Box 5048, Bloomington, IL 61702-5048, or e-mail [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com)

## Family Reunion Picnic

Did you miss out on the pride events in June? Well, all is not lost; the Advocacy Council is planning a FANTASTIC "Family Reunion" picnic from noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, July 19 under the shelter at Underwood Park in Normal.

Let's get down to the important stuff...THE FOOD! As in years past we will furnish the grillable items - meat and veggie options - as well as the buns and condiments. We encourage everyone attending to bring a food item to share with the group.

Paper products including plates, napkins, and silverware will be provided by our friends at the

McLean County AIDS Task Force. The task force will also offer drinks for sale with the proceeds going to local lgbtq organizations.

The afternoon will feature raffles, games for adults and children (including a piñata), and FREE ice cream for everyone!

We have reserved the shelter so there will be plenty of picnic tables for seating, but there is also plenty of room for lawn chairs and blankets so feel free to bring those with you as well.

For questions about the Family Reunion Picnic please e-mail us at [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com).

## LGBT Film Festival

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights has decided that the time has come to hold an LGBT film festival in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois and is aiming for a weekend in the autumn of 2010 to stage the event.

To determine the nature of the film festival and begin to develop a plan, ACHR invites interested individuals and groups to participate in an organizational meeting at 5 PM on Tuesday, July 21, 2009 at the Connections Community Center, 313 N. Main St. in Bloomington (across the street from the Bistro).

Please contact ACHR with your skills and interests at [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com) and join in the excitement on Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Bistro events in July

The Bistro July calendar includes drag, talent and lots of good times.

On July 10, mistress of ceremonies Sharen Share Alike will host a Showcast featuring some of your favorite Bistro performers including Devin Graberass and DeCevia Mann. The show begins at 11 p.m. and cover charge is \$5.

The month wraps up on July 31 with a new monthly event, a talent show showcasing local talent. Anyone who has a talent is invited to sign up!

For more details go to the Bistro's Facebook page (just search for Bloomington Bistro).

## BN Dining OUT

The BN Dining OUT group will get together at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 14 to eat at Elroy's in downtown Bloomington.

BN Dining OUT is an informal group for gays, lesbians and their friends in the Bloomington/Normal area that meets each month for socialization and networking within the community.

For more information about the group go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BNDiningOUT/>.

## LGBT financial and legal strategies

A workshop geared towards strategies that the LGBT community can put into place to secure the financial future of their partners, loved ones, or those who they want

the money to go to will be at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 8 at the Bistro, 316 N. Main St. in downtown Bloomington.

Included in the workshop will be financial and legal strategies that should be considered by members of the LGBT community. The information will be presented in an upbeat and entertaining way, with refreshments provided by Lancaster's.

RSVPs are encouraged and can be made by contacting Scott Simon at 309-212-0750 or [scott.simons@prudential.com](mailto:scott.simons@prudential.com).

## Award-winning Gay author at local church

Marc Adams, Silver Pen Award recipient for his autobiography, The Preacher's Son will be the featured speaker at the 10 a.m. service on Sunday, July 5 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington/Normal, 1613 E. Emerson St. in Bloomington.

"The Preacher's Son" chronicles Marc's life growing up gay as the

continued from page 1 ...

son of a fundamentalist Baptist minister in rural Pennsylvania where he endured a childhood of physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse. He went on to attend, by choice, Jerry Falwell's Liberty University where he also was employed for 3 ½ years in the student recruiting/university relations department. His book articulately reveals life at Liberty and the struggle to conform to the standards for which he would have been a martyr. It culminates with his coming to terms with being gay and his coming out to his fundamentalist Baptist Christian family.

Since its release in 1996, "The Preacher's Son" has garnered praise from bookstores, reviewers, the mainstream press, and the gay and lesbian media. Not to be discounted, Marc says, are the thousands of letters and e-mails he has received

from men and women, gay and straight, who have read his books and found themselves changed.

Marc will share some of his life's story, talk about his latest book, (lost)Found, as well as "HeartStrong, Inc.," the non-profit organization he co-founded. "HeartStrong, Inc." is a non-profit educational organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students of religious schools, colleges, and universities. HeartStrong has provided hope and help to GLBT students who have endured faith-based anti-GLBT bullying in religious schools around the world since 1996.

All of Marc's books and resources will be available for purchase, including his latest book (the much anticipated follow up to "The Preacher's Son," (lost)Found. For more information about Marc Adams see [www.meetmarcadams.com](http://www.meetmarcadams.com).

## ILGRA variety show at Shark Bar

The Shark Bar, 3 Finance Drive in Bloomington, will host the ILGRA Variety Show at 8 p.m. on Saturday, July 18.

The variety show will feature country music, impersonated entertainment, raffles, the selling of rodeo tickets, and promotion of our upcoming rodeo. Also included will be dance lessons by the Windy City Cowboys.

The Illinois Gay Rodeo Association is a not-for-profit organization that formed in 1993. The organization sponsors an annual gay rodeo event; this year's rodeo will be Aug. 22-23 in Crete, Illinois.

For more information about the rodeo association visit [www.ilgra.com](http://www.ilgra.com). For additional information about the Shark Bar go to [www.thesharkbarbloomington.com](http://www.thesharkbarbloomington.com).

## Spotlight on...the Bistro

From time to time we plan to highlight a business or organization that supports the local lgbtq community. To kick off this feature we conducted an e-mail interview with Jan "Momma," owner of the Bistro, 316 N Main St in Bloomington.

**Q.** How long have you owned The Bistro? Can you provide a bit of history about the bar?

**A.** Officially I purchased The Bistro in July, 1993. The bar was opened and operated by Dan Cochran and Mark Mears. They operated the bar approximately a year before I took over.

**Q.** What influenced you to get into the bar business?

**A.** Well, I was doing pretty good on the other side of the bar: Also, I believe most people want to own their own business and I was one of them. I had been working for others usually ninety or more hours a week and really didn't have much to show for it. This was my opportunity and I thought a good one for the "community."

**Q.** What has been most rewarding about owning a business that caters primarily to the lgbtq community?

**A.** I would say the feeling of community/family. Also, being an activist this gave me a much bigger platform to promote so many different causes.

**Q.** You are a very vocal supporter of the lgbtq community. Can you tell us about some of the fundraisers you have sponsored at the bar?

**A.** There have been so many! Mc Lean County Aids Task Force, Advocacy Council Human Rights, Neville House, Marc Center, Women's Health Services to name just a few. We have also raised money for candidates that support our causes including HRC and Lambda Legal Defense. On the other hand we have raised money when someone is in need: we have helped with funeral expenses, memorials, winter coats and clothing, food, and school supplies to name just a few. A big one for me is Education. Lots of money has been raised to promote education and equality.

**Q.** You are affectionately known as "Momma" to many in the community. How did you acquire this nickname?

**A.** After buying the bar I was still working full-time at The Music Shoppe, in Normal. I guess I was always taking care of things there too! One of the employees there called me Momma one day and

... continued on next page

it stuck. Now almost everyone downtown calls me that (at least to my face). The name makes me feel even more connected and I feel I need to live up to the name. I have given people lots of nicknames, over the years, and those names have stuck too.

**Q.** What so far is your most memorable moment at The Bistro?

**A.** Without a doubt the passing of the equal rights ordinances in both cities. The groups of people that came together for that cause, told their stories, stood up and were counted even though afraid—that moment can never be duplicated. There are many more moments, the ones that stand out are ones when we came together for an event or cause, sometimes a sad time other times happy.

**Q.** The bar staff has changed over the years. Can you list your current staff and when they work?

**A.** I am very proud of my current and past staff and hope everyone takes the time to get to know them. Tuesday—Bill, Wednesday—Celena, Thursday—Momma, Friday—Momma, Tiffany, Celena, Saturday—Momma, Jason and Bill.

**Q.** Can you talk a little about your regular weekly events at the bar?

**A.** Of course we have great drink specials every night of the week. We recently finished an in house dart league that was on Wednesday. Of course Thursday we play BINGO, it is lots of fun and a great way to meet new people, Friday I open early

(4:30) for Happy Hour. We catch up on all the news of the week. Fridays DJ Rakestraw is spinning and then of course Saturday DJ Squeesa.

**Q.** What events do you have lined up for the summer months?

**A.** We will be doing the First Friday Happy Hour on June 5th. That also coordinates with the Downtown First Friday events. Brad Egli (Sharon Share Alike) has also gotten a show cast together. They will be performing the second Fridays in June, July and August. Several bands have been scheduled for June and July and of course Pub Crawl is the last Saturday in July. I am sure there will be many more events planned. Check us out on Facebook—BloomingtonBistro or look me up.

**Q.** What are the issues facing our community?

**A.** Well, I don't think it has changed that much—EQUALITY! Leave religion out of the mix—we are talking equal rights. More education is needed, more voices speaking out: we cannot sit back now and hope and wish for change – we need to work for it.

If you have a suggestion for future Spotlight features please e-mail it to us at [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com).

The Bistro is at 316 North Main, Bloomington, Illinois 61701, 309/829-2278.

Hours of operation are M–TH: 8p.m.–1a.m., FRI: 4:30p.m.–2a.m., SAT: 8p.m.–2a.m.

## AIDS, freedom, denial

By Gene Naden

In my youth we never thought about condoms, and if a man I liked wanted a particular activity, why not? Now that I think about it, there were a lot of things that I didn't worry about: the possibility of getting prosecuted for letting a 17-year-old use me, getting busted for having four or five beers in a disco and driving home, or getting bashed. I was young and – I thought – invulnerable. I found freedom on Friday and Saturday night. That freedom was in a sense illusory since I just refused to consider, or knew nothing about, the risks I was taking. But it afforded me miraculous relief from an otherwise joyless existence.

When the AIDS epidemic took off in the early 1980s, I was busy convincing everyone in my life, especially myself, that I was not homosexual. I sure didn't want to meet any obviously gay man who might elicit some telltale response from me and blow my cover. I certainly didn't want to read about the "gay" plague.

From 1988 to 1990 I was a pre-medical student at the University of Arizona. During that time my basic humanity sometimes broke through my denial. I remember one 12-step meeting where the speaker was a gay man who had more or less adopted a man in the last stages of AIDS. When we were finished I impulsively hugged the man. Around that time I had a roommate who said

that God gave us AIDS to relieve overpopulation. I told him that God didn't give it to us, it came straight from Hell. Actually I do sometimes wonder where God was in all of this, letting it happen. Where was Christ? Where was the Son of Man?

I went on to medical school, in Mexico, in 1990. One of the professors there was using a new method called Polymerase Chain Reaction to test sex workers for HIV infection. I asked him to teach it to me but he declined. In 1993 my school sent me back to the United States (Oak Park, IL) for a year of clinical training. I assisted in the surgery and post-operative care of a person with AIDS who had gotten lymphomas (cancer of the

... continued on back page



# Family Reunion Picnic

Sunday, July 19, 2009

Underwood Park, Normal

Noon - 4 p.m.

- Bring a food item to share
- Hot dogs, burgers, veggie alternatives, buns provided
- Paper products provided
- Soda and water available for sale

Join us for an afternoon  
of food, games, raffles prizes and fun!