

Calendar of Events

Every Wednesday

8:30 p.m.
Movie and 80s Retro Night
The Bistro
316 N. Main St., Bloomington

Every Friday

7:30 – 10:30 p.m.
Open Door Youth Center
313 N. Main St., Bloomington

Every Saturday

7:30 – 10:30 p.m.
Men N2 Men Social Group
Connections Community Center
313 N. Main St., Bloomington

Need publicity?

The Rainbow Connection will publicize your GLBT or GLBT-friendly event. Please include the event date, time and title, along with a contact name and phone number. Submissions should be made before the last week of the month prior to publication (ex. before the last week of August for the September issue), and can be e-mailed to info@achr-il.com, or sent via US Mail to P.O. Box 5048, Bloomington, IL 61702-5048.

Congratulations to Jan Lancaster and The Bistro on their 12th anniversary! Thank you for your contributions to the Central Illinois glbt community!

ACHR Needs Your Input!

Panel discussions

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR) is planning a series of educational forums/workshops on medical, legal, financial, and insurance issues facing the glbt community. Our hope is to sponsor these events in late 2005 and 2006.

To help us put together a panel of experts, we are asking for your help. If you know of glbt or glbt-friendly medical, legal, financial and insurance professionals who might be interested in sitting on a panel to discuss these topics, please contact us by e-mail at info@achr-il.com or by phone at 309-827-4005 (PATH telephone hotline/answering service).

Religious issues

As a part of our ongoing efforts to make Bloomington/Normal a better place to live, ACHR is embarking on a project to tackle religious issues and how they relate to sexual orientation.

Tentative plans call for ACHR to offer presentations to local churches and/or local church study groups in an attempt to bring a different, fresh perspective to the debate over homosexuality and the church.

If you are a member of a local church and think your church might be open to a discussion of this issue, please contact us by e-mail at info@achr-il.com or by phone at 309-827-4005 (PATH hotline/answering service).

Local organizations host human rights film festival

Bloomington Public Library has partnered with the Central Illinois Down Syndrome Organization and the Central Illinois Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union to present a local Human Rights Film Festival.

The four part series runs on Thursday evenings in September and October at the library, 205 E. Olive Street in Bloomington. The festival lineup includes:

7 p.m. Thursday, September 22

Jay Rosenstein, the critically acclaimed documentarian of "Amasong Chorus: Singing Out", will discuss the power of documentaries and the documentary process. Rosenstein is from the University of Illinois.

7 p.m. Thursday, September 29

The film "Going to School" will provide a captivating look at the daily experiences of students receiving special education services. The film focuses on the lives of three seventh graders and a second grader in the Los Angeles Unified School District and reveals the determination of their parents to see that their children receive an equal education.

7 p.m. Thursday, October 6

"Life in Debt" explores the effect of the International Monetary Fund's policies on developing countries. The audience will see the reality of life in Jamaica beyond the façade of the tourist industry.

7 p.m. Thursday, October 13

The film "Books Not Bars" looks at the growth of the prison industrial complex in the United States through the eyes of the youth who are working to reverse the trend. A discussion follows.

For more details call Bloomington Public Library at 309-828-6091 ext. 206.

the RAINBOW CONNECTION

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights

September 2005

Group petitions for marriage protection referendum

The Illinois Family Institute, an anti-gay group, is in the midst of a petition drive to get an advisory "marriage protection referendum" on the 2006 general election ballot in Illinois.

The referendum would read:

"Shall the Illinois General Assembly submit an amendment to Article IX of the Illinois State Constitution to the voters of the State of Illinois at large at the next General Election stating as follows:

'To secure and preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children, a marriage between a man and a woman is the only legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State?' (Yes or No)"

If the referendum receives a majority vote the Illinois Family Institute will use that momentum to pressure the General Assembly to craft a proposed amendment that would restrict marriage

in Illinois to one man and one woman. That amendment would need to pass the General Assembly by a 3/5 vote, then be presented to Illinois voters on the November 2008 general election ballot. If the voters of Illinois approve the amendment by a 3/5 margin it will be adopted and a part of our state's constitution.

The petition drive to get the referendum on the November 2006 ballot requires 283,000 signatures of registered Illinois voters be submitted to state election officials by April 2006. Please warn your friends, family members and coworkers about this petition and discourage them from signing it!

One of Bloomington/Normal's elected officials, state Sen. Bill Brady, has expressed support for the efforts of the Illinois Family Institute and has made "moral values" part of his platform as he runs for the Republican nomination to become the next governor of Illinois.

Warhol Exhibit at ISU Through October 2

A significant showing of gay artist Andy Warhol's works runs through Oct. 2 at Illinois State University's University Galleries, located in the Center for Visual Arts. Warhol's Shadow Series I-V and a selection of his self-portraits comprise the exhibit.

Warhol, who died in 1987, was the leading exponent of the pop art movement and one of the most influential artists of the late 20th century. He concentrated on the surface of things, choosing his imagery from the world of commonplace objects such as dollar bills, soup cans, soft-drink bottles, and soap-pad boxes. He is variously credited with ridiculing and celebrating American middle-class values by erasing the distinction between popular and high culture.

GLBT organizations oppose Supreme Court candidate

Four of the nation's largest gay rights organizations have announced their opposition to the nomination of Judge John G. Roberts Jr. to the Supreme Court.

The Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays released a statement of opposition Thursday, Aug. 25.

People for the American Way, national glbt supportive organization, announced its opposition to the Roberts nomination a day earlier and released a 50-page report detailing its concerns.

The groups claim that Roberts' judicial record is anti-gay and a threat to the civil liberties of glbt people. For the full story visit the Human Rights Campaign web site at <http://www.hrc.org>

Author/Screenwriter Comes to ISU, IWU

Acclaimed author, poet, and screenwriter Sherman Alexie will come to Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University Oct. 4 as part of the two universities' "Visiting Author Program."

Alexie will make brief remarks at 2 p.m. at ISU's Milner Library followed by a presentation at 7 p.m. at IWU's Westbrook Auditorium. The day's events will finish up with a book signing in the rotunda of IWU's Ames Library.

Among Alexie's works are "The Business of Fancydancing," which tells the story of a Native American gay poet who suffers resentment from his tribe when he returns to the reservation after many years. Alexie later scripted and directed the film version of his book.

All events are free and open to the public.

Milwaukee Vice Squad Shuts Down "Naked Boys Singing"

The Milwaukee City Vice Squad recently shut down a production of "Naked Boys Singing" in a move that civil rights activists called homophobic and selective discrimination.

The squad shut down the production in August on the grounds that the venue lacked a small theater license and that the production was a "public nuisance." The Milwaukee Gay Arts Center, sponsor of the production, argued that a license had never been required for its previous theatrical productions. The center also cited other city venues that had never been required to obtain a license for their productions.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin stepped in to advise the center and producer Mark Hooker. Hooker, who has AIDS, was advised not to defy the order of the squad as he would be arrested and might not have access to his HIV medications while incarcerated.

Instead, the Milwaukee Gay Arts Center held a press conference Aug. 24 to announce a claim against the city, accusing the squad of selective and arbitrary enforcement of the license requirement. Furthermore the suit argues that as a not-for-profit the center should not be required to hold a license. The center is seeking \$600,000 in damages.

"Naked Boys Singing" is a gay-themed musical that has run off-Broadway since 1999. Milwaukee is the fourth municipality to shut down the musical; others include Atlanta and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

ACHR needs your input ...
see back page for details!

Our hearts were young and gay

By George Spelvin

I am just returned from a brief vacation to a "gay and lesbian resort". This visit served to confirm an impression that I have considered for several years, based on my experience with a variety of businesses that cater to a largely gay and lesbian clientele.

There seems to be something in the furtive, secretive, sometimes shameful nature of "gay life" that lets many of us accept being gouged, cheated and disrespected by the very businesses that we look to for acceptance, shelter, and whatever sense of community we think may exist there.

Let me hasten to add that this is not universally true, but generally true enough that my cynicism now leads me to expect this behavior.

So many times I find that accommodations, food, liquor, entertainment and goods are priced higher for gay clients than they would be for a straight demographic. It often follows that service is surly, dismissive and rude in ways that our straight brothers and sisters would never tolerate. Yet we have continued to patronize these businesses out of what seems a misplaced sense of loyalty.

The establishment I just visited had some pleasant employees, but the rooms were barren, poorly maintained and over-priced. The grounds were in a dismal state (and not from drought...this resort has had rain). The food service was mediocre for the price, and the beverages were extraordinarily expensive. I sat near the cash register in the bar one evening for about an hour, could hear what was being ordered, and could see what was being rung up. On this particular evening the resort was offering a special entertainment event in the bar (FREE!!!) but the event didn't begin until a full hour after the announced start time. I couldn't help thinking that this was done on purpose to sell more drinks.

Now, the rest of the story: This resort was especially un-busy for the height of the summer season, and I learned that business was down by 40 percent! Could it be that as we find it even minimally safer to be who we are in society at large, our need for private refuge is diminished? Could it be that as more and more of us are turning our thoughts to the business of work, church and family we find that the establishments that once were the only "safe" places to go hold less importance for us?

Perhaps it's time for the businesses that have taken the gblt community for granted for so long to re-examine how they conduct their business with us. Perhaps they need to consider how our needs have changed. Perhaps they need to understand that we're not willing put up with second-class service anymore. Perhaps they need to realize that we need compelling reasons to drive by mainstream establishments, offering the same essential products and services, to bring our business to them.

I once lived in a larger city with many businesses targeting the gay community. There was one bar that had opened in the 1940s and was still operating in the 1970s. It was owned by a straight couple. It was never flashy and trendy, but one could patronize that establishment without being made to feel "un-cool", "un-hot", too old, too fat. The drinks were generous and fairly priced. I ran into someone this week on vacation who lives in that city. The bar I just described is still in business...going on 60 years! The bars that were "hot" when I lived there are no more.

Karaoke Comes to the Bistro

Do you have a burning desire to be the next American Idol? Or do you just want to have some fun with your friends? If so, come to the Bistro, 316 N. Main St. in downtown Bloomington for karaoke nights.

The bar will present Karaoke Nights beginning at 9 p.m. on September 4, 18, and 27. The Tuesday dates will feature drink specials of \$1.50 domestic beers and \$2.50 UV drinks and bombs. The Sunday sessions will include drink specials of \$1.75 Miller Lights and \$2.50 Cuervo shots.

ACHR values our sponsors ...

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Web:
www.aches-away.com

E-mail:
info@aches-away.com

Web Sites of local organizations and GLBT friendly businesses

Advocacy Council for Human Rights
<http://www.achr-il.com>

The Bistro
<http://www.thebistro.us>

Open Door Youth Center
<http://www.opendooryouthcenter.org>

ISU PRIDE
<http://www.isupride.org>

ISU Triangle Association
http://www.ilstu.edu/employee_groups/triangle_association/

McLean County Democrats
<http://www.mcleandemocrats.org>

McLean County AIDS Task Force
<http://www.mcatf.org>

Lancasters Restaurant
<http://www.lancastersrestaurant.com/>

Pumpnickels Deli and Restaurant
<http://www.pumpnickels.net/>

Aches Away (Ann Blake)
<http://www.aches-away.com>

Heartland Theatre Company
<http://www.heartlandtheatre.org>

Arbonne International (Roger Laramie and Tim Bayley)
<http://www.boyzarbonne.com>

Merry Maids
<http://www.formerrymaids.com/il/0521>

Add your organization or business to this list ... e-mail us at info@achr-il.com.

The Rainbow Connection is published by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR).

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The Advocacy Council would like to thank Jan Lancaster and the staff of **The Bistro** for their ongoing support.