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**SECOND EDITION
Summer/Fall 2014**



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Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide

Funny, huh? When we released the first edition of this special Gay & Lesbian Wedding Guide back in February, we had achieved marriage equality, but it still beckoned us from the near-future. Not three weeks after the release of the issue, however, Cook County took a stand and decided to open up its offices early to gay and lesbian couples and began to issue licenses on Feb. 22, over three months in advance of the June 1 statewide beginning of marriages.

So at this point, when our Facebook feeds can't go one weekend without heralding the very legal weddings of more and more of our friends and marriage equality is now the law in 19 states (and D.C.), one rarely hears anymore of "gay weddings." Now, you simply hear of them as "weddings." Sounds like equality to us!

So make sure to patronize the advertisers in this second edition of Windy City Media Group's Wedding Guide, a one-stop shop for all your wedding planning needs. Have fun and live your lives. They are yours, after all!

—Kirk Williamson, editor

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Lower right: Andrew and Andrew (page 26).
Photo courtesy of the couple



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GROWING FAMILY



A mother reacts to her son's new marriage

BY JOANNE GURION

After my son Charlie came out 10 years ago, I was overwhelmed with crippling feelings of guilt, fear and anxiety. I began to chronicle my journey, first as the “mother of a gay man,” until I finally returned to being just “Charlie’s mom.”

My son married the love of his life, David Wilk, on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014. On the previous day, after a court ruling, they were the first same-sex couple to receive a license from Cook County Clerk David Orr’s office. While there had been emergency same-sex marriages prior to that date (due to health reasons), this was the first time non-emergency licenses were issued. They were part of history, but to me, they are a special couple because they are my sons.

I often remind my children to never take for granted being part of a large, loving family. During WWII, when the Nazis invaded Poland, my mother-in-law’s family was exterminated. She survived interment in Auschwitz. My father-in-law lost most of his family members, and barely survived imprisonment in a Siberian gulag. My parents grew up during the Depression. They both lost their mothers at an early age. My dad was in an orphanage and then the

foster care system. These experiences made our parents value family above anything else. Although my husband and I came from different cultural and religious backgrounds, the importance of family was the glue that bound our families together. The hardships our parents had endured made them determined to always love and support their children.

My father-in-law, Max, was a very wise man. He liked that my family was composed of so many different ethnicities that we didn’t identify with just one. When each of our children were born, he was ecstatic, explaining to us again and again, how he felt that the blend of so many different ethnic backgrounds would make our children stronger. He taught us that diversity was not only good, but desirable. Eventually we were blessed with four children, and became a typical suburban family, living in Northwest suburban Palatine, Ill. We felt secure in the knowledge that our children were healthy, happy, normal kids. After Charlie came out however, I began to question just what the term “normal family” really means.

At 38 years old, I was not expecting another pregnancy. Several years prior to Charlie’s birth, I’d been informed that I was in early

menopause. Thirteen years later on a frigid January morning, Charlie was born. My Irish Catholic mother considered it a miracle. Our daughter Lisa was 16 at the time, and our twin sons, Dave and Dan were 13. Charlie was welcomed with open arms; all of his older sibs arguing with each other, over who would get to hold him first. Two years later after Henry's dad Max died, Grandma Gina moved in with us. Charlie grew up showered with love and affection.

In retrospect, when he was growing up, I'd had some level of awareness that Charlie was gay. I quickly pushed the thought to the back of my mind though, being unable to process it at the time, largely due to my own fear and ignorance. It was easier to attribute to child rearing trends in the 1990s. Children were encouraged to play with toys other than those considered gender specific. I'd always let Charlie choose the toys he was attracted to. He played with dinosaurs and he played with Polly Pockets. Along with collecting Pokemon cards and Power Rangers, he collected Spice Girl memorabilia. He had some male friends but they were greatly outnumbered by his female friends, with whom he seemed more comfortable.

Just a few weeks ago, Charlie surprised me. He called to request that I get the family together at Cook County marriage court the next morning, to witness his marriage to David. I was speechless, a rare occurrence. They had become engaged last August and a wedding was planned for September of 2014. When the Illinois marriage equality passed last fall, it had been the icing on the cake. Groomsmen and bridesmaids were chosen. All seven of their nieces and nephews were excited to have been given special jobs. A venue was secured. Tastings had been arranged. Save-the-dates had gone out to family and friends. Charlie explained to me that the date to obtain a marriage license had been moved up. He was so overjoyed and excited that he couldn't wait any longer to marry David. He went on to say that they'd obtained a license earlier that

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Facing Page: Joanne Gurion (center), with her son Charlie (left) and his new husband David Wilk.

Photo courtesy of Gurion



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FRANKLY SPEAKING ...

Expert tips to plan your wedding expertly



BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS, MBC

Everything's coming up roses—orchids, calla lilies and hydrangeas, too!

Flowers are a huge part of any wedding. You can spend a little, you can spend a lot. It all depends on how important this is to you, as well as what your budget will allow. This is where your wedding consultant will assist you coming up with a design that works best for you. Here are the key parts of the wedding that need flowers, with some great options I'd like to recommend for any budget.

Personal flowers are the first thing you need to consider. Brides can go with a traditional hand-tied round bouquet of all tight blooms, which has been popular since Martha Stewart made this vogue 20 years ago. It's timeless and simple. Or they can go with an interesting cascading shape of a crescent or oval. I just had a bride recreate her grandmother's bouquet from 1928. They were HUGE back then.

For bridesmaids, I'd recommend something smaller, or to save money even one grace single stem. Moms lately seem to not want to wear a corsage so I have been doing small bouquets for them to carry, or even just a small vase of flowers at their place settings. As for men's boutonnières, I suggest keeping it simple so it doesn't look like a corsage or an '80s prom; they can use spray roses, dendrobium orchids or, as I wore at my wedding (back then it was just a commitment ceremony), a mini calla lily. I suggest having backups for the grooms as after the ceremony, with lots of hugs, they tend to get crushed; this way you have a fresh one for the reception. Also consider non-flower bouts of berries or herbs—or go a completely different route by wearing a brooch.

The largest expense will be decor flowers. Let's start with reception. Centerpieces are where the costs add up big time. When selecting these, think about the overall feel of the wedding, and where you are having it at. If it's a hotel ballroom, I'd recommend a mix of elevated arrangements and complimenting lower arrangements. By mixing these formats with the same flowers, it will not only add interest to the room, but save you money as the lower will be less expensive than the elevated, as you need a lot of volume.

If you are in a more casual environment such as a loft or even your home, think about one single vase or even a collection, with each vase having a different type of flower in it. (Having the same color is called monobotanical.) You can tell your florist—if you are not picky—to set a price point, and to just get “the best of market” and have them decide on what type. Also consider a grouping of small vases with a single stem that will double as a favor for guests to take home. You can go entirely with candles, but make sure the flames are in glass to meet fire codes. Also, using non-floral elements such as props or edible centerpieces (such as a small wedding cake) saves money. Again, this must fit your theme and or overall feel of the wedding. I love the words “unexpected” and “out of the box,” which are my calling cards.

When selecting flowers and decor for your ceremony, I have one word I keep in mind: REPURPOSE. Think “How can I use these at the reception, to save money?” Centerpieces on rented pedestals create an amazing aisle. Large statement pieces flanking your ceremony can be relocated to each side of your orchestra or head table or can be used as centerpieces for your escort card or sweet tables. If you are us-

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Gay marriage begins early in Cook County

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Forty-six LGBT couples rushed to Cook County Clerk David Orr's office Feb. 21 to get the first marriage licenses after a federal judge ruled earlier that day that same-sex couples would not have to wait until June 1 to be married.

Judge Sharon Coleman's ruling said the state's ban on gay marriages is unconstitutional, and that marriages for gay couples can begin immediately. Same-sex couples who had already been legally married in other states would have those marriages recognized immediately, the clerk's office said.

The ruling applied only in Cook County, where the initial lawsuits were filed. Residents of other Illinois counties would have to travel there to get their license and be married.

The county clerk's office was kept open an extra two hours Feb. 21 and was prepared for the ruling. Shortly before 1 p.m., the first same-sex couple of the day had obtained their license. Chicagoans Charles Gurion and David Wilk heard about the ruling on the news and decided to go get the license.

"I only just heard about this and hour and a half ago, and convinced him an hour ago," Gurion said.

—Also contributing: **Tracy Baim**
Originally from the Feb. 26, 2014, issue of
Windy City Times. See the full story at
www.windycitymediagroup.com



Top photo: Mike Kierpiec (left) and Donn Mielke, 34 years. *Photo by Hal Baim.* Middle left: Jeff Woods and Tom Wray. *Photo by Hal Baim.* Middle right: Jarvine Colbert and Kush Kwesi. *Photo by Dr. Lou Bohr.* Bottom: David Orr with Carolyn and Sara Kujawa, and their son Ronan. *Photo by Matt Simonette*



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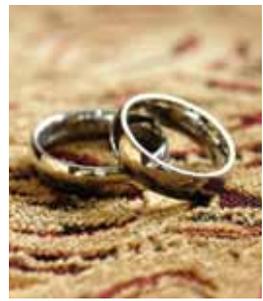
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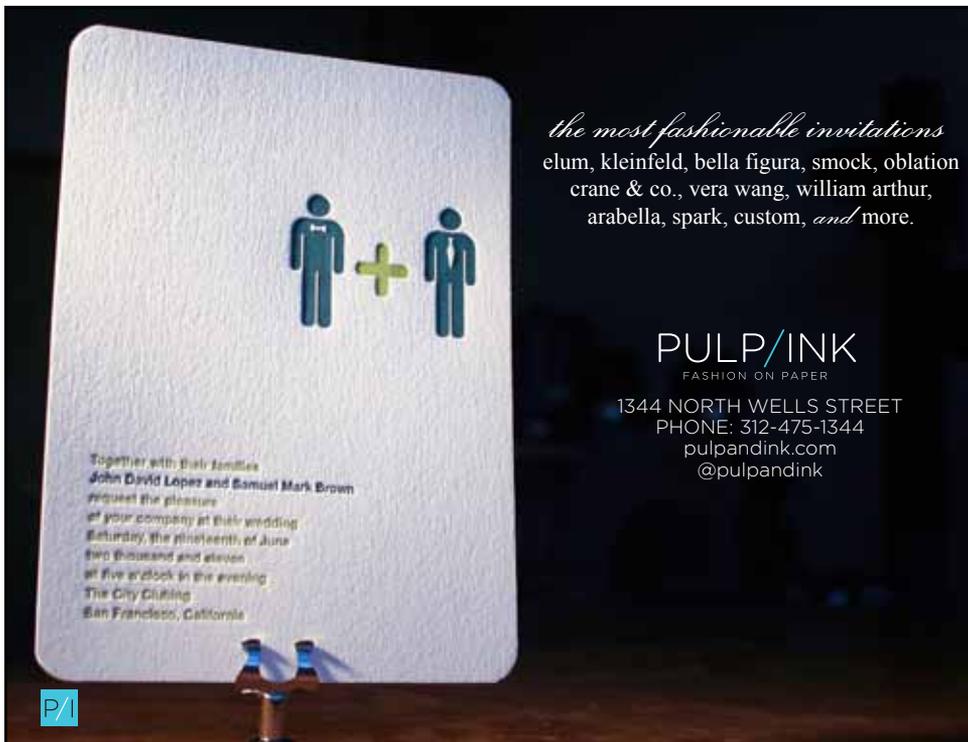
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High-profile expansion for Rony Tennenbaum Jewelry

BY ROSS FORMAN

One of the largest, family-owned jewelry chains in the country, Rogers & Hollands, has made a “tremendous” move to reach the LGBT community, said renowned, openly gay jewelry designer Rony Tennenbaum.

Rogers & Hollands announced it is adding a new wedding jewelry collection created to celebrate marriage and equality—through the addition of Rony Tennenbaum’s Jewelry collection—to its bridal cases in both its Woodfield Mall location in Schaumburg, and in downtown Chicago’s Water Tower Place stores. The jewelry chain operates numerous stores in the Chicagoland area and throughout the Midwest.

“The fact Rogers & Hollands embraces the LGBT community [sends] a huge message to other retailers, to other establishments, especially larger establishments, that LGBT can feel safe and supported in their stores,” Tennenbaum said in a phone interview. “There’s no question, having the backing of a chain like Rogers & Hollands is huge.”

And it’s just the tip of the iceberg for same-sex couples, especially in Illinois, who are ready to tie the knot.

“Rogers & Hollands making a stand is very powerful, very important. It’s a very big step,” he said.

Tennenbaum said more retailers nationally have been reaching out to him as more and more states pass same-sex marriage. He noted that retailers in locations “that I would not have expected,” have been contacting him as well, such as representatives from Detroit, Memphis, Mississippi and elsewhere.

“There seems to be a much bigger openness to accept [same-sex marriage],” he said. “I don’t know if that’s from a commercial standpoint, because there’s a niche opportunity here that they are seeking, or that there really are some

barriers and walls that are coming down; I think that has a lot to do with it as well.

“Store owners are really finding that the niche is something relevant, something important. They are now wanting to carry products in their stores that actually attract an LGBT audience. I think it’s very interesting, very important. I think it’s good to see that there are still supportive people out there; people who are willing to support the LGBT community.”

Tennenbaum noted that there definitely is a growth and increase in the number of same-sex couples going to retail outlets, searching for their wedding and engagement rings. And Tennenbaum also is going into the gay communities more often—to answer questions. “That’s a key new [aspect] to what I’m doing,” he said.

“As we’re developing these new traditions and these new etiquettes, which are evolving, I’m finding that there are more and more questions that couple want to know, want answered.

Questions include “Who proposes?” and “Do both have to wear diamond rings, do rings have to match, and more.”

One trend that’s been hot this spring and summer, he said, is that couples getting engaged with secret proposals. “They are wonderful, charming stories. I find more and more of that is happening,” he said.

Tennenbaum, who has 25 years of experience in jewelry design and manufacturing, has been active in same-sex engagement and wedding rings since 2008.

“I always have a lot on my plate, new collections that I’m working on, new ideas and concepts that are very interesting that will be coming out in 2015, expanding the niche, and more,” he said. “The opportunities are tremendous out there for untapped markets, and that’s a very important factor.”



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from page 12

ing an archway, chuppah or mundap (for a Jewish or Indian ceremony, respectively), ask if these items can be repurposed for you to have a sweet-heart table for two to dine at—or would your wedding cake look sweeter under this structure? Pew flowers in church can be repurposed on the backs of chairs at the head table.

Again, try to use whatever you use at the ceremony in the reception. If your ceremony and reception are not at the same venue, there will be an extra delivery/set-up fee, but much less than purchasing separate floral all over again.

If the budget allows, I love to place a bud on each napkin. Small arrangements for the restrooms and bars (as well a bowl of nuts for guests to munch on while waiting for a drink) are nice touches as well.

One more thing to consider is lighting. You have these beautiful flowers, and once the room gets dark you will lose the beauty. I highly recommend pinspotting each table, with a light focused directly on each centerpiece. This makes a huge impact, and I feel is money well-spent. Then, if the budget allows, I love to do a pattern on the dance floor created with light. Also, a lit room perimeter creates a dramatic feel, and can change color during the evening.

For information and images, www.frankevntdesign.com or "FrankEventDesign" on Facebook.



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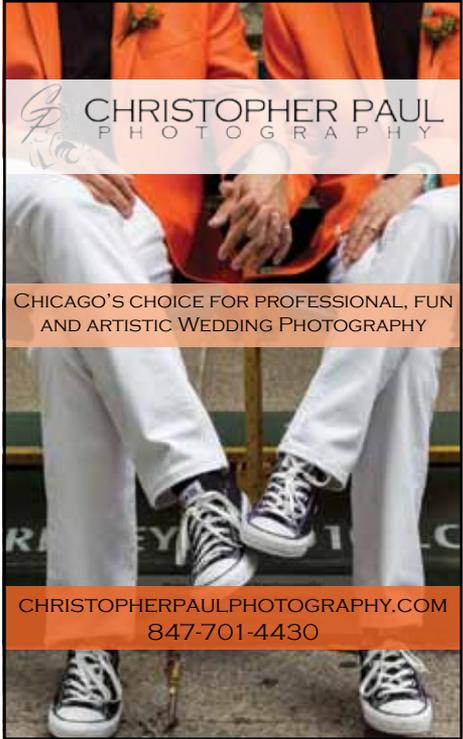
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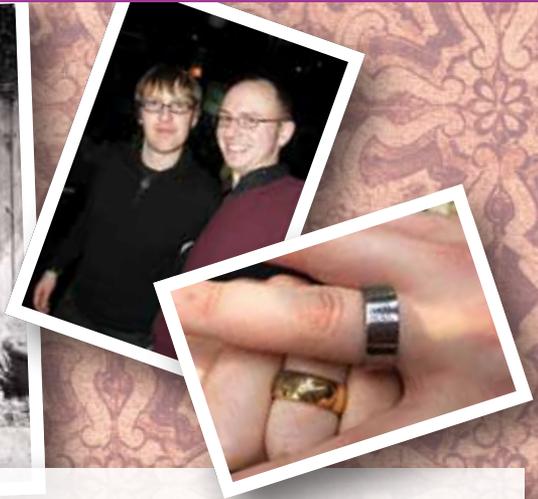
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Andrew Edwards & Andrew Gunnerson

July 18, 2014

Cook County Marriage Court (Downtown)

"We wanted this to be easy and painless, so we started with brunch at the Bongo Room with some friends and family. I surprised Andrew with a limo—I was also surprised by the fact that it was a stretch Navigator—downtown. We had a crew of about 20 people with us, and we packed into the tiny basement room to do the deed. The judge was VERY serious, so, naturally, we had a hard time not bursting into laughter during the ceremony. Our rings are engraved in Gallifreyan - the lost language of the Time Lords. Limo back home for cocktails, and then a lovely dinner on the patio at the Fireside Restaurant in Andersonville. It was a wonderful (and easy and painless) day."

Also pictured: The Andrews' first date at Berlin, January 2008. Originally printed in the Jan. 8, 2008 issue of Nightspots.



Dawn Rescigno and Angela DeBello were

married March 8 after 19 years together. Guests joined the couple for a celebratory brunch after the ceremony. The couple resides in Chicago with their 6-year-old daughter, Miuccia. The couple previously had a commitment ceremony in 2005 to celebrate their tenth anniversary.



PHOTO BY KEVIN WEINSTEIN



PHOTO BY KEVIN WEINSTEIN



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day and could be married 24 hours later. I knew that prior to this, he believed that he and David might never have the opportunity to marry legally. I could hear the eagerness and anticipation in his voice. I had been waiting for this day ever since the time he told me that David was “the one.” Everyone in our family already loved David. There was no reason they should wait any longer.

When we arrived at marriage court, you could feel the excitement in the air. Everyone’s faces were beaming. Judge Martin Moltz gave us a warm welcome. His small chamber was bursting with overwhelming happiness, love and anticipation. A news crew was present. I was worried that since there were so many of us, some might be asked to leave. Yes, history was being made, but to us, Charlie and David are our family. Everyone wanted to be present to support them as they pledged themselves to one another. I cried, as amidst all the excitement, I saw David and Charlie hold hands and stare at each other, eyes misty with tears. All of a sudden, the judge began to speak. And then, I felt a tremendous sense of peace envelop me, knowing that finally Charlie and David would no longer be looked upon as second-class citizens. They could now feel the same joy and yes, sometimes the frustration, experienced by all married couples.

After brunch at Atwood Cafe, we dropped the newlyweds off at their home in Avondale. On our way home, Henry and I talked about what a journey it had been since Charlie came out to us at age 15. He’d been so happy and relieved to make us understand that he was very clear about his gender preference. He’d approached us during junior high, but was put off by a therapist who’d assured us it was just a phase he would grow out of. I remember feeling numb as we both hugged him and assured him that his being gay would never change our love for him. After he left, Henry and I clung to each other and sobbed. The tears flowing down my face were mingled with grief and fear for my child. We both knew how hard it could be for him to face the hatred and discrimination arising from homophobia. I worried he could

be a victim of HIV. Our dream of him some day finding a wife had been changed to him some day finding a husband, which seemed highly unlikely at the time.

When our son came out, we knew of no one who was openly gay. We were well aware of the dangers of Internet dating. Charlie needed help finding gay friends in the suburbs as well as finding adult mentors. We were referred to a very knowledgeable clinical psychologist in Oak Park who specialized in the area of same-sex relationships. After meeting with all of us, she kindly informed us that Charlie was just fine; it was we who needed information to help alleviate our fear and anxiety. I left her office with a list of reading material, the location of the nearest PFLAG meeting and the name of a social worker from LINKS, who moderated the Pride Youth group in our area.

There is no perfect instruction manual for parents of LGBT children. Like all children, each one is unique, having his or her own interests, fears, hopes and dreams. Our primary responsibility as parents is to nurture and love our children. That part came easily for me. Charlie was still the same lovable child I held in my arms the day he was born. Yet those two words, “I’m gay,” took away the security I’d taken for granted being the mother of a so called “normal family.” Suddenly I feared my child would be viewed by some as being abnormal, and possibly be exposed to the same hatred and discrimination his grandparents had faced years ago because of their Jewish heritage. He was now part of a minority group victimized by bullies, who could be isolated, made fun of and denied rights inherent to him under the U.S. Constitution. At that point, the natural urge I had as a mother to protect my child went into overdrive.

Our local high school provided no social group for LGBT students. Instead, the kids met privately during school hours, with the school psychologist. I felt that this sent the wrong message to the students because it implied that they needed to continue to hide an important part of their identity. I worried they might feel isolated, when instead, they should be building the self-confidence needed to integrate with their peers. The school administration explained to me that they were protecting the identities of the students because none of them were out yet, except Charlie. The other



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high school in our district already had an LGBT youth group which met after school, like most other school-sponsored clubs. By the time Charlie graduated in 2007, one had finally been established at our school.

The simple act of coming out allowed Charlie to thrive. If anything, his new-found self-confidence seemed to attract many more friends. I think it's that way for most people. Self-acceptance begets happiness. Happiness attracts those around you. He still needed, however, to find a nearby place in which to meet other gay teens, so he decided to attend a Pride Youth meeting. The first time he went, Charlie wasn't even old enough to drive. I went with him and while he was there, I attended a PFLAG meeting. Afterwards I met the Pride group leader, Erschel De Leon and volunteer, Paul Dombrowski. They explained to me that the meetings provided local LGBT youth a place in which to gather. It was a safe atmosphere where the group could share feelings and have questions answered in an honest and informative manner. Some of the kids in this group eventually became mentors themselves by being given the opportunity to speak about their coming out experiences at health classes at area high schools. They answered questions from faculty and students about what it's like to be a gay teen. Charlie flourished under the direction of Paul and Erschel, even receiving a partial scholarship to DePaul University because of the volunteer opportunities they gave him. To this day Paul and Erschel remain our close friends. It meant so much to me that Paul and his partner, Joe Serio, were married only a few hours later on the same day Charlie and David married.

Since Charlie came out, I've had experiences with him that I never imagined I'd have. I admit to being a stubborn Irish woman. In my zeal to be the best mother ever, I went overboard; subscribing to gay publications, wearing rainbow attire and constantly bringing up how proud I was of my "gay son," in general, being an annoyance. Finally he gently reminded me that being gay did not define who he was. It was just a part of his identity. When I began to relax and just enjoy our relationship, rather

than feeling that I had to prove my support, it became much more fun. I cheered Charlie on at the Bud Boyz Contest, hit the bars in Lakeview for his 21st birthday and explored the Castro with him in San Francisco. More than anything else, I enjoyed the company of the many friends I've met through him.

I am a story teller who also appreciates hearing the stories of others. I have been honored to listen to some very personal stories told to me by gay men I have met either through Charlie or in my own travels. So often though, the stories are dominated by feelings of loss and rejection. Each one has a place in my heart and together, they have had a powerful impact



Charlie Gurion (left) and David Wilk were the first to apply for a marriage license in Cook County on Feb. 21 when a judge opened up the door for all same-sex marriages in the county.

Photo by Matt Simonette

on me. Often when conversing with new gay friends, I am asked in jest, if I would be a mother to them. This seems to have become a pattern. I am deeply touched and yet saddened by this. I feel anger toward whomever caused their pain. Anger doesn't accomplish much though, other than frustration. I needed to find a way in which I could turn my frustration into action.

I started to write about my own experiences as Charlie's mom. At first I wrote responses to self-righteous letters to the editor filled with misinformation, vitriol and Bible passages condemning the "gay agenda." Rather than to respond in an adversarial way, I tried to correct misnomers and false stereotypes with reality-based on personal examples and experiences. I began writing letters to politicians and on

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(L-R) Charlie's dad Henry, David, Joanne, and Charlie at the Cook County Courthouse.

Photo courtesy of Gurion

Facebook using the same approach. I wrote from the perspective of a mother. I shared that my fondest dream for many years, had been to dance at Charlie's wedding. Pretty soon people in the community began to approach me in grocery stores, wanting to hear more stories. Politicians answered back. What seemed so normal to me was a curiosity to others. Even my mom, who lives in a retirement center, tried to help pass the marriage bill by sharing stories about David and Charlie around the lunch table. Soon, her best friend shared that she has a son who is gay. The conversation at the table began to flow. Eventually, instead of viewing Charlie and David as a curiosity, folks began to view them as just another couple. They get up

and go to work every day, feed their dogs, take care of their home and enjoy time with friends and relatives, just like other "normal" families.

I feel impatient with families who say that they cannot love their LGBT children due to the constraints placed upon them by their religious beliefs. Some may find it ironic that I claim it is indeed my Catholic education, which continues to fuel my passionate belief that all human beings are created equal and are therefore deserving of equal rights. I was educated by Franciscan and Benedictine nuns. These strong women fought for social justice. Their mantra was the most basic tenet of Christianity, "Love one another, as I have loved you." The archaic and mean-spirited rhetoric used to shame and marginalize gays by Church hierarchy is a clear abuse of power. It creates division among families, not allowing them to accept and love their children within the context of their own faith. We families and friends of LGBT people need to reeducate those around us. Misconception, shame and fear can help be eliminated by sharing and networking.

I have come full circle. Instead of feeling scared and anxious, I now enjoy feelings of hope, optimism and renewed faith that people will continue to fight for what is fair and just. The hard-fought battle to achieve equal rights has brought about legislative change which is finally occurring at a more rapid pace. I feel much joy watching my grandchildren grow up with the attitude that it is always good to celebrate people who love and commit themselves to each other, regardless of gender. I found a beautifully written children's book to read to them about a wedding with two grooms. One of them looked at me afterwards and said, "We already know that Grammy. It's not a big deal anymore."



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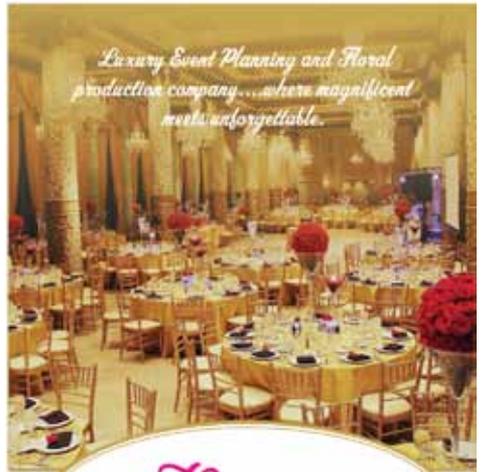


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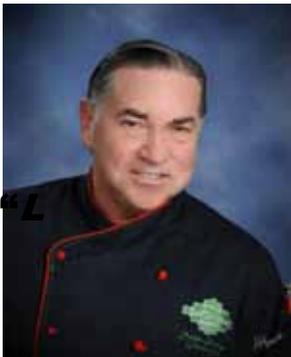
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Longtime Chicago gay activist and bar owner **Marge Summit** (left) married her partner, **Janan Lindley**, in May. Summit, owner of the popular His 'n Hers bar, has been active in the Chicago LGBT community for many decades.



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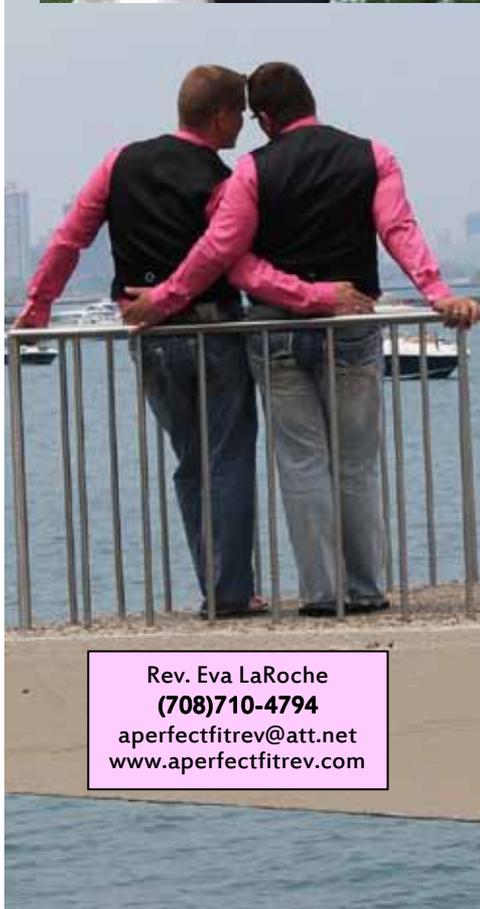
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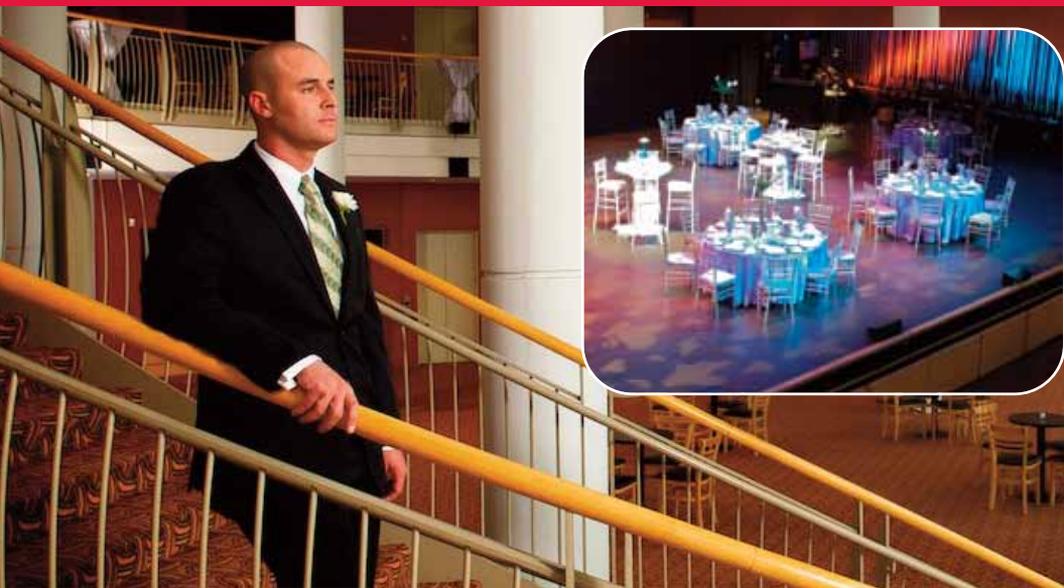
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more on page 54

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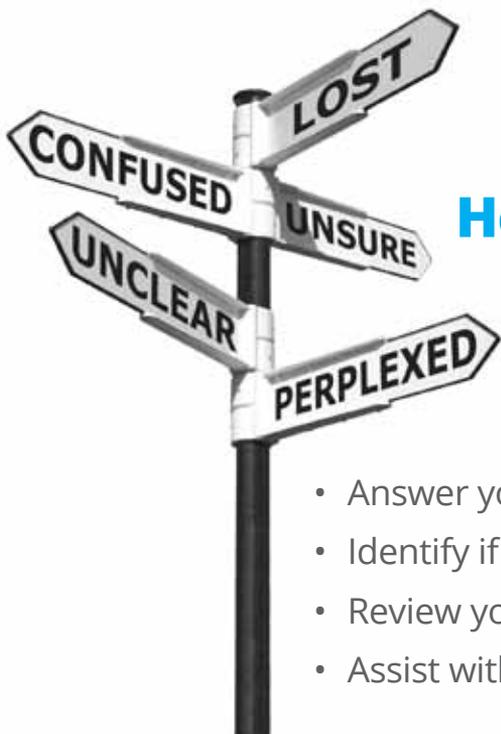
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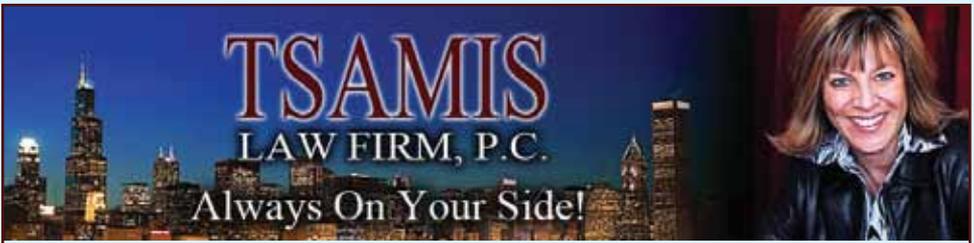
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