



We Are Family

Issue Number 3

Date: April 2009

Domestic Partnerships in Nevada

Nevada legislators are considering a critical bill to create domestic partnerships for committed couples -- gay and straight -- who either cannot or choose not to marry. This bill would be a bold step forward for equality in Nevada.

The Nevada Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor heard testimony on Senate Bill 283, a simple Domestic Partnership bill that will give thousands of Nevada LGBT families security in their relationships. It is a bill that says the relationships have value, families have value and all citizens have value.

Visit the [SB283 polling page](#) and show your support for SB 283. Your elected official will get notice of your support.

We Are Family Needs You!!!

We Are Family has agreed to provide volunteers for the upcoming Family Picnic on April 19. We need volunteers to help set up the picnic prior to the AFAN Aids Walk. If you are available, please email Brian at brian@wearefamilylv.org. We need the help so please bring yourself, bring your partner, bring your children, and your friends to help make the HRC Family Picnic a success.

Upcoming March Events

Decorate Easter Eggs

When: Saturday, April 11, 11:00 – 2:00pm

Where: The Gay and Lesbian Community Center at 953 E. Sahara Ave., B-31,

Why: Let the kids have some fun

painting Easter eggs and give them an opportunity to get to know each other while the parents talk.

Who: All members, especially children

RSVP: For more information and to receive an Evite to this event please email adele@wearefamilylv.org.

Meet and Greet

When: Tuesday, April 14, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Where: The Gay and Lesbian Community Center at 953 E. Sahara Ave., B-31,

Why: Get to know the members of We Are Family

Who: All members, including children.

RSVP: For more information and to receive an Evite please email adele@wearefamilylv.org.

AFAN AIDS Walk / HRC Family Picnic

When: Sunday, April 19, 8:00am

Where: World Market Center on Grand Central Parkway

For More Information go to the AFAN website:

<http://afanlv.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=291714>

Volunteer Now

If you are interested in hosting a family fun day or feel you have information to share with gay and lesbian parents in Southern Nevada, please contact Brian at brian@wearefamilylv.org.



Volunteer for Las Vegas Pride, 2009 and help support We Are Family by donating your volunteer earnings. To learn more about Las Vegas Pride, 2009, and how you can volunteer to work for We Are Family, log onto their website www.lasvegaspride.org

To learn more
www.wearefamilylv.org

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Planning Members

Tara Newberry
Brian Eagan



HRC Family Picnic

Date:

Sunday, April 19, 2009 - 12:00pm

Location:

Rotary Park, 901 Hinson Street,
(corner of Charleston and Hinson), Las Vegas

Join the Human Rights Campaign for this fun filled family event. We will



also be honoring the Clark County Department of Family Services for equality in finding permanent families for children.

What:

- Food/Beer and Wine
- Kids play area & Bounce House
- Live DJ Mike Remedy
- Kickball, Softball Matches
- Water Balloon Toss, Horseshoes and other park games
- GLBT and Community

Organization information for families and equality.

No RSVP needed, bring a blanket (and your own picnic basket, if you like)

For More Information:

hrc-lasvegas@cox.net

In the News

What happens to kids raised by gay parents? (Sunday, April 5, 2009).

Research suggests that they turn out about the same, no better, no worse and no more likely to be gay than other kids

Rebecca Meiksin, 22, is white, middle-class, college-educated, and plans to earn a graduate degree in public health. Terrance McGeorge, 20, is black, grew up in the Hill District, has a high school degree and works in an AmeriCorps service program at Beginning With Books.

Despite their differences, both of these young people have something in common with the new grandson of the vice president of the United States, who was born to Mary Cheney and her partner, Heather Poe, on May 23: They grew up in a family with a gay parent.

And both of them believe they have turned out just fine-- in no small way because of how they were raised.

"My dad has been my best friend since I was a kid," said Mr. McGeorge, a tall, friendly young man who wants to pursue a career in theater and fashion. "He always encouraged me and was there for me, for whatever it was, graduations, performances, he was there, immediately."

Mr. McGeorge, like his father, is gay. That might provoke an "Aha!" moment for those who warn that children of gays are more likely to adopt their parents' lifestyle, but he says his father had nothing to do with it, except, possibly, providing DNA.

"I've always known I was that way, since I was 3- or 4 years old, when I started getting crushes on other

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boys. My father didn't come out until I was 6," he said.

Ms. Meiksin is heterosexual.

"Um, I'm going to spend the month of June with my boyfriend," she says with a shy laugh. Asked if her lesbian mother encouraged her to follow in her footsteps, she rolls her eyes.

"I never felt any pressure to be gay," she said. "Although I did take my boyfriend to a gay pride parade once, which was a real trip for him."

Ms. Meiksin represents part of a first wave of babies intentionally conceived or adopted by gay parents in the 1980s as the gay pride movement took off. Mr. McGeorge, on the other hand, is part of a different group of children - many from minority and low-income communities - born of a heterosexual union that dissolved when one parent came out as gay.

So how are they doing, now that they've reached young adulthood?

Some critics have suggested these children - along with Samuel David Cheney, Mary Cheney's infant son -- are doomed to a life of struggle compared with those raised in a more traditional, Ozzie-and-Harriet-model family, with a mother and a father.

But most studies have found that outcomes for children of gay and lesbian parents are no better -- and no worse -- than for other children, whether the measures involve peer group relationships, self-esteem, behavioral difficulties, academic

achievement, or warmth and quality of family relationships.

No one knows precisely how many children in the United States have at least one parent who is lesbian or gay. Estimates range all the way from 1 million to 9 million.

For many of these young people, though, growing up in what census researchers call a "same-sex parent household" doesn't have to be a big deal - except that, these days, it is.

"With all due respect to Cheney and her partner," Dr. James Dobson of the conservative Christian group Focus on the Family, wrote in Time magazine in December, "the majority of more than 30 years of social-science evidence indicates that children do best on every measure of well-being when raised by their married mother and father."

Some liberals chimed in too, notably Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Leonard Pitts, who cited "a growing body of research that tells us the child raised without his or her biological father is significantly more likely to live in poverty, do poorly in school, drop out altogether, become a teen parent, exhibit behavioral problems, smoke, drink, use drugs or wind up in jail."

The problem with the research cited by both Dr. Dobson and Mr. Pitts is that it compares children of heterosexual couples only with those of single parents and not with children of same-sex parent families, said Gary Gates, a senior research fellow at the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law and an expert on census data involving gay and lesbian households.

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"There are virtually no studies that make a direct comparison with same-sex parents," he said, noting census data show one in four same-sex couples are raising a child under the age of 18.

A number of professional medical organizations - including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association - have issued statements claiming that a parent's sexual orientation is irrelevant to his or her ability to raise a child.

For the most part, the organizations are relying on a relatively small but conclusive body of research - approximately 67 studies - looking at children of gay parents and compiled by the American Psychological Association. In study after study, children in same-sex parent families turned out the same, for better or for worse, as children in heterosexual families.

Moreover, a 2001 meta-analysis of those studies found that the sexual orientation of a parent is irrelevant to the development of a child's mental health and social development and to the quality of a parent-child relationship.

More research needed

The problem with these studies, Dr. Gates says, is that most of the children are from "intentional" same-sex parent families, where the parents tend to be better educated, more affluent and more open about their sexual orientation, and who deliberately conceive or adopt children with the intention of raising them in a same-sex parent family.

"My research suggests that's not the typical gay parent household," Dr. Gates said.

In fact, only 6 percent of same-sex parents have an adopted child, and a sizable number appear to be living in some kind of step-family arrangement, in which parents "come out later and have children from an earlier heterosexual marriage or relationship," he said.

While white couples of relatively high income have been the focus of most studies, Census figures show that about 45 percent of same-sex parents are either black or Latino. And most of those same-sex couples with children have household incomes below that of their different-sex married counterparts.

Mr. Gates speculates that the omission of children from minority and low-income communities may be because the children have been pressured by their parents not to talk since "there may be higher levels of stigmatization in minority communities regarding homosexuality."

Mr. McGeorge says he knows about that firsthand. When his father first came out, he recalls, children in his Hill District neighborhood "cut me no slack whatsoever. They all knew about it. He looked different, acted different, and they made sure I knew it."

Despite that childhood trauma, and continued harassment when he himself came out as a teenager, Mr. McGeorge says he's proud of who he is - a working adult with a partner and big plans for a career. He says his own robust self-esteem stems from a strong relationship with his father. (His father



declined to be interviewed for this story.)

"He doesn't mind that I'm talking to you," he said, "but he's a more private person than I am."

One of the reasons for that is because of a high level of intolerance of homosexuality in the African-American community, Mr. McGeorge believes.

"Oh my God, I think maybe four or five times a week I'm getting called 'faggot,' " he said. "I can't go into a store to buy cigarettes without being told I'm a 'faggot' and I'm going to hell. I can't get on a bus without someone getting in my face. Sometimes the discrimination hurts, but I'm unapologetic for who I am. I won't apologize and I won't change for anyone. I've always just been myself."

On the other hand, Ms. Meiksin, born to a single lesbian mother in Squirrel Hill who moved in with a partner when Ms. Meiksin was 12, says she rarely felt any kind of discomfort growing up. (Her mother declined to be interviewed for this story.)

Ms. Meiksin says she is very comfortable talking about growing up with a lesbian mother - and challenging anyone who believes it might not be appropriate or beneficial.

A graduate of Allderdice High School and Oberlin College, in Ohio, she says her life "always felt normal to me. A lot of my mom's friends are gay, and she's really politically active. She took me to gay pride marches and whatnot. I

remember sitting out on the deck at New York New York [a Shadyside bar] eating french fries while she was at meetings."

Ms. Meiksin is probably part of the "intentional" same-sex parent family that Dr. Gates was talking about, but at least one prominent researcher takes issue with his contention that they may be overrepresented in studies.

"I've actually seen lots of diversity in the psychological literature, although what is right about what he said is that more of the research focuses on middle and upper classes," said Dr. Charlotte Patterson, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia, editor of two books published by Oxford University Press on gay and lesbian identity and youth, as well as the author of a number of articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Still, she and others noted that in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which surveyed 12,000 high school students across the socio-economic and ethnic spectrum - outcomes for children of gay parents and heterosexual married parents were comparable.

To see the full story: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07161/793042-51.stm>

*First published on June 9, 2007 at 10:59 pm
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