
LGBT News

The LGBT Resource Center for
the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.

January 2010

**Happy New Year from the Board and Staff of the 7
Rivers LGBT Resource Center**



Celebrate New Year's Eve. Benefit the Center

Please join us New Year's Eve for our benefit Drag Show at Players Bar, La Crosse. We will have fabulous cast members from Illusions, Shane, Lily's debut, Miss Gay Madison 2009, and the long awaited return of Tammy WhyNott???. We will have door prizes! However you wish to finish off your New Year's Celebration this is a super fantastic way to begin it! \$10 gets you in, a drink token to start your evening, and a chance to win a fabulous door prize! Join us

for a night of reminiscing and making new memories for years to come. Come out and show your love for the Center and all the good it does.

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar now and be sure to join other members of the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center for the Annual Meeting on January 9, 2010, 10:00 a.m. at the People's Food Coop classroom. To RSVP, please call 608-784-0452. All paid members are eligible to vote at the business portion of the meeting.

Meet and Greet Local Politicians

Here's your opportunity to meet and speak with area legislators at the Center from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. See the [events](#) page for more information.

Director's Column: Happy New Year!

Much has changed since the beginning of 2009, when I had only four months in as Director of the Center. It was with much anticipation that I looked forward to what the year would bring. Now looking back at what has been accomplished this past year it is amazing. We have a new program at the Center, GALAXY for youth 13-20 that identify as LGBTQ or allies. Groups have been added to help meet the diverse needs of the community we serve, GNO started in May and is a monthly meeting for male identified persons. It is a honor to work at a Community Center that is in a position to be able to continue to evolve its programs, services, and collaborations for the betterment of LGBT folk in the Seven Rivers Region.

Our successes are largely in part due to the support of people like you. We are a fortunate Center to have financial support from a strong membership and individual donors. It is a clear sign of your commitment and that of our community to ensure that the Center exist to serve as a steward for equality. Clearly, we are stronger and able to do more due to the generosity of people that have given and continue to give of their talents, time, and financial resources. Gratitude is an integral part of the Center's history and present, thank you for helping breathe life in to our mission and vision with your generosity.

On several occasions this past year people passing through La Crosse as part of their travels stopped in the Center and were surprised that such a small place

would have a LGBT Center. One man from Florida, a flight attendant on a lay over, saw the flag flying proudly above the door and stated it “served as a beacon of hope.” Needless to say he made my day. It is in these brief encounters with people just passing through La Crosse that I realize what it is we must be doing for people that call the tri-state area home. As we continue to remain a physical presence, provide a voice, and offer insight to challenge the stereotypes and discrimination perpetuated by fear, we do indeed pave the way for change. Every day we are open, we make it a little better for people we do not even know need the Center. It is in our collective belief and desire to simply be that makes the most difference in countless ways.

I invite you to stop in the Center to visit, attend one of our groups or Out & Abouts, or just come to peruse our Christa Matter Memorial Library. Our space is small, cozy, and comfortable and everyone is welcome. Come spend a few moments with us, you will be glad you did.

I wish you a 2010 full of challenges to strengthen your resolve, laughter to make your belly ache, and love to realize the beauty in every day. Live well, be true, and keep on being your fabulous self.

Always,
Rosanne St. Sauver

Upcoming Center Activities

7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, January 9, 2010, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Where: People's Food Coop classroom

To RSVP, please call 608-784-0452. All paid members are eligible to vote at the business portion of the meeting.

Legislative Meet & Greet

When: Saturday, January 9, 2010, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl.

Representative Jennifer Shilling, Senator Kathleen Vinehout, Senator Dan Kapanke, and John Medinger, and United States Senator Herb Kohl's La Crosse area representative are confirmed to attend. We will talk about the Center, needs of those we serve, and more. Please join us for an afternoon of

conversation and collaboration for the betterment of LGBT folk and allies in our area.

December Out + About sledding party

When: Sunday, January 10, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

Where: Myrick Park

Bring sleds, snowboards, and anything else you need. It will be a great day. We can go to other sledding spots as the group desires. All participants will need to sign a participation waiver and if under 18 must have it signed by a parent or legal guardian. More information: Rosanne 608-784-0452

Guy's Night Out: potluck dinner and movie.

When: Friday, January 22, 2010 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl.

Please bring a dish to share and your own beverage. Questions or to RSVP call Mike 608-385-5753 or Josh 608-790-7606

Ongoing Center Activities

Weekly Activities

GALAXY, a group for youth ages 14-19

When: Every Tuesday 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. AND every Saturday 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

LGBTQ Parents Group

When: Every Wednesday 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

Drop-in Group

When: Every Thursday 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

Bi-weekly Activities

AA Group

When: Every other Friday at 7:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

Just as Glenda was Dorothy's support in OZ this group is the equivalent for LGBT people struggling with drug & alcohol addictions and issues. If you are looking for support and a safe place to be yourself as you deal with your drug & alcohol issues -please join us. For more information please contact: Aaron at 608-788-1508

Monthly Activities

PGLAG

When: First Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

Gender Queer/Transgender Gathering at the Center:

When: First Wednesday 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Where: 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, La Crosse

Do you identify as gender queer? How about Transgender? Do you ever feel like you don't fit in because of your gender identity or expression? Then come to a monthly discussion group at the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center. The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00. For upcoming meeting dates, check the Center [website calendar](#)

Genderqueer - A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This person may want to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

Transgender - A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

GNO (Guy's Night Out)

GNO will meet the fourth Friday of every month at the Center from 6-8 pm. All male identified persons are welcome.

DOMESTIC PARTNER REGISTRY - here are some reasons why you should register. By Christina Mae Olson, CFP®

A couple of months ago I conducted an unofficial survey of various LGBT couples who live in Wisconsin. I wanted to know if you had filed for a Declaration of Domestic Partnership and officially registered your partnerships. It turns out that not very many couples have registered. Here are some of the more colorful comments you gave me:

- “Are you serious? This is a fu..ing fantasy!”
- The registry is “...a pathetic sop” (this couple registered anyway to “show a presence in the larger community”).
- “No way! I’m not taking over her debts if she dies!”
- “It doesn’t seem to fit our situation and has no financial benefit.”

Most couples told me that they didn’t need the DP declaration to affirm their relationship or for the law to tell them they were in a lasting or legal or loving union. Some couples did not want to go to the trouble or pay the \$70 cash required to register. The fact is that while you may have a lasting and loving union - you do NOT have a legal one. Registering as domestic partners will put a worthwhile legal shell over your relationship. As I’ve said many times, we are legal strangers to each other - if you don’t register your partnership.

You’ve probably heard that there are over 1000 federal rights and benefits afforded to legally married (read: heterosexual) people - none of which gay and lesbian couples (even the legally married ones) are able to access. Here is a link to a description of the full impact of this inequality. This is a 75 page document but is well worth at least skimming:
<http://www.gao.gov/archive/1997/og97016.pdf>

The Wisconsin Domestic Partner registry provides a full 43 “rights and benefits” in 27 areas. Here’s the state link (this one is only 30 pages long) to the legal provisions:
<http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/2009-11Budget/Budget%20Papers/391.pdf>

What follows is a discussion about why I believe partners should register. I outline the points that I feel are most important. If you take away anything from this summary - take this: PARTNERS WILL NOT GET THESE BENEFITS IF THEY DO NOT REGISTER. MANY OF THESE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES CANNOT BE

GAINED FROM HAVING A WILL OR POWERS OF ATTORNEY. YOU ARE DENYING YOURSELVES SOME VERY KEY PROTECTIONS AND RIGHTS IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO REGISTER.

Most of the 27 areas in the state law merely add the words “domestic partner” to provisions for spouses or family members. In legal situations, for example, a domestic partner can keep their partner (or former partner) from testifying against her/him - like a legal spouse. If you are not registered then the law can compel you to testify against your partner - or s/he against you. Domestic partners will be included, like legal spouses, under the victim notification provisions by the Department of Corrections. Domestic partners can file a wrongful death claim - like a legal spouse. You have no claim to compensation or monetary damages (think 9-11) if your partner is killed, unless you register your partnership. Domestic partners are eligible for crime victim compensation - like a legal spouse, but only if you register. Domestic partners must be paid their registered partner’s unpaid wages, if the partner dies being owed wages from their employer.

There are some important legal “rights to consent” that domestic partners gain in this law. A domestic partner can consent to admitting their partner to a hospital, nursing home, community care facility or hospice. You do not have this ability unless you register. A domestic partner can consent to donating body parts of their deceased partner for transplantation or research. A domestic partner can consent to an autopsy after the death of the partner.

Registered domestic partners have immediate access to each other’s medical records. Registered domestic partners have visitation rights in hospitals and care facilities. You have privacy rights for these visits if you are registered. YOU MAY BE TURNED AWAY FROM VISITING YOUR ILL OR DYING PARTNER IF YOU ARE NOT REGISTERED. Registered domestic partners are eligible for the state AIDS/HIV health insurance premium subsidy program. You get this benefit if your partner can’t work due to HIV related issues. If qualified (50+ employees), your employer must grant you family and medical leave - protecting your job - to take care of your sick (registered) domestic partner. This is 2 full weeks every year as long as you are registered.

If you are registered domestic partners, and your partnership dissolves, provisions in this law protect you “from each other.” And, if your partner was married before - your current domestic partnership trumps any financial/asset transfer protections s/he had in the prior marriage. Registering your partnership serves to protect you like re-marrying would. Provisions granted to your domestic partner’s former spouse or partner will not be honored if you register your partnership. You can’t be unintentionally excluded from your partner’s will.

From a financial planning and estate planning standpoint, the 43 rights and benefits are worth serious consideration. While there are no state income tax benefits - there are estate tax and inheritance privileges granted to DP's who register. Here are some of the more positive provisions. These, alone, make registering very important for couples:

1. Transfer of property at death - Domestic partners are treated as spouses in the absence of a will. If you are not registered then you have no right to your partner's property. Get in line behind her parents, children, siblings, and extended blood relatives. If registered, the deceased partner's taxable estate will be reduced by the value of the property transferred to the partner. This is good - less estate taxes! If not registered, the transfer will be treated as a taxable gift to the surviving partner.
2. Payment of an "allowance" from the estate of your partner. The surviving domestic partner may receive payments for "support" out of the estate of the deceased partner, if registered, until the estate is settled. This is good as it will also reduce the taxable estate of the partner. These payments are not available to couples who don't register.
3. Speedy settlement of small estates. Estates worth less than \$50,000 (minus debts, support payments, charitable contributions, etc.) can go through probate quickly, if registered. If not, the process could take up to two long years.
4. DOMESTIC PARTNERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR DECEASED PARTNER'S DEBTS! If you are registered, you are even entitled to claim up to \$10,000 from his/her estate PRIOR to his/her debts being paid! You will be paid before the creditors are paid, if registered!
5. DOMESTIC PARTNERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR LIVING PARTNER'S DEBTS (unless you took on the debt/title jointly).
6. Right to purchase your partner's home. You have first dibs to your partner's home (if it wasn't also titled in your name) when s/he dies, if you are registered. If not, get in line behind the parents, children, siblings, and distant blood relatives. Of course, if you title your house together - as Joint Tenants with Rights of Survivorship (JTWROS) - then you won't even have to purchase her interest in the house. This transfer will be a taxable event if you are not registered.

There's more. I've just listed the provisions that seem most important. You should really read the bill and/or consult with an attorney to get full clarification on the benefits of registering your partnership. While it's very true

that the DP registry does not grant full marriage equality - it does provide registered couples with some extremely important protections! It is worth it to register - get your birth certificates, \$70 and go down and just do it!

Chris Olson is a licensed financial planner with a fee-only practice. You may contact her at CMoney@centurytel.net or 608-525-9818.



If you have comments on this article, please send them to Chris at the email address above, NOT to the LGBT Newsletter.

Opportunities to Help Your Center

There are new items on our Wish List. Check here for the complete [Wish List](#). [Volunteer](#) for some fun, fundraising activities for the Center.

Become a member!

Your membership in the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center makes it possible for LGBT folks to have a presence in our community and to support the collaborative work we do with other organizations in the 7 Rivers Region. Your membership supports LGBT visibility! Please join us now by filling out [the membership form](#) and mailing it to the Center. Membership also comes with goodies from our Community Partners.