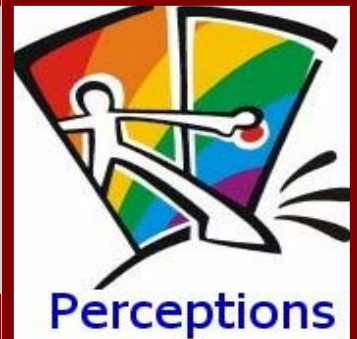


Perceptions

Saginaw Valley

www.PerceptionsSV.org



Serving the Tri-City area LGBT Community

February 2008

www.PerceptionsSV.org

Nemecek to Speak in February

By Tim



Dr. Julie Nemecek's work in diversity advocacy has been widely

covered, including articles in Newsweek, The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and a national story on Fox News. Ms. Nemecek serves on the board of Michigan Equality, and has also worked with the Triangle Foundation, the National Center for Transgender Equality, Equality Maryland, the ACLU and the Human Rights Campaign to advocate for a world that honors diversity.

Julie's situation attracted international attention in 2007, when she filed a gender-discrimination complaint against Spring Arbor University, where she had worked for the past 16 years.

Diagnosed with gender identity disorder, the former John Nemecek began estrogen treatments and came out to administrators at Spring Arbor University in late 2005. When Nemecek announced that she would start dressing and living as a woman, university officials cut her pay and reduced her job responsibilities. A few days after she legally changed her name, they told Nemecek that she had violated the terms of her contract and would lose her job.

The university, affiliated with the Free Methodist Church, said state and federal law protects its Christian mandate and that faculty and administrators are required to be Christians and follow Biblical principles. "We expect our faculty to model Christian character as an example for our students."

Nemecek, an ordained Baptist pastor, served at two churches in Chicago and one in Grand Rapids before accepting a teaching job at Spring Arbor. "My faith never wavered, because what I'm doing is not a sin," she says. Her faith has kept her marriage strong and helped her and her partner of 35 years, Joanne, accept the changes.

In mediation with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Julie Nemecek and the university eventually reached a "mutually satisfactory" settlement. She is now the president of [Julie Nemecek Consulting](#),



Julie Nemecek speaking from the steps of the Michigan Capital Building at Michigan Pride

a firm specializing in diversity consulting, training, and advocacy. In her work there, Julie strives to help people

celebrate the richness of God's diverse creation. Dr. Nemecek has proven capable of helping people understand and apply the value of diversity to their organization.

As a public speaker, Julie Nemecek informs, entertains, and inspires in a way that not only changes thinking, but also calls for action. She is a consistent voice against hate and violence. **Please join us on Thursday, February 21st at 7:00 pm at St. John's Episcopal Church, [123 N. Michigan Ave.](#), Saginaw, to welcome Dr. Nemecek.**

Memberships!
Memberships expired in January. Don't give up your membership! Click [here](#) or go to our website

www.perceptionssv.org and click on "Membership" at the left. Complete the on-line registration and then pay thru Pay Pal or send in your \$25.00 check to:

**Perceptions
Saginaw Valley
P.O. Box 1525
Midland, MI
48641**

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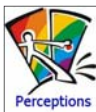
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Subscriptions: Get your copy of the newsletter free upon request with your paid membership to Perceptions. The newsletter always free to view online. For more information visit www.perceptionsSV.org



Mid-Michigan's leading resource for enriching and empowering GLBT individuals and their community

Perceptions is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. Your contributions to Perceptions which exceed the minimum amount to qualify for membership are tax deductible.

Mission statement: Our mission is to provide superior educational programs, networking opportunities and services for the well being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and their community.

Valentine's Day Dinner Dance

By Rob



Do you want to wait 45 minutes for a table at some chain restaurant on Valentine's Day?

That is, after you get home from a long day at work since Valentine's Day is Thursday this year. How about a great meal and dancing in a friendly atmosphere where you and your Valentine can be intimate and relaxed?

If this sounds good to you, please join us at The Mixx on



Saturday, February 9 at 7:00 pm for the annual Valentine's Dance. Dinner will be a private buffet for our guests only followed by dancing until 10:00. Your ticket price includes your admission to The Mixx after the event.

Tickets will be \$25 and mem-

bers who have paid their 2008 membership will be eligible for a \$5 refund at the door. Tickets are available from board members at any Perceptions event or online at www.perceptionssv.org.



We will have some tickets available at the door for those last minute Valentine planners. Singles welcome of course. You never know who you'll meet!

**Your Heart Pounds...
Your Breath Quickens...
And You Haven't Hit the Dance Floor yet...**



115 N. Hamilton
Saginaw, MI
989-498-4022



Life After Death: **This Doug's Life**

By Douglas Solosky

Several of my friends, who would like to give back to Perceptions, say, "I can't do anything." Maybe what I'm about to say will help them and others in a similar boat.

To paraphrase Elizabeth Barrett Browning, How can I contribute?---"Let me count the ways."

I can contribute by volunteering to take on projects, serving on the Perceptions' Board, offering constructive suggestions about our group, bringing in new members, attending our Friday Night Dinners, Meet & Greets, and Membership meetings, or as I am doing - write articles.

I am writing about my life spent with one man for 35 years, including my highs and lows in our relationship.

A case in point:

About 8 years ago, Don (my partner) was in St. Mary's Hospital having an angioplasty to open the veins in his heart.

His family and I were in the waiting area when the Doctor came out to give us the prognosis.

When he entered, he looked at us and said to me, are you a member of the family? Without hesitation, I said, "Yes." No one said otherwise but the Doctor seemed incredulous (to say I did not look like a member of Don's family is putting it mildly).

We were told the procedure was over, but there had been a "small" complication. For a short while, Don had died on the operating table, but had been brought back to life and all was well.

Later, Don told me he knew that he'd died

and the experience was interesting. He remembered floating upward from his body. He remembered looking back and seeing the medical staff working frantically to revive him. He was able to hear everything that was going on without the least bit of emotion. He told of the Doctor putting a small device on his heart and shocking it. That brought him back.

In all, he was only gone for a couple of minutes.

Since Don's permanent death, I see almost nothing of his family.

While he and I were together, they treated me as a relative. All the while I couldn't help think otherwise. All those years, I thought I was being ac-

cepted by them only because I had come with Don to visit and not because I was Don's other half.

Now, it is as though our relationship had never existed.

Such are the ways of life.

Are you a member of the family? Without hesitation, I said, "Yes."

UU Fellowship continues its "Welcoming Congregation" Programs

On January 29th from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland at 6220 Jefferson Avenue (at Wackerly Street) we will be talking about the process of coming out, both its joys and sorrows. Coming out isn't just a GLBT issue and we will be looking at ways it affects all people. All are welcome; please join us.

The Welcoming Congregation Series will continue in February and March with sessions such as "Your personal history," "Affection & Sexuality," "Linking the oppressions," and "Bisexuality."

A year before his death in 1987, black civil rights activist Bayard Rustin said: *"The barometer of where one is on human rights questions is no longer the black community, it's the gay community. Because it is the community which is most easily mistreated."*

Black history month



Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' 'I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother- and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people,' Coretta Scott King. - Reuters, March 31, 1998.

We'd like to have a representative from Perceptions attend the National Creating Change Conference on LGBT Equality. This is a national conference held in Detroit, Michigan at the Renaissance Center February 6th—10th, 2008.

Creating Change is the one and only time each year that more than 2,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights advocates from every corner of the country converge to strategize, socialize and mobilize for LGBT equality.



It features top-level trainings, workshops, networking sessions and action-planning with our movement's best thinkers and brightest innovators — oh yeah, there's also tons of opportunities for socializing, meeting up with old friends and making lots of new ones. In short, Creating Change is community like you've never experienced it before!

Now in its twentieth year, Creating Change is the nation's largest and most unique annual skills building and strategy conference of activists and organizers who work in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement.

Can you attend? Visit www.creatingchange.org for more information. Then contact us at pboard@PerceptionsSV.org and let us know you're going!

More Ways to Get Involved



We've **adopted a highway** and we haven't even told it yet. We're not sure what the right age is to let it know, but we've been keeping it clean in the mean-

time. We need someone to coordinate the clean up efforts for our highway. Highway trash pickup happens only 3 times a year. April, July and September.

Bring refreshments and snacks to our monthly meetings. You'll be reimbursed up to \$40, and be making people smile.

Each year, Perceptions holds a **yard sale** and gives the proceeds to a worthy charitable cause. Last year we earned \$523 which was applied towards our commitment to sponsor this year's Mid Michigan AIDS Walk at the \$1,000 level.

This year, we have the garage, but we need people to price the items and work the tables during the sale. Contact pboard@PerceptionsSv.org and let us know you'll help!





Current Events

February 1 - Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Ole Tyme Broadway, 1602 Broadway St., Bay City.

February 5, Tues - HIV Support Group

7:30 - 8:30pm Confidential peer to peer support group for those living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. Discreet and safe east-side Saginaw location. Please call 989 992-9664, or email ImPossibleSV@yahoo.com

February 6, Wed - Saginaw Meet & Greet

7:00 - 9:00 pm. An informal gathering for the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome. Meet your old friends and make some new ones while eating fantastic baked goods. Enjoy hot and cold drinks in a non-smoking environment. **Bambi's** by Java Dave's, 4632 State Street, in the Green Acres Plaza.

February 7 & 21, Thurs - Womyn's Circle

5:30 - 7:00 pm. This program provides support to Tri-County lesbian women and facilitates community awareness projects in partnership with Perceptions and PFLAG. It has provided safety and help to many women and their families experiencing hostility, abuse and isolation. The free, confidential support group sessions are facilitated by Mary Jo Hall, MSW, LMSW. Meets at the YWCA located at 3405 Midland Rd. in Bay City.

February 8, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Royal Buffet, 201 N. Euclid, Bay City. Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

February 9, Saturday - Valentine's Dinner/Dance 7pm

Held at The **Mixx**, advance tickets are \$25 and available from board members and online. Members are eligible for a \$5 refund at the door.

February 13, Wednesday - Freeland Meet & Greet

6:30 to 8:30 pm. **Riverside Restaurant**, 8295 Midland Road (M-47), Freeland. This event will repeat on the 2nd Wed. of each month.

February 15, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Lumberjacks, 605 E. Midland St., Bay City. If you plan to attend, reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm

February 19, Tuesday – Men's Discussion

Group 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Zael Memorial Library, 3100 Center Road, Saginaw Township. This gathering is intended as a discussion and informal support group for gay and bisexual men. The group will be facilitated by Thomas Brubaker. You may contact him at Thomas@PerceptionsSV.org

February 19, Tues - HIV Support Group

February 21, Thurs - Womyn's Circle

5:30 - 7:00 pm. The free, confidential support group sessions are facilitated by Mary Jo Hall, MSW, LMSW. Meets at the YWCA located at 3405 Midland Rd. in Bay City.

February 21, Thurs - Perceptions Membership Meeting 7pm

Special Guest Speaker, Dr. Julie Nemecek. Remember the new location. St John's Episcopal Church , **123 N. Michigan**, Saginaw. **All are welcome!**

February 22, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Kabob and Curry House, 4070 Bay Rd., Saginaw. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday. Join Perceptions members and friends each week at a different venue. Sign up for our email list on Yahoo Groups to be notified of future venues.

February 28, Thursday - Bay City Meet & Greet

Note new day. 7- 9 p.m. An informal gathering of the Tri-Cities LGBT community. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. **Espresso Express** located at 916 N. Water St., Bay City, offers a variety of delicious drinks, baked goods and desserts.



February 24, Sunday, PFLAG Meeting

2:00– 4:30 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland. 6220 Jefferson, Midland

February 29, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Sullivan's Black Forest, 281 Heinlein St., Frankenmuth. If you plan to attend, reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday. Sign up for our email list on Yahoo Groups to be notified of future venues.

FEBRUARY 2008

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Chuck Darr Memorial Update

by Tim A.

At the suggestion of several members, shortly after Chuck Darr's death, Perceptions announced that we were accepting funds to purchase a memorial for him that would be placed in the community garden at the Green House Gathering Place where he had been a faithful volunteer.

We recently purchased this bench (see picture below) with funds that were donated specifically for this memorial. The bench features a grey granite top and a wrought iron base in a fig leaf pattern finished in a verdigris patina.

Our next step will be to obtain a garden plaque to be placed next to the bench and have it engraved to read:

This Bench Placed Here In Memory Of
Chuck Darr
(1938 - 2007)
By His Friends At Perceptions Saginaw Valley



We have a very small balance remaining in the Darr Memorial Fund and will likely need to raise a little more money to purchase the plaque and pay for the engraving.

The bench and plaque will be placed in the Green House's community garden in the Spring.

In addition to funds that have been given with a designation for the Memorial, Perceptions has also received gifts given in memory of Chuck that were directed by the donors to the Scholarship Fund.

Editor's note: Michael Kerr, the accused killer of Charles Darr, remains in jail after Judge Jurrens decided on Friday, January 25th that he would be bound over for trial.



Board-R Line

News from the Board of Trustees

News from Rob
2007 was a

busy year for Perceptions
Saginaw Valley:

- 1 We hosted dozens of Friday Night Dinners and Meet-N-Greets.
- 2 The discussion and support groups (Womyn's Circle, Men's Discussion Group and the HIV/AIDS Support Group) met on a routine basis.
- 3 Our member events were huge successes and we even managed to create some new events.

The first annual **Respect Fest** received more media coverage for us than in the previous five years combined. We reached out to other groups and made positive connections that we hope will bring us further opportunities. And, we established an endowed **scholarship fund** for GLBT and ally students.

While it would be great to take a breather, we are already working on making 2008 even better. At the January General Meeting, the membership elected two new board members, Brian Carstensen and Gary Knight, bringing our total board up to 11 members.

And, we are busy planning for this year's **Respect Fest** and **Holiday Party**, not to mention the **Valentine's Dance** which is scheduled for February 9.

FYI Charity Auction- Ticket sales for events such as the Valentine's Day dance and the Holiday Party are close to cost for Perceptions. We offer these activities for the enjoyment of our members.

Most of our yearly profits come from the auction at the holiday party. If you enjoy shopping, now is the time of year for steep discounts. You may want to go out and pick up some bargains and hold them as Al does in a corner of the basement to donate to the 2008 Holiday party.

Anyone can donate! Last year, several of the donations were picked up and taken to the auction by volunteers, so the only thing you have to do is shop! Who doesn't like to shop?

So go out and take advantage of the sales. Choose items that have mass appeal and sell easily. It's fun to do and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you've done something worthwhile for a good cause. Remember that Perceptions is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, so your donations could be tax deductible.



The deadline to apply for **Perceptions scholarship** is February 15, 2008. See page 7 of the December 2007 newsletter for more information, or call 989 891-1429

2007 Financial Review - from *Perceptions' Treasurer Rob Cummings*

The 2007 Holiday Party was a great success and added almost \$2,800 to our funding of the Scholarship Fund to bring our total funding for the year to \$5,800. The following schedule provides a summary of the financial results of our activities for the year:

Revenues:

Member Events & Fundraisers	\$16,278
Memberships	2,410
Donations	1,113
Miscellaneous	440
TOTAL REVENUES	20,241

Expenses:

Member Events & Fundraisers	12,058
General Meetings & Newsletters	866
Telephone	531
Supplies & Miscellaneous	682
TOTAL EXPENSES	14,137

Profit/(Loss) from Activities
6,104

Grants, Sponsorships, & Gifts	
Innerlink Youth Services	1,000
AIDS Walk	1,000
Scholarship Fund	5,800
Miscellaneous	25
TOTAL	7,825

Net increase/(decrease)

Fund balances

(\$1,721)

Donation receipt letters will be mailed at the end of January to our friends and members who contributed money or goods in 2007. New IRS regulations require taxpayers to have a receipt from the recipient charity in order to deduct charitable contributions. Donations to Perceptions Saginaw Valley are tax deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



Black History is Everyone's History

By Dawn Wolfe

I have never been, nor will I ever be, pulled over for "Driving While Black." I can walk into any high-end store I like, dressed however I like, without once seeing a clerk edge over to the security button with a feigned casualness. Everywhere I go, in fact, I can expect the respect that my Caucasian skin earns for me – a respect that all too many African-Americans still have to "earn" in other ways in this country.

For all that, though, I believe that Black History is my history. And regardless of your race or ethnicity, I believe that it's yours, too.

Why? Because this country's development was leapfrogged ahead on the backs of the free labor of slavery. Think about it – would this country have grown nearly so fast, or come nearly so far, in our first centuries if we had had to *pay* all of the people who planted our crops, built our things and cleaned our homes?

The United States' four centuries of unearned progress isn't the only reason that Black History is something we all share. Black History is our history because Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King struggled for all of us – not just to free the oppressed, but also to heal the

hearts of the warped, twisted people who felt the need to be oppressors. Black History is our history because we live in this country together. And Black History is our history because the institutional and cultural racism that has been slavery's legacy still haunts too many Americans, Barack Obama's Presidential candidacy notwithstanding.

This country's development was leapfrogged on the backs of the free labor of slavery

But that still isn't all. Black History is also our history because of the double

oppression faced by our black sisters and brothers who are also LGB or T. I believe we need to do more to understand and work with the Black culture that has fostered anti-gay oppression even as we work to end oppression and discrimination against everyone.

Perhaps it's fortunate that, at least in Michigan, Black History Month falls during the coldest month of the year – making it a perfect time to stay home and read, or watch a documentary, or surf the Web to learn more about this history we share. Knowledge is not only power, it is a way to understanding, and – I hope – a way to healing the divisions we've created between us.

Dawn Wolfe is Triangle Foundation's Director of Communications. For more information about Triangle visit: www.tri.org

Top Ten Things to Never Say, If You Want a Lesbian Date (anon)

1. I've decided I may be bisexual....
2. Will you come to court with me, it's just small claims.
3. My parents know, they just don't bring it up
4. I think your mom's a dyke, she just doesn't know it
5. My kid's parole officer....
6. Are you paying???
7. I think I may have slept with your ex, back in the day
8. I think you may have slept with my ex, back in the day
9. Chat rooms aren't that bad...
10. This hickey?? it was a friend goofing around



**PFLAG
meets the
4th Sunday
of each month at
the Unitarian Uni-
versalist Fellowship
of Midland,
6220 Jefferson, MI
2 - 4:30 pm.**

Perceptions monthly meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

We use a meeting room at St John's Episcopal church, [123 N. Michigan Avenue](#), in Saginaw. There's plenty of parking on Court St. across from the court house. Use the side entrance near that parking lot.

Meetings consist of socializing, listening to an interesting and informative speaker and more time for socializing. This month's speaker is Dr Julie Nemecek. There are always snacks and soft drinks.

If you've never attended a meeting before, or if you haven't been there in awhile, c'mon in and join us for fun, information and camaraderie.

New Trustees Elected

Trustee elections were held at the Perceptions Annual meeting on January 17th, 2008.

Perceptions welcomes two new trustees, **Gary Knight** and **Brian Carstensen**. A third nominee, **Rebecca Dunn**,

has been actively serving the board since July, replacing Aaron Brown, and was unanimously elected to continue serving along with Knight and Carstensen until January 2011.



The two new guys Gary Knight & Brian Carstensen

Any board member can be contacted by visiting www.PerceptionsSV.org, and clicking on the 'Our Board' button.

There you will find an explanation of how the board works, the bylaws, and how to contact any board member.

We currently have 11 board members. Our bylaws allow for 12. We sadly say goodbye to **Leo Romo**, **Diedra Knox**, and **Dann Federico** and thank them for their tireless, dedicated service!



Back row: Gary Knight, Jim Kleinsorge, Tim Atkinson, Brian Carstensen, Rob Cummings, Alan Shinaver, Joe Nuncio.

Front row: Joy Clark, Kay Sural, Douglas Solosky, Rebecca Dunn