

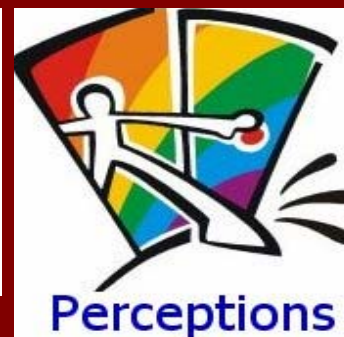
Perceptions

Saginaw Valley

www.PerceptionsSV.org

Serving the Tri-City area LGBT Community

March 2008



Fired Transgender Professor Tells Story

By Rebecca Dunn



Author's note: A transgender myself, I am aware that attempting to understand trans-genders is confusing for many people. Regardless of her social status or sexual identity at any given time in her history, Julie

Nemecek's gender is and has always been feminine. This

Photo credit: P. Whitcomb

article is respectful of that and uses only feminine pronouns.

Dr. Julie Nemecek captivated her audience at the Perceptions general membership meeting at St. John's Episcopal Church on February 21. Nemecek recounted her story to one of the largest attended meetings in recent history. She was warmly greeted by all, including several trans-genders who nodded their heads in silent understanding, as much of her story undoubtedly resonated with their own.

In 2003, after much unhappiness and internal struggle, she went online and logged into WebMD.com and discovered a term that described her lifelong feelings. She began to realize that she had gender identity disorder, a diagnosis that was confirmed by a leading counselor in that field, as well as her family doctor and a Christian counselor she worked with at Spring Arbor University.

In a heartfelt letter to her wife, Joanne, she explained all she had been experiencing. Through six tear-filled and anguished weeks, they talked, prayed, and studied in an effort to understand what was happening and to see if they could

salvage their relationship. At the end of those six weeks, Joanne decided that she "loved the person and not the package" and was "in it for the long haul." She committed to the marriage even though it put her in the position of being in a lesbian relationship.

Dr. Nemecek, an ordained minister, then came out to her three sons and their wives. The oldest, also a Baptist minister, was initially accepting but has since distanced himself. The other two sons are affirming; the youngest has actually created a website called

"My Father, She" (blog.myfathershe.com) in support of transgender issues.



Photo credit: Tana Michaels

In 2005, Julie's administrative superiors at Spring Arbor found out about her transgender status. She was told

that as long as it was kept out of the university and it didn't progress any further than it had, it wouldn't be a problem. Though it caused great stress, she was eventually forced to accept a "take it or leave it" offer by the university: a 20% pay cut, a ban from appearing on campus or acknowledging association with the university, and complete silence regarding her transsexual diagnosis with anyone connected with the university. She became depressed and suicidal. At one point she sat at her computer with a loaded revolver in her lap, and an email she had composed that read "By the time you read this, I will be dead." She said it See **Nemecek** page 7

Memberships!

Did you remember to renew your membership?

Click [here](#) or go to our website www.perceptionssv.org and click on "Membership" at the left. Complete the online 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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Perceptions Saginaw Valley

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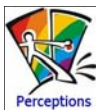
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Mid-Michigan's leading resource for enriching and empowering GLBT individuals and their community

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.

Alcohol and Spirituality

By Kathy VanBuskirk

Over the past couple of years I have had several people in the gay community approach me about things concerning spirituality. They tell me about how they have been looking for some spiritual home to which they can feel connected. The only problem I have seen is that they don't want to make the commitment of actually getting involved in anything "spiritual" because they are afraid this might mean changing their lifestyle.

Let me reiterate a couple of things I have said previously. The guilt many of us have, resulting from religious teachings we had pounded into our heads, since we

were a youth are unfounded. I believe there is nothing wrong with, and no punishment for, being gay other than the ways in which we punish ourselves because we believe the lies we have been told.

You can be gay and be spiritual. You can drink and be spiritual. My own personal view is that drinking in excess may harm your body, but it is not harming your soul unless you are letting drinking keep you from achieving a connection with our creator. I don't believe God is up in the sky looking down and saying, "Okay he's going to hell and so is she...they both consume too much alcohol." That creative force in the universe, if it judges at all, which I doubt, would be more concerned about how we treat each other and how we are growing spiritually, not whether we are drinking alcohol.

When Jesus was at the last supper, the way the story goes, he said, "Drink this." referring to wine at the table. I don't think Jesus was sitting around earlier in the day saying, "I need something to symbolize my blood when I talk later. I think I will have wine at the table." The fact is that they drank wine with their meals...including Jesus.

Being spiritual has nothing to do with your sexuality, or your drinking behavior. It has to do with loving people and growing to be a better person.

“Being spiritual has nothing to do with your sexuality, or your drinking behavior. “

I am offering to give the gay community in this area a spiritual home within which to feel

connected. If you come to meetings I don't care if you were drunk the night before. I just want us all to help each other find our own personal connection with God, no matter how each individual in the community views that God.

I am Gay...I am a female...and I do on occasion have a drink, but that doesn't make me any less a minister of truth. I am not just telling you things I think some of you want to hear. I am telling you what I view, as a result of my education, as truth. I am real and authentic and I am here to listen and when necessary help. If you join me on this journey I am sure we will help EACH OTHER along the way.

If you have any questions that you would like to have answered in future articles please contact me at Rev.KathyV@yahoo.com. You can also call me at 989-752-9227.



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

By Douglas Solosky

Losing the Past

A few days ago I returned some memorabilia to my partner's brother. I took them to his sister's house who lives next door. Since I had not heard from, or seen them for months, I saw no reason to find out if they were home.

This morning at Meijer's, lo and behold, he and his wife were there! They sought me out. We had a wonderful visit. It turned out that he was home and was very disappointed that he had missed me.

Subliminally, I have had feelings of being sad, alone and isolated. I have been excluding them because it hurts to remember the past. My partner and I use to visit them regularly, and every time I go there my head is flooded with thoughts from the past.

A third email from a married lady friend of mine surprised me with this, "I think there are legions of spouses who, while it seems they are accepted and part of the family, find out later that their relationship was only because of whom they had married. Sometimes they find out when a death happens. Sometimes they find out when there is a divorce."

I feel that communication is the key to a healthy relationship; be that with the past or the present. I am going to try and keep in touch with my past as I work on my present.

What Perceptions Means To Me

By Jim Kleinsorge

Perceptions means a lot of things to different people. To some, it means social networking, to others it means political activism. For many, it means feeling like an active part of our community. To me it means all these things and more.

When I came to my first Perceptions meeting, I was very nervous that I'd see someone I knew. The rational part of me said that if they were there, it was for the same reason I was. Still, I was hesitant to walk in that building. I can understand how difficult is for others to take that first step and come to their first meeting, since I had been through it myself. As it turns out, when I walked into the UU Fellowship and looked around, I DID see someone I knew. I froze. Now what would I do? I decided to ignore my fear and I went over and spoke to the familiar face. The world didn't come to an end. Today, that person is one of my best and most trusted friends.

I've noticed changes in myself that I never would have anticipated. Thanks to Perceptions, although I'm still very shy, I'm more outgoing than I ever imagined becoming. I've made friends and met people I probably would have never known otherwise. This didn't happen overnight or by going to one or two functions. It took perseverance, but gradually, I came to see these people as my extended family. I was never forced or pressured to do more than I was ready to do. I don't consider myself an activist, but feel I'm changing hearts and minds in my own way, one person at a time.

These are just a few of the ways I've benefited from becoming involved with Perceptions. While all the people that participate in Perceptions don't reap all these benefits, my guess is that most benefit in some significant way.

Is Perceptions worth the \$25.00 yearly membership fee? I'd bet my life it is! The satisfaction I get from knowing Perceptions is there for me...for us, is as they say, priceless.

Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well.

Barbara Bush (1925 - present) remarks at Wellesley College Commencement 1990



No written law has ever been so binding than unwritten custom supported by popular opinion.

Carrie Chapman Catt (1859 - 1947) Speech at the Senate hearing on woman's suffrage. 1900

Chocolate Party



This annual fundraiser for PFLAG Tri-Cities and Perceptions will be held in a beautiful Victorian home, located at 1609 5th St., in Bay City.

Enjoy a wonderful selection of decadent chocolate desserts and conversations with friends old and new. Free-will donation at the door.



Be informed about upcoming events

Subscribe to our email list to keep updated on Perceptions news and events. Just send an email to:



Current Events

PerceptionsSV-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

You can always go directly to the "Current Events" page at

<http://events.perceptionsSV.org>

The board of trustees elected officers at the last board meeting. The results are as follows:

- Chairperson: Alan Shinaver
- Vice Chair: Joy D. Clark
- Treasurer: Rob Cummings
- Secretary: Jim Kleinsorge



Can You Help?



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

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 years' 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

March 4, 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

March 5, 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.

March 6 & 20, 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.

March 7, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

The Metro Grille at The Mixx, [115 N. Hamilton St.](#), Saginaw. Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

March 12, 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 Wednesday of each month.

March 14, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

The Stockpot, [1007 Washington Ave.](#), Bay City. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

March 16, Sunday, PFLAG Meeting

2:00- 4:30 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland. [6220 Jefferson Ave.](#), Midland.

March 18, Tues - HIV Support Group

March 20, Thurs - Perceptions Membership

Meeting 7pm. **Green Point Environmental Learning Center**, [3010 Maple St.](#), Saginaw. Dress for an outside hike, weather permitting. **All are welcome!**

March 20, 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.

March 21, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

Shari @ The Willard Hilton, [1506 W. Beaver Rd.](#), Auburn. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

March 25, 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

March 27, 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.

March 28, Friday Night Dinner 6:00 pm


Pasong's, [114 N. Michigan](#), Saginaw. If you plan to attend, please reply to Jim@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

****March 29****

Saturday, Chocolate Party

This annual fundraiser for PFLAG Tri-Cities and Perceptions will be held in a beautiful Victorian home at [1609 Fifth St.](#), Bay City. Enjoy a wonderful selection of decadent chocolate desserts and conversations with friends old and new. Free-will donation at the door.

MARCH 2008

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23 Easter	24	25  Men's Discussion Group 7:00 - 8:30 PM	26	27  Bay City Meet & Greet Espresso Express 7:00 - 9:00 PM	28  Friday Night Dinner Pasong's 114 N. Michigan Ave. Saginaw 6:00 PM	29  Perceptions/ PFLAG  Chocolate Party 7:00 - 10:00PM Bay City																																																																																				
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Action is Hot, Power is Sexy

by Charissa Urbano



What do you get when you mix over 2,000 lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender, queer and gender-undefined people together in the motor city? You get the 2008 edition of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [Creating Change Conference](#). The fabulous IKEA-like-stage with a pink and purple theme was the perfect backdrop for this year's conference theme, "Power is Sexy, Action is Hot." The stage, the energy and the most colorful mix of people of all persuasions demonstrated the power of uniting our collective forces to promote justice and inclusion for all.

Despite getting lost in the maze that is the Renaissance Center, I was able to attend a dozen sessions and bring back 20 pounds of promotional information from the exhibit booths. Thank goodness Showtime provided free tote bags when you checked in at the reservation tables. Renowned comedic and political commenter Kate "Hilarity" Clinton served as the host of the plenary sessions. Her interaction with the crowd and quick wit was just plain fun. I wrote down one of her favorite lines "I'm not bragging, well I guess I am" for later use when, and if, I ever do anything to brag about.

Julian Bond kicked off the welcome reception on Thursday evening. The former chair of the NAACP spoke eloquently about civil rights and social justice for all. He highlighted parallels of the civil rights battle for racial equality with our communities fight for total inclusion and equality. He called on black preachers to stand up against discrimination and rise up against inequality rather than an abomination. His final words, humanity." **"I'm not bragging, well I guess I am"** against discrimination and rise preach that homosexuality is "Do not disturb the unity of

Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay man in the world to be elected bishop in the Anglican Church called for understanding, love and dialogue. His talk was centered on three words, "Trust, Honor, and Respect." Trust that you will advance the cause, honor an authentic and healthy life of unique character and respect your willingness to work for a better world.

Matt Foreman, The Executive Director of the [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#) gave the State of the Movement Address on Friday night. He delivered a passionate review of the accomplishments of our political movement. In summary, 0% of the U.S. population supported protection on the basis of sexual orientation in 1970, 4% in 1980, 20% in 1990, 34% in 2000 and 52% in 2006. The tide is shifting despite George Bush's efforts to contain it. This year 2 states added gender identity protections to their state constitutions, 3 states ratified broad family protections, 4 states now have anti-bullying laws that prohibit harassment against our youth, 6 localities extend domestic partner benefits and recognize second parent adoption and 20 cities have nondiscrimination laws that specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity. He brought the crowd to its feet on several occasions as he promoted an uncompromising call to action for marriage equality. The excitement in the ballroom was electrifying...wish you all could have been there.

Nemecek *continued from front page*

was only the love of her family that saved her.

By the end of October of 2006, the university claimed that Nemecek was in violation of the contract. Her attorneys advised her to file an EEOC complaint against the university, both at the state and federal levels. A settlement has since been reached with Spring Arbor University and her employment with them was terminated.

Her story was picked up by the national media, including a Newsweek cover story in which she and Joanne were prominently featured. Nemecek has since started a consulting firm and has become a transgender activist. She speaks to groups across the country and finds her college audiences especially receptive.

"The more you tell your story, the more people can understand," Nemecek said. "The more people understand and have a face to attach to it, the harder it is to hate."

Dr. Nemecek's website is at julienemecek.com. Her blog "Celebrating Diversity" is at julienemecek.blogspot.com.

Perceptions Guided Night Hike

By Becky Goche

Join Park Ranger Becky Goche for a **Guided Night Hike** on Thursday, March 20, 2008. Hikers should meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, [3010 Maple Street](#) in Saginaw.

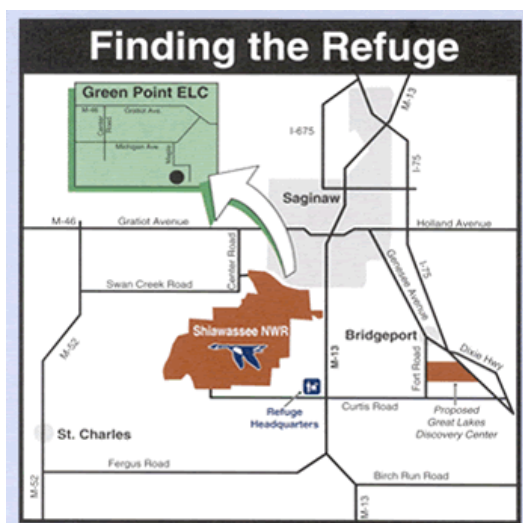
Explore the sights, sounds and smells of the night as you hike in a guided group along about one mile of Green Point's trails. **This hike is suitable for children and adults** and will feature nocturnal animal identification, owl calling, and more. On past night hikes, visitors have been awed by the sights and sounds of tiny, screech owls that live on the 76-acre property. Keep in mind that there are no guarantees we will see them!

Wear dark clothing, sturdy boots/shoes, and bring a flashlight. In the event of severe weather or flooded trails, the hike will be replaced by an informational talk about Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and its wildlife, inside the nature center. For more information, contact Becky at (989) 759-1669.

Directions to Green Point Environmental Learning Center

From I-75

Take the I-675 exit. Follow I-675 and take the Michigan/Davenport exit. Get onto Michigan Avenue and head south (towards the hospitals). Stay on Michigan for about 3.5 miles. Watch for Maple



Street which intersects Michigan just past a stop light and where Michigan curves to the west (rightward). Turn south (left) onto Maple and go about 0.5 mile. The Center is located on the right side of the road.

From M-46/Gratiot

Take M-46/Gratiot to Center Road. Turn south onto Center Road. Stay on Center for 1 mile to Michigan Avenue. Turn east (left) onto Michigan. Go 1.5 miles to Maple Street (just before the third stoplight). Turn south (right) onto Maple and go about 0.5 mile. The Center is located on the right side of the road.

Green Point Environmental Learning Center
3010 Maple Street
Saginaw, Michigan (989) 759-1669

Summer Organizing Fellowship earn up to \$500 a week



Our Organizing & Training team partners with leaders, organizations, and campaigns to build the political power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Fellows will work as part of a dynamic field team based in high priority campaigns around the country.

Stipend and Placement

Summer fellows are paid a stipend of \$500 per week.

To apply Applications must include:

1. Cover letter outlining your motivation in applying for the fellowship
2. Resume
3. Contact information for three references
4. Your college transcript (if applicable)

Applications must be received by Sunday, March 30,

Decisions will be made and communicated by Monday, April 28, 2008.

Step 1: Send cover letter, resume and references in the body of an e-mail to jsage@theTaskForce.org. **Verify your e-mail address by replying to the auto response.**

Step 2: Mail college transcript (if applicable) to:

Jovan Sage — O&T Fellowship Program
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
80 Maiden Lane, Suite 1504
New York, NY 10038

Questions? Contact Jovan Sage, field organizer at jsage@theTaskForce.org, or call 646.358.1483.

The Task Force is an equal opportunity employer.

Triangle offers internship earn up to \$3000 for the summer



The [Equality Federation Institute](http://www.equalityfederation.org) is offering internship positions for summer 2008. Interns will develop and carry out projects with local Equality Federation members. It doesn't matter what your major is. Internships are open to upper division (junior and senior) undergraduates and students in accredited graduate schools or law programs.

Interns will receive a stipend of up to \$3000.00 for the summer. They will participate in biweekly online leadership training and receive a full scholarship, including travel, to this year's Equality Federation Institute Summer Meetings in Columbus, Ohio.

Students are encouraged to apply for academic credit for this internship.

Apply by contacting Triangle Foundation for an application form. **The deadline for the summer session is March 31, 2008. Contact sean@tri.org**

The Equality Federation Institute is a national 501(c)(4) organization that provides support and services for statewide LGBT advocacy organizations.

More Questions? Contact the Equality Federation at renee@equalityfederation.org or see our website – www.equalityfederation.org – and click the Internship link.

It's important to us that we represent our community. People of color, people with disabilities and people of diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and identities are encouraged to apply

A Dialogue Circle on Racism

Presented by

The Bridge Center for Racial Harmony

A Dialogue Circle:

- Consists of **six, 2-hour**, small group discussions with co-facilitators and ten to twelve participants;
 - Is a process of small group deliberation that is voluntary and participatory;
- Considers many perspectives, rather than advocating a particular point of view;
 - Uses ground-rules to set the tone for a respectful, productive discussion;
 - Is rooted in dialogue, not debate;
- Has multiple sessions moving from personal experience of the issue, to considering multiple viewpoints, to strategies for action; and,
 - Provides an opportunity for participants to work together to improve their community.

Space is limited to 12 participants

For further information and to register please contact :

CORRECTION: Michael Kerr, the accused killer of Charles Darr, remains in jail after Judge Jurrens bound him over for trial on February 13, 2008. The newsletter originally announced the date as, January 25th, 2008. (Kerr's arraignment is scheduled for March 10, at 1:30 before judge Borchard.)



Valentine's Dinner/Dance Fabulous!

By **Kay Sural** It was fabulous! If you missed the Valentines Day Dance, you missed a wonderful night. I heard a million excuses as to why you did not come but let me tell you, you missed one of the best events that Perceptions sponsors.

We had a wonderful meal of ham or chicken, green beans, parsley red skin potatoes, tossed salad, delicious hot rolls and to-die-for mini cheese cakes and chocolates. Robb at the Mixx did a terrific job setting the room with white table cloths and fresh flowers.

Our group, as always for special events, had the place to ourselves until 10:45p.m.. Access to the VIP room before and after others came in, was just another special perk. Joy and Becky went out of their way to make sure everyone was having a great time and a raffle for a "special fun basket for the guys and box for the girls," filled with Valentine's day gifts to make everyone in the room wish they had won it.

Also a special door prize. Tickets to the Comedy Fest in Ferndale were given away. To top it off, the music was for lovers to dance cheek to cheek, or for us single folks to get close to all our friends. I just can't say enough about how great an evening this was whether you were single or with a partner. As I said at the beginning, IT WAS FABULOUS!



Kay earns more money by go-go dancing!



Photo credits: Tana Michaels; Jim Kleinsorge