



PERCEPTIONS

SAGINAW VALLEY

Serving the Tri-City Area's LGBT Community

September 2012

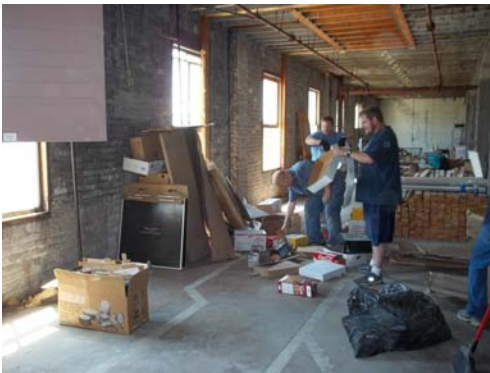
www.PerceptionsSV.org

Free

Volunteers Make Progress at The Alderton Building



A group of volunteers gave up a few hours of their Saturday morning to clean up the second floor warehouse area of The Alderton Building. This space is located directly behind the area where our monthly meetings are held. This space will be used for storage of Perceptions supplies and will eventually house office space and perhaps an additional meeting room.



At Right: Alan took time away from cleaning to make friends with a young pigeon who was "evicted" from The Alderton.



September General Meeting Will Inform Us How Health Care Reform Impacts the LGBT Community

Join us for the first General Meeting following our summer hiatus. We'll meet on Thursday, September 20th at The Alderton Bldg., [301 Cass St.](#), Old Town Saginaw. Doors will open at 7:00 pm with refreshments and social time; the meeting will be called to order around 7:20 pm. All are welcome

A representative of [Michigan Consumers for Healthcare](#) (MCH) will give a non-partisan, fact-based, consumer-focused presentation on how the Affordable Care Act benefits U.S. residents and citizens, and will focus on particular needs, solutions, and protections for the LGBT community. What's really in the new law? Come to the "Truth about Healthcare Reform" seminar and learn more.

MCH brings the consumers voice to Healthcare Reform in Michigan by partnering with policymakers and a diverse coalition including AARP, American Cancer Society, Lung Assoc., Michigan Council of YWCAs, The Arc, and Free Clinics of Mich.

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Perceptions Saginaw Valley is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contributions are deductible as charitable donations for federal income tax purposes.

Perceptions is Mid-Michigan's leading resource for enriching and empowering LGBT individuals and their community.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

Highway Cleaup Saturday September 29th 10:00 am

Rick Farrand

Due to scheduling problems, I will not be able to do this end-of-season highway clean-up, but Randy H. stepped up to the plate and he will do it for me. Thank you Randy!

As before, wear clothing that is appropriate for the day, dress in layers and have good footwear. Sunblock will be provided as well as donuts and bottled water.

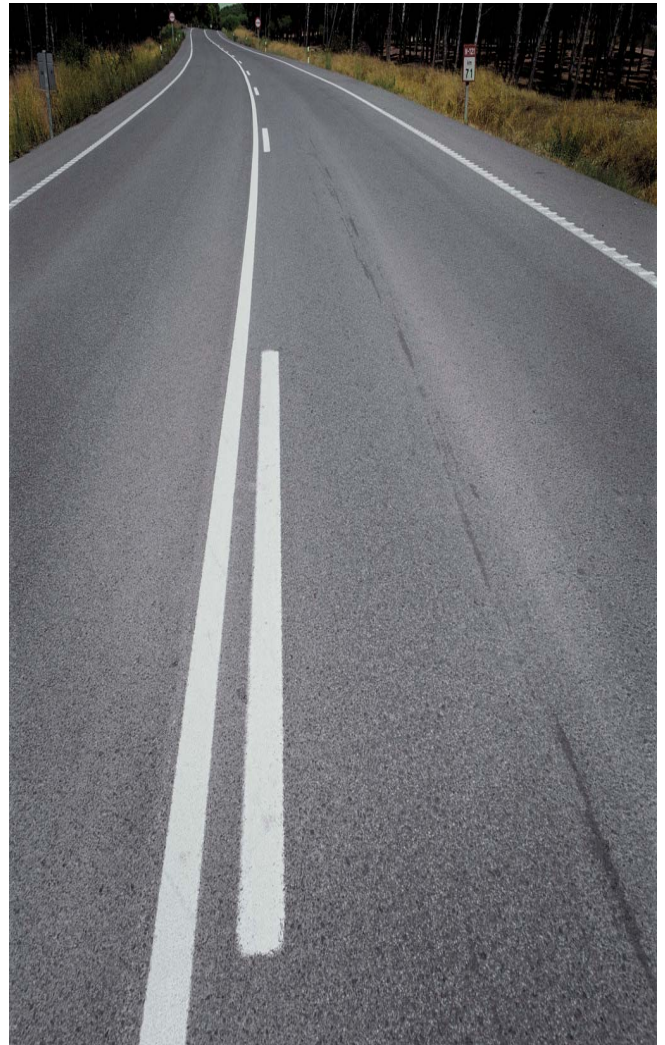
We will meet at the rest area on Southbound I-75, just south of the M-84 exit (#160). We will go over safety rules and regulations and pass out work vests, gloves, and trash bags.

We would really appreciate it if you could RSVP to Randy so that he can get a head count for the cook out after, so please call him on his cell at 989-980-3171 and leave a message.

As a special treat, Alan will be preparing homemade pizza on the grill for all volunteers.

If you decide you want to go but did not RSVP, don't worry, we could really use the help. In that case please just show up and have some fun, and get out and mix and mingle with old and new friends, while doing something good for the community!

So lets give Randy some support and show up and have a great time! Thank you for all you do and thank you, Randy, for doing this for me!! In case of major rain, it will be cancelled. If you have any questions, please call.



Love ya, Rick

AIDS Walk Saturday September 22nd

Shawn Nicholes



As time moves on there have been significant events in history such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor, assassination of JFK and 9-11. If you were alive when these events happened, you remember where you were and what you were doing.

Do you remember where you were and what you were doing the first time you heard the word AIDS? June 5, 1981, was the first published report of AIDS in The United States. AIDS was spreading fast with death inevitable with no medications to treat infected people.

Decades later AIDS can be controlled by getting tested and now, more than ever, testing is important to bring this horrible disease to an end. There are now new promising medications that offer a longer, better life for those who live with HIV or AIDS. And now

more than ever there is hope, and that's where Sacred Heart Rehabilitation centers come in. They provide confidential testing, a food pantry and an emergency relief fund for clients that have a hard time paying their rent and utilities. Sacred Heart offices are located in Bay City and Saginaw.

There is a way that we can all help those that do and don't have AIDS. The answer is the AIDS Walk 2012 Great Lakes Bay Region. AIDS Walk 2012 will be held at Wenonah Park in Bay City on Saturday September 22nd. Registration starts at 9:30 am; Walk Rally at 10:30 and Walk Time is 11:00 am.

Perceptions has supported AIDS Walk Great Lakes Bay Region since the first one was held in 2005 and continues to do so this year. You can register as a team member or you could make a donation at www.AidsWalkMichigan.org. Go to the website and click on Bay City, Saginaw, Midland on the left side of the web page and then you can make a donation or join our team and make a difference in this world where we still live with AIDS. Team member collection envelopes are available upon request and I will make sure that you are provided with one.

For any questions please email me, Shawn Nicholes, Perceptions team captain, at nicholes911@yahoo.com for any questions or concerns.

I really hope that this reaches a lot of people as we can only beat AIDS together.

Thank you in advance for your donations and time and for being a part of team Perceptions.



Michigan Gay Community Centers Launch 100-Day Hunger Strike

Tim Atkinson

All LGBT Community Centers throughout the state of Michigan have joined together to protest Michigan's extreme anti-equality environment, by declaring a 100-day hunger strike which began exactly 100 days before the general election.

The Community Centers Network (CCN), consisting of eight lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Michigan community centers, is organizing this demonstration to protest the extreme anti-equality environment in Michigan. Top leadership from every community center will serve a solid 24 hour block of time, living on display in the front windows of Affirmations, Michigan's largest LGBT community center, on 9 Mile Road, in the heart of downtown Ferndale. You can view the strikers live by streaming video on the internet. Shifts run from 9:00 am to 9:00 am, beginning Monday, July 30th and running through Tuesday, November 6th.

Members of The Community Centers Network are:

[Affirmations](#) | Ferndale, MI

[Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center](#) | Kalamazoo, MI

[OutCenter](#) | Benton Harbor, MI

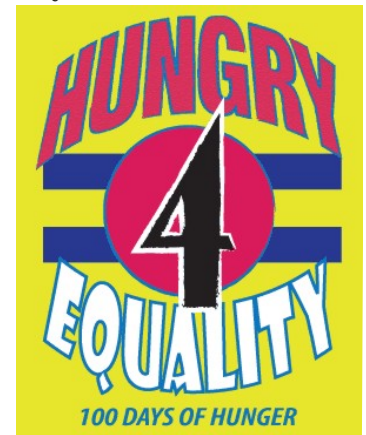
[KICK](#) | Detroit, MI

[Perceptions](#) | Saginaw / Bay City / Midland, MI

[The Network](#) | Grand Rapids, MI

[Jim Toy Community Center](#) | Ann Arbor, MI

[Detroit Latin@z](#) | Detroit, MI



Among the reasons why Michigan has come to be known as “the Mississippi of the LGBT civil rights movement” are laws in this state that prevent gay and lesbian couples from getting married and prevent one partner from adopting the children of the other to provide security and stability for their family. In Michigan, LGBT people can be fired from their jobs if they're suspected of being gay or transgender. LGBT people in Michigan can be denied housing and public accommodations.

The hostile environment continues to manifest with new legislation such as the recent bill that was passed to eliminate health care coverage for domestic partners of municipal and public employees. House Bill 5039 has been introduced to prohibit municipalities from adopting non-discrimination ordinances that include protections for LGBT residents. A pair of bills in the house and senate would require university counseling, psychology and social work programs to violate national ethics standards to allow students to refuse service to LGBT and certain other clients. These bills could jeopardize the accreditation of psychology, counseling and social work programs at Michigan universities. SB 975 would give doctors and medical care providers, insurance companies, and employers the right to discriminate in services offered based on religious or moral exemptions.

There are many ways to become involved in this outreach project. There are still a few openings for strikers and Strike Supporters to take a shift at Affirmations. Strike sponsors provide financial assistance. Most importantly, we need Strike Advocates. The strike brings attention to LGBT issues in our state. As an Advocate, you'd have the opportunity to join motivated community members who share your passion to create real change. Training is available to learn skills that will help with outreach and education. Activities for Advocates can range from writing letters to your elected officials or an Op-Ed piece for a local newspaper, to statewide phone banks to contact potential voters about pro-equality issues, to going door to door to educate community members about pro-LGBT issues. For more information go to www.hungry4equality.com

Current Events

events.PerceptionsSV.org

▼ **September 7th - Friday Night Dinner** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions friends at **Midland Resort's Garden Restaurant**, [1500 W. Wackerly St.](#), Midland. If you plan to attend, please reply to RSVP@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

Sunday, September 9th - Genesee County PFLAG Meeting 2:00 - 4:30 pm. The meeting takes place at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Flint, [2474 S. Ballenger Hwy.](#) For more information, contact pflagflint@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, September 12th - Open Hearts 6:00 pm. Positive thinking group for disabled members of the LGBT community. Discussion, speakers and support. Meets at Butman Fish Library in Saginaw. For info call Rev. Kathy VanBuskirk at 989-392-6874.

▼ **Friday, September 14th - Friday Night Dinner** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions friends this week at **The Savoy Grill**, [127 S. Franklin St.](#), Saginaw. If you plan to attend, please reply to RSVP@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

Sunday, September 16th - PFLAG Meeting 2:00 - 4:30 pm. The meeting takes place at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, [2525 Hemmeter Rd.](#), Saginaw. For more information contact pflag@pflag-mbs.org or 989-941-1458.

▼ **Tuesday, September 18th - Men's Discussion Group** 7:00 to 8:30 pm. **The Alderton**, [301 Cass St.](#), Old Town Saginaw. 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 for additional information or to let him know you'll attend. Light snacks will be provided.

Wednesday, September 19th - Womyn's Room II 6:00 pm. This women's group is designed as a safe place for Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender women, who are out or not, to come for support and socialization. For more info. contact Rev. Kathy VanBuskirk at 989-392-6874.

Wednesday, September 19th - Men's Friendship Room 7:00 pm. Men's Friendship Room is designed as a safe place for Gay, Bisexual and Transgender men, who are out or not, to come for support and socialization. It meets at David Younk's home in Saginaw. For more information, contact David Younk at 989-771-9721 or DavidY513@hotmail.com or Rev. Kathy VanBuskirk at 989-392-6874.

▼ **Thursday, September 20th - Perceptions General Meeting** 7:00 pm. **The Alderton**, [301 Cass St.](#), Old Town Saginaw. Ryan Sullivan of the [Michigan Consumers for Healthcare](#) will give an informative "Truth about Healthcare Reform" seminar, with focus on the particular needs, solutions and protections for the LGBT community. All are welcome.

▼ **Friday, September 21st - Friday Night Dinner** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions friends at **Vinny's Stock Pot Diner**, [1007 Washington Ave.](#), Bay City. If you plan to attend, please reply to RSVP@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

▼ **Saturday, September 22nd - AIDS Walk Bay City/Midland/Saginaw** Wenonah Park, Downtown Bay City. 9:30 a.m. Registration Begins, 10:30 a.m. Rally, 11 a.m. Walk Time. Free food, music, entertainment, and awards/trophies to the top individual fundraisers and walk teams. To join Perceptions Walk Team, contact Team Captain, Shawn Nicholes, at nicholes911@yahoo.com or visit aidswalkmichigan.org.

Saturday, September 22nd - AIDS Walk Flint Noon Registration; Walk 2:00 - 4:00 pm. University of Michigan - Flint, University Center (UCen), Downtown Flint. To join the PFLAG Striders Walk Team, contact Terri Dinsmore, at pflagflint@yahoo.com or visit www.aidswalkmichigan.org.

▼ **Monday, September 24th - Perceptions Transgender Group** 6:00 pm. Meeting at **The Alderton Bldg**, [301 Cass St.](#), Saginaw, the group offers an informal gathering, taking a more 'light-hearted' approach to allow transgenders in the Tri-City area an opportunity to connect with one another for socializing and support. If you have any questions, contact Rachel at Rachel@PerceptionsSV.org.

▼ **Thursday, September 27th - Saginaw Meet & Greet** 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Join Perceptions friends each month at **The Mixx**, [115 N. Hamilton Street](#), Old Town Saginaw for an evening of games of skill or chance or just for friendly conversation. Board games and cards will be available if you'd like to play, or bring your own game. Sandwiches and snacks will be available in The Metro Grille, as well as coffee, soft drinks, and a full bar.














▼ **Friday, September 28th - Friday Night Dinner** 7:00 pm. Join Perceptions friends at **Sullivan's Food & Spirits**, [5235 Gratiot Rd.](#), Saginaw. If you plan to attend, please reply to RSVP@PerceptionsSV.org by 3:00 pm Friday.

▼ **Saturday, September 29th - Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up** 10:00 am. Meet at the [rest area](#) on Southbound I-75, just south of M-84 / Westside Saginaw Road. Afterward, Alan will prepare homemade pizza on the grill at his Bay City home for all volunteers. For more information, contact Randy at 989-980-3171. RSVPs would be appreciated to help plan for supplies and food preparation. But your participation will be welcomed, whether you're able to RSVP or not.

▼ Event sponsored or endorsed by Perceptions

To be informed about upcoming events, simply send a blank email to: PerceptionsSV-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

SEPTEMBER 2012

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9  Genesee Co. PFLAG Meeting UU Church of Flint 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint 2:00 - 4:30 PM	10	11	12	13  Card Players Club The Alderton 301 Cass St. Saginaw 1:00 - 3:00 PM	14  Friday Night Dinner Savoy Grill 127 S. Franklin St. Saginaw 7:00 PM	15																																																																																				
16  Tri-Cities PFLAG Meeting Our Savior Lutheran Church 2525 Hemmeter, Saginaw 2:00 - 4:30 PM	17	18  Perceptions Men's Discussion Group 301 Cass St. Saginaw 7:00 - 8:30 PM	19	20  Perceptions Monthly Meeting 301 Cass St. Saginaw 7:00 PM	21  Friday Night Dinner Vinny's Stock Pot 1007 Wasington Ave. Bay City 7:00 PM	22  Great Lakes Bay Region AIDS Walk Wenonah Park Bay City 9:30 AM																																																																																				
23	24  Transgender Group The Alderton 301 Cass St. Saginaw 6:00 - 7:30 PM	25	26	27  Saginaw Meet & Greet ("Game Night") The Mixx & Metro Grille 115 N. Hamilton St. 7:00 PM	28  Friday Night Dinner Sullivan's 5235 Gratiot Rd. Saginaw 7:00 PM	29  Percepttions Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up Day 10:00 AM I-75 Rest Area South of M-84																																																																																				
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September Brings Out Angst for Many LGBTQ Youth and Educators Alike

by David DePeal, Perceptions SV Columnist

The opinions expressed in this article, are that of myself and myself ALONE and do not reflect those of Perceptions SV leadership, its board, its members and/or associates. Perceptions SV is a 501(c)(3) organization and does not support or contribute to any political organization or political candidate in accordance with all IRS non-profit rules and regulations.

Ah, September. Such a bittersweet time of year. As the nights begin to cool with a new found crispness and the leaves change in a rainbow of colors, many old and young alike are beginning to anticipate what lies in store as a new school year begins. For LGBTQ teens, this is a particularly anxious time as the end of summer brings new and old fears regarding sexuality, discovery, dating and even group showering — not to mention the daily taunts, torture and threats that many are forced to endure. As a matter of survival, LGBT and questioning youth often seek out supportive adults in the school environment who can help protect them, discreetly answer their questions, and who can help alleviate their fears, angst and depression.

Such individuals play an role of incalculable importance to the welfare and happiness of these youth. Literally, many children's lives are in these hands. Hopefully, all children attending these learning institutions are in understanding and progressive environments that seek to promote the health and safety of those in its charge, and those that can assist these youth have a free hand to help them through a difficult time. Unfortunately, this is becoming less and less the case.

In July of 2011, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed tenure reform legislation that ends the “last in, first out” practice through which school districts make staffing decisions based solely on seniority, in favor of a new system that requires administrators to consider demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom. While such a proposal as this may sound good technically on paper, there are many serious problems with its practical application in learning environments.

With this reform, it will take five years for a teacher to qualify for tenure, up from four, although teachers who are rated “highly effective” three years in a row may earn tenure in less time. During the initial probationary period, however, a teacher may be dismissed **at any time**. Even after a teacher earns tenure, he or she will have to continue earning effective ratings in order to keep it. School districts will have to notify parents in writing if their child is taught by a teacher who is rated “ineffective.” The reform, however, is silent on how administrators will measure educator “effectiveness” and how personal politics and biases will be eliminated from this process leaving the subject open to further speculation and debate.

Any type of controversy surrounding a teacher, therefore, can meet with termination by a fearful administration at any time. This will cause many teachers to fear being “outed” and losing their jobs. It will also effectively silence many teachers, gay and straight, who might be inclined to help students by reaching out to those who might be questioning their sexual identities. As a result, it is likely that here in Michigan those students bullying other students perceived as gay, lesbian or transgendered will be given a free pass and that teen suicide rates will increase significantly.

In other related news, Michigan passed *Senate Bill No. 137*, called “Matt’s Safe School Law” named after a

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teenager (Matt Epling) who killed himself after being the victim of anti-gay bullying.

In a sad, ironic twist of fate, the bill was rendered effectively useless by Michigan Republicans controlling the Michigan Senate who *only agreed to consider an anti-bullying measure* that did not require school districts to report bullying incidents, did not include any provisions for enforcement or teacher training, and did not hold administrators accountable if they fail to act, *thus* allowing bullying to continue in schools unabated.

To make matters even worse, *these same* Michigan Senate Republicans fighting back Democratic attempts to enumerate particular types of students who are prone to being bullied such as religious and racial minorities and gay students, later amended the bill to let bullies off the hook if they act out because of their “*sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction.*” *The amended section, as a result, does not prohibit a statement of a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction of a school employee, school volunteer, pupil, or a pupil and parent or guardian.* Effectively, not only does this bill do *nothing* to prevent bullying, but it actually *encouraged* religious extremists to continue to treat gay teens as less-than-equal because their “speech” is now protected on account of discriminatory held religious beliefs.

Michigan Democratic leaders, having redubbed the bill “License to Bully”, immediately sought the repeal of *Senate Bill No. 137* or to modify it back to serve its original purpose of protecting those who are currently being bullied in school settings. Such an outcome seemed unlikely giving the Michigan Senate’s current political climate. However, after the bill drew national attention, airing on such liberal forum as the Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow shows, the repeal of the amendment was successful. No word as of press time how the final bill will read as it travels to the Michigan House of Representatives.

Likewise, added collateral damage that can be expected from the animosity of current leadership through outlandish legislation such as *Senate Bill No. 137* is the extinction of already well established gay-supportive school-based groups such as gay-straight alliances (GSAs) as most public school districts require that extracurricular school activities be sponsored and advised by school faculty members. Many educators will abandon their involvement in such groups seeing it as career suicide given the present day punitive environment now in effect. The result will be that LGBT and questioning youth will then need to seek out alternative sources of information and camaraderie which may prove to be less reliable and/or even dangerous to their well-being.



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and click “Join This Group” or simply send a blank email to:

PerceptionsSV-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Collaborative Anti-Bullying Program: THE BULLYCIDE PROJECT

Who: Delta College Office of Diversity & Inclusion (Prism, Unison),
Saginaw Valley State University,
PFLAG Tri-Cities
Perceptions Saginaw Valley

When: Tuesday, October 16, 2012

Where: Delta College Lecture Theater at 2:00 pm
SVSU Malcolm Field Theatre at 7:00 pm.

Background: The above groups have worked together to bring The Bullycide Project to our area! The Bullycide Project is a powerful play created and performed by the Trust Theater Ensemble of Fenton, MI ⁽¹⁾. The play received national attention on CBS's "48 Hours" and invitations to perform throughout the Midwest, Canada and during anti-bullying conferences in Atlanta, GA and Washington DC ⁽²⁾. The original play showcases the stories of real teens who committed suicide after being bullied. These true-life vignettes include the story of Matt Epling (Matt's Safe School Law) and cyberbullying from the stand point of the student, the bully, the bystander and the loving parent in an effort to promote awareness and change. See the YouTube trailer below for highlights ⁽³⁾.

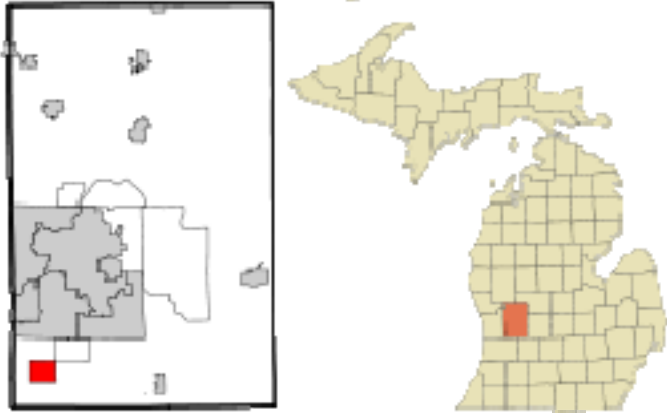
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1. The Bullycide Project – Trust Theatre Ensemble
<http://thebullycideproject.com>
2. Bullycide Project Receives National Attention
http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2011/09/the_bullycide_project_to_be_fe.html
3. The Bullycide Project Youtube promotional trailer
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpaepz4p3w0>
4. Bullycide Facebook Project
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Bullycide-Awareness-Project/117704898289322>



Places I Remember ... Byron Center Revisited

David DePeal, PSV Columnist



In 1995, Gerry Crane and Randy Block had a Civil Union ceremony in Byron Center, MI where they lived, (same-sex marriages are “unconstitutional” in Michigan). At the time, Crane was a teacher at the local high school. It was also at that time that Crane believes that a disgruntled former student whom he had banned from class the previous year secured a program of the ceremony and distributed copies to the Board of Education and local ministers. He also called several of Crane's

students and made jokes about the service. Though a highly respected tenured teacher who had received several awards and recognition for turning around Byron Center's music program, homophobia set in.

Gerry Crane became the object of an anti-gay backlash campaign sponsored by a local hate-mongering minister, his mislead congregation and anti-gay supporters among whom was the Byron Center Public School Superintendent. The Byron Center School Superintendent, however, could not openly fire Crane without fear of a lawsuit, and so he devised a plan to ensure that Mr. Crane would be miserable enough to quit by supervising all his classes, muzzling Crane about any detail of his personal life and leaking his address to the anti-gay minister and his group. Crane hung tough but was constantly under tremendous pressure and threats. Unable to endure it anymore, he finally agreed to resign at the end of the 95-96 school year with a year's severance package, health insurance and a recommendation letter along with the understanding that he find other employment. Gerry Crane sought but never did find another teaching position.

On December 27, 1996, Crane suffered a rare type of stress-related heart attack and slipped into a coma and never awakened. After his death, the Byron Center Public School Board refused to pay Randy Block, Crane's spouse, the agreed upon severance. Block took the Byron Center School District to court, and, after several years eventually won a settlement. Randy Block then donated part of the remaining money to the Gerald Crane Memorial Music Scholarship Fund that benefits students from the Byron Center, the very place that took both his partner's job and life. Gerry Crane was 32 when he died.

And what about the Byron Center? It would nice to say that Crane's death has meant something to both Byron Center and Michigan legislators on both sides of the aisles. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case and, sadly, Crane's death has meant little to very few. Byron Center, it appears, remains largely a close-minded fundamentalist small town. An internet search revealed that Byron Center has no openly gay or gay

affirming therapists advertised (just gay issues) or gay/straight student support groups. Likewise, those single LGBT individuals within Byron Center still largely live their lives cloaked in fear and shame based on the fact that I could find no one who openly claims to hail from Byron Center on any gay personal websites. This leads me to conclude that those individuals in Byron Center fear being outed and ostracized for their sexual orientation. Somewhat ironically, however, it does now have a “gay” church.

Furthermore, in July of 2011, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed tenure reform legislation that ends the “last in, first out” practice through which school districts make staffing decisions based solely on seniority, in favor of a new system that requires administrators to consider demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom. While this may sound good on paper, there are many problems with its practical application. The bottom line is that it politicizes the education system and requires that educators teach not with compassion and for students well-being, but for the current political status quo and the comfort zone of school administration. The end result will not be good for LGBTQ and Straight Ally students and educators.

I would have liked to have gotten Randy Block's opinion of Byron Center. At the time of press, however, I have been unable to locate him for an interview as he has moved from the Grand Rapids area several years ago and a forwarding address cannot be found. I wish him well in his new locale and life and hope he finds happiness again.

To end on a positive note, (no pun intended) the Gerald M. Crane Memorial Music Scholarship administered by the Grand Rapids Community Foundation continues to go on strong, having given dozens of West Michigan youth over the years since its inception in 1997 the means to escape the small town mentality and express their true self, whatever that may be. In that, Gerry would be proud.

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