

Meet the couples taking on Pennsylvania's marriage ban

By Jen Colletta

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On June 9, the trial will open in the first legal challenge to Pennsylvania's ban on same-sex marriage. While the case will ultimately be fraught with legal terms and constitutional arguments, the issue of marriage inequality in Pennsylvania is ultimately a story about the lives and loves of same-sex couples and their families.

The American Civil Liberties Union's *Whitewood v. Wolf* case has assembled 25 plaintiffs — 11 same-sex couples, two of their children and one widow — to represent our state's LGBT community. Plaintiffs come from all corners of the state and myriad backgrounds, and all have taken unique paths to arrive at a common truth: Pennsylvania's ban on marriage equality is an all-encompassing impediment that prevents certain Pennsylvanians from living as free and respected citizens.

Here are the stories of two of the plaintiff couples taking on our state's inequality.

Sandy Ferlanie and Christine Donato Swarthmore Together 18 years

When Sandy Ferlanie was diagnosed with breast cancer last year, her prognosis wasn't the only thing on her mind.

Ferlanie has been with her partner, Christine Donato, for nearly 18 years but, because the couple is not legally married in their home state, Ferlanie worried that they would encounter complications as they traversed her diagnosis together.

"It was really scary," Ferlanie said. "It was a time in my life when I needed Christine the most and I had to worry about, 'What if I ran into somebody — a physician, a nurse, somebody at the admissions desk — who wouldn't let her up to see me?'"

Fortunately, the couple said the staff at Pennsylvania Hospital, where Ferlanie spent more than eight hours in surgery, were accommodating and accepting.

"We were very lucky to be in a great city and a great hospital," Donato said. "During a time like that, you have so much anxiety and then you walk into the hospital and have to be thinking, 'OK, do I have all the forms with me that say I have rights to see her and to make decisions on her behalf? We were treated very well, but the anxiety of not knowing if we were going to be treated well was terrifying.'"

Ferlanie fully recovered from surgery, completed chemotherapy last summer and her hair has grown back.

"Things are pretty ordinary right now," she said. "Ordinary is good."

Ordinary entails Ferlanie's work as a nurse in the drug-safety field and Donato's as a pharmaceutical consultant — and most importantly, their roles as parents to their son, Henry.

The 5-year-old was conceived through in-vitro, with Ferlanie carrying him. Once he was born, both women had to legally adopt him as part of second-parent adoption, to ensure they would both be legally considered his parents — another byproduct of the state's ban on marriage equality.

"I had to go through the whole process of adopting my child, even though he was my biological child," Ferlanie said. "We had to have home visits by social workers, write essays, get fingerprinted, get recommendations, medical exams. It was a lot."

The process took more than 10 months to complete and, during that time, Donato was technically a legal stranger to her son.

"For 10-and-a-half months I just prayed to God that nothing happened to Sandy," Donato said. "Because if it did, I would have had no rights to my son."

The couple said they worried about how to explain the procreation issue to Henry but said that conversation was much easier than they're finding the marriage-equality talk to be.

"Kids understand things in simple ways. He says to himself — not in these words — but, 'Parents who have children and who



SANDY FERLANIE AND CHRISTINE DONATO

have families love each other and make a commitment and get married. My family has two loving parents raising me, why can't they get married?'" Donato said. "His questions made me feel so guilty, like I didn't have a good-enough answer for him. Finally, I just said, 'We're not allowed to.' 'Allowed' is something kids understand. And I felt so powerless. 'We're not allowed to.'"

While some same-sex Pennsylvania couples have tied the knot in other states, when they return to the Keystone State, their marriage is not recognized by our government. That, coupled with all of their family and friends living in this area and with each having an ailing parent, and Ferlanie and Donato decided to wait to wed until marriage equality becomes a reality in Pennsylvania.

While that time isn't here yet, they have started imagining what their wedding day would be like.

"We have a big soccer and baseball field at the end of our street and we've joked that we'll just use the field for a day, have food catered and a dance floor and DJ and throw a petting zoo in for the kids," Ferlanie said, noting that the couple likely would hold a wedding ceremony in their local Episcopal church, of which they are active members.

"It's exciting to start thinking about it."

For so long, Donato said, it was a thought that didn't seem possible.

"For so many years, [getting married] was just scratched off the list of things that were likely to happen. So you didn't even let yourself think about planning, about where you would go, what you would wear, those fun things," she said. "But I'm an optimist. I do think it's going to happen in Pennsylvania, I do see myself marrying Sandy. And I see it happening soon."

Angela Gillem and Gail Lloyd Philadelphia Together 18 years

In the fall, Angela Gillem and Gail Lloyd spent a weekend in Washington, D.C., touring museums, biking and dining — and finished their getaway by tying the knot.

The couple married in a small ceremony Nov. 15, surrounded by Lloyd's mother and brother and Gillem's brother. Their path to marriage began nearly two decades ago at the party of a mutual friend — although their relationship took some time to develop.

"We were introduced and I was just totally taken by Gail," Gillem said. "It was like I'd been introduced to a movie star, I was so impressed. She was so gorgeous and I was just awed by her. The way she just moved around the party, it was like she'd taken over the stage and was working the room; I just thought she was so cool. So it was like love at first sight."

Lloyd remembers the interaction a bit differently.

"I was definitely not a movie star. I'm afraid I might have disappointed my beloved because I'm not the cool chick she thought I was," she joked.

Lloyd said she was under the impression that one of her friends was interested in Gillem, so she kept her distance that night.

The pair ran into each other two years later at a book signing at Giovanni's Room and began seeing one another a few months later. They celebrated their 18th anniversary last month.

While the couple connected in Philadelphia, they learned they come from the same area; Lloyd is from D.C. and Gillem grew up in Arlington, Va. Lloyd moved to Philly in 1979 to attend art school, and Gillem in 1986 for a previous relationship.

The couple now lives together in Chestnut Hill, in a house they bought and rehabbed more than 15 years ago.

Gillem, 61, teaches counseling psychology in a graduate program at Arcadia University and operates a private practice in Chestnut Hill, while Lloyd, 55, who has worked in the film/video industry for nearly two decades, is now refocusing her attention on the art field, with a concentration on

ceramics.

The couple registered as domestic partners with the city in 2002, in part as a means of demonstrating their relationship to Gillem's employer.

"We had domestic-partner benefits at the university since the early '90s, but unfortunately some of the benefits were not being offered to us because the health-insurance company didn't offer domestic-partner benefits," she said. "So when they finally started that, they wanted some proof that we were domestic partners, so at that point we formalized it with the city."

They began talking seriously about marrying after last summer's overturning of the federal ban on same-sex marriage.

"Especially as we get older, we're going to be taking care of each other, so it became



ANGELA GILLEM AND GAIL LLOYD

even more important," Gillem said. "Last summer, we planned to update our wills and powers of attorneys to make sure everything was in order, and our personal attorney strongly recommended we go ahead and get married now that we could get federal benefits and that level of recognition."

They spent the weekend touring D.C. and had a Monday ceremony with their family, followed by dinner before driving to Philadelphia that evening.

The couple said they intend to have a larger ceremony and reception in Pennsylvania when marriage equality is sanctioned here — "We're gonna party like it's 1999," Lloyd joked.

"We decided that until Pennsylvania recognizes our marriage, we didn't want to have a big ceremony. It would feel like something was missing," Gillem said. "But there is a piece now that feels sad; the fact that it was a small ceremony with just three people there to witness our marriage does feel a bit sad."

Despite the bittersweet nature of the wedding, the couple said that having a legal marriage certificate did draw them closer, which they found surprising.

"It really does make a difference in ways that are hard to articulate," Lloyd said. "I completely adore Angela but after we got married, I somehow felt even closer to her. I don't know how to describe it; I always thought our relationship was solid, but it somehow felt even more solid. It deepened my commitment to her. I now wake up, look at her and it's like, 'Wow, we're married.'" ■

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Keystone State outlook

FEDERAL COURT

Whitewood v. Wolf: A suit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of 11 same-sex couples, two children and a widow claiming due-process and equal-protection violations. Attorney General Kathleen Kane and Gov. Tom Corbett have been removed as defendants; Health Secretary Michael Wolf is the primary defendant. The case will come to trial before U.S. District Court Judge John E. Jones III on June 9.

Palladino v. Corbett: Philadelphia residents Cara Palladino and Isabelle Barker, legally married in Massachusetts, are requesting the state recognize legal same-sex marriages performed out of state.

Register of Wills Hanes to compel him to stop issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Hanes appealed to the state Supreme Court.

Ballen v. Wolf: Several-dozen same-sex couples who received licenses from Hanes sued for recognition of their marriages. Kane and Corbett were removed as defendants, with Wolf serving as primary defendant.

Cucinotta v. Pennsylvania: Paoli residents Nicole and Tamara Cucinotta sued the state for recognition of their Montgomery County marriage license.

COUNTY COURT

Baus v. Gibbs: Bethlehem resident Barbara Baus sued after being hit with an inheritance-tax bill after the passing of her wife.

STATE COURT

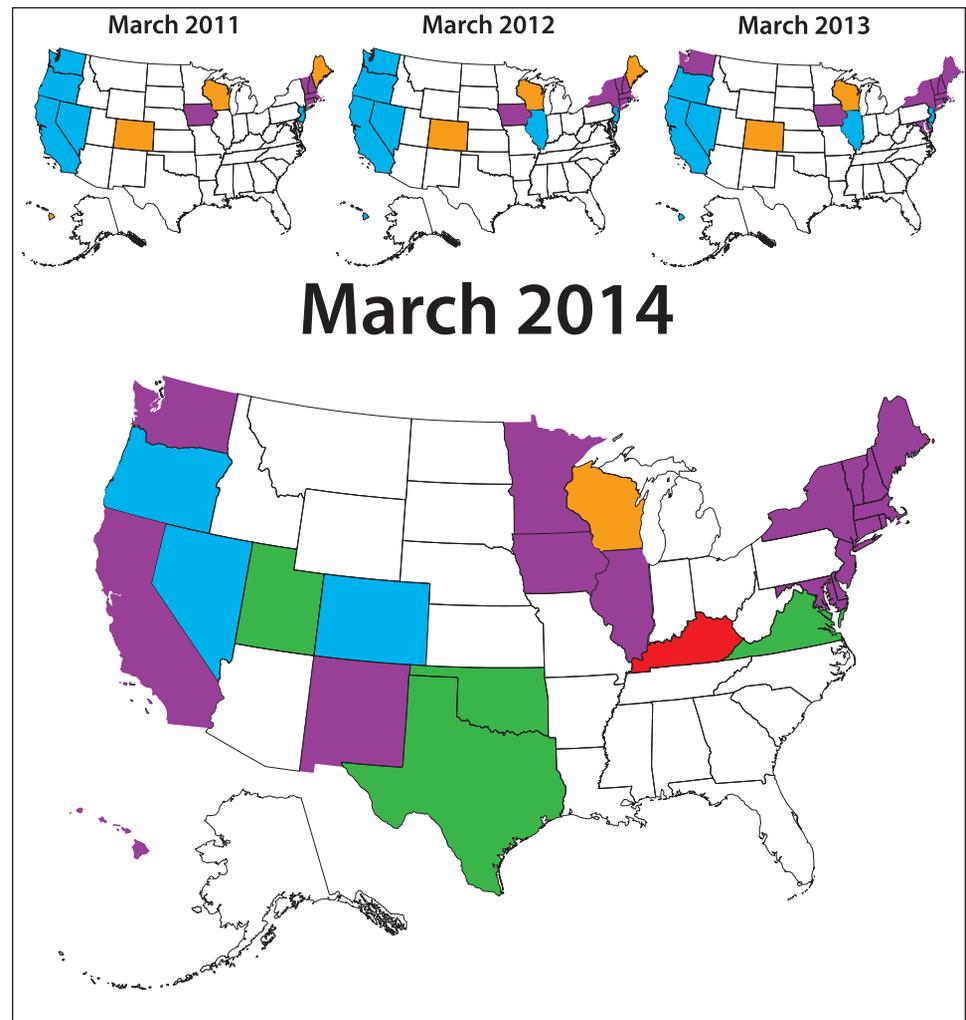
Department of Health v. D. Bruce Hanes:
The state sued Montgomery County

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- Some partner rights:
Wisconsin
- State marriage ban struck down by a federal judge, pending appeal:
Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virginia
- State must acknowledge marriages in other states:
Kentucky

SCOTUS ruling caps a momentous marriage year

By Jen Colletta
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The past 12 months have seen a sea change in the marriage-equality landscape: The number of marriage-equality states has nearly doubled, the nation's top court dealt a tremendous blow to the federal ban on same-sex marriage, and rulings continue to pour in taking aim at state marriage-equality bans. So what do the next 12 months bring?

At this time in 2013, marriage equality was sanctioned in nine states and Washington, D.C. One year later, same-sex couples can now wed in 16 states and D.C., and that number will reach 17 this summer when Illinois' law goes into effect.

How quickly that number continues to grow could be traced to last summer's Supreme Court ruling dismantling the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Following the historic finding in June, four states (New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois and New Mexico) mandated marriage equality, either through court rulings that took the Windsor case

into account or through legislative actions many pundits contend were bolstered by the SCOTUS decision.

This year, federal judges overturned marriage-equality bans in Oklahoma, Utah, Virginia and Texas, and two others ruled that bans in Kentucky and Ohio do not prevent the states from recognizing same-sex marriages performed legally out of state.

Appeals are pending in those cases.

The Windsor decision played a role in all of those cases as well, said Mazzone Center legal director David Rosenblum.

"When the Windsor decision came out, we thought the federal government was getting out of it and saying it's up to the states, but what's coming out of these cases in federal court is they're saying that Windsor goes beyond that," Rosenblum said. "They're saying that there is a higher federal law that says we have to treat people equally, the equal-protection clause. The same sort of thing happened with interracial marriage. What these cases are say-

ing is seemingly that states can do whatever they want as long as they're not violating federal law, which says sex discrimination is a bad thing, so the gender of a person shouldn't affect marriage. So I think the reason we're seeing so many of these out of federal courts is that they're directly applying Windsor to say, 'The federal

"I think the reason we're seeing so many of these out of federal courts is that they're directly applying Windsor to say, 'The federal government gave the states the chance to do the right thing, but what you're doing violates federal law.'"

government gave the states the chance to do the right thing, but what you're doing violates federal law."

But, the Supreme Court will ultimately have to weigh in with a definitive voice on the constitutionality of state marriage bans, Rosenblum said.

"They're going to have to face

these eventually, and some of them are moving surprisingly fast. The Supreme Court doesn't have to take the cases but I think they're going to have to, once we start seeing however many states saying it's unconstitutional, others saying it is constitutional and others staying silent. They'll need to clarify soon enough," Rosenblum said.

"But so far, we haven't even gotten a split in the cases: Each case has said this is unconstitutional and there's no rational basis, other than pure animus. And that's not how we make laws."

And Pennsylvania will soon get its own day in court, as the federal trial in the case brought by the American Civil Liberties

Union opens June 9 in Harrisburg. Similar to the strategy employed in California, this case will head to a trial, so that the arguments, on both sides of the issue, can be aired publicly and on record.

"The ACLU has cleverly decided to have a trial on this, to really get into all those articulated reasons, to say, 'Give us your proof that this is about child-rearing or protecting kids' or whatever they'll put forth as a defense. There's some real power in having that discussion, and not just filing motions. They'll really be getting into the question of what the defense is based on. Once you get into those nooks and crannies, you see it's a house of cards. So I'm expecting a good ruling."

Even with a favorable ruling, the case will certainly be appealed and likely stayed as the case winds its way through the federal courts and potentially to the Supreme Court.

Rosenblum cautioned couples heading to other states to wed to make sure they consult with a legal professional first to consider all of the legal outcomes. ■



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Wedding

Craig Bierman and Fred Kogan

By **Angela Thomas**
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For two South Philadelphia residents, Valentine's Day offered more than flowers and candy.

Craig Bierman, 54, and Fred Kogan, 50, of East Passyunk, got married Feb. 14 in Delaware.

Bierman, originally from Elizabeth, N.J., and Kogan, who hails from Cleveland, are both teachers at Friends Select School in Philadelphia. The pair met in 1991 in New York City's West Village and have been together for 21 years.

The couple said they met by chance when Kogan, who was working at Saks Fifth Avenue, attended a happy hour at a now-defunct bar called Uncle Charlie's.

"I was the first one to walk up to him and start a conversation and we had a long conversation there and that night we talked for three hours," he said. "I thought he was just a nice, regular, normal guy — no drama and seemed a lot like me."

Kogan said that, over the years, he and Bierman learned that respect was an important component of a successful relationship.

"I think being honest, caring for each other, listening to what the other has to say and not controlling the other person — that seems like the major elements," he said.

During their more-than two decades together, the pair talked about marriage, but ended up moving to Pennsylvania before New York adopted marriage equality.

"Our original plans were we would get married whenever we were living somewhere that legalized same-sex marriage.

When we lived in New York, they didn't legalize it. Then we moved to Philly and New York does it and every state around us started legalizing it."

Kogan said they had been looking for a "more manageable and affordable city"

than the Big Apple when they stumbled upon Philadelphia, ultimately moving here in 2001.

"A good friend of ours was already living in Philly and when we visited her, we instantly fell in love with the city," he said. "We are so happy living here with all the city has to offer."

Despite the Keystone State lacking marriage equality, as the movement took on speed in the region, Bierman decided to pop the question, and did so casually while the couple lounged around the house.

Kogan said that, after 21 years, they already felt like

they were married.

"I feel like people are coming up to us now saying, 'What it is like being a newlywed?' and we've been together so long, it has been great all the way through," he said. "Going back to 21 years ago, the coming-out process was intense then and it is so different now. Everyone is excited and I am glad to see a change in the United States."

With marriage equality not an option in Pennsylvania, the couple decided to get married in New Castle County, Del., which began allowing same-sex marriage last year.

"We thought it was interesting to get married in America's first state and in the first county. Also, Delaware has tax-free shopping," Kogan joked.

The couple drove down with two friends as witnesses and were married by a justice of the peace on Valentine's Day, exchanging rings and vows in a simple ceremony before hosting a cocktail reception later for friends and family.

Now that they are legally married, Kogan said there is a sense of security to the title.

"We are both protected now in a lot of ways. If we have our health, we will have a lifelong relationship. We are soulmates and it gets better year to year. I think it is amazing to be able to say he is my husband." ■



KOGAN (LEFT) AND BIERMAN

Get tips of the trade at local LGBT wedding expo

By **Jen Colletta**
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Marriage equality remains elusive in the Keystone State — but that hasn't impacted the wealth of local LGBT-friendly wedding vendors eager to lend their skills to same-sex couples planning to take the plunge.

Dozens of such vendors will be on hand for the seventh annual Bucks County LGBT Wedding Expo, 12:30-3:30 p.m. March 30 at Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 N. Oxford Valley Road in Langhorne.

The event is staged by Rainbow Wedding Network, which has produced more than 100 expos in 25 states since its 2003 inception. The North Carolina-based group began with just one event per year and now hosts about two dozen annually.

Co-founder Marianne Puechl said the event has been evolving with the rapidly changing marriage-equality landscape.

She noted that events in states that recently sanctioned marriage equality often see big boosts in attendance, but that states without marriage equality have also been boasting high attendance rates.

"We generally have even stronger attendance in states where marriage rights haven't yet been granted, like in Texas, Florida and an event we had here in Raleigh," she said. "In these areas, couples may feel that much less secure in reaching out to wedding professionals, so having this resource available takes that awkwardness out of the picture."

A show held in January in Jersey City had a great turnout, Puechl said, which could be partially due to the Garden State's recent addition to the marriage-equality list. Bucks County's close proximity to New Jersey may also fuel attendance at the local event, she added.

The expos on average bring in about 450 guests, she said.

About 30 exhibitors will be on hand for the Bucks County event — including photographers, ceremony and reception venues, DJs, officiants, jewelers and transportation companies. Lawyers, Realtors and fertility clinics will also be represented.

Most couples who turn out are in the throes of wedding planning and benefit from the personalized attention the vendors are able to provide, compared to some of the other big-box wedding expos.

"These couples are usually very seriously in the planning stages and love the personal time with each exhibitor," Puechl said. "This is set up in a boutique-style, so rather than running through and grabbing free stuff, couples are invited to stick around and mingle."

Most couples do spend the full three hours at the venue, she said, largely owing to the environment it fosters. Despite the growing acceptance for marriage equality, Puechl said, it's difficult to find a similar atmosphere at mainstream trade shows.

"Way back in the day, we said we hoped we'd eventually work ourselves out of business but, as far as marriage equality has come in the past decade — and it's amazing how far it's come — I think there's

still a need for shows like ours in the longer term," she said. "Our couples come in and feel totally comfortable, totally accepted. A lot of them may be in a place where they can't still tell their family comfortably or be out at work safely, so to be able to walk into a ballroom like this, where you don't have to translate yourselves or answer questions like, 'Which one of you is the bride?' or 'Are you brothers?' is exciting. We see couples come in and they just breathe a sigh of relief."

The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.samelove-samerights.com. ■



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Before the Bells

Jen Colletta

The proposal

Before the Bells is a new monthly column chronicling the wedding-planning process for a same-sex couple, drawing on the writer's ongoing experiences to offer practical advice on everything from selecting LGBT-friendly vendors and venues to making sure your celebration, no matter how large or small, stays true to the love you share with your partner. This column won't presume to serve as a how-to guide for all couples — as marriage means something different to each couple that heads down that path — but rather as an exploration of how this one couple's journey unfolded, and the do's and don'ts they're learning along the way.

While the “I do” on your wedding day may be the culmination of months, or even years, of planning, another word is almost equally important: “Yes.”

When you or your partner decides to pop the question, and the other accepts, as much as it sets a new future in motion, it also affirms your past, and so that moment should embody who you are as a couple — a mantra that needs to be remembered throughout the wedding-planning process. Some couples get casually engaged, deciding to take the plunge after hearing about the latest state to sanction marriage equality. Others may be the subjects of the growing number of viral, over-the-top proposal videos. Regardless of your method — large or small, formal or informal — what matters the most is the joint commitment contained in the word “yes.”

But getting to that point may be a bit different for same-sex couples. While the onus for popping the question is usually on the male in heterosexual couplings (although we cheer those ladies who take the reigns!), same-sex couples don't have to follow such norms. Couples can approach the topic jointly if the “surprise” factor isn't important to them (which may be especially true for couples who've had decades-long relationships before the marriage-equality movement starting gaining speed) or one partner can take the lead.

In my case, my partner, Ashlee, was the one who took the lead on most steps of our relationship — initiating a conversation, formally asking me out, saying the first “I love you” — and we had jokingly talked about how she'd likely have to be the one to propose. So, after nearly six years together, I planned to counter her expectations by planning my own proposal. I'd picked when and how I was going to do it and had just begun saving for a ring but, unbeknownst to me, she had made that

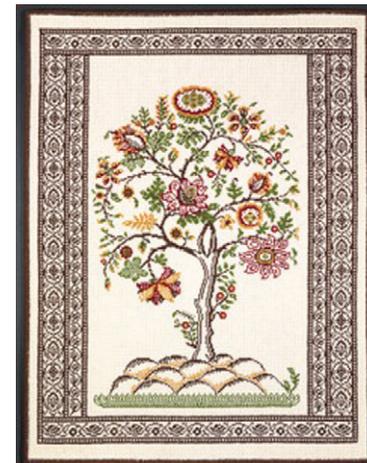
same decision months before and popped the question on our six-year anniversary last April. While she said she had considered going whole-hog with a flash-dance proposal, she opted instead for a simple proposal that involved just us: After hiking in Wissahickon Park, we had lunch atop a hill overlooking the park, and she asked if I thought I'd want to marry her. I replied “of course,” and she followed up with “How about today?” holding out the ring. While my proposal thunder was stolen, all that mattered was that the question was asked, and answered.

While we'd long talked about getting engaged, I don't think either of us was prepared for the immediate change it had on our relationship. After six years, we were quite accustomed to being a couple, but suddenly being an engaged couple made things different. We weren't just “girl-friends” any longer; saying “yes” quickly illuminated our future, an intimidating, yet exciting, transition.

While we were unsure how to follow up the energy of the engagement, our first thought was to tell family and friends. Some we called, some we visited. And after ensuring all of our immediate family members and close friends were in the know, we told everyone else through Facebook. While that sounds trite, the function of social media in today's digital age shouldn't be underestimated. Platforms like Facebook can be useful tools in the coming-out process; posting pictures or chronicling your relationship with your partner on social media is an informal, casual way of sharing your life with loved ones without the pressure of a sit-down, coming-out speech. Likewise, sharing your next step in this way gets the news out without pressure, especially for those who may have folks in their lives who aren't supportive. But, what we saw was an overwhelming level of support — and we were particularly impressed by the number of people, from childhood friends to former teachers, who offered their congrats. Just as many of us may have been pleasantly surprised to see red equal signs on some of our Facebook friends' pages throughout last year's U.S. Supreme Court case, the social-media response to our engagement was heartening.

But, ultimately, what was most important was the confidence we both had in our decision. Getting engaged can be an overwhelming experience that brings one's life into sharper focus — but, as we saw, believing in ourselves and our relationship makes every step of the journey easier. ■

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Minneapolis isn't always in a polar vortex

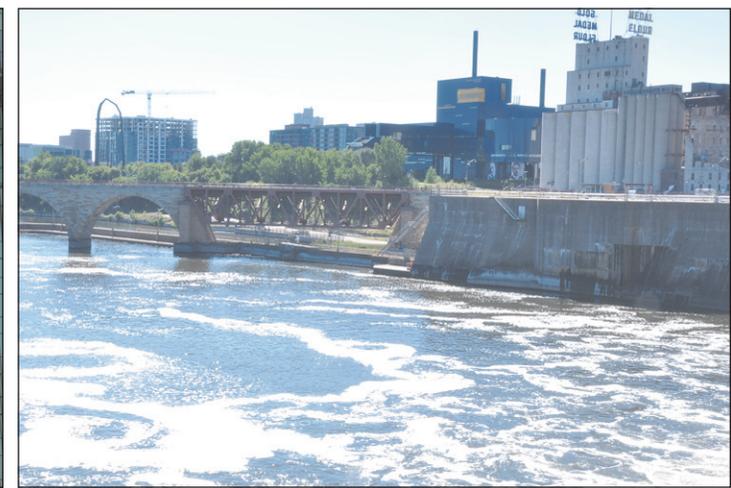
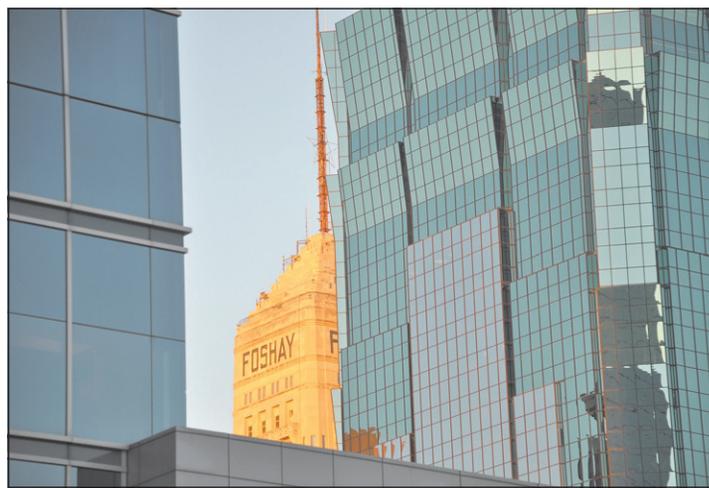
By **Scott A. Drake**
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Two things usually come to mind when Minneapolis is mentioned: cold and the Mall of America. And that's if you remember the mall. There is a third item that comes to mind for some of us, but we'll get to her later.

If cold weather is an issue for you, don't go in the winter. It's that simple. Getting around downtown when it's a blustery -20 degrees isn't impossible once you get downtown; there are about 8 miles of elevated walkways connecting just about everything across about 70 square blocks. But for spring, summer and fall, this is an under-appreciated Northern city.

The locals hype MoA and its array of stores and indoor amusement park and all that, but it's not an essential stop. The only thing you really need to know about the mall is Tuesday is kids' day. So if you want to go shopping (or need to go shopping, like one member in our wedding party who conveniently forgot shoes and just had to go buy some), hit the downtown Nicollet Mall, a blocks-long stretch of shops and eateries that segues nicely into the theater district.

We were fortunate to get an excellent rate at the centrally located Hotel Ivy (201 S. 11th St.; thehotelivy.com), so we were able to walk and cab to many of our destinations. Minneapolis has a pretty



A SMALL SEGMENT OF THE MINNEAPOLIS SKYLINE (LEFT) AND A MISSISSIPPI RIVER VIEW OF THE STONE ARCH BRIDGE, THE GUTHRIE CENTER AND THE MILL MUSEUM Photos: Scott A. Drake

good metro transit system of buses and light rail too, which is an excellent thing because, quite honestly, whenever we got in our rental car we got lost. This isn't a Penn-planned city and it almost makes the District of Columbia's layout make sense. Advice: ALWAYS ask for directions before you go.

So what's gay in Minneapolis?

Well, marriage, for one. Hundreds of LGBT couples have been married in Minnesota since it passed its marriage-equality law. A number of those marriages are people who crossed the line, as it were, from Wisconsin and Illinois — the latter of which has recently

joined the fray. In fact, Minneapolis former Mayor Raymond Rybak made a bit hit with local gays as the law was being debated by offering to marry any couple at midnight when the law was signed. (See sidebar.) Additionally, in 2011, The Advocate hailed Minneapolis as the gayest city in the United States.

Minneapolis is like some temporal anomaly on the Mississippi River where a lot of the city's past is still

prominently present and the rest of the city is looking squarely into the future. Today, the downtown has some of the most strikingly beautiful new architecture around. But Minneapolis was once the largest mill city in America and that alone brought thousands of workers to grist mills and many thousands more across the state for construction of the vast rail system needed to transport grains and products country-wide.

All that makes the **Mill City Museum (704 S. Second St.; millcitymuseum.org)** a must-see. Overlooking the mighty Mississippi, the museum tells the history and connectivity of the grain, the mills, the city and the river. Interactive displays are fun and there are plenty of photographs and artifacts to keep you more interested in flour than you ever thought you would be. There is an optional tour and if you time your visit right, the on-site baking lab will be in full swing and you can learn more about the annual Pillsbury Bake-off.

Endless art and nature

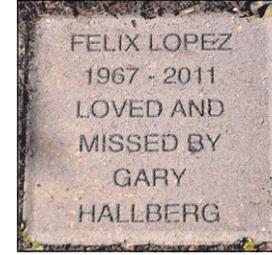
A most pleasant surprise for us was the vast array of theater, music and dance options for a county of just under 400,000. Hennepin Avenue is the hub of the theater district, with grandly renovated showpieces like the 1921 Historic Orpheum Theatre and the Pantages Theatre, to name a couple. While the district is generally around Hennepin, it doesn't have finite boundaries as evidenced by the two orchestras that perform on the opposite end of Nicolett Mall.

Guthrie Theater (guthrietheater.org) is

also on the skirts of the district, only one block from the Mill Museum, and we were lucky enough to catch a world-premier theatrical rock concert — "Moon Show 143" — while there. This was just one event of several happening that night at the Guthrie. Note, there are many diverse places in the area for pre- or post-show dining also.

We enjoyed an early supper across the street from the Guthrie at Spoonriver (750 S. Second St.; spoonriver.com), where they use locally grown produce in season and, if you're cooking while on vacation, they have a farmer's market on their site seasonally every Saturday.

Guthrie is a multi-floor complex encompassing two theaters and a studio, a restaurant, several bars, a lounge and an impressive view of **Stone Arch Bridge (stonearchbridge.com)** over the Mississippi River. It's a former railroad bridge with 23 arches, popular with bikers, runners and river walkers. You can also tour the entire mill area, river, walkways, etc., via **Segway Magical History Tours (magicalhistorytour.com)** and in just a couple of hours cover 12,000 years of Minnesota and Mississippi River history and learn about how and why this city came to be the largest mill town in America — and have fun doing it.



A MEMORIAL STONE IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN



"SPOONBRIDGE AND CHERRY" BY CLAES OLDENBURG (LEFT) AND AS GENERALLY PHOTOGRAPHED BY SCULPTURE GARDEN VISITORS



ONE OF THE INTERACTIVE MINIATURE GOLF HOLES



KEN KIEFER (SECOND FROM LEFT) MARRIES KEN ZALEWSKI ON A PADDLE BOAT ON THE ST. CROIX RIVER AT STILLWATER.

At the very least, plan to spend part of a day exploring the river area and parks. As mighty as the Mississippi River is, it is also quite captivating this far north. A point of interest to check out is a statue of the city's namesake Minnehaha in Minnehaha Park near Minnehaha Falls. It's a lovely spot to stop for a packed lunch or just to relax.

This means you get to use swinging objects, your feet and foosball soccer paddles to help or hinder your opponents. Uncontrollable laughter is apparently one of those obstacles also.

The Walker Art Center is a vast space that offers many different areas to explore.

The art-museum scene is also thriving, dynamic and diverse. Case in point: One afternoon we played seven holes at one of two interactive miniature-golf courses adjacent to the **Walker Art Center (1750 Hennipin Ave.) and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden (walkerart.org/garden).**

Let's back up a second. Yes, interactive miniature

It has a free First Saturday program also, and locally headquartered Target sponsors Target Free Thursday nights from 5-9 p.m. Check it out and while you are there hit the café, bar or restaurant on site and enjoy the terrace or if the weather is off, one of the indoor lounges.

The sculpture garden is one of the nation's largest and it's a must-see. From the city's iconic sculpture, Claes Oldenburg's "Spoonbridge and Cherry," to Cowles Conservatory, there are more than 40 sculptures in this 11-acre park. If you like the Philadelphia Museum of Art's "Iroquois" by Mark di Suvero, then make sure you check out his "Molecule" and also Brower Hatcher's "Prophecy of the Ancients," a cousin to our own "Ancient Garden 1990" at Ninth and Walnut streets.

If it sounds like you could spend the better part of a day just in this part of town, you're right. But there is also **The Museum of Russian Art (tmora.org)**, billed as our country's largest collection of Russian artifacts, photographs and memorabilia. Not as impressive as we had hoped, but we still found a stunning glass ornament for our Christmas tree in the gift shop. Check out their special exhibitions for subject matter that may suit your tastes.

Another museum recommended by the locals is the **Minneapolis Museum of Arts (2400 3rd Ave. S.; artsmia.org)** with its fine photograph collection including Margaret Burke-White, Dorothea Lange and Richard Avedon, and a prints and drawings collection with the likes of Francisco de Goya, Piet Mondrian, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein to name but a few.

Eat, drink, repeat

Dining spans the spectrum in Minneapolis and spills over into much of the surrounding area. This is not a town to start a diet in while on vacation. But then what city is? Biscuits and gravy? Check. Pan-seared trout? Check. Fried pickles? Check. Sushi, pizza, salmon tartar, pasta bar — you name it, they eat it.

Ask any local where an LGBT-owned or -friendly restaurant is and you'll get a few different answers, but I guarantee you'll hear about two. **Hell's Kitchen (80 S. Ninth St.; hellskitcheninc.com)** is likely to be the first one mentioned because it's open almost 24 hours a day. (I say almost because they close for about two hours in the wee-early hours to regroup.)

The brunch menu alone has more than 50 items, many vegan, however I can personally recommend the maple-glazed bison sausage and the shrimp and crab cake with poached egg. Lunches and dinners can be the evening experience without a film or show. Don't be surprised if the house special of the day is kangaroo or alligator. These guys don't break for anything.

Besides the fabulous in-house creations, like a four-cheese mac and cheese that leaves every other recipe in the dust, they also make their own mustard, peanut butter and ketchup. And when you get home,

you can still go online and order their Holy Trinity Gift Box with Sublime Hot Cocoa with house-made marshmallows, their secret Rib Rub (aka amazing Bloody Mary Rim), plus a big 1-pound jar of Legendary Peanut Butter, which holds a special status in hell.

Best of all, many of the best recipes are published in the "Hell's Kitchen Cookbook," which someone thoughtfully purchased for my birthday.

Think brunch should always have unlimited mimosa? Lush.

No, seriously. **Lush (990 Central Ave. NE; lushfoodbar.com)** is the hot spot for weekend brunch and not just for those



HELL'S KITCHEN ENTRYWAY (TOP), LUSH EXTERIOR AND ON THE ROOF OF BRIT'S PUB

mimosas. The food is crazy-good and, depending on the season and the weather, they open the 20-foot-high garage doors and you can enjoy the beauty of the day from inside or out. Yes, garage doors. Lush is an unassuming converted gas station-slash-garage bar and not only does brunch, but also weekday lunches.

At night, it's a bar as gay as it gets with the usual DJs, dancing, karaoke some nights and drink-special options. Mostly a younger crowd, but everyone feels welcomed. And if your dabbler is getting itchy, there's a room to play Bingo in every Saturday night.

A great happy-hour spot we found is **The Saloon (830 Hennepin Ave.; saloon.com)**, where there is quite an interesting crowd on the weekends, to be

"I want to marry you in Minneapolis"

By **Scott A. Drake**

scott@epgn.com

Former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak crisscrossed the Upper Midwest to cities like Chicago, Madison and Milwaukee in mid-2013. Why? It is relatively easy for LGBTs to hop over the border and legally tie the knot, that's why.

The slogan "I want to marry you in Minneapolis" is at the top of the ad-campaign blitz that so far stretches into Detroit and Denver, but Rybak says that going to Texas and "stealing the gay-wedding business from Rick Perry" is in the near future. His point was that if a same-sex couple wants to start a business and enjoy the rights of everyone else, which state would they prefer?

During the Minnesota marriage-equality bill-writing process, Rybak told us he shouted out at a rally, "If this thing passes, come down to City Hall and I will marry you" without thinking. He said a close staff member's eyes got huge and said, "I'd better call the office and prepare them."

True to his word, when the first day to legally marry in Minnesota rolled around, Rybak performed a wedding ceremony in the City Hall Rotunda, with the first "I do" being uttered at midnight.

Then, he did 45 more. He performed 46 weddings in fewer than eight hours — walking down, back up and standing on the top of the steps of the Capitol Rotunda every time.



"Before we started, we realized just doing the math that we would have to find a way to streamline each service and make it personal so it wasn't like a conveyor belt of love," Rybak said.

Staff interviewed each couple, gathered unique aspects for each and created a briefing book with each couples' details — who had a combined 746 years together.

There was one couple that Rybak said was the most remarkable.

Two women, both actors, one deaf, met when the second was hired to do the voice for the first woman. Rybak's personalization was about "giving voice to love."

"As I read the vows and told them to repeat after me, they signed it to each other. And in the entire atrium, you could feel it, feel them all freeze, as these extremely expressive actors motioned their love in a way that you could only think of the phrase 'You complete me' in this powerful way," Rybak said. "That was one of the most powerful moments I can ever remember because it just physically said what everyone was thinking at that time."

Shortly after that marathon, Rybak then married the police chief and her partner, and believes he was the first mayor in America to do so. When asked if there were any plans for a one-year anniversary event in the city, Rybak laughed.

"We hadn't thought about that, but I'm sure, before I blurt it out again in public I better talk it over first." ■

MINNEAPOLIS from page 19
 sure. The place is packed to the walls on Sunday nights for the shower contest. Use your imagination. And then push it up a notch. This is one hot event.

A block away is **The Gay 90s (gay90s.com)** and gay it is. This six-bar complex includes the Happy Hour Bar (which opens at 8 a.m.), 90s Bar, Dance Annex, Men's Room, Retro Bar and La Femme. We spent the better part of a Saturday night there drinking, playing darts, eating, watching a drag show and generally just having a blast.

Make these two stops for sure.

Oh, Mary!

Remember that third thing Minneapolis is famous for? Yes, everyone's favorite "Oh Lou!" girl, Mary Tyler Moore, did



THE AUTHOR WITH THE MARY TYLER MOORE STATUE Photo: Micheal Ward

more for Minneapolis in the 1970s than the Twins and Vikings have since. In tribute, there is a bronze MTM statue on Nicollet Mall. She's not hard to find, but you can ask any local where to go.

While you're in that area, stop into **Brit's Pub (britspub.com)**. Weather permitting, you can play bocce on the roof. Yep. The roof is almost completely covered with grass and several games can be played at once. Reservations are recommended for this. While you wait, down a pint or two at a nearby table and check out the skyline. If it's winter or rainy, you can pop inside for afternoon tea or a scotch by the fireplace. A gem of a place and we went twice.

Minneapolis is a lot more than we expected. I expect on our next visit, we'll learn even more. And probably gain another pound or two as well. ■

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Same-sex marriage battle is simply history repeating itself

Regardless of the year, June 26 is a date that LGBT Americans will never forget. On that day in 2003, the Supreme Court of the United States found Texas' anti-sodomy laws unconstitutional in *Lawrence v. Texas* and, 10 years later, the top court gave us another huge victory when it ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act was unconstitutional because it violated our Fifth-Amendment rights.

It was a palpable moment where our government validated and deemed equal the love shared between two people in the LGBT community. But the tears of joy have long since dried, the rainbow flags have been folded and put away and here we are in Pennsylvania still waiting for our state to acknowledge us. I don't know about you, but as state after state (TEXAS?!) begins to stand

on the right side of history, my patience for Pennsylvania is wearing thin. Yet, as we look back 50 years ago to the not-too-distant past, the timeline for same-sex marriage is shockingly on par with that of the anti-miscegenation laws overturned to fully legalize interracial marriage.

It was once illegal for someone to marry a person of another race in almost every state in the country. Anti-miscegenation laws had their roots in colonial America, and by the early 20th century, they were the norm throughout the South and Midwest and on the West Coast. An 1883 ruling by the Supreme Court in *Pace v. Alabama* put an African-American man and a white woman in jail for two years for having a sexual relationship, and this continued to be the legal precedent for decades to come. But, responding to rising opposition to the racial inequalities caused by World War II, California in 1948 became the first state since the 19th century to overturn its anti-miscegenation statute. Slowly, over the next decade, many states with similar bans outside of the South overturned their anti-miscegenation laws on the grounds that they violated the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Massachusetts similarly started the domino

effect in the fight for same-sex marriage equality, stating that its state constitution "forbids the creation of second-class citizens" when its top court determined in November 2003 that same-sex couples had the right to marry. The Supreme Court could have jumped on the marriage-equality train at any point in the decade that followed but chose not to hear cases that touched on the controversial subject.

Similarly, the Supreme Court had its chance to stand on the right side of history in 1955 when *Naim v. Naim* was appealed, but it chose not to hear the case, as it would force them to make a decision on the controversial subject of interracial marriage. Han Naim and Ruby Naim were an Asian man and white woman from Virginia who were wed in North

Carolina, where the anti-miscegenation laws only prevented Caucasians from marrying African-Americans, as opposed to Virginia, which prevented all interracial marriage. A year later, when they went to divorce in Virginia, the state didn't recognize their marriage in the first place and they were wedlocked — stuck in a marriage because their home state didn't recognize it in the first place. Sound familiar?

The same occurs today in Pennsylvania and many other states that don't recognize same-sex marriage. I have clients that were married in Canada when they first legalized marriage equality and didn't research the residency requirements for divorce, only to find themselves in the same situation — wedlocked until Pennsylvania recognizes their union, or having to move to where they got married for six months to a year to meet the residency requirement and then get divorced. Neither were particularly helpful options 50 years ago, and they certainly still aren't today.

As more states legalized interracial marriage, the Supreme Court finally dipped its collective toes in the waters of change in 1964, when it unanimously ruled in *McLaughlin v. Florida* that two unmarried people of opposite sexes were allowed

to live together if one was Caucasian and the other African-American. Similar to *Windsor*, which took down DOMA, the ruling was the tipping point that states needed to remove their anti-miscegenation laws from the books. Since the fall of DOMA, four states (New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois and New Mexico) have legalized same-sex marriage, while four others (Utah, Oklahoma, Virginia and Texas) have stayed rulings to allow same-sex marriage, pending appeal. These appeals that conservative lawmakers think are going to prevent marriage equality from "invading" their states are merely delaying the inevitable, and it's these appeals that will ultimately bring the matter before the Supreme Court for a final decision, just as *Loving v. Virginia* did for interracial marriage in 1967.

The Supreme Court heard arguments in the case of *Loving*, where an African-American woman and Caucasian man were sentenced to a year in prison for marrying one another. The Supreme Court unanimously found Virginia's and all other states' anti-miscegenation statutes unconstitutional under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. The ban on interracial marriage was overturned.

Just as McLaughlin marked the beginning of the end for institutionalized racism via anti-miscegenation laws, the

Supreme Court's finding that the federal DOMA was unconstitutional under the Fifth Amendment in *Windsor* in June was simply history repeating itself. In the nine months that have followed, federal courts in state after state have found state-level same-sex marriage bans unconstitutional. As of this publication, 33 states ban same-sex marriage (with Michigan presently being heard in court), but within three years of *Windsor*, I believe the Supreme Court will have decided the matter at the national level, just as it took three years to get to *Loving*.

You'd think with 50 years of inflation it would only take one year's time, but again, this is simply history repeating itself. There are multiple marriage-equality lawsuits currently making their way forward in Pennsylvania, the first of which will most likely be *Whitewood v. Wolf*, scheduled for trial June 9 in Harrisburg. I know it's only three months away, but hopefully this will be worth the wait. ■

Angela D. Giampolo, principal of Giampolo Law Group, maintains offices in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and specializes in LGBT law, business law, real-estate law and civil rights. Her website is www.giampololaw.com and she maintains two blogs, www.phillygaylawyer.com and www.lifein-house.com. Send Angela your legal questions at angela@giampololaw.com.



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LETTERS from page 11

[Mahjoubian], I was somewhat astounded by the response. Micah, whom I expected to be the calm voice of understanding and reason, was a bit agitated and Mark turned to me and said, "I understand, but the WWCC still needs to be involved." I was grateful for the positive response and understanding. I will say that, as to myself (not speaking for any member of the board), I never doubted the ability of Mark to make this happen from the first day I heard about it. My tour of the building proves those abilities to me, as it should to everyone else.

What does this tell us? What is the point

of my little exercise in composition? Very simple: We can call Mark a pain in the ass, a pushy Jewish faggot (his words, not mine), a grandstander, the devil, etc. You can call him anything you want, but this community, young and old, needs to take notice that this city would not be the number-one rated city in the country for LGBT Americans if not for the many years of work by Mark Segal. Was he alone? No. But Mark is still standing and still fighting, and I personally am profoundly grateful to have this pushy pain in the ass on my side. ■

— Jeff Sotland
Philadelphia

Local stars in new marriage campaign

By **Angela Thomas**
angela@epgn.com

A new marriage-equality initiative was launched on Valentine's Day and features among its cast an actor with Philly ties.

She4Me was launched through Marriage Equality USA as a public-service announcement to advance education about marriage equality nationally.

She4Me features the song "She," which was written and performed by Jen Foster. The video focuses on two women who are a soon-to-be-married couple, aiming to use music as a way to "wrap minds around issues of conscience."

She4Me, which was directed by Nicole Conn, features former Philly resident Jessica Graham as a member of the bridal party, along with Gabrielle Christian, of lesbian teen drama "South of Nowhere," and Nicole Pacent, from LGBT mini-series "Anyone But Me," as the couple.

Graham moved to Philadelphia when she was 18 and lived in Center City before settling down in Fishtown. She moved to Los Angeles at 24 but continued to work on Philadelphia-focused films, including "2 Minutes Later," directed by Robert Gaston, and "Tremble and Spark," directed by Kelly Burkhardt.

Graham identifies as bisexual and said her own coming-out process was relatively smooth.

"My dad had a hard time with it, but he got over it really fast," she said. "I remember the day I knew he had become comfortable with me having a girlfriend. He gave me a framed painting of two women playing a harp in a somewhat sensual way. The card said that he loved me no matter what. He actually had a hard time when, eight years later, I started seeing a man."

Graham said playing the lead role in "Antigone" helped build her confidence and ability to pursue further performances.

Graham got involved in the Philly theater scene in 1998.

"I started acting when I was fairly young and that always kept my head above water," she said. "Three years ago, I decided it was time to get some real training. I am now about to graduate from a three-year Meisner technique program. It has been life-changing and my creative toolbox has a lot more variety now."

Graham volunteered for Theater Catalyst and co-founded The Eternal Spiral Project while in Philadelphia. She said she hopes to be cast in a big production in Philadelphia so she can spend some time doing theater back in the area.

Graham was approached to be a part of She4Me a few days before filming and said she had always admired Conn's work ever since she saw her "Claire of the Moon" as a teenager.

For Christian, whose family has Philly roots, She4Me helped channel a sort of closure for her "South of Nowhere" work, as her character had just graduated from high school as the series ended, and in this role she was able to play an out adult.

"I just felt that it was a cool thing to explore as an actor because the show was about [Spencer's] coming-out process and we never saw her evolve as an adult and that was a cool closure to explore," she said.

Christian said being able to reach millions of LGBT young adults through her work on "South of Nowhere" has been one of her most rewarding acting experiences.

"My character was a role model to a lot of young girls and boys who found comfort in the way she grew and came out," she said. "She was authentic and honest and I think people could relate to that vulnerability and innocence."

Graham said working with LGBT supporters like Christian and the rest of the cast made for a positive working environment.

"We were all there because we believe in marriage equality. It's an amazing feeling to come together for something so important," she said, noting that she believes the initiative has the power to help people evolve on the issue of LGBT equality. "It's fun and sexy, which I love, but there is also this beautiful story that you can't help but be moved by. I think these are the kind of initiatives that can really change the minds of some of the people who are against marriage equality."

Christian added that the media can be an important tool in the LGBT-rights movement.

"Media has so much power and Hollywood reaches people all over the world," she said. "We have so much



CHRISTIAN (LEFT) AND GRAHAM

influence and importance and the ability to create awareness. Music and media can make people want to pay attention. Music is a universal language everybody can understand and there is something powerful in that."

For more information on Graham, visit jessicagraham.com or follow her on Twitter @deconstructjg.

For more information on She4Me, visit www.she4me.org. ■

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