

YOUR SOFFA VOICE

Volume 2, Issue 3

June 1, 1999

Editor's Note

Greetings!

I am very pleased to report that I've received many good comments about this newsletter. I have to say though, that I couldn't do this without those of you who take time out of your busy lives to write and share your stories. Many of them touch me and I know they touch others too. I'd love to get the word out about this newsletter to even more people who might benefit from hearing that they aren't alone. If you have any ideas on how to do this, please feel free to write me at SOFFAUSA@aol.com or postal mail:

*Jodi Burchell, Editor
P.O. Box 1916
Smyrna, TN. 37167*

Thanks again!!

~~jodi

THE PANEL

By Connie McCarthy

Let's talk about sex! In fact, let's reveal the most intimate detail of our lives in front of a group of strangers! If this sounds like fun to you, then you would enjoy educating others about the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered (GLBT) lifestyle. I had the opportunity to just that in May at my local community college. The class hosting our panel was Human Sexuality.

This would be my second year sitting on the panel. This time, however, I would be sitting in as SOFFA of a FTM. That FTM is now legally my husband. I still identify as a lesbian. On the panel with me were three drag queens, (two out of face and all are gay), one pseudo hermaphrodite, one gay man (not even associated with drag), and me and my husband. The panel started with one of the drag queens, Ms. Tiffany, doing a performance number.

I had known about the performance before hand. Although I have seen her perform lots of times, the best time is always on this panel. I say that because we live in a very conservative area and many people do not even know there are people such as those on the panel living among them. After her performance, she had whistles and claps. She of course enjoyed basking in the attention of everyone. Immediately the questions came. Many people told her that if they did not know she was a man, they would believe that she was a biological woman. A lot of the men were shaking their heads because they had thought he really was.

The next person to speak was the pseudo hermaphrodite. She has been on the panel two previous times. The class didn't seem that shaken up about that. That is, until someone asked her if she has a penis. You can tell the audience was trying to think about the definition of a hermaphrodite. Her response was, well yes and no. It seems to me that each time I sit on the panel with her, she gets more confident about talking about it. I was amazed to hear more about her life story since

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We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

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I knew her son before I ever met her. She had thought she was sterile (had 4 kids) and usually had gay or bi-sexual lovers. She had finally found someone to love her for who she was.

My best friend, Steve, was next. He identified himself as the boy next door type who was neither effeminate nor butch but just Steve. He got lots of applause for saying that. He talked about how he came out and later went on to form a group for GLBT people who wanted to still be connected with the church. He also donates his time at the local HIV food bank.

Then it was my turn. This felt harder for me than it had ever been before. I knew that I could not say too much in the beginning about being a SOFFA because Kaelan wanted that surprise for himself. When I did start, I talked about how I came out and the group on the college campus that I went on to lead.

Then I said, " But there is an interesting twist to my story and you will find out more about it as we go along the panel."

The anticipation was building.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Kaelan, my husband, start gearing up for this. Mind you, he now has a beard and has shaved off his hair. Kind-of looking like the Mr. Clean man. He began like this: "My name is Kaelan and I am a female to male transsexual. I was born a woman! And this is my wife!"

Jaws literally dropped. In the front row there was a woman who gasped so loud it startled even me. The next thing I heard was someone saying, "You must be kidding!"

I will admit I was sacred at that moment. I did not know if this crowd was going to be able to take hearing something like that. But they were running with it. So the next question was aimed at me "Well, then do you consider yourself to be a lesbian?" I answered that yes I am a lesbian even though I am with FTM. I explained that although it is a transition for us as a couple, my sexual orientation did not change. There are straight

Loving Outside Simple Lines

By Sonya Lorenzo

1.

Leaning over you in bed, I run my hand across your shirted torso, caressing breast and muscle, smoothing abdomen and flank. My touch on your female body does not emasculate you. You are not a woman to me. You are butch. My fingers tell you I understand.

My stone butch; I am prepared for you to pull away every time I reach for you. I don't understand the strange sense which guides my approach to you, but it is innate, instinctive, natural.

You gaze at me with trust, and wonder that you can let me touch you so freely. I tell you I could make love to you for hours. I, young and novice femme, could make love to you, skilled and knowing butch, for hours. And you, tough from years of living as you do, lie quiet beneath my touch.

Always, I give you my body, completely. I luxuriate in how well you know my needs, how well you match me and capture every strength and grace I hold within. I give over to you, and you take me to total release, drive me to sexual madness, then bring me back to safety in your embrace.

Without knowing that anyone like you existed, I searched for you. And now I've found you, I feel such relief to know that what I sought is real. Now I want to know the wealth of your mind, body and soul, the hell of being you in this world and the joy that also comes from living outside simple lines.

You ask me to marry you. "Yes", is my answer. And I say Yes to life. I say Yes with my eyes wide open. You will be my husband, for you are butch, and I can call you no other way. You will be my husband, because you are worthy of the title, far more than any man I have known. You'll not own me, but I'll be your wife. I am already your femme and your girl, and I feel my own strength and power as never before.

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Announcements

~~New Column on AOL

There is a new column on AOL called Parent Threads...you can find it on Parents on Q, and it is bi-weekly column on parenting issues in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community. Please feel free to pass this on to others who have access to AOL.

~~Call For Submissions

WERE YOU A TEEN WITH A LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, OR TRANSGENDERED PARENT?

YOUR STORY WANTED FOR UPCOMING ANTHOLOGY!

We are seeking personal essays that explore what it means to be the child focusing especially on the teen years-of one or more gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered parents. Essays should touch on some aspect of dealing with this issue: for example, dealing with a parent's sexuality while coming into your own; overcoming homophobia at school, at family gatherings, within conservative ethnic/social communities and inside yourself. Teen writers welcome.

WE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGE SUBMISSIONS FROM PEOPLE OF COLOR AND PEOPLE WITH GAY DADS AND TRANSGENDER PARENTS!!

Guidelines:

These pieces are short, so focusing on a particular issue, theme or event with your parent may be more illuminating than a broad autobiographical approach.

Approximate essay length: 10-12 double-spaced, typed pages. If accepted, contributors will receive a \$100 honorarium.

Contact Information:

Co-editor Noelle Howey:

Nshowey@aol.com, or (212)420-7985.

Co-editor Ellen Samuels:

munchie75@aol.com, or (617)628-3192.

<http://www.madsam.com/outoftheordinary/>

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I marry you, and it is more than words or license or tax break, more than a church wedding or a white dress/tuxedo affair, more than a political statement, commitment ceremony, holy union. Marriage with you is Life. You extend your hand to me. I step into your world and unite you to mine.

2.

Comes the day, you tell me you want your breasts removed. Top surgery. Chest reconstruction. I am oddly not surprised. I think I always knew we would do this together someday. And somewhere in me, though you have not said it aloud, I know this is the first step of a profound transition.

I love you. So I go with you to the computer, and we look up different transgender websites - places I have already been, because I knew that someday you would want this information. We read about procedures and options. We have an animated and revelatory conversation. But inside me, a deep, overwhelming panic begins to build.

I want to scream: I LOVE YOU... AS YOU ARE! My desire for you is not confused. I'm a femme who loves butches, who knows butches. I understand your body. Why can't that be enough!

Since I met you, I have struggled to reconcile your breasts with your masculine face, your cunt with your masculine presentation, your body with your masculine soul. I have wanted to "figure you out", using an intellect fettered by narrow expectations, so implicit in my culture that even I have rarely, if ever, questioned them.

You, simply by existing, question all gender assumptions. Gradually, I have learned not to try to understand you with my intellect, in all its limitations, but instead, to trust my heart, so clear in its acceptance and love for you.

Yet now, in fear, I want you to agree with me: "Perhaps if you had been recognized, accepted and validated as you are, maybe now you would not want to alter your body." Please, my eyes beg. I want there to be an easier way. I want that you should not need to do this. I want even the possibility that there might have been a chance for you not to need to do this. You patiently shake

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The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

-Legal Issues: Phyllis Randolph Frye, Esq: PRFrye@aol.com (lawyer and transwoman)

-Medical Issues: Dr Kathryn Thomas, Phd, RN: 410-625-1095; Email: katesx@juno.com (gender therapist)

-Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: MaryBoenke@aol.com (parent of tg)

-Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert; Email: fluffy@access.digex.net (ally)

If you think you'd like to be an AmBoyz local, regional, or SOFFA contact, see the American Boyz website, <http://www.netgsi.com/~listwangler> for a "job description" and then contact national SOFFA coordinator, Loree Cook-Daniels, at:

LoreeCD@aol.com

or American Boyz's Coordinator-in-Chief, Gary Bowen, at:

transman@netgsi.com.

American Boyz

American Boyz is a support and social group for people who were born female but who feel that is not a complete or accurate assessment of who they are and our significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs). Our membership includes Butches, FTMs, Transmen, FTV's, Gender Outlaws, Transexals, Drag Kings, Boychicks, She-Bears, Shapeshifters, Tomboys, Passing Women, Amazons, Intersexuals, Female Guys, Boss Girls, Transgenderists, Sirs, and our SOFFAs. We provide education, support, social events, newsletters, online forums, local meetings, political action, and a national conference.

To learn more about The American Boyz, send email to majordomo@netgsi.com with the message 'info amboyz' in the body of the email, and it will automatically return the 'Welcome and Info' article with more detailed information about our online resources.

Or send email to listwangler@netgsi.com

Or send SASE to: The American Boyz, 212A S. Bridge St., Suite 131, Elkton, MD, 21922

Sexual Orientation : My Long, Strange Trip

By Arthur Freeheart

Our culture defines sexual orientation by what gender a person is and what gender(s) that person is attracted to. Genital type is seen as the ultimate "sign" of maleness or femaleness. Male and female are seen as the only two genders. The gender a person is assigned at birth is seen as permanent.

The sexual orientation boxes [gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual] are often a very awkward "fit!"

I "came out" at age 11 after I learned that people are expected to have sexual orientations. It was difficult to settle on what I was coming out as! I felt identification with and affinity with boys. I was repulsed by the idea of interacting with boys as a girl. The horror I felt about social interaction with boys "as a girl" was a great incentive in repressing physical attraction to them. I was physically attracted to girls, but felt lost when expected to do girl-girl social stuff. I was certain I was non-heterosexual, but that was about as far as I got!

I realized my attractions weren't restricted by what a person's genital type or gender when I first began thinking of myself as a sexual being. Still, I engaged in the common bisexual coming out self-questioning "boys or girls? boys or girls?" on many a sleepless adolescent night.

I connected with a college gay/lesbian community at fourteen. I gravitated toward flamboyant, drag-influenced gay men. They eventually impressed on me that female-bodied gay people were expected to be lesbians & be much more interested in lesbians. I took the label "lesbian" without having the ability to build rapport with other people with the label.

I thought of myself as a lesbian for 15 years. I had a grand total of two sexual encounters with women. I was outside any real womyn's community. I had infatuations with gay men and very unsatisfactory relationships with straight men throughout that time.

I embraced my bisexuality only after I came out as transexual. I came out as transexual 3 1/2 years before I transitioned. The fact that most of the people I dealt with in the bi community respected my gender self-definition "despite appearances" was very comforting and

partners of FTMs. I mentioned that a lot of times relationships such as ours don't work out but it is not because the couple did not try hard enough or love each other enough.

As Kaelan continued, he went on to talk about taking testosterone. He brought up his chest surgery and everyone wanted to see but he only agreed to at the discussion group which would meet after the panel. He brought up the Ultimate Packer. Again, people could only see it at discussion. (Just to clarify here, we had just recently bought two and Kaelan had not worn one of them ever. He put it in a ziplock bag for people to see.) The mere mention of a penis brought up the lower half surgery. Kaelan has not had that surgery yet but addressed what he had seen in Loren Cameron's book, "Body Alchemy". I must have been making some type of face because a woman asked, "Well, Connie doesn't seem to be that comfortable with that." I was honest when I replied, "This is something that I am struggling with. I do not know how I am going to feel when we get ready to cross this bridge. This will be the ultimate test of our relationship because this will be the last of his transformation." Where the conversation turned next was somewhat unexpected for me. They brought up kids. They wanted to know if we were planning to have any and what where we going to tell them. This was something that we haven't talked about too much since we don't have any and don't see ourselves with any in the near future. Although some day we would love to adopt, I had remembered previous discussions that other people had about their children and tried to come from that standpoint.

We tried to turn the panel over to the next person. That would be drag queen #2, Ron, who was also married to his partner of 3 years, Carlos. Of course, in the spirit of drag queens, Ms. Tiffany had to give her a hard time about needing to learn how to put on make-up correctly. Ron also talked about when he came out.

The last panelist was drag queen #3. He was there with his husband as well who was in the audience. He talked about his start in drag and how he planned on running for Empress in June. By the time we got to him we had run out of time. It was time to move on to the discussion group.

At discussion, which was located in a small classroom, it became standing room only. We passed around Loren's book. Kaelan took off his shirt. A man asked him, "Won't you

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affirming. [I'd delayed coming out as TS and doing something about it because I thought I'd have to be hypermasculine to be seen as a man.]

Some people have labeled this sexual orientation journey of mine "confused." I used to see that as a misinterpretation and put down. I think of it as like being in a hall of mirrors where all of the surfaces reflect a distorted image of the gender realities I move within.

I've read conversational threads on one FTM list about "former straight women" FTMs and "former lesbian" FTMs. My response is that no "female" identity label can fully describe an FTM person. There's also a wholllllle lot of the erotic spectrum that doesn't rely on either/or dichotomies.

I feel I've always been a gay-identified bisexual. I'm very fortunate to have a lover and erotic friends who also reject the sexual orientation boxes as "molds" they should force themselves into. ♥

~~Arthur is the American Boyz Gay/Bi FTMs & SOs liason.

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~~Collage

Become a part of our new and improved Volunteer Program! There are opportunities for people of every age, background, location, and interest to become involved, so call our national office at (415) 861-5437 today to see how you can help!

Children Of Lesbians And Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) is an international support, education, and advocacy organization run by and for young people of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender parents.

For more information please contact us:
www.COLAGE.org or

COLAGE@COLAGE.org
3543 18th St. #17
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-861-KIDS
fax-415-255-8345

There are two things a community must give its children: roots to grow, and wings to fly.

get a ticket from a police officer if you have your shirt off in public?" Kaelan explained that everything has been switched over to male on all public documents. Why would he get a ticket? Men take their shirts off in public all the time. Another question for me was, "Do you get accepted as a lesbian in the gay community?"

My reply was that here in my hometown, I am not always treated as one. I often am made to feel as though I am a traitor or must be attracted to men. I am the same person that I was when I met Kaelan as a woman. I do what I do now because of that love that I shared with her. The rest of the discussion was mostly geared toward Ms. Tiffany who had teasingly said to Kaelan, "You had to be the center of attention! You stole my spotlight!" Kaelan saved the Ultimate Packer for the end of the discussion time. He gave everyone a opportunity to leave who did not want to see it. No one left.

In conclusion, this time on the panel made me realize more about how I feel about myself in my relationship with a FTM. It is a hard road often covered with compromises and explanations. That is how I feel about it and obviously can not speak for the majority. In a world where I am not accepted as a lesbian and praised for appearing heterosexual, it is not as fulfilling as it would be if someone were to say, "Hey, I think that you are two wonderful people who are trying to make it through life together." I have noticed that with the increased visibility of gays and lesbians that people's attitudes are changing. At one time in my life people would have gasped when I disclosed myself as one. Today, it was for Kaelan. My hope is that with increased visibility and education that there doesn't have to be anyone who is met with such disbelief that there are people like him in the world. ♥

~~If you have any questions or comments on this article you can reach me by e-mail at: kaelanslesbian@juno.com



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your head. "The world is only part of this,"
you tell me. "The rest of it is inside me."

And my heart knows better. I know you better.
You were transgendered before socialization
tried to force you to choose "one or the
other".

"Are you a Boy or a Girl?" has been ringing in
your ears from earliest memory.

"What do you think?" you flip to them now,
tired to explain. Confusion turns in their
eyes. What they say is: Freak. What they do
is: Turn away. Stare. Laugh. Spit. Kill. Beat
the spirit from your heart.

You fight them. Survival. Best defense is Get
Them First. Show your menace; you are not to
be toyed with. 'Dangerous' is the message in
your eyes, clothes, walk. The razor edge walks
with you. You anticipate attack or threat at
every turn, exchange and glance. You talk
tough. Survival. And tough encases your heart.

End of the day, and your voice is cold. Your
eyes, too old for your years. Tears backed up,
held in at what cost? I draw you into the
circle of my arms and feel your tension ease...
You breathe, and I know you are quietly
bringing yourself to me. You can hardly
believe you can let it all down, that you can
let the tears fall. You can. I know your
strength; you have nothing to prove to me.
Every part of you they hate and fear, gives me
delight. In loving you, I am assured of my own
normality.

It is this I fear losing.

The next morning I am driving to work. As I
hand my two dollars to the toll collector at
the bridge I am trying to calm myself.
"Whatever happens, she will still be my Mary."
I whisper again and again like a mantra. But
then I realize: you will not be Mary anymore,
you will have a new name. And as if that were
not enough, you will not even be "she".

We are entering uncharted territory.

One night, several weeks later, I awaken to
see you sleeping next to me, your breasts
dusky in the half light, spilling onto the
bed. Your breasts, which I never touch without
knowing are a part of you, shrinks from my
hand. Beautiful, womanly breasts.

Suddenly, I can't lie beside you another
moment. Tears from nowhere stream hot down my

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The Last time I saw T

By anonymous

*Half a sigh of relief had almost closed my eyes
that moment you came in.*

*The hormones that puncture your body had
erupted from your skin. But that was not why I
feared your face.*

*You sat down two hard carved pews ahead of
me and read philosophy while I studied the
carvings of past visitors as bored and frightened
as I, but better armed.*

*Twice, maybe three times you tried to speak to
me. Once to give me an old gas bill. But
heaven set the room spinning each time your
mouth tried to make that contact and three furies
beat their wings so your whispers would not
reach me.*

*Still your re-adolescing shape will move in and
out of my vision through the long morning and I
will wonder at the ache that no wind will blow
away.*

*Two thick women will stand between us so I
won't see you. Only your shiny toed shoes and
the agonized face of the man who learned his
lesson. He and the harpies will make it so I
need never see you again. So that the dire
oracles you prophesied and the ravenous
threats you made will never come to pass.*

*Where is the woman who perched on the
hammer of my hand and dragged me laughing
into the mythological sky? ♥*

cheeks. In the bathroom I leave the light off, sit on the edge of the bathtub, double over in the moonlight. I rock against my confusion.

Anger. How dare you throw my universe into disarray! Just when I think I finally know myself! When I think I know you!

Fear. This is too much to ask of me! I can't bear this weight. It is impossible. I feel insane!

Betrayal. Who are you? Are you a butch only because there was no other choice? Am I really a lesbian? What does this mean? How can I be your femme if you are a man?

I want to scream at you. Hate you. Instead, I stifle my crying in a towel until at last the tears come silent, flowing gently. In the morning you find me curled on the couch in the living room. You hold me. Your eyes are so sad. You tell me how sorry you are.

For what? For being true to yourself? I don't want you to apologize for this. I don't know what I want!

I let you hold me, and it does feel better. But I berate myself for being so angry. For hurting you. I wish I could just get to the other side without going through the pain.

Every day I feel different: I drift in and out of anger and pride, excitement and fear. I grapple with monumental theories and insignificant but suddenly important consequences of your transition.

My greatest fear is how this might affect my own sense of self. "Just don't ask me to be straight." I tell you. "It took me too much pain and time and struggle to come out queer, lesbian and femme proud. I can't go back." But you never step on or dictate my identity, and for this I am grateful beyond words.

Instead, you inspire me to look with courage at my self-definitions. I see how they are true to me. I also see how they sometimes limit me. Though they have often given me security and a means to self-awareness, I notice parts of myself I have suppressed: attractions I once felt for men, desire I feel now for other femmes, a need to examine my own "other genderedness".

Some days I feel very alone in the world, like the biggest "freak among the freaks", and I turn old internalized hate upon myself. Other days, I feel like a part of an ancient, unspoken tradition, as one who is particularly "wired" to partner a trans person. I feel almost sacred.

Months pass quickly. Every time you bleed, you feel a little more insane, and I feel less able to be your safe harbor. We go to meetings and get to know other transmen and their lovers and wives. We search the internet for surgeons. We figure out which credit cards can hold the weight of this surgery. Time eases pain, it is true. I love your breasts, but now I release this part of you so beautiful and mysterious to me.

I am changing. Part of me begins to address this surgery with a note of erotic anticipation. I notice that much of my desire is linked to the disparity between your gender expression and your body. When you bind your breasts, pack a dick, when you wear a suit and tie, T-shirt and boxers, when you shift before my eyes from woman into man, I am aroused, excited beyond belief.

I relish the way you construct your gender despite the dictates this world has linked to your body. I love your duality. Now, I wonder at how it will be to love you in a body which further manifests your particular gender.

Christmas week we travel from San Francisco to Maryland for your surgery. We make love in the cheap hotel room near the surgeon's office. I want to touch you, but you tell me you just can't. I could cry.

Later, I ask if I can kiss your breasts goodbye. You grant me this, though I know what an effort it is. But I have to ask for this; I'll never have another chance. I kiss your nipples as tenderly as if they were made of snow. I let my tears fall onto your soft skin. I know I will always remember how your nipples quietly harden, even under such a gentle touch.

The next day, we go to the clinic. You leave me in the hallway as you make your way to the O.R., looking back to mouth "I love you". Your eyes are wide in fright, but you are smiling.

Then you are gone. I spend four hours waiting.

There is a strip mall next door. In the coffee shop I write in my journal. In the drug store, I buy you a card and makeshift bandages. I try to be objective about whether sanitary pads or diapers will be more comfortable and absorbent against your wounds. The lady at the checkout counter asks me how I'm spending my holidays. I tell her, "Quietly."

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~~CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS, TRANSSEXUAL NEWS TELEGRAPH (TNT)

Transsexual News Telegraph (TNT), the only Transsexual/Transgendered-focused magazine currently publishing, is now accepting material from new contributors.

TNT is sold in Queer bookstores across the United States and Canada. It is a 48-page (or more) glossy magazine of professional caliber. TNT has published Rachel Pollack, Max Valerio, Riki Ann Wilchins, Davina Anne Gabriel, James Green, Dallas Denny, Kate Bornstein, Jacob Hale, Gary Bowen, Jessica Xavier, Susan Stryker, David Harrison, Leslie Feinberg, Anne Ogborn, Loren Cameron, Nancy Nangeroni, Candace Brown, Jason Cromwell, Mariette Pathy llen, and many others.

We're looking for researched pieces, opinion pieces, reportage, fiction, interviews, poetry, photography, academic pieces, and cartoons. Or anything else. All material will be selected and edited in keeping with professional journalistic standards. Neatness counts.

Contributions are accepted in hard copy form, or (preferably) by e-mail or disk. Mac format preferred, but not required.

We suggest that you query first, before writing a finished piece. All queries answered within two weeks. The next issue (#9) is now being assembled; deadline for queries is June 30.

TNT is published and edited by Gail Sondegaard, with sporadic, fitful assistance from Katherine Collins.

Contact:
e-mail: GailTNT@aol.com
phone: 415-703-7161 (leave message)
fax: 415-775-3848
snail mail: [redacted] ~ San Francisco CA 94104-4903

~NEWSLETTER ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

FTM Int'l Newsletter is a 12-year-old quarterly out of San Francisco. We have an ongoing interest in submissions of work from SOs, family, and friends of FTMs. Poetry, artwork, or writing are all forms that we could use: 600-1000 words is a good length to shoot for, though longer pieces will certainly be considered too. Topics are pretty unlimited: personal stories, political work, kvetching, what's going on in your area; you name it.

The easiest forms for us to use are email or floppy disks, but typed or even hand-written work is fine too if you don't have access to computers. Our contact info is: Jed Bell, FTM, [redacted], San Francisco, CA 94103; phone (415) 553-5987; email: jedbell@igc.org (newsletter submissions only).

~NEW SUPPORT GROUP-Indianapolis

We are happy to announce the arrival of a social/support group for FtMs in the Indianapolis area.

The group welcomes gender variant people on the Ftm spectrum and those who support them; including but not limited to tomboys, butches, F2Ms, transmen, drag kings, intersexuals, and our SOs, friends, family, and allies.

The group meets once a month and the next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, January 16th at 6:00 PM at the Diversity Center.

E-mail viragol8@hotmail.com for more information or call the Diversity Center for directions.

~NEW SUPPORT GROUP-Michigan

FAMILY MATTERS is a discussion and peer support group for parents, siblings, children, spouses, partners, significant others, friends, allies, and loved ones of transgender people. The group meets every first and third Monday at Northside Presbyterian Church, 1679 Broadway, Ann Arbor. For the month of February, the meetings will be on Mon., Feb. 1, and Mon., Feb 15, from 7-9 pm. The group is open to anyone from the Southeast Michigan/northern Ohio/Windsor, Canada area.

For directions, to check on the meeting dates, or further information, contact:

Debbie Accetta - (734) 662-7830 or Email: daccetta@umich.edu

Univ. of Mich. Office of LGBT Affairs (734) 763-4186 or Email: lgpta@umich.edu

***NOTE: Please send any SOFFA-related announcements for future newsletters to: Jodi Burchell, Editor
PO Box 1916
Smyrna, TN 37167
Or email: soffausa@aol.com

My Child & I

By Penny Hunt

A little over a year ago my 14-year-old daughter told me that she felt she should be a boy. I had never heard of such a thing. I got on the internet, not knowing where to start, I contacted Pflag and received an email back with contacts of other people like my child and sites to help me understand. This was the first time I heard the word transgender. I spent many hours reading, researching and trying to sort through all the information I was finding on the net and receiving in the mail.

It has been a emotional roller coaster for both me and my new son. He is now 15 years old and named Blake, lives male full time, is home schooled and a much happier person, but he does go through a lot of depression and is hating the wait. He sees a therapist that has been an angel helping us find a lawyer and doctors. At this point, the Judge has denied his request for a gender change. We have talked to a few doctors that don't want to work with a minor, but still have hopes that he will be on hormones soon.

One of the most frustrating things I have found are the lawyers and doctors that are TS themselves and will not help or their costs are so high, much higher than others. I am now on several email lists that have been a real eye opener for me and help me understand the wide range of people in the transgender world. Blake and I talk about so many things that most mothers and sons would never discuss, what is the average size penis, what circumcised is, how do lesbians have sex, and the questions just keep coming.

We have made many friends, one of which I don't know how I would have made it without. Mike has answered many embarrassing questions and even let Blake stay with him a couple of times. Blake and I went to the True Spirit Conference in Baltimore. That was wonderful to watch Blake with the other boys and see him be part of a group, smiling and laughing. I bought lots of books and met some of the other parents that I had been talking with. We had a ABC news crew follow us back to Texas. They were here a week filming for a program on Transgender Youth, which should air in January sometime.

I have changed a lot, the way I view the world and people. My own life is now going through many changes. I have decided life is to short to live it unhappy.♥

After three hours, I come back to the waiting room. It is a cosmetic surgery office, so it is a little like a hotel lobby, underheated and expensively decorated, with candy in little dishes, emerald green plush chairs and upscale fashion magazines artfully displayed against the wall.

A young woman comes in, frantic to get a pimple "zapped" before she sees her family over the holidays. An older woman comes in with her daughter for a follow-up visit to a facelift. She is wearing a scarf and dark glasses. The nurse examines her bruises right out in the waiting room.

And you are in the operating room having your body and your gender legally altered. I feel like laughing, but I know it will come out sounding lunatic.

After a lifetime of waiting, I am finally called to the recovery room. You are woozy and weak but smile at me when I take your hand. I remember why I am willing to nurse you through this and anything.♥

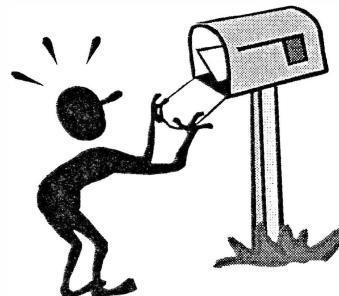
**Note: This excerpt is Parts 1 & 2 of at least a three part series. Part 3 will be in the August 1st issue.

By the way.....

This newsletter is available on a one-time basis as a sample copy via postal mail. To receive a print version of the latest issue, send SASE to Jodi Burchell, Editor at: PO Box 1916, Smyrna, TN 37167. Or Email: SOFFAUSA@aol.com or visit Websight: www.angelfire.com/tn/yoursoffavoice/index.html

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