

# YOUR SOFFA VOICE

Volume 2, Issue 2

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## Editor's Note

### True Spirit 1999: What's in it for me?

One of my favorite sayings, among several that I have, is "I wish that life was a gender conference." I can imagine a world where everyone is open enough to respect each other's gender presentation. One where your birth/biological sex doesn't mean you're stuck with a label all of your life. I find myself wishing this a lot, especially after attending a gender conference like True Spirit 1999. My return from this year's conference was no different. The truth is, I long to discuss things like what masculinity really means, or debating whether someone who identifies as femme is transgendered, or whether an FTM and his partner can maintain a place in the lesbian community.

It truly does my heart good to see people amazed that there are so many others like them out there in the world. I facilitated the Partners Only caucus, which had doubled or tripled in size since last year and I loved hearing the SOs say how happy they were that there was actually something for them at True Spirit. Several had reluctantly attended and had prepared themselves for the whole conference to be

True Spirit...cont. pg. 4

## Why Don't You Tell Them I'm a Boy?

By Florence Dillon

*"Setting my daughter free meant more than I'd imagined"*

*My husband, James, and I have two sons. Alex, who just turned fourteen, is a classical musician and computer whiz. Steve just turned eleven. His life revolves around rocketry, soccer, and improvising stand-up comedy routines in the kitchen. He's in denial about puberty being just around the corner. As his parents, we're concerned about the changes puberty will bring, because we know how distressing it will be for him to begin to develop breasts in middle school. And we're sure that, unless something is done to postpone or stop it, he will develop breasts and begin to menstruate, because this child - who feels and behaves in every way like an ordinary boy - has a normal female body.*

*During the first year of life, the baby we named Sarah ate, slept, and watched the world in silence from my arms. Then she began to speak and run. It was hard to keep up with this toddler who would climb to the top of anything with handholds and, later, the preschooler who loved to jump from the tallest branch of our backyard tree down to the roof of the garage.*

*We were very proud of Sarah. I had always hoped for a daughter who would define herself, who would grow to be a strong, intelligent, and independent woman. This lively, fierce, thoughtful little girl gave me great joy. As her mother, I wanted to create a safe, warm nest where I could nurture her, then set her free to fly.*

*Sarah tested my resolve to set her free in a way I had never imagined. On her third birthday, she tore the wrapping paper from one of her grandmother's gifts and discovered a pink velvet dress trimmed in ribbons and white lace. I knew she wouldn't want to wear it - she hadn't voluntarily put on anything but pants since turning two, and this*

Why....cont. pg. 2

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Why...from pg. 2

*dress was totally impractical for playing the way Sarah played. Nevertheless, I was surprised by her reaction.*

*She looked up, not unhappy, but puzzled and confused, and asked, "Why is Grandma giving me a dress? Doesn't she know I'm not the kind of girl who wears dresses?" Then, with an air of great satisfaction at finding the solution to a problem, she said, "Just tell Grandma I'm a boy."*

*Initially I assumed Sarah's announcement was simply an attempt to communicate a clothing preference in language she thought grown-ups would understand. Then, shortly after her birthday, Sarah said she wanted us to call her "Steve." We thought this an odd request, but tried to remember to say "Steve" from time to time. A few weeks later we received a call from the Sunday school teacher who taught the three-year-olds at our church. She told us our daughter had asked to have the name "Sarah" on her nametag crossed out and replaced with "Steve." We realized then that the name "Steve" must be very important to Sarah, so we told the teacher it would be all right to call her "Steve" for the time being.*

*At home, we talked to Sarah about the difference between a nickname like "Steve" and her real name. But in our neighborhood and on the playground at the park, Sarah began to introduce herself only as Steve. Within our family, she became more insistent that she was a boy. She never said, "I want to be a boy," or, "I wish I were a boy," but always, "I am a boy." She demanded we use masculine pronouns when referring to her. When we forgot or refused, her face would screw up in fury and exasperation, and the offending parent was likely to be pinched or kicked by this usually loving child. I stopped using pronouns altogether when Sarah was within earshot.*

*The teacher at Montessori preschool wasn't as flexible as the Sunday school teacher. The children were learning to write their names, and "Sarah" was*

Why...cont. pg.3

## *Vulcan Love Story*

*By NatureFire*

*Why the reference to Vulcan style love story? I'll tell you it's Vulcan style love!!! Not as in once every seven years - but in following the principle of IDIC - infinite diversity infinite combinations. We have been many things to each other and that is one reason our love is so strong.*

*It was a dark and stormy ni...oops wrong story.....We met in 1974 at basic training, at the now-defunct US Navy Recruit Training Center in Orlando FL. One day, I faked my "batallion" affiliation in the pocket notebook we male recruits were required to carry so I could eat in the coed chowhall instead of the all-male one we were suppose to eat at. I knew that if I was caught, I could have been discharged but I didn't care. I was desperate. I walk in, cursing myself for again forgetting the Roloids, and go pick out my meal. It was a piece of brownish cardboard with some sort of saucy thing on it. If you were thinking liberally it was pizza. I go into the dining area and looked for a table that would suit my raging desires. I spied one that had a bunch of young ladies at it. There were others, but I was drawn to this one for some reason. Love at first sight...kismet, I guess. I sit down and strike up a conversation with one who looked very interesting to me. Well, cutting to the chase, among other things we make a date for later in the month to take her to my house here in Daytona (at the time I lived upstairs from my parents -- had my own entrance and everything). Storm told me later that after I had left, they started talking about the kind of man they liked and Storm said "you just met him". She was really floored to hear herself say that.*

*After I had finished bootcamp I started "A" school. If you're unfamiliar with the Navy, that's the first school you go to that's in the specialty you've picked. I wanted to be a Quartermaster (that's Ship Navigation and Piloting -- not to be confused with the Supply Corp in the Army and Air Force.) Anyway, towards the end school I was picking some food out at the "Roach Coach" when a young woman who was in several of my classes (brunette, nice..., looked great in a TeeShirt....but I digress) walked up to me with Storm. She was taking the same thing! (not your typical woman" thing to do at that time). We spent alot of time together relatively speaking -- like...the time the shore patrol pulled up to that Chevy station wagon with the*

Vulcan...cont. pg.9

## AMBOYZ SOFFA CONTACTS

### National SOFFA Coordinator:

Loree Cook-Daniels: 707-648-2113;  
Email: [loreecd@aol.com](mailto:loreecd@aol.com)

### Local SOFFA Coordinators:

-New York City: Natalie: Email:  
[natalie@everest.hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:natalie@everest.hunter.cuny.edu)  
-Tennessee: Tracy: 615-431-9540;  
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[kaia@ca.ibm.com](mailto:kaia@ca.ibm.com)  
-San Antonio, TX: Debra: 210-434-6044;  
(leave msg on answering machine);  
Email: [debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu](mailto:debra@mac.hwr.arizona.edu)  
-Richard Brown in Delaware, (gay man,  
tg ally): Delaware: Richard Brown:  
302-366-1805; Email:  
[horned@sprintmail.com](mailto:horned@sprintmail.com)

### We also have SOFFAs serving in regular positions:

-Lee Smith, Midsouth Coordinator, is a SOFFA and also the Online Outreach Coordinator:  
PO Box 118, New Haven, KY, 40051  
Email: [STHRNBOYZZ@aol.com](mailto:STHRNBOYZZ@aol.com) or  
[Alphavamp@aol.com](mailto:Alphavamp@aol.com)  
Phone: 502-549-3846

-Arlene Sandoval-Guerra is the Southeast Region Spanish-speaking Liason  
(ally): Latino/a Issues: (Se Habla Español)  
Email: [asandoval@aol.com](mailto:asandoval@aol.com)

*evidently the only name the teacher was willing to teach. This became an issue as Christmas approached. Four-year-old Sarah came home one day and asked how to spell "Steve" so she could sign her letter to Santa. When I cautioned that Santa might not be able to find our house if the name on the letter wasn't correct, she looked at me with scorn. "Santa knows where I live, Mommy. He knows my name is Steve."*

*I decided it was time to seek professional help. I had no idea why Sarah was convinced it was better to be a boy. Surely someone could tell me what I was doing wrong. And it must be something I was doing, or failing to do, because the children were in my care twenty-four hours a day. No one else had nearly as many opportunities to influence them. My husband was pursuing a corporate career that required his attention eleven or twelve hours a day, and I - very much by choice after fifteen years of work and academia - was a full-time mom.*

*My first call for help was to our state university's human development department. When I described my child and our family's situation, the "human development specialist" who took the call laughed reassuringly and said, "Don't worry about a thing. Your child has a great imagination. Lots of bright, creative kids try out different roles at this age. She'll grow out of it."*

*With relief, I took that advice, stopped worrying, and waited for Sarah to grow out of it. For the next couple of years, I supported my child's wish to be called Steve. I no longer made her unhappy by insisting, "You're a girl." Instead I said, "You have a girl's body, though Mommy and Daddy know you feel like a boy."*

*But I still felt responsible for my second child's inability to accept that she was a girl, and I set out to correct whatever misapprehensions she might have about becoming a woman. Because being a mother was such a joy for me, I told Sarah the most*

## Thoughts About Marriage

By Michael Bear

I'm sitting at home waiting for my wife to come home. But how can Ande, now transitioning to be a man, be my wife? It was hard enough dealing with myself being a FTM husband. What do you say to people, who do you ask that question of? We both are straight, meaning we are FTMs that like women yet we are together. I think in some respects we are forced to adopt gay behaviors (his and his towels anyone?) and be bachelors at the same time.

Get married so you can be bachelors. What a laugh on us. I'm not gay, neither is my FTM wife/partner. Wife/huzboy/partner/brother/husband/Daddy/boy, what title at what time?? His family is around, play happy straight couple. At his office I lose all identity and become XXXXXXX's husband. Now what will people think now that XXXXXXX is identifying as Ande and FTM? At least when I started transition I was with a woman (okay, a few women), so it made us "status quo", straight, normal, not different, not part of some separate community. What DO you call FTMs married to each other?

*"Some girls don't like boys like me, but some girls do.."*

What we both want in life is each other and a woman for each. Does not work too well when you like dykes and you ID as a man. Beards do wonders for getting rejected by the dyke women we love so much. Guess that leaves two FTMs sitting at home, twiddling wedding rings and playing Monopoly. ♥

*~~This excerpt is Part 1 of a 2 part article. Part 2 will be in the June 1<sup>st</sup> issue.*

*focused on the FTMs and their surgeries, hormones, and issues with nothing available for them as a partner. I was delighted that they were wrong.*

*I'd like to think that this was at least in part due to the fact that I wrote a rather lengthy letter to American Boyz strongly voicing my opinions concerning last years SOFFA events or lack thereof. Judging from the number of SOFFA events this year, I'm sure there were others who did the same thing. This year, not only did we have a Partners Only caucus, but we also had a Relationships Surviving Transition Panel, a Femme Caucus, and a Trans/Trans event as well. Needless to say, I was ecstatic. In addition, we had two family events on the schedule, whereas last year there were none. I'm not sure about the family events, but the SO events were packed and I do have several suggestions for next year's conference.*

*So, what does this all mean to me? What it tells me is that there is a definite need for more/better SOFFA events/support at TrueSpirit 2000. I'd bet anything that most ALL gender conferences need more SOFFA events/support. So many of us feel isolated and alone in our little corners of the world and it doesn't have to be this way! We need to get the word out there to those who didn't come to the conference because they felt there wasn't anything available for them. There is support for SOFFAs and it's growing and getting better all the time. It may be small now, but I can see it improving.*

*I figure that I'm asking for too much to have every day be a gender conference, so I'll do the next best thing and consistently work and rally for more support of SOFFAs and their issues in general and at future conferences like TrueSpirit 2000. How about you? ♥*

~~~jodi

*Send any comments, letters, personal stories, article, essays, poems, etc. to either of the following addresses:*

*Email: [soffausa@aol.com](mailto:soffausa@aol.com)*

*or postal mail:*

*Your SOFFA VOICE, c/o Jodi Burchell, Editor*

*PO Box 1916*

*Smyrna, TN 37167*

## POETRY

### *Long Distance Love*

by Anonymous

*There are days of sunshine....  
and days of rain.....  
It is your Love...  
that heals my pain.....*

*I Love you deeply.....  
and need you to know.....  
that I will be here for you.....  
where ever you go.....*

*I know it's hard....  
to be far apart....  
but I knew that it would be....  
from the very start.....*

*Please hold my hand....  
and together we'll see...  
that our Love is strong....  
and will always be.....*

*We will find all the rainbows....  
the sunshine and cheer.....  
That will fill our lives....  
From year to year.....*

*Our dreams and desires....  
will all become true....  
and our lives will be beautiful...  
and we'll never be blue..*

*So take my heart.....  
and all my Love.....  
and keep in touch ....  
by note or dove.....*

*I'll keep you close....  
in my heart and mind ...  
and before we know it...  
our time will shine....*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ~NEW BOOK

**TRANS FORMING FAMILIES: REAL STORIES ABOUT TRANSGENDERED LOVED ONES** is a great new book, hot off the press last week, edited and self-published by Mary Boenke.

The book is a collection of stories by mothers of very young gender variant children, parents of adult transgendered folks, spouses and partners, and even grandparents, siblings and friends. Written mostly by "ordinary people", who have all struggled from bewilderment to acceptance and even celebration, these 31 stories serve as role models for all those families who are still hurting, rejecting, or feeling isolated -- or who have already "arrived"!

The subjects vary greatly, -- both FTM's and MTF's, intersexed persons, crossdressers, adults and children, mostly American, but several from other countries; some even with physical disabilities, and from all walks of life.

But all are stories of profound caring, stories of pioneering families who put love above all else and come out accepting, even celebrating the courage and specialness of their transgendered loved one.

Jamison Green says "No concerned parent, family member or friends of a transgendered or transsexual person can fail to be moved by these stories, a long overdue book, a book of love..."

The book also includes a glossary, current list of trans organizations and a trans-family reading list. Also an introduction by Jessica Xavier, Foreword by Robert Bernstein, and Preface by the editor about her own family experiences and learning's. Predicted to be a best seller within the trans community.

Mary is the mother of an FTM son, Chair of PFLAG's Transgendered Special Outreach Network (TSON), founder and Co-President of the Roanoke PFLAG chapter, and a trans-activist. (She is also a co-author, with Jessica Xavier and Nancy Sharp, of the popular 16 page introductory booklet, *Our Trans Children*, which has sold over 13,000 copies. 2nd edition, updated, now

*Announcements...cont. pg. 7*

wonderful thing about being a girl is that girls can grow up and have babies of their own. Hearing this, Sarah's face darkened. She shuddered and said, "I don't want to talk about that." She asked if everyone had to get married and have babies when they grew not, she relaxed and said she was always going to live in our house with Alex.

By age five, Sarah had given all her dresses to a neighbor girl of the same age. She wouldn't put on any item of clothing without first asking if it had been made for a boy or a girl. Only boys' clothes would do. I found myself confessing to sales clerks in boys' departments that I was buying these socks and pants and jackets for my daughter who evidently thought it would be better to be a boy. I felt I owed perfect strangers an explanation of something I couldn't explain to myself.

Still relying on the academic advice we had received when our child was four years old, I believed that Steve would eventually yield to "reality" and find a way to accept growing into a woman. The possibility that my child might be transsexual crossed my mind, but seemed so rare as to be extremely unlikely. The most difficult thing for me at that time was trying to keep all the options open - the ambiguity of not knowing for sure where Sarah/Steve belonged on the gender spectrum. As a woman, I hoped my child would learn that she was unique and that she had the right to define the kind of woman she would become. As a mother, my greatest concern was that my child feel wholly accepted and loved.

James and I searched for information about how and why a child's sense of gender can contradict his or her biological sex. There were very few studies available and none of them were well-designed, in my opinion, because they tended to rely solely on adult impressions and observations of children who were deemed "too masculine" as girls or "too feminine" as boys. It struck me as unhelpful and even harmful to judge children's dress and play as appropriate or inappropriate depending on how closely they approximated sex-role stereotypes from the 1950s. According to the studies, very few of these "masculine

girls" or "feminine boys" grew up to be transsexual. Of those adults who did later identify as transsexual or transgendered, nothing had been noted about them as children that differentiated them from the others in the studies.

Those early researchers did not ask the children what they thought or felt about their own gender - whether they believed themselves to be boys or girls despite the contrary shapes of their bodies. The researchers' failure to ask that question clearly limits the value of their work. More recent medical research indicates that gender identity is every person's internal, brain-embedded awareness of being male or female (or somewhere in between). Gender identity determines whether a person feels male or female, not how masculine or feminine that person may appear to others.

What was our child's true gender identity? I didn't want to cause Steve more anguish at his young age by pushing him in either direction. Steve was a very bright, sensitive child who was troubled and confused about having a girl's body. He couldn't understand or explain why he had this body, although he continued to state unequivocally that he was a boy. He told me he knew there was nothing a boy could do that a girl couldn't do, but he was a boy. I wanted to give this child plenty of unpressured time to come to terms with being whoever he was.

After a painful kindergarten year during which our child was officially known as "Sarah," we asked the first-grade teacher to use the name "Steve" and to let Steve handle it if other children wondered whether Steve was a boy or a girl. Because we knew this situation was unusual and would very likely cause stress for the teachers, we offered to pay for a clinical psychologist specializing in gender issues to meet with the school staff. We wanted to provide an experienced resource to answer their questions about gender identity and help them develop strategies for dealing with a gender-variant child in their classrooms.

The school principal accepted our offer. However, one week before the staff gender training was scheduled to occur, the principal called to say she was disturbed

available, also from Mary [below]. \$3 for 3, \$18 for 25, \$34 for 50, etc. including mailing.)

The book is \$12, including mailing, through April 30. (Then to cover price, \$13.95.) 164 pages, paperback. Make check out to Mary Boenke and mail to her at: 180 Bailey Blvd., Hardy, VA 24101. Inquire about larger orders and consignments.

For reviews, excerpts, and more information visit the book's website: <http://www.aiyiyi.com/transbook>, call 540/890-3957, or email [maryboenke@aol.com](mailto:maryboenke@aol.com)

**~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](mailto:jedbell@igc.org) (newsletter submissions only).

**~NEW SUPPORT GROUP-Florida**

**Trans/Mission**

Open support & discussion group for all transgendered people and significant others meets the third Saturday of each month at 3:00pm.

FTM/SO of all orientations transgender support & discussion group meets the first & third Saturdays of each month at 1:30pm. S&M/Kink-Friendly.

All meetings are held at the Center of Tampa Bay, 4265 Henderson Ave, Ste. B.

Contact Bo at [TransMissionFL@yahoo.com](mailto:TransMissionFL@yahoo.com) or [tranz\\_emoboy@yahoo.com](mailto:tranz_emoboy@yahoo.com) or write PO Box 17522, Tampa, FL 33682.

## 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](mailto: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 [listwrangler@netgsi.com](mailto:listwrangler@netgsi.com)*

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

SOFFA Contacts....from pg. 3

The following special contacts are also SOFFAs:

- Legal Issues: Phyllis Randolph Frye, Esq: [PRFrye@aol.com](mailto:PRFrye@aol.com) (lawyer and transwoman)
- Medical Issues: Dr Kathryn Thomas, Phd, RN: 410-625-1095; Email: [katesx@juno.com](mailto:katesx@juno.com) (gender therapist)
- Family Issues: Mary Boenke; Email: [redacted] (parent of tg)
- Official Jewish Mother: Leslie Ann Alpert; Email: [fluffy@access.digex.net](mailto: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/~listwrangler> 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](mailto:transman@netgsi.com).*

*because she had overheard children asking whether Steve was a boy or a girl. She perceived this as "harassment" of Steve, and she wasn't going to allow it to continue. Without waiting for input from the professional gender therapist, she had decided to call an all-school assembly meeting for the purpose of announcing to the entire student body at once that Steve was a girl, and to tell them that no one was ever to mention it again.*

*Nothing would more terrify my child. The single most important concern of Steve's life was to be seen as a boy. His girl's body was a source of deep shame to him. He was so fearful of anyone else finding out about it that he insisted on wearing three layers of clothing to bed at night.*

*Before the school year began, we had asked permission for Steve to use the unisex staff rest room because the girls' and boys' rooms are the only places in school where children are routinely identified by sex. The principal had refused our request. Because he saw himself as a boy and knew that boys didn't use the girls' room, our six-year-old was in agony from trying not to go to the bathroom at all until he got home at the end of the day.*

*When the principal told me her plan to make the all-school announcement, I was stunned. I felt powerless to protect my child. I've since learned that parents have considerable rights when protecting their children's welfare in the public schools, but at that moment all I could manage to say was that her decision would be devastating to Steve. The principal was firm, but offered to take Steve for a walk and "explain it to her."*

*Later, the principal called back to report what had happened. She had asked Steve if he would like the questions from the other children to stop. Steve said he would. Then the principal told him she was going to make the questions stop by telling everyone that Steve was a girl.*

*Steve looked up at her and said, "Why don't you tell them I'm a boy?"*

*To her credit, the principal listened to him. Startled by this first-grader's logic and assertiveness, she decided to wait until after the visit from the gender specialist to*

*put her plan into action.*

*The public announcement never happened. The psychologist who conducted the gender training made it clear to the school staff that gender identity is innate, that it is established at a very early age, that it can differ from an individual's biological sex, and that it's neither appropriate nor possible for teachers to try to change a student's gender identity.*

*Today, Steve is known as a boy by his classmates. He's been elected president of the fifth grade and holds school records for push-ups and pull-ups. He has changed from a frightened, clingy child who had to be pushed kicking and screaming onto the school bus in first grade into a happy, confident boy who cockily practices muscle man poses in the mirror.*

*Steve is the only expert on his own experience. He has never doubted his identity. And, although his parents and older brother find it helpful to use the term "transgendered" to describe him, he doesn't refer to himself that way. As far as Steve is concerned, he's just a boy. ♥*

*Florence Dillon is a pseudonym, and the names of Sarah, Steve, and other parties in this story have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals featured. Parents seeking more information about support and services available to families dealing with Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) issues can contact Rainbow Families at (612) 370-6651; or Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) at (612) 825-1660. Both are grassroots organizations dedicated to supporting GLBT families.*

### **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](mailto:SOFFAUSA@aol.com) or visit Website: [www.angelfire.com/tn/yoursoffavoiced/index.html](http://www.angelfire.com/tn/yoursoffavoiced/index.html)

All donations are greatly appreciated to help provide materials and postage.

To receive future issues, complete the subscription form on page 11.



## Pronoun Choices & SOFFAs

~by Arthur

*steamed up windows illegally parked behind one of the Base buildings and asked what we were doing in there (we answered - reading a good book...still can't hear someone mention "reading a good book" without us getting goofy), and then I finished school. For some stupid reason I was assigned to a rustbucket out of Galveston, Texas. We kept up writing to each other a lot. When Storm finished, she got her first pick of duty stations -- Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.*

*On 2 weeks leave, instead of going back home to finish up her affairs, she came to Galveston and we were married. I was transferred to Pearl Harbor (the Navy tried to put married people as close as possible) and we spent 4 years in paradise. The warm balmy breezes, the beautiful beaches. Ahhhhh, we were made for this!!!! After one miscarriage, our daughter was born there at Tripler Army Medical Center. I was on ships and Storm was assigned to the Naval Base. And our new love continued to blossom and grow. I convinced my Executive Officer and my Chief to allow Storm to be assigned to the ship and to work with us in the shipyard while my ship at the time (USS Richard S. Edwards) was being overhauled. When "Eddy" was sea-worthy again, after some persuasive talk, Storm again was cut orders to the ship for a shakedown run, not a terribly common Navy practice back then. In 1984, after 10 years active duty, I got out. Storm had spent 2 years active duty, having gotten out after the birth of our daughter. In San Diego, while I was still in the Navy, she elected to have her tubes tied. We lived in Hawaii, C California, Washington (state) and New York. After a while, my father sold us the house and we settled back here in Daytona and have lived here for 8 years.*

### Transition

*....after 24 years of married life, I knew Storm's wants...dreams...desires. I fell in love with STORM, not the outer facade that you see, but the inner real person. It would deepen our love to new depths...an incredible intimacy that we had not known up until then. I love Storm very much and only want us to be happy together. That is the only thing that matters. It pleases us that both sides of our family are very supportive of his transition (well, his Mom has a few misgivings)..... as also his boss. Our daughter (married now, and with a little girl) and her husband said they just want us to be happy. They live here in the same town and we go out together quite often. ♥*

Making a decision to request that people refer to you by preferred pronouns is one of the scariest steps in the transition process. Pronoun change requests challenge the idea of "once a gender, always that gender" more than almost anything else a transperson can do.

No one makes that request unless it's crucially important to their comfort. It's not a quick or casual choice. If a transperson has an SO, the SO is one of the first people s/he risks discussing the choice with.

Many transpeople are insecure about whether or not they "can" ask that preferred pronouns be used before they "pass" or before they start hormonal replacement therapy. It's important to reassure a trans loved one that request timing is independent of any set criteria/time table.

Gender pronoun preferences aren't always distinct or unchanging. Sometimes, transpeople request preferred pronouns use then retreat from the request. Sometimes, preferred pronoun usage is limited to interaction with other transpeople & supportive friends. Either scenario can be very frustrating and confusing for a loved one who is struggling to adjust to thinking of a partner as a "different" or preferred gender.

If you find yourself faced with the challenge of adopting new pronouns for your SO, try to talk to other people who've done it. Try to avoid censoring or hiding any misgivings or fears you have about it. Don't beat on yourself for making "pronoun slips", but remember just how important the chosen pronouns are to the transpeople in your life.

Adopting preferred pronouns is a linguistic transition process. Preferred pronouns usually feel more and more "natural" the more you use them. Their use usually becomes matter-of-fact and effortless. ♥



**~NEW SOFFA WEBSITE**

Resources for SOFFA's of any type of transgendered person:  
<http://members.aol.com/SOFFAUSA/index.html>

If you know of any informational SOFFA-related resources for the website, please EMAIL them to: [SOFFAUSA@aol.com](mailto:SOFFAUSA@aol.com)

**~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 [virago18@hotmail.com](mailto:virago18@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](mailto:daccetta@umich.edu)

Univ. of Mich. Office of LGBT Affairs  
(734) 763-4186 or Email: [lgbta@umich.edu](mailto:lgbta@umich.edu)

**~New Meeting-CHICAGO**

The Howard Brown Clinic has a trans group meeting every first and third Monday of each month. It is open to both FTM and MTF and anybody else they want to bring with them (friends, family, spouse, etc.). The meetings are from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Each night there is a subject.

Sometimes the subject is very broad, sometimes it is very specific. Monday, March 15th, was about hormones. Randi Ettner came and talked about hormones and answered questions. The phone number for the Howard Brown Clinic is 773-871-5777. It is located at 4025 N. Sheridan, in Chicago. It's one block North of Irving Park Road, and about 5 blocks West of Lake Shore Drive.

We plan on having other health professionals and other professionals (such as lawyers) at later meetings. It is a very friendly group, so come and join us if you're interested! If you have any questions, email [HologramDr@aol.com](mailto:HologramDr@aol.com).

**~New Meeting-KNOXVILLE BOYZ**

FTM Support Group in Knoxville, open to all stages of female born, masculine identified, persons and their SOFFAs (significant others, friends, family, allies).

It is a hard process to find people, professionals, and resources in Knoxville. Now it's time we all work together. Pool resources, build resources, and build friendships. It's emotionally painful to feel alone in your transition, I know, been there still doing that.

Meetings are held every Monday and Friday at 7:30pm, in a private home. Call us at (423) 932-7398 for address and directions. Meeting times may change as agreed upon by the group.

All supportive people, and all needing social support, are welcome.

There will be a subject idea for each week, unless surprises come up and we need to focus on a birthday, a new HRT patient, or sorrows.

**\*\*\*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](mailto:soffausa@aol.com)

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