



Hugs - Hope * Understanding * Giving * Support
To the Gay & Lesbian Community of Lake, Geauga, and Ash-
tabula Counties.

Teenagers Shun Haven of Sexual Obscurity

When she was 16, Joanna Smith had a talk with a sympathetic high school teacher. Afterwards, Smith began revealing a secret she'd kept for a while.

She is a lesbian.

"Before I came out, I was scared," said Joanna, now 19, who was attending Bedford High School. "I told a teacher, who had guessed it, and she referred me to a support group."

Joanna's decision to come out, or publicly acknowledge her sexuality, is a step more and more gay teenagers are taking.

The age when teenagers make that decision has dropped dramatically over the last 20 years.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, gay youth came out as college students or later. Now, they come out in high school, or some cases middle school, according to social workers and psychologists.

"The age keeps coming down, and that changes all the potential problems," said Robert E. Owens, a communications professor at the State University of New York, Geneseo, and author of the book "Queer Kids: The Challenges and Promise for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth."

Owens said the decision to come out was usually postponed until the person was on his own.

Now, he said, "We're seeing kids living at home, under the control of parents who may or may not be sympathetic."

Caitlin Ryan, a Washington D.C., clinical social worker, echoed that observation. Two decades ago, the coming out age for males was 19 to 21, and 21 to 25 for females. These days, they come out when they are between 14 and 16 years old.

"We're at a different point in time historically," said Ryan, the co-author of "Lesbian & Gay Youth: Care and Counseling." "Then it wasn't safe to come out as an adolescent. Now we're much more aware of human sexuality as a culture."

C.J. Bott, an English teacher at Shaker Heights High School, made the same observation.

For the past two years, Bott has been one of the advisers to the school's chapter of the Gay Straight Student Alliance.

She believes that gay students are experiencing the same type of sexual awareness as their nongay peers.

"With all the straight kids talking about sexuality, I think it would be abnormal that gay kids aren't going through the same things," she said.

Ryan said that while gay youth aren't different in experiencing sexual awareness, they do have to handle it differently. They have to deal with their feelings in isolation because it's not safe to do so publicly.

Christina Jones, now 20, said harassment forced her to stop attending high school for a while. Jones said she was outed at 15 when other students at South High School in Cleveland became aware of her homosexuality.

Her grades plummeted from A's and B's to D's and F's. She said she was taunted constantly.

"It wasn't just the hallways," she said. "It was the hallways, the classroom, the school bus. I was getting in fights and getting violent."

Jones's parents knew she was gay; she'd told them when she was 13 or 14.

Carlos Frazetta, now 18, informed his parents when he was 16. But he never told friends at his former high school, Shaw in East Cleveland.

He dreaded the possible consequences.

"I kept a shut mouth when the issue came up," he said. "I was scared and didn't want to get jumped."

Bott believes many gay students experience such caution and fear.

She noted that belonging to the Gay Straight Student Alliance, which educates members about homophobia and heterosexism, can be risky – even though students do not divulge their sexual orientation unless they wish.

"The first year we were careful to meet privately," she said.

Still, the existence of the clubs sends a message to gay students that there is support for them and the message appears to have gotten through. She said students have felt comfortable enough to come out to advisers.

Scruggs, A. O. (2000, August 6). Teenagers shun haven of sexual obscurity. The Plain Dealer, Cleveland.

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E-mail your questions or comments to:

HUGSEAST@HOTMAIL.COM

Calendar of Events

September, 2000

- 09/07 Hate Crimes. — Rhonda
- 09/14 Movie "Relax it's Just Sex!" — Mark
- 09/21 Spirituality. — Terry
- 09/28 Pro's and Con's of Single vs. Partnered. — Maureen

October, 2000

- 10/05 General Business Meeting. — Terry
Board members please arrive at 6:30 PM
- 10/12 Gays in the Media. — Brenda
- 10/19 Planning Meeting. — Terry
- 10/26 Movie "Virus". — Virginia
Donuts, Coffee and Apple Cider will be provided.

Hugs Social Activities for September & October

- 09/09 4:00 PM Potluck Picnic.
Val's house. If the weather is bad the picnic will be moved inside. Please **bring a dish and a beverage to pass.** Call the information line for directions.
- 09/23 6:00 PM Dinner at Mama Roberto's.
8658 Mentor Ave., Mentor, OH 44060
If you will attend please let Virginia know or call the information line by September 14, 2000 so she can make reservations.
- 10/28 6:00 PM Halloween Dance and HUGS Fund Raiser
Val's house. Admission is \$5.00. You can come in costume or not. If you bring a carved pumpkin and it is judged the best your \$5.00 admission fee will be waived. **Wanted:** snacks and beverages. Call the information line for directions.

Other Activities for September & October

- 09/17 11 AM AIDS Walk. Edgewater Park. Cleveland, OH
- 09/24 9:05 AM Breast Cancer 5K Walk/Run. Wade Oval, University Circle. Cleveland, OH
- 10/14 Ashtabula Covered Bridge Festival. Ashtabula
10/15 County Fairgrounds. Jefferson, OH.

10/21 Havride. Sponsored by Cleveland Couples Together. See Terry for tickets and information.

For more details regarding any social event or meeting topic please call the information line at (440) 974-8909.

The Thursday evening meeting begins at 7:00 PM and is located at: 8521 East Ave., Mentor, OH 44060

Did you know that...

Ashtabula County now has support for the gay and lesbian community. For information on the Ashtabula Group call (440) 964-4289 or email them at lgbuashtabula@gay.com

Thank You!

Thanks to those who donated items to the HUGS flea market in June. HUGS was able to raise \$117.05. Thanks again.

And.... Thanks to those who donated school supplies to the children of families with AIDS.

Cleveland AIDS WALK

Join the HUGS team for the 10th annual Dr. John T. Carey Memorial AIDS Walk on September 17th. This is a pledge walk, so line up your pledges. As September approaches more information will be provided. If you would like to get information now you can call the AIDS WALK HOTLINE: (440) 735-WALK.

The Four Epicureans

In August the "Four Epicureans" went to Wallaby's Restaurant Downtown. Why, you ask! Because the old Perfect Match on Station Street in Mentor will soon be reopening as a Wallaby's Restaurant. The food was good, as was the atmosphere. I would compare it to an Applebee's Restaurant. It has an Australian Theme as you may have guessed. The four Epicureans had steaks, salmon and a kind of beef potpie. All the meals were good and the prices reasonable. Several menu items said they were Pacific Rim seasoned. I think that means salt & pepper, as it was not unusually spicy. I foresee a HUGS East "Ethnic Dinner Night" at Wallaby's of Mentor in our near future.

By Brenda

FAVORITE POTLUCK RECIPES

Beer Cheese Spread

Ingredients: 1 lb. Mild Cheddar Cheese, finely grated
 1 lb. Sharp Cheddar Cheese, finely grated
 ¼ cup finely grated Bermuda Onion
 ½ clove garlic, peeled and crushed
 ¼ cup Ketchup
 1 Tbs. Worcestershire Sauce
 1/8 tsp. Liquid hot red pepper seasoning
 1 (12 oz.) can of beer
 ¼ cup Blue Cheese dressing, Optional
 “Also optional, is drinking the remaining beer from the 6 pack as you make this Cheese Spread. But, since you will be operating machinery, I would recommend waiting until after making the cheese spread to drink the remaining beer”

Directions: Let cheeses soften at room temperature for at least one hour. With an electric mixer or in food processor fitted with the metal chopping blade, mix cheeses and all remaining ingredients except beer by motor on & off several times. With motor running, beat in the beer a little at a time until light & fluffy. Chill well before serving.

Makes one quart. Spread is best if aged in refrigerator one week.

Submitted by Laura

Deep-Dish Chicken Pot Pie

Ingredients: 2 Cans (10 ¾ oz. Each) Campbell’s Condensed Cream of Chicken Soup or 98% Fat Free Cream of Chicken Soup
 2 Pkg. (about 9 oz. Each) Frozen Mixed Vegetables, Thawed
 2 Cups Cubed Cooked Chicken
 ½ Cup Milk
 1 Egg
 1 Cup Bisquick Baking Mix

Directions: Preheat Oven to 400F
 Mix Soup, Vegetables & Chicken in 2 ½ Qt. Casserole Dish Mix Milk, Egg & Baking Mix in another Bowl – Pour this over Chicken Mixture Bake 35 Minutes or until Golden Brown Normally Serves 6 (or 4 very hungry Lesbians)

This recipe was not signed but I remember it well. It was delicious!

By Brenda

Gay Comic Book Characters

If you like comic books your in for a treat. Gay characters have become part of the plot in the hot-selling comic “The Authority,” where they were written in as individuals, not stereotypes. The character Apollo confirmed the relationship and raised some eyebrows when he planted a public kiss on his love, Midnighter before leaving for a dangerous mission. “The Authority” No. 8 is published by Wildstorm/DC Comics. Over the last few years several comic books have included gay/lesbian characters just as TV Shows have. For more information see The Plain Dealer, Saturday, August 5, 2000, Arts Section or check out your local comic book store.

By Brenda

Good Things Come in Small Theaters

The great thing about small professional theaters is that the landscape is constantly shifting.

Just ask the folks at Beck Center for the Arts in Lakewood. It has transformed itself from a community theater into the emerging professional company with the widest-ranging, most ambitious season among the troupes that operate under the PACT (Professional Association of Cleveland Theaters) umbrella.

The awful thing about small professional theaters is that the landscape is constantly shifting.

Just ask the folks at Signstage Theatre, the city’s American Sign Language company. It had to pull back from four or five shows to two or three because grant money fell through. The company promises to be back to speed by the 2001-02 season.

Call it exciting, call it dicey, but here’s a critical glance at the seasons ahead at PACT theaters.

Beck Center

The 11 shows on the Beck Center’s two series (main stage and studio) include six Cleveland premieres, half of them with gay themes. This is a bold statement by artistic director Scott Spense, whose theater serves both a mainstream audience and the area’s largest concentration of gay citizens, in West Cleveland and Lakewood.

The main-stage season opens with the Cleveland premiere of “A New Brain” (Sept. 15-Oct. 8), a new musical by William Finn, composer-lyricist of “Falsettos,” the gay musical that was one of the best new shows on Broadway in the 1990s.

Another Cleveland premiere follows with Ray Bradbury’s adaptation of his own classic defense of the art of reading “Fahrenheit 451” (Oct. 27-Nov. 19). For Christmas, the Beck serves up a musical version, by Sheldon Har-

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nick and Joe Raposo, of the Frank Capra movie "It's a Wonderful Life" (Dec. 8-31).

Joe Orton's wicked farce "What the Butler Saw" (Feb. 2-Feb. 25) will be followed by "Once on This Island" (March 16-April 8), created by "Ragtime" team Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens. The main-stage season ends with the Cleveland premiere of "Master Class" (May 18-June 10), Terrence McNally's loving portrait of Maria Callas, and "Evita" (July 13-Aug. 12), by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice.

The studio theater starts off with Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Three Tall Women" (Sept. 29-Oct. 22), followed by three Cleveland premieres: a "gay musical extravaganza" titled "When Pigs Fly" (Nov. 17-Dec. 17), which was an off-Broadway success; "The Dying Gaul" (March 30-April 22), by "Prelude to a Kiss" writer Craig Lucas, which portrays a gay-straight Internet love triangle; and "A Piece of My Heart" (June 1-July 1), Shirley Lauro's weepfest about women who served in Vietnam.

Great schedule. Can the Beck summon the budget and the talent to do it justice?

For more information, call (216) 521-2540 or visit them on the Internet at www.lkwdpl.org/beck

The above article is a brief excerpt of Tony Brown's article in the Plain Dealer.

Brown, T. (2000, September 3). Good things come in small theaters. The Plain Dealer, Cleveland. p. 1-J.
E-mail: tbrown@plaind.com

How dare you say those things!

As the Vermont Legislature worked in the spring to pass the civil unions law that took effect July 1, every newspaper in the state carried letters both pro and con.

Some of the letters against civil unions were stridently anti-gay, and eventually Sharon Underwood of White River Junction, Vt. could take no more. In late April she sent the following to her local paper, the Valley News of White River Junction and Hanover, N.H.

Her indignant reply to the insults and falsehoods she'd read struck a nerve, and the letter has reappeared, first in other New England papers, and then on the Internet. It has now appeared in publications from Alaska to South Africa.

Many letters have been sent to newspapers concerning the "homosexual menace" in our state. I am the mother of a gay son, and I've taken enough from you good people.

I'm tired of your foolish rhetoric about the "homosexual agenda" and your allegations that accepting homosexuality is the same thing as advocating sex with children. You are cruel and you are ignorant. You have been

robbing me of the joys of motherhood ever since my children were tiny.

My firstborn son started suffering at the hands of the moral little thugs from you moral, upright families from the time he was in the first grade.

He was physically and verbally abused from first grade through high school because he was perceived to be gay.

He never professed to be gay or had any association with anything gay, but he had the misfortune not to walk or have gestures like the other boys. He was called "fag" incessantly, starting when he was six.

In high school, while your children were doing what kids that age should be doing, mine labored over a suicide note, drafting and redrafting it to be sure his family knew how much he loved them. My sobbing 17-year-old tore the heart out of me as he choked out that he just couldn't bear to continue living any longer, that he didn't want to be gay and that he couldn't face a life with no dignity.

You have the audacity to talk about protecting families and children from the homosexual menace, while you yourselves tear apart families and drive children to despair. I don't know why my son is gay, but I do know that God didn't put him on this Earth to give you someone to abuse. God gave you brains so that you could think, and it's about time you started doing that.

At the core of all your misguided beliefs is the belief that this could never happen to you, that there is some kind of subculture out there that people have chosen to join. The fact is that if it can happen to my family, it can happen to yours, and you won't get to choose. Whether it is genetic or whether something occurs during a critical time of fetal development, I don't know. I can only tell you with an absolute certainty that it is inborn.

If you want to tout your own morality, you'd best come up with something more substantive than your heterosexuality. You did nothing to earn it; it was given to you. If you disagree, I would be interested in hearing your story, because my own heterosexuality was a blessing I received with no effort whatsoever on my part. It was so woven into the very soul of me that nothing would ever change it.

For those of you who reduce sexual orientation to a simple choice, a character issue, a bad habit or something that can be changed by a 10-step program, I'm puzzled. Are you saying that your own sexual orientation is nothing more than something you have chosen that you could change it at will? If that's not the case, then why would you suggest that someone else can?

A popular theme in your letters is that our state had been infiltrated by outsiders. Both sides of my family have lived in Vermont for generations. I am heart and soul a Vermonter., so I'll thank you to stop saying that you are speaking for "true Vermonters."

You invoke the memory of the brave people who have fought on the battlefield for this great country, saying that they didn't give their lives so that the "homosexual

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agenda” could tear down the principles they died defending.

My 83-year-old father fought in some of the most horrific battles of World War II, was wounded and awarded the Purple Heart. He shakes his head in sadness at the life his grandson has had to live. He says he fought alongside homosexuals in those battles, that they did their part and bothered no one. One of his best friends in the service was gay, and he never knew it until the very end, and when he did find out, it mattered not at all. That wasn't the measure of the man.

You religious folk just can't bear the thought that as my son emerges from the hell that was his childhood he might like to find a lifelong companion and have a measure of happiness. It offends your sensibilities that he should request the right to visit that companion in the hospital, to make medical decisions for him or to benefit from tax laws governing inheritance.

How dare he, you say. These outrageous requests would threaten the very existence of your family, would undermine the sanctity of marriage.

You use religion to abdicate your responsibility to be thinking human beings. There are vast numbers of religious people who find your attitudes repugnant. God is not for the privileged majority, and God knows my son has committed no sin.

The deep-thinking author of a letter to the editor who lectures about homosexual sin and tells us about “those of us who have been blessed with the benefits of a religious upbringing asks, “Whatever happened to the idea of striving . . . to be a better human beings than we are?”

Indeed, sir, whatever happened to that?

Underwood, S. (2000, July 7). How dare you say those things! *Gay People's Chronicle*, Cleveland. p. 9.

POP QUIZ—WHERE ARE HOMOS?

Check those statements which are true.

Gays are never found . . .

- in line for the Mormon Tabernacle tour
- at the Young Republican Baptists' fund-raising picnic
- knocking on your door to give you the Watchtower
- watching reruns of Three's Company
- listening to Marie Osmond's *Greatest Hits* album
- milking cows in Nebraska
- donating to Jesse Helms's reelection campaign
- playing football in the National Football League

Results. If you've checked any of the above—BUZZ, you lose. Gays are everywhere. Homos are Mel-White, who for years wrote Jerry Falwell's speeches. Gays are Jean O'Leary, a well-known gay activist who was a nun. Gays are Dave Kopay, who played football for the New

York Jets.

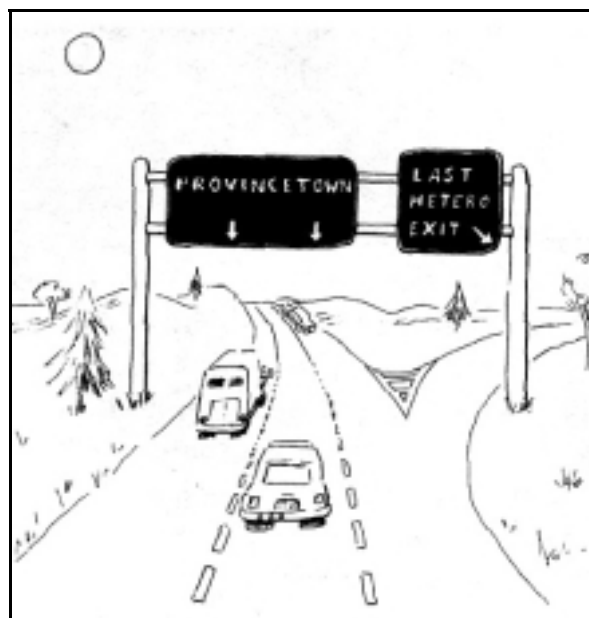
You can find a homo by driving two hours out of your small hometown to go to a gay bar, or you can save yourself time and gas money by just looking around in your own neighborhood, because there are gays where you live, work, eat, and play. As a survey once found, one out of ten individuals has experienced sex with someone of the same sex. Trying to figure out who they are can be a lot of fun. So go outside and count one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, gay! This could definitely make standing in line at the bank more fun.

“I read that only one percent of this country is gay. If that's true... I've slept with every one!”

— GAY COMIC JASON STUART

I think it's harder identifying gay women than men. Society teaches men that affection is to be exchanged with women, and a pat on the tush of another guy is okay only if you've got a number on your chest and a ball in your hand—a football. If a man looks at another man for more than a moment, straight men will look away, run away, or feel uncomfortable. So if a man holds another man's glance, changes are he's gay. But woman can kiss another woman or even cuddle with her in bed and she's still straight!

In real life people don't give themselves away that easily. Many straights would like to think that gay people have horns or some such physical marking that makes us stand out, while in fact, we come in all shapes and sizes and dress in all different ways, which makes it hard to really be sure who's queer. Actually, it's difficult only for straights; gays seem to be able to spot other gays. Why? Because they have *gaydar*.



Carter, J. (1996). *The homo handbook: getting in touch with your inner homo*. New York, N.Y.: Fireside Books.

Be a part of HUGS EAST

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Due to the increased cost of the mailing of our newsletter we can no longer afford to continue our current mailing to non-paying members. This will be the last to those not currently with paid dues or who do not mail their dues prior to the next newsletter mailing in March.

Please send your dues to Hugs East P.O. Box 253, Mentor, Ohio 44060. If your not currently paid and would like to remain on the mailing list, please submit your dues by the next scheduled newsletter. Current newsletters will still be available on Thursday nights at the Mentor site for those who are not on the mailing list.

2000 HUGS EAST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 CITY & STATE _____
 ZIP CODE: _____
 PHONE #(optional) _____
 EMAIL (optional) _____

<u>Membership</u>	
Individual:	\$8.00
Student:	\$5.00
Household:	\$10.00
Supporter:	\$25.00
Contributor:	\$50.00
Benefactor:	\$100.00

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

*Dues run from January thru December.

To update our membership list we ask that you complete the above information. Even if you were a current member, we would like to update our records to show current information. This will ensure your copy of the newsletter. Membership dues are suggested amounts. Please feel free to pay more if you can, less if you cannot. All members share the same privileges. Make check or money order payable to: HUGS EAST P.O. Box 253 Mentor, Ohio 44061-0253, or bring to the Mentor site any Thursday evening (7pm to 9pm).

_____ Do not send HUGS EAST newsletter to my home.

**\$8.00-\$10.00 dues are not tax deductible; amounts paid over said dues are considered contributions and are tax deductible.