
LGBT News

The LGBT Resource Center for
the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.

March 2007

*This month begins with a new section in the Center newsletter called **Celebrations** that will contain announcements of commitment ceremonies, anniversaries, the birth of children and similar events. Our very first listing is a 25th anniversary. Read about Chris and Michelle's upcoming celebration at the Center and their thoughts on 25 years together. To get the announcement of your celebration in the Center newsletter, email: admin@7riverslgbt.org We reserve the right to edit all submissions for length and grammar. We reserve the right to refuse inappropriate submissions.*

Celebrations

Michelle Coen and Chris Olson are acknowledging their 25th Anniversary with an open house celebration. Friends and family are invited to the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street in La Crosse, on Sunday, April 15th, from 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm. In lieu of gifts, the couple asks for donations to be given to the 7 Rivers LGBT Center.

Chris is a local financial planner in private practice and Michelle is a programmer analyst with Ashley Furniture. They met in Anchorage, Alaska where they lived until moving to La Crosse in 1998. They now reside in rural Arcadia.

Twenty-five Years Together: Chris Olson and Michelle Coen

Editor: Why is it important to have a 25th anniversary celebration?

Michelle and I think our 25 years together is a really big deal. So many straight marriages (more than half) end in separation or divorce. Even LGBT partnerships don't always last. We want to share the success of our relationship with our friends, family and the community. We want to celebrate it with everyone.

Editor: Why is it important to celebrate that anniversary publicly?

Lesbian couples/partnerships don't often get to brag or show off their relationships to the community at large. There is no public forum for announcing or celebrating this. We get a lot of wonderful validation from the lesbian community but we also want La Crosse to know that we are here. Lesbian and gay couples need to be visible if we ever hope to move forward with gaining the same marriage rights as straight couples.

Editor: Twenty-five years brings a lot of memories. What is your favorite memory?

We built a cabin together - with our bare hands - in the bush of Alaska. We were still in our 20's when we did this. The cabin was remote and on a little lake. This was a dream of both of ours. We spent every weekend there for 12 years. We grew up together building and enjoying this place. For both of us - the cabin was a little piece of paradise - what a bonus to be able to share it with the woman of your dreams?

Editor: What's your funniest memory?

Our cabin in bush Alaska was actually about 30 miles (as the crow flies) from a fairly large community. We didn't have plumbing or power. At night it was so dark - you could see every star in the sky.

One night at the cabin we went outside to look at the Northern Lights. Oh, what a display. There were also some weird lights in the distance that just didn't seem like any Northern Lights we'd ever experienced before. They were more uniform and flashing at regular intervals. We eventually talked ourselves into believing that the lights were from an alien spaceship. Imagine our surprise when we learned they were really from a car dealership open house - they were very big spotlights that somehow we could see from 30 miles away.

Editor: What advice do you have for other couples aspiring to 25 years together?

We never really fought much - we think successful relationships learn how to work out the conflicts before they get too big. We always maintained our individual identities - not getting lost in the relationship. Our advice to others is to not become enmeshed in the relationship. It's okay to have separate friends and activities knowing that one partner is not the do-all and end-all for the other. Of course, undying love for each other doesn't hurt, either.

Editor: What are your dreams for the future?

We met in AA. One strong philosophy in recovery is to live "one day at a time." While we have many dreams for the future what we really want is to live in the moment and enjoy every current moment that we have together (and with our kids - the 4 dogs and a cat).

Center Activities for March 2007

The Center Blog now has additional posters, so check often for new posts. Remember the LGBT Movie Night at the Pearl Street Theatre! There are still 3 Center sponsored movie nights in

March, April, and May. Our regular groups will meet during March as well. [The date for La Crosse Pride is August 18, 2007.](#) Watch the newsletter for more information as it becomes available.

Ski with other 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center People

Brandon is organizing a skiing day On March 10, 2007. His message to you is below.

For those of you who haven't gone skiing yet this season, you'll want to join us at [Granite Peak](#) in Wausau on March 10. They are 100% open, 700 foot vertical with a good solid base. Lift tickets are \$52 (if you buy from their website) and they are open from 9am-9pm. If you just want to ski at night (4pm-9pm), tickets are \$28. Let me know if you are interested, and I hope to see you all there!

Brandon Hayes: brandonshayes@yahoo.com

Help Create La Crosse Pride 2007

Volunteers are wanted for the fun and important job of organizing Pride 2007. Meet with the committee at the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center, 303 Pearl Street, at 7:15 pm on both March 12 and 26. Everyone is welcome to help!

For upcoming meeting dates, check the Center [website calendar](#)

LGBT Movie Night at the Pearl Street Theatre, i.e. The 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center.

Mark your calendars for our Resource Center's monthly "Movie Night" being held on the 1st Saturday of March, April and May 2007. We will be showing lgbt movies at our Center, 303 Pearl Street.

We're providing popcorn but feel free to bring other snacks and a non-alcoholic beverage. \$5.00 suggested donation to the Center.

March 3, 2007
The Broken Hearts Club: a Romantic Comedy (2000)

The lives of a group of gay friends in West Hollywood revolve around the Broken Hearts, a restaurant run by the fatherly Jack (John Mahoney) and the softball team he sponsors. The friends (Dean Cain, Zach Braff, Andrew Keegan) rely on each other for conversation and camaraderie as they search for love and mourn their many losses. Directed by Greg Berlanti, 96 minutes

April 7, 2007
Desert Hearts (1985)

Uptight literature professor Vivian Bell (Helen Shaver) heads to Reno, Nevada in 1959 for a quickie divorce. While staying with Frances Parker (Audra Lindley) at her ranch to establish residency, Bell meets Parker's adopted daughter (Patricia Charbonneau), a casino worker 10 years her junior. Bell finds herself increasingly drawn to the open and self-assured lesbian, and

their developing intimacy releases buried emotions Bell has never explored. Directed by Donna Deitch, 91 minutes

May
Brokeback Mountain (2005)

5,

2007

Two shepherders - Jack Twist and Ennis Del Mar (Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger) - meet and fall in love while working together near Wyoming's Brokeback Mountain in 1963. Over the next 20 years, their lives take different courses: Jack becomes a rodeo cowboy while Ennis remains a ranch hand. Screenwriter Larry McMurtry's adaptation of a short story by E. Annie Proulx. Directed by Ang Lee, 134 minutes

Ongoing Center Activities

Weekly Activities

Coulee Region LGBT Group for Adults

We have recently formed a group for persons over age 20 to connect with others in the LGBT community. We look forward to engaging in a variety of activities, from potlucks to topical discussions, to camping. Our primary purpose is to provide a safe space where people can meet and pursue activities that they find meaningful. The group meets every week, and welcomes anyone that is LGBT, questioning their identity, or is an ally. We currently meet on Tuesday's at 6:00 pm, at the Center on 303 Pearl St. If you have any questions or would like to be added to the group's listserv, please call Connie at (608) 784-0452.

GALAXY

GALAXY, a YWCA sponsored program for lgbt youth, meets every Thursday at 6:00 pm at the Center.

Monthly Activities

Gender Queer/Transgender Gathering at the Center:

Do you identify as gender queer? How about Transgender? Do you ever feel like you don't fit in because of your gender identity or expression? Then come to a monthly discussion group at the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center. The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00. For more information contact: vanroose.kath@uwlax.edu. For upcoming meeting dates, check the Center [website calendar](#)

Genderqueer - A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This person may want to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.
Transgender - A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

Women's Book Group:

The women's books group changed its schedule and will read **Eleanor Roosevelt volume I** by Blanche Wisen Cook, for March. The discussion will take place at 4:30 on Sunday, March 25, 2007. See the 7 Rivers LGBT Resource Center website calendar for more details: [website calendar](#)

A Tax Tip - for Schedule A deductions: THE SALES TAX DEDUCTION By Christina Mae Olson, CFP®

How do you decide if you should complete Schedule A when you complete your tax return? Come on - don't stop reading now. Even if you pay someone else to do your taxes - it's important that you know this stuff. Some of the best tax preparers make simple mistakes.

The decision to itemize your deductions is simple. In 2006, if you have qualifying deductions that total more than \$5150 then you should itemize. \$5150 is the standard deduction - the "gimmee" deduction for single filers. It goes up a tad every year - up to \$5350 in 2007. If you have less than \$5150 in deductions then you won't benefit from itemizing. Most of my readers are not able to marry - but just in case a legally "married filing jointly" filer wants to know - your standard deduction is \$10,300 for 2006 - going up to \$10,700 in 2007.

Are you an "itemizer?" You can deduct things like real estate taxes, home mortgage interest and charitable contributions. Do you have medical expenses that total more than 7.5% of your income? These are deductible. You can also deduct on Schedule A certain expenses that total more than 2% of your income (these are the so-called "miscellaneous deductions") like safety deposit box rental costs, investment fees and unreimbursed employee expenses. You can download Form 529 from www.irs.gov for a complete list.

Did you know that we've been able to deduct our state income taxes from our federal income tax liability? The IRS has allowed this provision for years for those of us who itemize our deductions on Schedule A.

ATTENTION: Wait, wait! Don't submit your 2006 tax return until you read this next part. In December of 2006 - congress reinstated a deduction for state and local sales taxes. Yes, SALES TAX. In many parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota - sales taxes can be 5.5% or more. You would have paid \$1375 sales tax on a \$25,000 auto purchase. Is that more than the state income tax you paid? Probably. Did you buy some big ticket items last year? If you did - you are now able to deduct the sales tax you paid from your income taxes.

You can only deduct your state income tax OR your sales tax on Schedule A. Not both. You'll need to add up all your sales taxes and see if that is more for you.

Here's the wacky part: this provision wasn't approved until after the IRS printed the tax return forms. You won't find a space for the sales tax deduction anywhere on Schedule A. Publication 600 (www.irs.gov) tells you to write in ST (for sales tax) on Line 5 of Schedule A and fill in the amount.

You may think I'm crazy to hope you have saved all your receipts and can actually determine the sales tax you paid in all of 2006. I'm not crazy - but - if you don't know for sure you can use a free and anonymous tool at www.irs.gov to help you calculate an estimate for you. Search for Sales Tax Calculator at their home page. It's worth it for you to do this because you might get a bigger deduction (higher return) if your sales tax obligation was higher than your state income tax.

Oh, one more thing. We all get to claim a credit for that elusive telephone excise tax that was added to our phone bills for years. This is a credit not a deduction. No Schedule A needed. You can take a standard credit of \$30 or actually total up the pennies and nickels from your old phone bills from March, 2003 to July, 2006. Yup. It's that simple. Form 8913 tells you how - the amount you claim is an actual credit that reduces your taxes dollar for dollar. Every penny counts, right? It does in my book.

Chris Olson is a Certified Financial Planner™ practitioner with a fee-only private practice. You can reach her at 608-525-9818 or CMoney@centurytel.net.

Honor June Kjome

June Kjome has given much to the lgbt community and the La Crosse community as a whole. Help thank her for all of her work by joining us in planning an event in her honor. To be a part of the planning process for this event, come to the next organizing meeting at the Center, 303 Pearl Street, March 6, 2007 at 7:00 pm. Watch next month's newsletter for date and time for the event.

Barbara Gittings, 1932-2007

One of the first fighters for equal rights for what was then referred to as homosexuals, Barbara Gittings died in February. In 1965, four years before the Stonewall riots, Barbara Gittings and a handful of brave folks held demonstrations outside the White House and Independence Hall seeking equal rights for homosexuals. These were the first such demonstrations in American history and began an era of gays coming out of the closet. Read more about Gittings and other pioneering work she did in these two articles: [City Paper](#) or [Gay People's Chronicle](#)

Wish List

The Center needs your help with some donations of time and items. If you can help, please contact Connie during our regularly scheduled hours or leave a message on the Center answering machine. We'll be happy to pick up any donations.

Here's what we need:

1. 4-5 card tables (for Euchre night and other activities)
2. some stacking or folding chairs
3. a dvd player and tv
4. coffee carafes
5. large coffee urn
6. sturdy computer desk
7. desktop scanner/copier
8. books and videos for our lending library
9. decorations for the center, i.e. pictures or poster that fit our theme and mission
10. bean bag chairs!

Here's what YOU can do:

1. Organize and lead a card night (maybe Euchre?)
2. Organize and lead a movie night

3. Suggest an activity that you would organize and lead!