



p3

... We have opened the doors at our new Hornell health center!

p4

... What does teaching about sex ed and LGBT issues look like in middle school? Dr. Susan Eschbach explains.

p7

... One intern shares how she has taken her first steps into a career at PPSFL.

CHOICE

Dignity for All Students! NY STATE "DIGNITY ACT" IS IN EFFECT

The Dignity for All Students Act (DASA, "The Dignity Act") seeks to provide the State's public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus, and/or at a school function.

As an agency that facilitates weekly LGBT youth groups in Ithaca and Corning and provides programming on sexual diversity, ally building, and creating safe spaces in schools, we have long recognized that bullying is a serious issue. Bullying can have a tremendous impact on a student's physical and mental health, academic performance, and prospects for success beyond high school.

We are very excited about the implementation of DASA as a step forward in support for LGBT youth. As part of our commitment to advancing this goal, and with a generous grant from Planned Parenthood Federation of America's Fund for the Future, we recently completed a two-day training for teachers and school support staff facilitated by trainers for the national Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and we will be working closely with them for the next year to ensure that local youth-serving professionals have the tools they need to put DASA into action in our schools. We are also thrilled to work with expert educators like Dr. Susan Eschbach (see page 4), and to offer LGBT health and wellness information to individuals, health care providers, and our community at OUTFORHEALTH.ORG.

PPSFL's work in this area is an important example of how the movements for LGBT liberation, equality, and reproductive justice can all work together toward the shared goal of equal rights and freedom.



LETTER FROM JOE SAMMONS, CEO

Dear Friend –

Just a few weeks ago, the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act, clearing the way for reforms that will make health care more accessible to thousands of people in our region. This is good news for our community and the patients we serve, and we are grateful to all our friends and supporters who have worked hard to make health care reform a reality. Your phone calls, e-mails, letters, and all you do to support Planned Parenthood have made a huge difference!

While the Affordable Care Act is a great step forward, we still have much work to do to ensure that quality health care is affordable and accessible to all. In particular, Planned Parenthood and its allies must fight to ensure that all women's health services are covered under the law – including access to safe, legal abortion services. We must also increase our capacity in order to serve the influx of new patients brought into the system as the law is implemented over the next few years.

We have been on this track for years at PPSFL, and we continue to move resolutely forward. The opening of our new health center in Hornell has been a tremendous advance for our patients and for our agency, and plans are well under way to expand our health centers in Ithaca and Corning. In May, we implemented our new Nextgen computer system, which is the first phase of our conversion to using electronic medical records. And we continue to offer innovative educational and community programs, and provide quality, compassionate care to hundreds of patients every month.

The best things in the world happen because good people make them happen. From the Supreme Court to our community programs and our health centers, good things are happening here in our community because of your unwavering support and commitment. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the wonderful work we are doing here at PPSFL. Thank you for being a part of that work!



Warmly,

Joe Sammons
President / CEO

A PLACE FOR LGBT YOUTH

Last fall, thanks to the support of a state grant and the Community Foundation of Tompkins County's Children and Youth Fund, PPSFL started an on-site LGBT and Allied Youth Group in Ithaca to provide a supportive, empowering environment where youth could express themselves and ask questions in a judgment-free space, make new friends, and share their thoughts, worries, ideas, and hopes.



Tompkins County LGBT Youth Group members had "Queertastic" t-shirts printed for their march in the 2012 Ithaca Festival Parade

Our meetings provide educational and social opportunities and a safe place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and allied youth. Our goal is to increase levels of youth engagement, increase access to resources and support, increase a sense of belonging, reduce social isolation, and increase access to peers and adults who encourage positive interactions, future planning, and healthy choices.

Many of our local schools do not have a Gay Straight Alliance, and we wanted to make sure that local LGBT and questioning youth felt that they had a safe space to call their own. We offer meetings weekly with varying activities, allowing members to meet new people, discuss important topics, learn the latest LGBT news, and get involved in the community. The size of the groups has grown dramatically, with up to 20 members at some meetings. We talk about everything – relationships, religion, same-sex marriage, the media – whatever is on their minds.

LGBT Youth groups meet in Corning and Ithaca weekly. E-mail lgbt@ppsfl.org for details.

Our New Hornell Health Center Location Has Opened!

April 23rd may have been an unusually cold and snowy day in upstate New York, but that did little to dampen the excitement of our Hornell staff. After months of anticipation, we began serving patients in our new Hornell Health Center – the first new health care site PPSFL has opened in a generation.

For over 30 years, we rented offices for a part-time health center in Hornell. Patient privacy and confidentiality were long compromised due to the public Main Street location where protesters could legally stand a few feet from the door and windows, looking into our waiting room. Originally a retail bank, the offices were ill-suited to the growing complexity of services that we provide.

After a search by a local committee of board members and staff, an ideal site was identified in early 2011. Originally built as a McDonald's and then renovated as a physician's office, the building is located at 111 Seneca Street, near the high school. Its proximity to the north of the downtown hub makes it more accessible to those living in North Hornell, Arkport, and other locations. The building has off-street parking, provides increased privacy for our patients, and it is fully accessible.

We purchased the site in July 2011 after successful negotiations with the owner who graciously donated 50% of the building's appraised value. The gift discussion was informed in large part by Chip Bryce, Director of the Office of Trusts, Estates, and Gift Planning at Cornell University, who volunteered his time to help PPSFL and the previous owner of the building better understand how such a donation would benefit both parties. Bryce's guidance was essential to the success of this transaction.

HOLT architects designed the new health center to include all the adaptations required by the NYS Department of Health. The renovated building has four exam rooms with an efficient patient flow centered around a nurse's station and lab area, and the waiting room is professional and spacious.

While the protesters did follow us to our new location, their impact on patients has been substantially reduced by the barrier that our parking lot provides, and the fact that patients can now drive right past them.

Hornell Health Center Manager Ev Laskaris reports that the reaction from staff and patients has been fantastic.



Ev said, "Patients love it here. We've received many positive comments about how professional the office looks and feels. Patients are also reporting that they really like how private the health center is now and how much they appreciate the off-street parking. Moving to this new space has made a big difference."

Teaching Sex Ed & LGBT Issues

HOW ONE TEACHER IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Have you ever wondered what sexuality education and talking about LGBT issues might look like in a middle school? We asked Dr. Susan Eschbach, an Ithaca health teacher who has worked with our programming staff for more than a dozen years to share how it works in her classroom. Her work in hosting Day of Silence events serves as an example of what one passionate, well-respected teacher can do to positively impact school culture.

[Some people might think of sex ed and LGBT issues as advanced or too mature for middle school students. What is your experience?](#)

Hmmm. Middle schooler readiness? Since the Day of Silence and most LGBT issues are about identity, safety, pride, personhood, fairness, haters, rights and responsibilities, and just being cute (!), then middle schoolers are primed for handling the issues because those are issues they care deeply about. Also, many of the kids have LGBT family members who they care deeply about and are loyal to. When the school is outwardly supportive to those issues, the kids can safely express their loyalty too. And of course there are LGBT kids as well. And most of the time they don't feel able to be out, but this gives institutional support to them, at least in theory. Actually, when I say "in theory," it is because the kids do not always know where their support will come from or even that they need it in forms of validation.

The only time people are afraid these kinds of issues are too much for kids is when they think it is specifically about sex. And that is something the adults need to get a grip on. (And the adults need to come to my class, too!)

[Why do you think it's important to talk to middle schoolers about sexual orientation, gender identity, and other LGBT issues?](#)

In addition to everything I said above, they are dying to talk about this stuff. It is the source of conversations among their peers (sex, health, sexuality, etc.), on their teams, in their jokes, in their music, on TV, among adults, on the news. And it gets added value simply because of the conflict or discomfort or wild controversies, and that makes them want to understand what the heck is going on. Their ideas and information are skewed — sometimes it is hysterically funny, sometimes worrisome, and other times they are right on. They are always interested and can tell when they are being patronized, lied to, or simply diverted from their quest. And they understand more clearly than adults that learning and talking about stuff does not make you go out and do it. They actually should all live in the Netherlands.

In terms of LGBT stuff when learning about sex and sexuality, all the general messages and learning applies to them whether they are straight or gay.

I tell them of my personal challenge to teach with few pronouns or gender identifiers when I teach about sexuality. For example, when talking about oral sex I will say things like "if you are the person with the mouth..." or "if the person with the penis or vulva does so and so..." or I say, "if you were born with a penis, then you should blah blah blah...to be safe."

They are desperate for information and to talk about all of it.



DAY of SILENCE®

[What has it been like to commemorate the Day of Silence with your students over the years?](#)

Day of Silence 2012 was our 6th year. When we first started, I laid the groundwork with staff, assuring them the world would not fall apart and asked for a few volunteers to be staff supporters for kids who wanted to try it. That meant they were willing to let it stand in their classes and that kids could go to them to get the Day of Silence information cards to sign. In the beginning there was concern that kids would do it for the wrong reasons or to get out of work or that it would somehow get out of control. Of course, that did not happen.

In our first year, more than 50 kids gave it a whirl. The following year, the librarian said she wanted to work with me on it and she not only helped generate some materials but created two informational table top displays — one of specific kids who had been silenced, and another with books that had positive LGBT themes or stories.

I made myself a black t-shirt that says in white letters “Is the silence loud enough yet?” I wear it every year and I do not speak all day, from the moment I enter the building until I leave. Each year a few more teachers also try to teach silently for the day. I think we are up to five. Now, we do three morning announcements to the whole school about the Day of Silence, teachers from each team hand out the Day of Silence cards, and all teachers plan lessons so the silent kids are not required to speak. Some teachers use it as a teaching opportunity about bias, oppression, homophobia, or whatever take on it they want. It is institutionalized and accepted.

Interestingly, when four black kids came to me to help organize a Hoodie Day in response to the Trayvon Martin shooting, I started to help them plan and organize their event. At first, we got quite a bit of resistance from some teachers. In response, the principal said, “this is just like the Day of Silence in terms of what we are helping the kids do!” Then the teachers were like “oh, ok, no problem.” We’ve become a template.

Can you tell us what it’s like to be an out teacher? Do you have advice for teachers who may want to come out or be vocal advocates and allies for LGBT youth?

Frankly, I think what makes us able to do this is because I am SO out. Staff like me and the principal is supportive and committed to doing the right thing as long as he is in the loop.

I am OUT there teaching! I cannot be in. I came out at my first school job in 1980 and I cannot imagine anything else. That does not always mean it’s easy, but it is harder to be in. I have had parents come at me in very vicious ways and I have had to teach some principals how to be supportive.

However, the bulk of my experience has been supportive parents and staff. I come out four times a year to a total of 20 classes. (I teach new classes every quarter.) I am out in the community, kids see me with my partner. She is also an out teacher and often her elementary kids end up in my middle school class and they are so happy to

see me again. Sometimes they say they saw us kiss. I say, something like, “yeah, I love kissing.”

I would say to “in” teachers, come out. It is better for kids and families. Most kids know gay people now. A show of hands almost always gets 80% of the class and then I remind them they know me and they have to all put their hands up. Schools need us to be their conscience in the face of harassment, law, diversity, pride, strength, competence, power, and role modeling. The kids MUST see there is room for everyone, which means there is room for each one of them, no matter what their thing is. In the Ithaca City Schools we are protected by policy.

If you are fearful about coming out to kids, or thinking, “well I wouldn’t mind but how would I do that, it is so out of context,” ask an out colleague or a colleague you really trust to help you come up with good ideas. I always do it in the context of setting up the guidelines of our classroom learning community. What do we need to feel safe in here in order to really totally participate? Then we talk about put downs, and I come out. Even though most kids already know, I always say it for the one kid who really needs to hear it.

Today, two girls came to me because they are bisexual and together and one of their friends was telling homophobic jokes. They are hurt and trying to figure out how to work this out. I sat with their group of five African American girls so full of feelings of closeness and hurt and yearning for it all to be OK and helped them sort through stuff. It was an honor to be there. If I was not out they would not have come to me in the same safe way.

WHY A DAY OF SILENCE?

- » In a 2009 survey, GLSEN found that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students report verbal, sexual, or physical harassment at school. More than 30% report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety. The Day of Silence helps bring us closer to making anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in America’s schools.
- » Day of Silence is an annual day of action to protest the bullying and harassment of LGBT students and their supporters. Students take a vow of silence to symbolically represent LGBT students and allies who have been silenced.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steve Ruoff, *Chair*

Debra Turner Bailey, *Vice Chair*

Andrea Beesing, *Secretary*

Annie Wall, *Treasurer*

Elizabeth Bixler

Renee Botelho

Penelope Chick

Clover Drinkwater

Mary Grainger

Shewanee Howard-Baptiste

Linda Jolly

Anne Kenlon

Beth Landin

Ravi Marala

Rev. Gary McCaslin

Rebecca Norman

Mary Opperman

Jane Powers

Wendy Robertson

Kay Rogus

Rev. Rich Rose

Michael Schaff

Carmen Strong

Rebecca Weger

NEED TO CONTACT US?

Health Centers

Corning	962-4686
Elmira	734-3313
Hornell	324-1124
Ithaca	273-1513
Watkins Glen	535-0030

Admin. & Development Offices

Ithaca	273-1526
Horseheads	796-0220

Sexuality Education & Outreach

Tompkins County	216-0021
Chemung County	734-3313
Steuben County	962-4686

Rape Crisis of the Southern Tier

888-810-0093

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for our 44th Annual Celebration!

Date: Thursday, October 4, 2012

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Corning Museum of Glass

Keynote Speaker: Pulitzer Prize winning author Connie Schultz

We hope to see you there!

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Each year at our Annual Celebration, PPSFL bestows the Constance E. Cook Award, the Margaret Sanger - Katharine Houghton Hepburn Award, and the Youth Advocate Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Cook Award recipients may include individuals, groups, or organizations in Tompkins County; Sanger-Houghton Award recipients may include individuals, groups, or organizations in the Southern Tier. Our Youth Advocate Award recipients may include any young individual. If you know a person or group deserving such recognition, please let us know!

Please send nominations to Amanda Gilbert at amanda.gilbert@ppsfl.org by August 15, 2012.

TRIBUTES

Mar. 24, 2012 - Jun. 22, 2012

IN HONOR OF

Beth Begany

Joan & Murray Schnaper

Penny Chick

Catheryn Obern & Rich Robinson,
Carol True-Palmer & Glen Palmer

Scott Heyman

JoAnne & Alex Miner

Steve Ruoff - Happy Birthday!

Katie & Olan Forker

Doris F. Singer

S. Singer

IN MEMORY OF

Judith Aronson

Robert Aronson

Nancy S. Barlow

Robert Barlow

Lorraine B. Chase

Stephen Chase

Dale Corson

Anonymous

Beatrice C. Davis

Dr. Dorothy Buerk & L. James Holman

Nona

Christa L. Perz, LMSW

Bob & Ginny Powers

Anonymous

Deborah Willkens Pierce

Diane M. Willkens & Rachel Halterman
and their children Covey & Casey

CORRECTION:

Our Spring 2012 CHOICE newsletter listing for Joy Weber's gift was in honor of Rev. Katie Finney and Carole McCarthy. We apologize for the misspelling that occurred in that issue.

Intern to Staff Member

We are very pleased to welcome Devon Ritz to our staff at Planned Parenthood! We wanted to let Devon tell you how her experiences brought her to us and how she sees PPSFL shaping her future.

In September 2002, the beginning of 7th grade, I realized I was gay. At age 12, I was terrified of this new found difference. I was afraid to confide in anyone because I truly believed I would get kicked off the field hockey and basketball teams, banned from the girls' restroom, shunned by my friends, and that I'd disappoint my family. So I kept my secret for years. I turned this shame and loneliness inward and beat myself up for a long time.

When I finally came out at the end of high school, it was not as cataclysmic as I imagined. I had struggled in my small town in Pennsylvania, but I found a great college in a little city: Ithaca College (IC). I hit the ground running at IC by taking part in countless opportunities aimed towards LGBTQA activism and awareness. I became a student leader and I networked my way through campus and found ways to "come out" in meaningful and powerful ways. However, I always carried my 12 year old self with me. I could never shake that feeling.

At the end of my junior year of college, I decided that I wanted to help start a middle school youth group in Ithaca. I asked one of my mentors, Lis Maurer, for help in achieving this goal. She put me in contact with the PPSFL programming and communications department. I met with Jen Mainville, the senior sex educator and the founder of the LGBTQA youth group in Tompkins County. I became a summer intern and began working in the department compiling information for a possible middle school youth group as well as assisting Jen with current youth group events. My summer internship quickly became a year-round one. I successfully facilitated a weekly middle school youth group. I also found a passion for sex education while seeing what Jen does for high schools and middle schools throughout the county. I was fortunate enough to be able to create a two hour workshop on positive body image and present it at New Roots High School. The staff at PPSFL have been incredibly supportive and have given me a new found sense of responsibility for not only my community, but for sex education as it pertains to equality and rights for people everywhere.

As my internship and college career wound down, I realized I was nowhere near finished with my goals. In everything that I do, I strive for more answers and new developments. In a time of uncertainty in terms of next steps, I found a perfect answer: a staff position opening in the programming and communications department. As a new employee, I have started my next step into my passion for activism. I aspire to be an exceptional sex educator and I know that being a part of the Planned Parenthood team will help me reach this dream.



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT PPSFL?

- » We are always looking for committed volunteers to help ensure our staff has great support while we provide health care, sex ed and rape crisis programming, community outreach, and political advocacy. If you would like to get involved in any of these areas of our work, please visit PPSFL.ORG to learn more and download an application. Questions? E-mail HR@ppsfl.org.

SCAN THE QR CODE!
You will be directed to
our volunteer info page.



WHY I SUPPORT PLANNED PARENTHOOD

by Svante Myrick, Mayor of the City of Ithaca

As many Ithacans know, I was raised in a household headed by a single mom. My mom did an amazing job looking out for the four of us kids. When we needed clothes, she got them. When we needed to go on educational field trips, she found a way to send us. When we became teens and we needed more information, she took us to our local Planned Parenthood to learn about contraception. I am grateful to her for the referral and to Planned Parenthood for its honest, non-judgmental information.

Young people don't need a lecture or scare tactics. They need medically accurate information, access to birth control, and affordable sexual health care, regardless of their ability to pay. We are lucky to have Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes serving Ithaca with high quality medical care, sex education programs, and advocacy for the sexual and reproductive rights of all people. Given the political furor about women's health care in the last year, we need Planned Parenthood's voice here in our community and in our national policy debates now more than ever.



314 West State Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

P.O. Box 268
Horseheads, NY 14845

www.ppsfl.org

Want to help us cut down on printing costs and save the planet?

To get your newsletters via e-mail, contact Georgia Rennie at georgia.rennie@ppsfl.org

Credits: *Editing & Layout* / Jenn Foy, *Design* / Ancient Wisdom Productions, *Printing* / Arnold Printing



Printed on paper containing 30% post-consumer waste using soy-based inks.