

## Save the date for Oct. 7 Town Hall Meeting on marriage equality

A town hall meeting on marriage equality is set for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 7 in the Community Room of the Normal Public Library, 206 W. College Ave.

The meeting will consist of a panel discussion featuring gay couples, legal experts, a social services specialist, and a local religious official. The discussion will center on the social, religious, and legal aspects of gay marriage. Legislative and legal updates on the issue will also be presented.

The event is being coordinated by a number of organizations including the Advocacy Council for Human Rights; Central Illinois Chapter of ACLU; ACLU of Illinois; Lambda Legal Defense; and Equality Illinois. The event is also sponsored by the McLean County AIDS Task Force; Bloomington/Normal PFLAG; and Open Door Youth Center.

For more information contact the Advocacy Council at 309-821-9453 or [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com).

## Support candidates who support us!

Two local men are running for congressional seats currently held by 15th District Rep. Tim Johnson and 11th District Rep. Jerry Weller.

Democrat Tari Renner is challenging incumbent Weller in the 11th district. The district includes the western parts of Bloomington and Normal and extends to LaSalle/Peru and Joliet. Tari has a sterling record on many issues including glbt issues. He is chair of the political science department at Illinois Wesleyan University and is an elected member of the McLean County Board.

Democrat David Gill is running against incumbent Johnson to represent the 15th district in Washington. His district includes much of eastern Bloomington and Normal as well as most of east central Illinois including Champaign/Urbana. Gill lives in Clinton and is a doctor. As such, he has made healthcare one of his primary issues in the campaign.

These two fine men, if elected, would represent their districts and champion rights for all people regardless of their sexual orientation. For more information on Renner and Gill visit their web sites:

Gill: <http://www.davidgillforcongress.com>

Renner: <http://www.rennerforcongress.com>

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"I don't know why a company would go out of its way to lend support to candidates who are that far out of the mainstream," Porter says. "If they want to have customers who are diverse and hold diverse political views, it's unclear why they would want to support candidates who are not indicative of that diverse mainstream nature."

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay advocacy group, gave Circuit City a low Corporate Equality Index score of 29 out of a possible 100. According to the survey, Circuit City does have a written non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation in its employee handbooks, but does not protect against discrimination based on gender identity.

Circuit City also does not offer domestic partner benefits to its gay Employees' partners, nor does it offer diversity training covering sexual orientation or gender identity.

Mason says she hopes that Circuit City will see the damage it could sustain if it continues to alienate gay customers.

"It's disappointing that Circuit City seems to be writing off a really important part of their potential customer base by making these contributions," Mason says.

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# the **Rainbow Connection**

A Publication of the **Advocacy Council for Human Rights**

September 2004

## Calendar of Events

### Every Wednesday

7 p.m.  
ISU PRIDE (student organization)  
Student Services Building Room 375

### Every Wednesday

8:30 p.m.  
Movie Night  
The Bistro  
316 N. Main St., Bloomington

### Every Friday

7:30 - 10:30 p.m.  
Open Door Youth Center  
313 N. Main St., Bloomington

### Every Saturday

7:30 - 10:30 p.m.  
Men N2 Men Social Group  
Connections Community Center  
313 N. Main St., Bloomington

### Sunday, Sept. 5

9 and 11 p.m.  
Bistro 11th Anniversary Drag Show  
\$5 cover at the door

### Monday, Sept. 6

10 a.m.  
Bloomington Labor Day Parade  
SEE ARTICLE FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Monday, Sept. 13

4:30 p.m.  
ISU Triangle Association Meeting  
Location TBA

### Wednesday, Sept. 15

5 p.m.  
Advocacy Council for Human Rights Meeting  
Connections Community Center

### Sunday, Sept. 19

Drag King Show  
The Bistro  
\$3 cover at the door

### Tuesday, Sept. 21

7 p.m.  
Bloomington/Normal PFLAG  
Yoke Room, First United Methodist Church  
211 N. School St., Normal

### Friday, Sept. 24

11:30 p.m., 12:30 a.m., 1:30 a.m.  
Hot Spots at the Bistro with Kadiva Mann  
The Bistro  
\$2 cover at the door

### Monday, Sept. 27

10 p.m.  
Talent Night Competition  
The Bistro  
\$3 cover at the door

## Phelps Family pickets six B/N churches, business

Members of Topeka's Westboro Baptist Church headed by the Rev. Fred Phelps journeyed to Bloomington Aug. 21 and 22 to picket six local churches and the corporate headquarters for Electrolux.

The six churches picketed were St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Second Presbyterian Church, Wesley United Methodist Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, Vale Community Church, and Holy Trinity Catholic Church. The group, consisting mostly of the Phelps family, was not accompanied by Rev. Phelps.

## Signs carried by picketers included the messages "God Hates Fags," "Fags Eat Feces," "Fags are Lawless," and "Thank God for 9/11."

The group's visit to Bloomington was purposely ignored by most people and glbt organizations who felt that a counter-demonstration or protest would only increase media coverage of the group's visit. There were reports of individual confrontations with protesters, and protesters reported that someone threw tomatoes at them and another person spat on one of them.

Electrolux was targeted because it is a Swedish-owned company. Phelps and his family have targeted Sweden because a Swedish court sentenced a Pentecostal pastor to a month in jail for calling homosexuality "abnormal, a horrible cancerous tumour in the body of society." On their web site Phelps' group argues that "Americans who work for and make money for the Swedish-owned Electrolux Home Products NA enterprise are sinning against God and will share Sweden's curse."

Leaders of the six churches advised their congregations of the upcoming protests and warned them of the extreme messages that picketers would display on their signs. Signs carried by picketers included the messages "God Hates Fags," "Fags Eat Feces," "Fags are Lawless," and "Thank God for 9/11." One protester carried a sign showing two stick men engaged in anal sex.

In response to the group's planned visit, Bloomington City Council members Mike Matejka and Karen Schmidt called a community meeting on Aug. 14 that attracted almost 50 people. From that meeting came a variety of suggestions for responses to the protesters, including the recommendation that Aug. 22 be declared "umbrella day." On this day churchgoers were encouraged to carry their umbrellas to church to shield them from the rain of hatred espoused by the protesters.

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## At the Bistro

**Friday, August 27**  
In the Hot Spot  
Amaya Mann  
performances at 11:30, 12:30 and 1:30

**Sunday September 5th**  
11th Anniversary Show  
9 and 11

**Sunday September 19th**  
Drag King Show

**Friday, September 24**  
In the Hot Spot  
Kadiva Mann  
performances as above

**Monday, September 27th**  
Talent Night

**October 10th**  
Mr. Illinois Gay Pride Pageant

**October 11th**  
Ms. Illinois Gay Pride Pageant

**October 16th**  
Bistro welcomes the Prairie Men

**October 23rd**  
White Party

**October 25**  
Talent Night

**Every Wednesday night**  
Movie Night

For more information, visit the Bistro on the Web: [www.thebistro.us](http://www.thebistro.us)

## Advocacy Council Plans Labor Day Parade Entry

The Advocacy Council, joined once again by local glbt supportive organizations, will sponsor an entry in Bloomington's Labor Day Parade Sept. 6.

The parade, set to kick off at 10 a.m. in downtown Bloomington, will proceed to Miller Park.

The Advocacy Council is working on plans for the parade including banners, candy to be distributed along the route, and possibly a decorated vehicle.

We are asking groups that plan to join us at the parade consider a small donation to ACHR to offset the cost of purchasing candy.

Groups and individuals interested in marching with us should contact the council at 309-821-9453 for more details.

If you don't want to march, please consider coming to the parade and cheering on our contingent!

## Not the best buy? Circuit City donates money to anti-gay pols

By BRYAN ANDERTON  
*The Washington Blade*  
Aug. 20, 2004

Circuit City may be the second-largest retailer of electronics in the United States, but some gays are saying they'll go somewhere else for their DVDs and home electronics.

That's because the Circuit City Stores, Inc. Political Action Committee has a long record of donating money to anti-gay legislators.

"I think it's important that we know who our friends are and who our friends aren't, and if we choose to vote with our checkbook, that's completely appropriate," says Equality Virginia Executive Director Dyana Mason.

The idea for a boycott came from an anonymous letter writer on the Web site VirginiaIsForHaters.com. The Web site also lists Circuit City, which is headquartered in Richmond, as one of the 10 largest companies based in Virginia.

Circuit City officials declined repeated requests for comment for this story.

Campaign contribution records on Congress.org show that, of the five U.S. House members who received donations from the Circuit City PAC in the 2003-2004 election cycle, only one - Calvin Dooley (D-Calif.) - voted against the Marriage Protection Act. That provision, which would strip federal courts of jurisdiction over same-sex marriage cases, was passed by the House in July by a vote of 233-194.

Likewise, all but one of the nine senators who has received money from the Circuit City PAC during this election cycle voted to bring the Federal Marriage Amendment up for a vote while it was being debated last month.

The records further show that, since 2001, the Circuit City PAC has given money to 52 Republicans, compared to just eight Democrats.

Among those who have received contributions from the PAC in that time are Sens. John Warner (R-Va.), John Cornyn (R-Texas), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Wayne Allard (R-Colo.), as well as Reps. Jim Gerlach (R-Penn.), Charles Pickering (R-Miss.) and Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colo.).

Allard and Musgrave are the lead co-sponsors of the Federal Marriage Amendment in the Senate and House, respectively, and Cornyn help lead debate in favor of the measure.

Receiving the most money since 2001 is Sen. Jim Talent (R-Mo.), who is also a co-sponsor of the Federal Marriage Amendment. In 1999, he also voted to ban gay adoptions in D.C. Since 2001, he has received \$5,000 from the PAC.

Jay Porter of VirginiaIsForHaters.com says he doesn't understand why Circuit City supports so many anti-gay legislators.

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The Advocacy Council for Human Rights met on Aug. 18 and agreed that any confrontation or direct response to the Phelps family visit would only attract more media attention and might cause a disruption near church property.

Instead, the Advocacy Council discussed a number of positive activities it is planning for the coming months including a town hall meeting on gay marriage; an entry in the Bloomington Labor Day Parade; several fundraising projects; fundraisers for glbt-supportive political candidates; and a concert featuring the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus and Amasong.

## Thumbs Up...

- To Bloomington City Council members Mike Matejka and Karen Schmidt for their efforts to coordinate a community response to the recent visit by the Phelps family.
- To members of the B/N glbta community, who showed remarkable restraint in the face of the raw, hateful message carried by the Phelps family.
- To the 50+ community members who attended the Aug. 14 community meeting in opposition to the visit by the Phelps family.

## Thumbs Down...

- To Bloomington City Council members Rich Veitengruber and Skip Crawford, who failed to publicly criticize the Phelps family despite the fact that their wards are home to three of the churches targeted by the group.
- To Rev. Ken Graham of Vale Community Church, one of the churches targeted by the Phelps family. While his church disavowed the group, Graham told The Pantagraph that he admired the group's commitment to their cause. Any commitment that includes picketing gay men's funerals and celebrating Matthew Shepard's death doesn't deserve any admiration, Rev. Graham.

## Monicals fundraiser a success

Our July 26 Monicals fundraiser was a success. We raised almost \$150 from people who ate at Bloomington/Normal and Peoria area Monicals on that day.

The funds raised would have been greater, but a snafu at the post office meant that most people on our mailing list didn't get the Monicals voucher until after the 26th. We apologize for that glitch and will give our membership more lead time when planning fundraisers.

Many thanks to all of you who ate at Monicals and made the fundraiser a success. We hope to hold another fundraiser next year.

## ACHR benefits from Art Walk

The Advocacy Council has been chosen to receive donations in the upcoming downtown Bloomington Art Walk called Heart and Soul. Art will be featured at ten or eleven locations, including Lancaster's Restaurant. The walk will be September 25th from 1-4.



The Advocacy Council would like to thank Jan Lancaster and the staff of the Bistro for their ongoing support of the ACHR and the Bloomington/Normal Community.

**Bistro Phone:** (309) 829-2278

**The Rainbow Connection** is published by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights.

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