

23RD ANNUAL LGBTQ-FRIENDLY SUMMER CAMP/PROGRAMS DIRECTORY

Gay Parent TM

March-April 2022 | Issue #141

LGBTQ

gayparentmag.com

REAL
HOUSEWIVES
OF ORANGE
COUNTY'S
Braunwyn
Windham-Burke

SEARCH
FOR LGBTQ
PARENTS
IN TODAY'S
MEDIA

by Aubree Calvin

Author Emily Jaeger:

“SECOND PARENT ADOPTION SUCKS”

23RD ANNUAL FAMILY BUILDING WITH BIOLOGICAL BABIES DIRECTORY

A LEADER IN LGBTQ PARENTING RESOURCES SINCE 1998

Endless Possibilities



HARKER SUMMER



K-GRADE 12

June 13-Aug. 5

Registration
opens
Jan. 24, 2022*
summer.harker.org

* Feb. 14, 2022 - Upper School Summer Inst. Only

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Harker offers an extraordinary array of summer fun and educational experiences for learners of all ages.

Programs are led by dedicated faculty and staff who are experts at combining summer fun and learning. Strong academics and inspiring enrichment programs are offered in full-day, partial and morning-only sessions. Harker's summer programs are held on our lower, middle, upper school campuses, all in San Jose. We are planning for in-person programs this summer.

From creative writing and archery to drivers ed and robotics, the possibilities are endless. Class sizes are limited – register today!

- Summer @ The Conservatory
- Summer Camp Plus: K-Grade 5
- Middle School Summer Institute
- Upper School Summer Institute
- English Language Institute
- Swim School



408.553.5736 | SummerCampInfo@harker.org | 500 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose, CA 95129

Welcome to Oakwood Friends School!



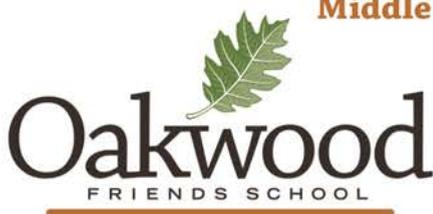
With health and safety our overarching policy, we welcome students, boarding and day, grades 5-12, for our 5-day, in-person programming, including academic and extracurricular. Protocols meet and exceed all NYS health and safety standards and guidelines.

- Social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion central to community
- Staff fully trained to engage students both in-person and remotely. Ample classroom and socially distanced instructional spaces in multiple outdoor classroom locations and newly constructed interior classrooms
- SEL (Social & Emotional Learning) integrated into programming; full-time school counselors to support students in- and outside the classroom

For complete details about our Health & Safety Protocols, and 2022 life at Oakwood, go to: OakwoodFriends.org

**Join our Virtual Open Houses
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**Upper School Day & Boarding Programs (5 and 7-day)
Middle School Day Program**



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For more info or to join us, write or call:
admissions@oakwoodfriends.org

(845) 462-4200

Discover! OakwoodFriends.org



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journey,
our simple
process.

cryobio

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FERTILITY SERVICES AT VALLEY

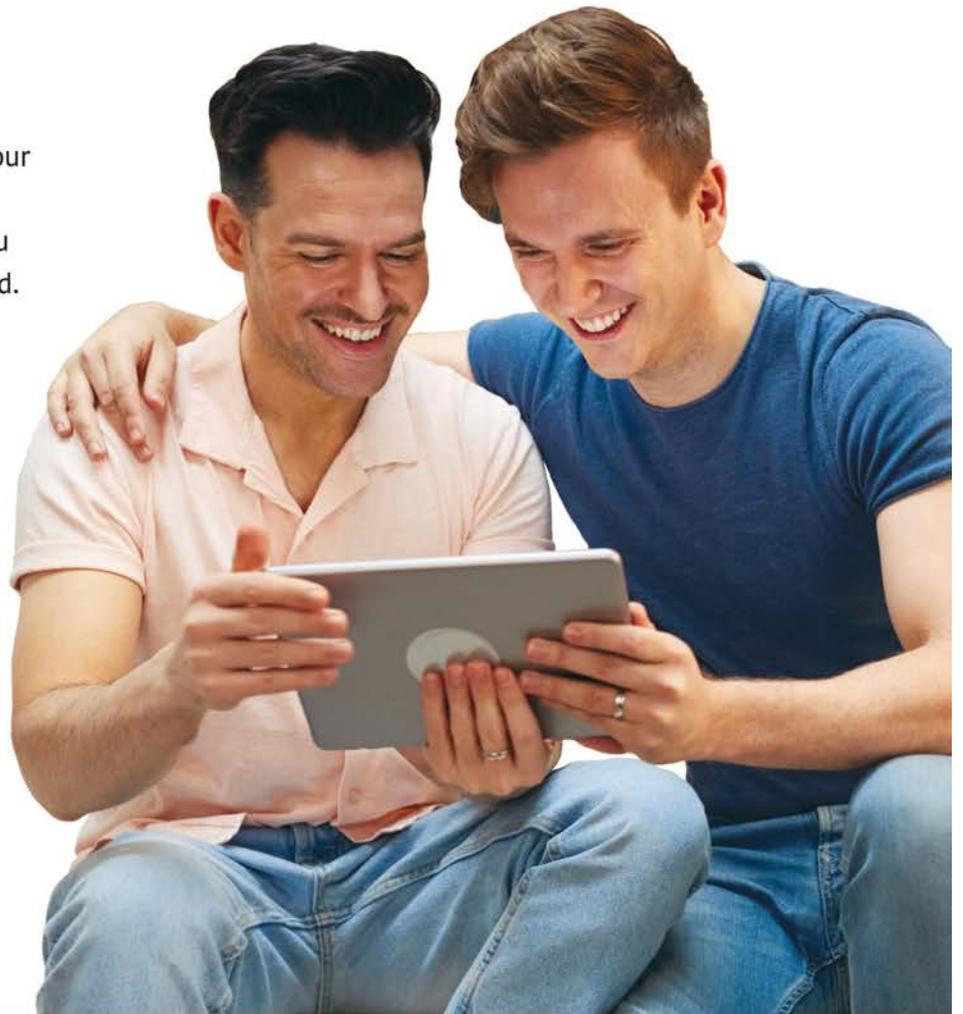
THE TIME IS *Now.*

WE GET IT.

Time to start exploring your family-building options? Learn how we can put you on the path to parenthood.

Our Services Include:

- LGBTQ Family Building
- Fertility Testing
- Insemination
- In Vitro Fertilization
- Preimplantation Genetic Testing
- Embryo Freezing
- Egg Freezing
- Donor Egg and Donor Sperm Services
- Gestational Surrogacy



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ValleyHealth.com/Fertility





We Share Your Dream

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Female & Male Infertility
Gestational Surrogacy

Fertility Preservation
Genetic Testing of Embryos

Yale Medicine
yalemedicine.org/fertilitycenter

Orange, Guilford, New London, Westport, Stamford
1-877-YaleMDs

A close-up photograph of a man with a full, dark beard and mustache, wearing a grey t-shirt, gently kissing a baby on the forehead. The baby is wearing a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt and is smiling. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Take the *First Step* Towards Parenthood

With over 30 years of experience, Cryos is proud to offer everything you need for your family. Completely free donor search for all our sperm or egg donors. Visit us online at www.cryosinternational.com



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Most programs available nationally - visit RainbowFamilies.org

Rainbow Families is a tremendous resource for me. In our small town of Battle Creek Michigan we don't have adequate resources for LGBT families or people considering parenthood -
Val

Thank you for these valuable programs and all the personalized support you're giving us. We could not be on this journey without you -
Jennifer

My family is grateful for your amazing programs and activities. We took the Maybe Baby class years ago, and joined your adoption support group too. We love meeting other families at the dances and special outings each year -
David & Adam

We so appreciate the work your team does. The camping weekend was our first introduction to Rainbow Families and it was a magical event for my child. Thank you for all you do to organize safe spaces for all different types of rainbow families-
Courtney

Your interracial family workshop was seriously eye-opening. I consider myself someone who tries to be mindful about privilege and power structures, but I was completely blind to some of the issues raised. I'm grateful for the new insight here - Andrew & Michael



RainbowFamilies.org

Info@RainbowFamilies.org

Insta: Rainbow.Families



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 - Kid-Friendly, nutritious meals and snacks
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 - More than 20 fun, outdoor activities including wilderness, gardening, sports, dance, visual arts, and more

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For more information, please email NewCountry@14StreetY.org
or call **646.395.4357**





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tps.school.org | 2501 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA

www.tps.school.org

FEATURES

EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA - Family photos from our audience. - page 11



23rd Annual Biological Family Building Directory Listing - Looking to build your family with a biological child? This list of LGBTQ friendly companies can help you. - page 13

ADVERTISER SPOTLIGHT: URA - URA (University Reproductive Associates) gives advice on growing your family through assisted reproduction technology. - page 15

23rd Annual Gay Parent Magazine LGBTQ Friendly Summer Camp/Programs and Independent School Directory Listing - With the pandemic now at two years, a fun summer experience for your child is important. Check out our list of summer camps and programs. - page 18



ADVERTISER SPOTLIGHT: Stratford School - California's Stratford School gives parents tips on knowing when your child is ready for summer camp. - page 24

ADVERTISER SPOTLIGHT: Puget Sound Community School - The Puget Sound Community School in Seattle has shifted to an anti-hierarchical collaborative leadership structure. Almost half of their students identify as non-binary. - page 28



My Search for LGBTQ Parents in Today's Media - Aubree Calvin examines contemporary media, searching for LGBTQ families. - page 32

ADVERTISER SPOTLIGHT: Media-Providence Friends School - Located in Pennsylvania, learn about Media-Providence Friends School's new Peer Facilitator Project. - page 42

ADVERTISER SPOTLIGHT: The École - The École in New York City announces they are extending their scholarship program. - page 44

This real housewife is living her authentic life - Mom of seven children, Braunwyn Windham-Burke of the reality show, *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, separated from her husband and came out on national television. - page 45



The Robinson Evans family of Southern California - It was love at first sight for John Evans and Bill Robinson. But John had to persuade Bill to get married and become parents. - page 52

2Dads1Daniel - Another installment of the wonderful comic strip *2Dads1Daniel* by Ted Simonin. - page 55

Second Parent Adoption Sucks - Non-gestational parent, Emily Jaeger, struggled with legally adopting her daughter. - page 58

Ad Index - page 59

Unclassified Ad - page 59

Cover photo courtesy of Emily Jaeger. Photos this page, top to bottom, photo courtesy of Andrew Truong, Simone Yarrrell, Heather Nicole Adams, and John Evans.



Gay Parent Magazine Inc, PO Box 750852, Forest Hills, NY 11375-0852 718-380-1780
gayparentmag@gmail.com | www.gayparentmag.com
 March-April 2022, Vol. 24, No. 141, ISSN 1545-6714
 Also publisher of *Gay Parent Magazine - New York*

Publisher/Editor: Angeline R. Acain **Ad Sales Manager:** Vivian Schepis **Ad Sales Reps:** David Kenney, Linda Rizzo **Webmaster/Graphic Designer:** Brett Cohen **Marketing & Social Media:** Ben Suazo **Editorial Contributors:** Aubree Calvin, Gary Hurtubise, Emily Jaeger, Sieglinde Levery-Nicholas, Ted Simonin. **SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION:** digital download-\$17 1 yr. or \$27 2 yrs. Make check payable to *Gay Parent Magazine*. Visit our web site www.gayparentmag.com to order a subscription online, a single digital or remaining print issue, for a listing of parent support groups, and for more information. *Gay Parent Magazine* is not responsible for the claims of its advertisers. Copyright © 1998 - 2022 *Gay Parent Magazine* ▼



Here's a pic of our family. Thanks for the shout out!
 @realtor.dads
 @erik.addresses.you
Andrew Truong

Da Family 🌈
Simone Yarrell



continued on next page


Lansdowne Friends School
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Family photo share from Heather Nicole Adams

10 weeks!
Bill Guest

We love to hear from you. Send us your photos and comments by email at gayparentmag@gmail.com or through www.facebook.com/gay.parent.magazine.

CORRECTION: Incorrect information was published in our January-February 2022 issue in The École school ad. For the 2022-2023 academic year, The École will allocate \$1.5 million to enable more students to benefit from its unique dual French-American curriculum: families interested in learning more about The École Scholarship Program can contact admissions@theEcole.org

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www.marymcdowell.org

Family Building with Biological Babies Directory

Welcome to our 23rd annual issue highlighting family building through assisted reproduction. The following is a list of LGBTQ friendly businesses that can assist you in growing your family.

All Families Surrogacy
503-906-7960
www.allfamiliesurrogacy.com
See their ad on page 52

Alta Bates In Vitro Fertilization Program
510-649-0440
www.abivf.com
See their ad on page 46

ART Risk Financial and Insurance Solutions
866-433-4999
www.artrisksolutions.com
See their ad on page 40

Beverly Hills Egg Donation
310-279-5272
www.bhed.com
See their ad on page 18



Center for Advanced Reproductive Services
Branford 203-481-1707
Farmington 844-467-3483
Hartford 860-525-8283
New London 877-860-8044
www.uconnfertility.com
See their ad on page 20

The Center for Reproductive Medicine and Fertility Dr. Louis Manara
856-767-0009
www.louismanara.com
See their ad on page 23

Cryobio
614-451-4375
www.cryobio.com
See their ad on page 4



CryoGam Colorado
970-667-9901
www.cryogam.com
See their ad on page 24

Cryos International
407-203-1175
www.cryosinternational.com
See their ad on page 7

Gago Center for Fertility / Gago IVF
Brighton 810-315-6865
Lansing 810-315-6867
Ann Arbor 810-315-6869
www.gagofertility.com
See their ad on page 47



Gifted Journeys
Southern California
818-505-3026

continued on next page



Media-Providence
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Summer Friends Camp
Ages 3 - 10
mpfs.org/camp



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www.mpfs.org/camp



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GRADES
3-8
crowden.org

www.crowden.org



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www.ecfs.org



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www.cgcvf.org

Northern California
925-984-2478
www.giftedjourneys.com
See their ad on page 55



**The Law Office of
Erin C. O'Kane, Esq.**
858-391-6589
www.lawofficeerinokane.com
See their ad on page 49

**Pacific In Vitro
Fertilization Institute**
808-946-2226 / 866-944-0440
www.pacificinvitro.com
See their ad on page 34

**Reproductive Medicine Associates
of Michigan**
248-619-3100
www.rmami.com
See their ad on page 20

**Reproductive Science Center
of New Jersey**
732-918-2500
www.fertilitynj.com
See their ad on page 21



Seattle Sperm Bank
206-588-1484
www.seattlespermbank.com
See their ad on page 48

Surrogacy 4All
212-661-7177
www.surrogacy4all.com
See their ad on page 46

**URA (University Reproductive
Associates)**
201-288-6330
www.uranj.com
See their ad on page 25

The Valley Hospital Fertility Center
201-634-5400 or 1-800-VALLEY1
www.valleyhealth.com/fertility
See their ad on page 5

Yale Medicine Fertility Center
1-877-YaleMDs
www.yalemedicine.org/fertilitycenter
See their ad on page 6

Zamani & Associates, PLLC
202-510-9112
www.zamaniassociates.com
See their ad on page 32



Léman High School with The École
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Léman Manhattan Preparatory School and The École join forces to create a new French bilingual high school program that will prepare students for success in university and global workforce.

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www.lemanmanhattan.org

www.theEcole.org

www.theecole.org or www.lemanmanhattan.org

...And Baby Makes Three

If you have found the person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life, congratulations! Perhaps you've even cemented the relationship by getting married. But there is still a major hurdle for many same-sex couples who wish to start a family. Making a baby is a simple three-ingredient recipe – an egg, sperm and a uterus. But when that combination represents three different individuals, it ceases to be simple. Who provides the sperm? Who provides the egg? Who will carry the baby to term?



nizes that one size does not fit all and that you are not just a number. At URA, we take the time to get to know our patients so we can better explain all the options to find the solution that's right for you and your partner. The first step is a telemedicine consult with one of our physicians to gather information, answer questions and discuss potential treatment plans.

Fertility Treatment For Two Daddies

Fertility treatment for gay men planning to build a family typically involves the use of donor eggs as well as a separate gestational carrier. Depending on which partner's sperm will be used to inseminate the eggs, one or both men will undergo semen analysis. Your URA physician will assist you in selecting a suitable egg donor, either *continued on page 17*

Welcome To Personalized Fertility Medicine.

The first step is finding the right fertility group who recog-

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Photo: Stepping into the spotlight for a choir concert.

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Camp Hawkeye

www.camphawkeye.com



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www.friendscommunityschool.org

Friends Meeting School
Frederick County, MD
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Individualized Tours by Appointment
admissions@friendsmeetingschool.org

Sandy Spring Friends School
Montgomery County, MD
685 students
Preschool (Age 3)-Grade 12
www.ssfs.org

URA continued from page 15 through a donor agency (“fresh egg donor”) or through a donor egg bank (“frozen egg donor”). We will also put you in contact with agencies that will help you find a gestational carrier. Once all these decisions have been made and the appropriate testing is complete, URA will obtain the eggs. If the couple is using a fresh egg donor, that donor will undergo ovarian stimulation followed by surgical egg retrieval, after which her involvement in the fertility process is complete. If the couple is using a frozen egg bank, the eggs would be purchased and shipped to URA. The eggs are inseminated with one or both partner’s sperm, and an embryo or embryos are then placed into the uterus of the gestational carrier.

Please keep in mind that sperm used in this process is typically frozen and quarantined for 6 months before it is released for use. This is to comply with FDA standards since your sperm is being used to achieve pregnancy in a third party. Therefore, you should consider completing the semen analysis and sperm freezing early in the process, so it does not delay treatment.

Fertility Treatment For Two Mommies

Prior to proceeding with treatment, the couple must decide which partner will carry the pregnancy. That partner will undergo basic blood work and ultrasound to assess her ovarian reserve, followed by a hysterosalpingogram (dye test) to make sure the fallopian tubes are open. If all testing is normal, the couple typically would select donor sperm then proceed with intrauterine insemination (IUI), a technique in which the sperm is placed directly into the uterus with a small catheter at the time of ovulation.

Under certain circumstances, the couple may decide that one partner will provide the egg while the other partner will carry the pregnancy. In this case,

www.friendscommunityschool.org
www.friendsmeetingschool.org
www.ssfs.org



the woman providing the egg undergoes ovarian stimulation followed by a surgical egg retrieval, while her partner takes medication to prepare the uterus to receive the embryo. The egg is fertilized with donor sperm in the lab, and the resulting embryo or embryos are placed into the uterus several days later. While this process may allow both partners to feel more connected to the pregnancy, it is more complex and expensive than IUI. However, it is the treatment of choice if there is a significant infertility issue to be overcome (e.g., blocked fallopian tubes) or if one partner has significant medical issues that would make it unsafe for her to carry a pregnancy.

URA does not have a sperm bank but can help refer you to sperm banks that comply with the FDA standards of safety and testing. ▼

Conceiving The Future, 365 Days A Year. URA never closes – not even on national holidays. It all starts with a conversation. Call us at 201-288-6330 to set up an initial telemedicine consult. Let’s start conceiving the future together. Visit www.uranj.com.

Photos courtesy of URA.

23rd Annual LGBTQ-friendly Camps for Kids Listing

School will be over in less than a year and it's time to think about plans for the summer. Each year in our January-February and March-April issues we publish a list of LGBTQ friendly camps and summer day programs that advertise in this issue. In this listing, in addition to traditional camps, are camps offering, circus, theater, and performing arts and a few that are specifically for LGBTQ campers. Some also offer family camping. Also listed are independent schools and after school classes, some offering summer programs. The camps and schools are located in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.

OVERNIGHT/ DAY CAMPS/SUMMER PROGRAMS

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Camp Quest Arizona
602-492-5836
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestaz.org
see ad on page 33

CALIFORNIA

**Camp Quest West:
NorCal and SoCal**
510-679-CAMP (2267)
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestwest.org
see ad on page 33

YMCA Camp Loma Mar
650-879-2100
www.campplomamar.org

see ad on page 18

COLORADO

Camp Quest Colorado
540-324-9088
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestcolorado.org
see ad on page 33

CONNECTICUT

Camp Clio
984-439-2308
www.campclio.org
see ad on page 29

Camp Dunnabeck
845-373-2002
www.dunnabeck.org
see ad on page 27

ESF Camps

800-529-CAMP (2267)
www.esfcamps.com
see ad on page 56

**Silver Lake
Summer Camp**
860-364-5526
www.silverlakect.org
see ad on page 31

Camp Sloane

860-435-2557
www.campslane.org
see ad on page 49

ILLINOIS



Camp Duncan
847-546-8086
www.ymcachicago.org/
duncan
see ad on page 44

IOWA

**Camp Quest North:
Minnesota and Iowa**
540-324-9088
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestnorth.org
see ad on page 33

MAINE

Camp Encore/Coda
617-584-1129
www.encorecoda.com
see ad on page 46

MASSACHUSETTS

Camp Pembroke
781-489-2070
www.camppembroke.org,
camp for girls
see ad on page 45

Dedham Community House

781-329-5740
www.dedhamcommunity-
house.org
see ad on page 29

The Story School

781-214-1174
www.thestoryschool.org
see ad on page 43

MARYLAND

ESF Camps
800-529-CAMP (2267)
www.esfcamps.com
see ad on page 56

MICHIGAN

Camp Quest Michigan
540-324-9088
www.campquest.org or

www.michigancampquest.org
see ad on page 33

MINNESOTA

**Camp Quest North:
Minnesota and Iowa**
540-324-9088
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestnorth.org
see ad on page 33

MISSOURI

Camp Quest Kansas City
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or 816-699-5463
www.campquest.org or
www.campquestkc.com
see ad on page 33



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www.crestviewprep.org

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see ad on page 16

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www.camptelnoar.org
see ad on page 45

Camp Tevya
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www.camptevyva.org
see ad on page 45

**The Granite
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603-232-8642
www.campmitena.org
see ad on page 53

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performingarts.com
see ad on page 11

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see ad on page 56

YMCA Camp Mason
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www.campmason.org
see ad on page 19

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How to Know if Your Child is Ready for Summer Camp

When your child hits a certain age, you might think that they're ready for summer camp or sleepaway camp. However, being ready for camp isn't as clear as reaching an age. Many kids start summer camp when they're 8 to 10 years old. Other kids aren't ready until they're 11 or 12. To figure out if your child is ready for summer camp, take a look at their maturity level and personality by asking yourself these questions below.

How independent is my child?

Independence is a big factor when determining if your child is ready. At summer camp, and especially sleepaway camp, your child must be independent enough to do some things, like brush their teeth, show-



er or bathe, dress themselves, and navigate most of their daily routine on their own. Camp counselors may

remind campers about their personal hygiene, but it's most important that kids already *continued on page 26*

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How to Know if Your Child is Ready for Summer Camp
continued from page 24

know how to do this.

Being self-reliant and mature enough to go to camp goes beyond personal hygiene. If an issue comes up, it's best if your child knows how to ask an adult at camp for help. Has your child had successful sleepovers at friends' homes? Have they had successful experiences with babysitters? Going to camp does teach kids independence, so if you're unsure that they're ready, look at the other signs.

Is my child confident when trying new things?

For most children, going to summer camp or sleepaway camp is an opportunity to experience new things. Is your child ready to handle it with confidence?

Your child will likely participate in many activities that they haven't tried before, from archery and sailing to pottery and ceramics. If your child re-

acts positively when being introduced to brand new things, they're likely ready for camp.

Confidence is also necessary for making friends and adapting to new surroundings. Think about your child's previous experiences with meeting unfamiliar kids, meeting new teachers or exploring new classrooms. Were they excited, or were they upset and tried to avoid the situation? Going to camp can help nudge your child out of their comfort zone, but it's best that they welcome new things and activities with open arms, at least for the most part.

Does my child take direction well?

Camp life is filled with schedules, planned activities, and rules. Does your child follow instructions well? Do they listen, remember directions, and follow through on what they're told? If your child has a stubborn streak or still has tantrums when they're told what to do, they may not be ready yet.

While kids are not expected to be perfect at camp, remember that many camp rules are designed for child safety. When they're not followed, the consequences can be disastrous. Your child should be willing to follow instructions given by adults, whether that's going to bed at a certain time, moving on to a new activity, or remembering to do something for safety's sake.

Is my child asking to go to camp?

Here's a sign as clear as day that your child is ready for camp: they're asking you to go! Maybe they've never experienced camp before and they've heard about it from their friends at school. Or maybe your child has been to day camps and is ready for a new adventure at an overnight camp. In either case, if they're asking to go, that's a very good sign that they're ready for it.

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learn?

When you've determined that your child is ready, ask yourself what you want them to learn at camp. Many summer camps and sleepaway camps are tailored towards certain activities, educational subjects or adventures.

For example, if you and your child are interested in coding and computers, an academic camp that focuses on that can be really fun for them. If you want your child to spend more time outdoors and moving around, an adventure camp with hiking, canoeing, and survival skills is a good option. Is your child a budding creative type? Check out the arts summer camps that focus on theater, dance, art or writing.

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If your child isn't quite ready for overnight camps yet, try sending them to summer camps during the day as a trial run. Summer@Stratford infuses a STEAM curriculum into an enriching, fun summer camp experience. Summer@Stratford has designed subject-based, engaging camp experiences for preschoolers and kindergarteners, elementary-age kids, and middle schoolers. Learn more about Stratford's It's Time to Shine summer camp programs by visiting www.StratfordSchools.com/summer.

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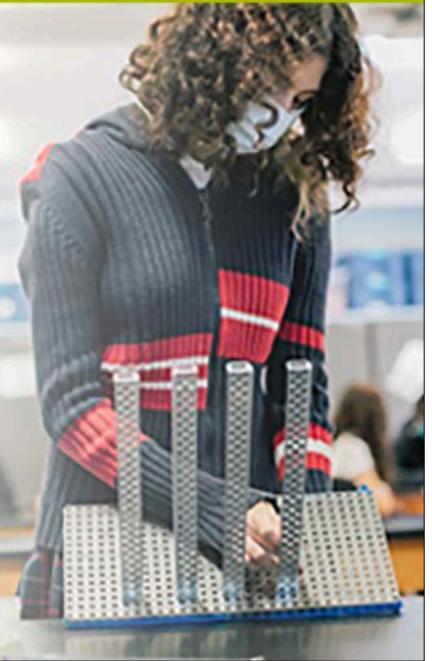
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What We Share: Affinity in School

By Sieglinde Levery-Nicholas

“If you’re going to Queer Space, please head to Broadway. If you’re a Straight Ally, head to Jackson. Facilitators will meet you there.”

It’s Wednesday at Puget Sound Community School, a small independent school, located in the International District of Seattle, in Chinatown, a bustling neighborhood with a deep heritage. You can smell fresh dumplings for blocks, play table tennis outside under brightly colored murals, and stop to read about the ID’s long history of redlining, internment, and “pioneering.” This land and all surrounding neighborhoods (the ones that were actually land and not tidal flats) were originally home to the Duwamish people.

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parent, and, sometimes, achingly slow—especially as we labor through the daily needs and responses to our community during this fractured, irrepressible time.

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ious privileges and biases—and *continued on page 30*

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Puget Sound Community School continued from page 28

practice integrating accountability with action.

Almost half our students identify as non-binary, gender expansive, trans, and lesbian and gay, and our queer affinity & straight allies groups are the most regularly well attended at PSCS. Facilitators are queer folks as well. They lead students through check-ins for well-being, discuss current issues and struggles, and provide specific topics. One co-facilitator often acknowledges, *“We all stand on the shoulders of people before us. It’s important to see each other, to learn the long history of those who came before, so we can better serve the queer people who will come after we are gone.”*

Hetero staff and students also meet at the same time. Recently, one of our facilitators began conversation using the anthology *“You are Your Best Thing,”* co-created by Tarana Burke and Brené Brown. The essays within center “Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience” and implore us to consider that humanity and intersectionality must scaffold all of our discussions.

PSCS affinity groups rotate weekly. Last Wednesday, Black & Brown space met—a scheduled opportunity for our global majority students and staff to decompress and share. As an institution, we recognize that Black & Brown students who attend independent schools experience school much differently from white students; that we live and learn together on land that some of our community members’ ancestors never ceded.

White students and staff meet at the same time to engage in facilitated anti-bias activities, caucusing, and anti-racist education. We hope to build positive racial identities for all our students; to know ourselves and our heritage, while continually investigating the truth of others’ experiences.

Next will be girl-identified and boy-identified spaces. PSCS girls who identify with the binary and want time together, and, on occasion, speak directly to boys about their experiences living under patriarchy. PSCS boy-identified students and staff discuss their experiences. They have been deeply moved to hear from their girl-identified classmates.

Neurodiverse space is new this year and was convened by students. After their first meeting, they identified the crux of these spaces: Being both visible AND feeling seen are how we transform equity and inclusion into belonging.

This work is by no means enough or perfect. Being a collaborative staff means taking extra effort to identify our internal hierarchies, but, so far, the process allows for real belonging amongst us all. ▼

For more information visit <https://pscs.org>.

Sieglinde Levery-Nicholas is Director of Community Engagement at Puget Sound Community School in Seattle, WA. This piece was collaborated on with several other staff members.

Photo courtesy of Sieglinde Levery-Nicholas

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We're More Than Just Side Characters: My Search for LGBTQ Parents in Today's Media

By Aubree Calvin

One of my favorite parenting joys is watching my daughter's interests develop and shift as she gets older. Some of them have solidified and blossomed, like her love of ballet, musical theater, and visual arts skills. Others have been more fleeting, such as her exactly one day attempt at playing *Minecraft*. It's no secret that due to the on demand nature of popular culture, combined with a seemingly endless amount of choices, kids cycle through series, fandoms, books, etc. at faster speeds than us who grew up in the 80s and 90s. Whereas, when I was in elementary school, if I wanted to watch *DuckTales* or *Jem*, I would run from the bus stop after school just to make sure I didn't miss the opening theme song. And the most exciting part of my week were the hours of Saturday morning cartoons when I could see my favorite show, *She-*



**Bow and his dads from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*.
Image from Comicsbeat.com.**

Ra: Princess of Power, and whatever mix of Hanna-Barbera, Looney Tunes, or other random shows that was thrust in front of me and I was not picky. The only choice we had was when to switch to a different channel of cartoons. But, moving away from my lamentations about getting older and getting back to my daughter, there is the rare occasion when our interests and pop culture tastes collide.

Such was the case when we watched *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, a Netflix reboot of the 1980s classic. This new version, helmed by author Noelle Stevenson was immensely enjoyable. This updated version was funny, had complex characters, intricate storylines, and was most importantly for our purposes, overtly and deliberately queer. One of my favorite subtleties was that Bow, one

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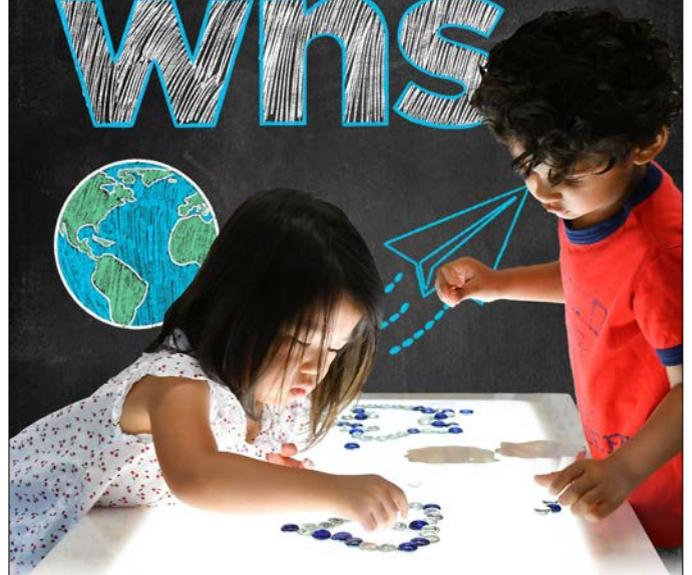
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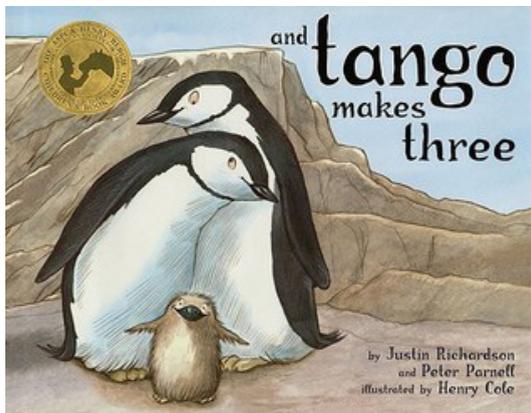
of the main characters, has two dads, a Black gay couple no less, and it was presented just so normally. It wasn't a big deal or central to the plot. They were just regular sweet, nerdy, and slightly overprotective parents. They made me want to look for other media examples of LGBTQ parents that exist for more than diversity's sake. And this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all LGBTQ parent characters. I just want to know what types of parents we usually see, and what's missing from the conversation. Candidly, I'm excluding non-fiction books, and documentaries, whether presented as films or docuseries. As important as it is to tell these true stories, they're only a small fraction of media created every year, and it shouldn't be necessary for families to have cameras invade their real lives just to tell our stories. Further, many times fiction is more effective at changing hearts, or normalizing our lives than overt true-life stories. I'm also excluding the genre of children's picture books, where the focus is specifically on showing the diverse families. Titles like *Heather Has Two Mommies, Daddy, Papa, and Me*, and *And Tango Makes Three* are a great way for younger kids to understand that parents don't have to be just a mom and a dad, and these books are still very necessary, but I'm hoping to find something deeper than these explainer type efforts.

We're in a golden age of youth oriented queer media. There's no shortage of kids/teens live action shows, cartoons, movies, graphic novels, and middle grade or YA books that have openly gay, lesbian, and

trans characters. They address coming out, navigating first time same sex crushes, understanding gender identity, and the ever-present worry about being accepted for who they are. Oh, and best friend drama, a required literary trope that spans generations and is due for retirement any day now. If gay or lesbian parents appear at all, they're usually relegated to one or two episode guest spots or exist as non-speaking background characters. You can see it in shows like *Sesame Street*, *Chip and Potato*, *Pete the Cat*, and *The Loud House*. I'm sure the creators of these episodes are well intentioned, but I'm not as willing to praise these halfhearted efforts. Actual groundbreaking representation would include parents as regularly occurring characters with frequent and significant story lines, if not starring roles. Even the most teen oriented Disney channel show has adults that appear in almost every episode as wacky teachers,

shop owners, and parents. There's no reason why those adults can't be a part of the LGBTQ community, rather than a one-episode next door neighbor. Occasional viability just doesn't normalize our families, and I think our kids deserve the chance to regularly see versions of their families just like kids with the heterosexual parents. We need to be more than very special episodes.

Further, none of these shows have parents that are explicitly trans, bisexual, non-binary, polyamorous, queer and single, or gender non-conforming. Well, that's not entirely true. This past summer preschool show *Blue's Clues* and had an animated *continued on page 36*



Cover of the book, *And Tango Make Three*.



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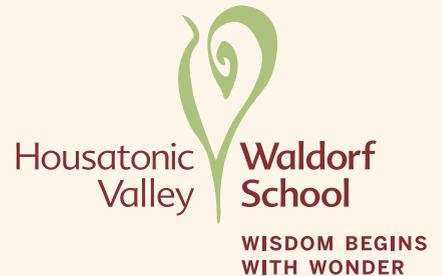


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Pride parade and showed multiple types of families, and snippets of real LGBTQ families. It was freaking adorable and melted a little bit of my icy cynicism. It is also good for heterosexual oriented families and kids of straight people to regularly see us too so that they'll realized just how much our families have in common. The truth is we'll reach far more people, and can change more hearts and minds through shows, movies, comics, and novels, than we'll ever be able to through drag queen library story times. And realistically children's educational shows aren't for us adults and they're not what I'm looking for either. As great as the new *She-Ra* was, I'm never going to pretend that I was the target audience, nor should I have been. It was a cute way for me to bond with my daughter and that's all I needed it to be. Although we may begrudgingly watch some shows with our kids, they aren't designed to entertain us parents. I'm more interested in finding adult oriented media that regularly spotlights LGBTQ parents.

I started wanting to explore this idea more after falling in love with Torrey Peters' *Detransition, Baby* and Mia McKenzie's *Skye Falling*, two recent novels that have garnered high praise in literary reviews. Peters was even nominated for the Women's Prize for Fiction, a prestigious British literary award, a first for a trans author. Both books are written by queer women and center around characters who are LGBTQ and grappling with their own personal growth and the different ways queer parenting

exists. *Detransition, Baby* I found particularly compelling because there aren't many widely known novels about the experience, or even prospect, of being a transgender parent. There are also very few contemporary novels that are about LGBTQ parents who are engaged with the daily ins and outs of raising kids, exploring what that does to our identity and sense of self, and how it affects our relationships. And this is a spoiler free zone, so I won't say how either book ends, but I highly encourage you to read both.

Because movies about LGBTQ parents come out so infrequently, the few we have tend to have lasting significance for multiple years. *The Kids are All Right* came out in 2010 and is still talked about. Both *Carol* and *3 Generations* premiered in 2015 respectively, and people are still discovering them for the first time. Thanks to the ubiquity of streaming services, even older shows maintain a level of cultural relevance long after they were released. Even the 1990s *The Birdcage*, while not as funny as its musical theater predecessor, is charming. I recently watched *Ideal Home*, a 2018 indie with Paul Rudd and Steve Coogan as a mature gay couple who adopt

a grandson they never knew existed. Can I take a moment to lament that Rudd, one of my most intense crushes during my sexually confused teenage 90s, is old enough to play a grandfather? A movie is over after two hours, and even if you watch it a second or third time, the story remains the same even though our apprecia- *continued on page 38*



Promotional for the movie, *Ideal Home*.

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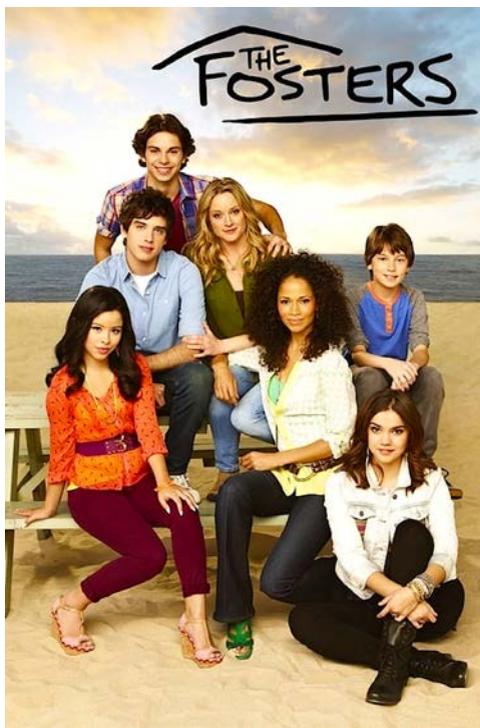
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tion of it may grow, like my love for Paul Rudd. Because considerably fewer films are greenlit each year compared to network shows it does feel like so more of the conversation about LGBTQ representation is focused on television than other mediums. Television shows allow for seasons, episodic arcs, time for us to fall in love with or loathe characters. We become invested in the unfolding drama and the longevity of the storytelling lets us feel closer to the characters than I think we can with standalone movies.

Just as my grandmother complained about the rise of cable years ago, let's all admit that there are too many channels, streaming services, and choices available, and it is overwhelming. I don't have the resources to subscribe to them all and still afford my daughter's ballet lessons. Instead, I did some extensive searching online and sought recommendations from a few LGBTQ Facebook groups I silently lurk in for suggestions of shows that feature queer families as main characters. What I've gathered are a mixture of current titles, older ones, and even a few that have ended, and come back in a new form. Of course, I'm referring to Bette and Tina from *The L Word* and

its continuation *The L Word: Generation Q* which has a few new parenting storylines. In the early 2000s, there was also couple Melanie and Lindsay, and biological father/source of contention Brian, on *Queer as Folk*. The final seasons of both *Six Feet Under* and *Brothers & Sisters* have major storylines about couples, David and Keith and Kevin and Scotty, respectively, journeys to become parents through surrogacy and adoption.



Ad for the television drama, *The Fosters*.

The three shows that came up in my search and were recommended most frequently to me were no surprise. Cam and Mitchell from *Modern Family* parent Lili from toddler to

teen and in the show's finale episodes adopt a baby boy. Lesbian Arizona and Bisexual Callie in *Grey's Anatomy* have a heartbreaking custody battle over their daughter Sofia. Last is of course *The Fosters*, really the only long running show to center a queer led family. Mom's Stef and Lena lead a blended family of teenagers through relationship and friend troubles, a complex foster system, and issues of race and immigration. I will confess that I know of the show when it first aired, but only started watching it during the pandemic. As wonder-

ful as it was, I stopped somewhere mid-season three, frustrated by the many immature decisions the teens were making, as they're supposed to do in a *continued on page 40*

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Aubree Calvin continued from page 38

teen drama, and frightened by how much I connected with Lena's character. Except for *The Fosters*, all the adult shows I've referenced are ensemble shows, with queer parents existing as one or two of many characters. But even ensemble shows have their lead stars or characters, and it is never the LGBTQ parents. We're still the second or third plot behind whatever the straight characters are doing. That's the standard studio tactic to keep straight or conservative viewers watching. Like the children's cartoons mentioned at the beginning, we get to exist in the show world, but the world can never be about us. The couples are also either lesbian or gay, with Sara Ramirez's Callie being the only mentioned bisexual. And these shows, even when showing a little camp, work hard to fit well into a normalized, white oriented, heterosexual view of family.

I'm sure there are more, but those are some of the more popular ones that came up. I think an honorable mention would have to go to *Home Economics*, a bland and formulaic sitcom in its second season. Like *Brothers and Sisters* and *Modern Family*, this ABC sitcom focuses on the interconnected lives of siblings and their families, with the twist being they're all at different levels of financial success. Sarah, the middle

child and an out of work child therapist, and her teacher wife, Denise, play the more woke lower income couple. From what I've seen so far, they seem to have the fewest significant storylines, with the show primarily focusing on star and executive producer Topher Grace's character, a middle class and uptight author. Another noteworthy show that was the recently cancelled was *Everything's Going to Be Okay*, about Nicholas, a gay twentysomething who moves to California to raise his two half-sisters (one of whom is also queer) after the death of their father. A quirky and sweet show, I wish it had been given another season to come into its own.

If you're still with me, you're probably wondering where my nostalgia filled pop culture dive is going. Simply put, I turned 40 recently and society has decreed that this age is a milestone of some great importance. My therapist jokes that this is the age where I'm supposed to stop giving a fuck about what other people think and feel more settled about my life choices. My daughter just calls me old. So far, except for noticing how much of my formative childhood is being repackaged for today's teens, I don't feel any different. To the entertainment world, though, I'm basically dead or at least invisible. The closest I've ever seen of a Black trans parent is Laverne Cox's role as Sophia Burset



Scene from the Netflix series, *Orange is the New Black*. Sophia Burset (Laverne Cox) speaking with her son Michael (Michael Rainey, Jr.). Photo by JoJo Whilden.



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on *Orange is the New Black* but remember that she was in prison and away from her son for most of the show. I know I'm not special. I don't think it is narcissistic to admit that I'm searching to see myself, a trans and bisexual parent dealing with the problems of everyday life. I've met trans parents from all over the country. We do exist, even though Hollywood has yet to figure out how to tell our stories. And for the record, I'm not including Maura Pfefferman from *Transparent*, because she transitioned later in life when her kids were adults, so the parenting dynamic is different. I will give *Transparent* credit for having a wide variety of LGBTQ characters including multiple trans characters, the oldest daughter Sarah being a bisexual and trying to parent her two kids while figuring out her love life, and youngest child Ari coming out as non-binary. There's a lot to love here, outside of the Jeffrey Tambor controversy.

I believe our community is clamoring for a wider variety of stories. I'm tired of the media's obsession with drag shows, coming out, falling in love, and straight parents with queer kids. We've seen so many of them, can we get something different please? A quick glance at Hulu and Netflix's LGBTQ sections shows most of the movies are about finding love or find-



The author, Aubree Calvin (purple hair), with her wife Victoria (left) and daughter Corinne.

ing your identity. But for millions of us, do you know what happens after we have the romantic queer love story? We have kids and spend the next 18-20 years negotiating school drop off and pick up schedules, bullies, first crushes, etc.! And yes, more storylines about the high cost of fertility and adoption, discrimination by foster agencies, homophobic wedding vendors,

or other challenges of navigating a straight-oriented world are still needed and will bring about less discrimination and greater political equality. A 2019 Gallup survey estimates that somewhere between 2 - 3.7 million kids under 18 have at least one LGBTQ parent. And 29% of all self-identified LGBTQ adults are raising kids. There's a lot of us and we are steadily growing, and this isn't even accounting for older gays, bisexuals, and lesbians who already have grown children. If they can afford it, 48% of Millennials report wanting to be parents one day, if they can afford it. I hope they have something to watch. ▼

Aubree Calvin is a part time writer and full time professor of government at a Texas community college. She writes about race, politics, and LGBTQ issues. She is also the co-host of the podcast, www.southernqueeries.com, which talks to individuals about being LGBTQ in the south. Aubree and her wife, Victoria, homeschool their preteen daughter and live in North Texas. She can be contacted at aubreecalvin@gmail.com and you can read more of her writing at www.aubreecalvin.com.

Photo courtesy of Aubree Calvin

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Graduates of the Peer Facilitator Project with School Counselor and Project Coordinator, Laura Taylor, and Head of School, Jon Hall.

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The École Launches Scholarship Program 2022–2023

The École is extending its scholarship program so that even more families can offer high-quality, truly bilingual education to their children.

New York, NY: For the 2022-2023 academic year, The École (founded in 2009 as École Internationale de New York), an independent Pre-Nursery to 8th Grade French-American school located in the Flatiron District, will allocate \$1.5 million to enable more students to benefit from its unique dual French-American curriculum.

The École has decided to widen its scholarship offering because of the growing need and demand for high-quality bilingual education in New York City.

The École, which doubled the surface of its Elementary and Middle School Building in January 2020, can now welcome more children, enabling it to launch this generous scholarship program.

The École scholarship program is awarded according to three main criteria:

- Financial need

- Diversity
- Merit

“We, like many parents, know the value of a bilingual education. That is why The École would like to empower families to provide truly bilingual education *continued on page 46*

Media-Providence Friends School continued from page 42 in school, and there is a student who is eager to help talk through this issue with you. The Peer Facilitator meets with you privately to listen, care, ask relevant questions, and help you to try out ideas that may resolve this issue. Later, the person checks in with you to see if your new strategies have improved your situation. If not, the Peer Facilitator is willing to work with you again to come up with different choices for resolution. You feel the safety and care of the community.

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The MPFS campus and Admissions Office remains open during the COVID-19 outbreak and continues to accept applications on a rolling basis. Prospective families are invited to register for our next live Virtual Open House at www.mpfs.org/rsvp. To learn more, visit our website or contact Angela DiMaria, Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions & Academic Program at 610-565-1960 x104.

▼ Photo courtesy of Media-Providence Friends School



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Braunwyn Windham-Burke is Living Authentically

By Gary Hurtubise

Love them or not, The Real Housewives franchises – those reality television shows following the lives of affluent women – have become a smash staple of our media consumption for the past generation.

This issue, Gay Parent Magazine had the pleasure of catching up with one of the housewives from the *original* franchise: ‘The Real Housewives of Orange County’.

Featured in seasons 14 and 15 of the series, Braunwyn Windham-Burke’s story arc came to dominate the show when she came out as gay on national television.

Braunwyn spoke with us right before the Christmas holidays, where she shared some frank and honest truths about herself and her family.

Braunwyn grew up in Laguna Beach California, the daughter of a professional surfer dad and a rockstar mom. “Growing up in an idyllic surf town in the 90s was pretty amazing,” she admits.

Eventually though, her mother gave up a life of music and surfing to enroll in medical school, where she eventually met Braunwyn’s step-dad. Knowing how challenging a full med-school course load would be, her mom decided to have Braunwyn live with her grandparents.

Braunwyn Windham-Burke, standing at top with, left to right, Sean, Douglas (Bella’s boyfriend), Jacob, and Caden. Seated, left to right, Rowan, Koa (front), Hazel (back), Bella, Curren, and Braunwyn’s mother, Dr. Deb.



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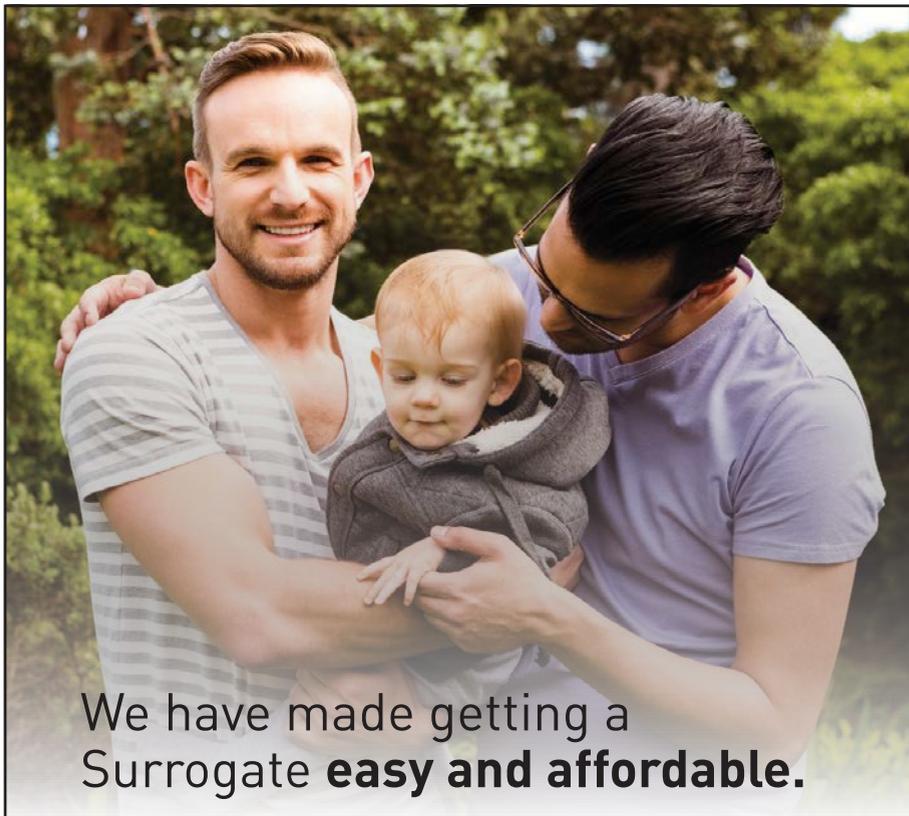
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"I spent most of my formative years there (with her grandparents), until I was sent to boarding school for high school."

"Moving around a lot as a kid," Braunwyn continues, "made me really good at learning how to fit in and make friends easily. I feel like I became a professional chameleon, constantly molding myself to the area in which I was placed."

While *officially* coming out in early 2020, Braunwyn was aware of her feelings for women for many years. For much of her formative years, she kept those feelings to herself, given the ever-present stigma there was around being gay.

"I had a lot of really intense relationships with girls that would burn really bright, and often fizzle out," she admits. "I just attributed those to 'lost friendships'."

"I started experimenting sexually with

The École continued from page 44

for their children," explain Philippe and Laurence Roux, The École Benefactors. "Our signature French-American dual program, which really goes beyond bilingual through the artful blending of both the French and American curricula, prepares students for the next step in their education, whether that is in a public or private school, here in the US, in France or abroad."

An average of 20% of families at The École will receive financial aid through The École scholarship program. The program is open to every family, regardless of their citizenship, and is a complement to the grants provided to French citizens attending accredited schools by the French government through the Consulate in New York.

Families interested in learning more about The École Scholarship Program can contact admissions@theEcole.org or visit The École website, www.theecole.org.

About The École: The École is an independent, French-American bilingual school serving an international community of Maternelle-to-Middle School students in New York City's Flatiron District. The École artfully blends the best of the French and American educational systems, equipping students with deep academic bi-literacy, whole-child skills and knowledge, and an optimistic, multi-cultural perspective.

girls in high school, but because I was in boarding school, I was able to live a double life. I could have my really fun nights in LA, then go back to wearing my pleated skirts and penny loafers.”

While personally acknowledging her feelings for women, Braunwyn had difficulty identifying with the lesbian role models she saw around her at the time.

“Because of my own eclectic upbringing, I knew having a traditional family was all I wanted: I wanted the white picket fence; I wanted to create what I *didn't* have growing up, even though it was the polar opposite of who I really was. There was a part of me that thought ‘if you can achieve this, you will be happy’.”

Creating this white-picket-fence world for herself began during her first few weeks at college, when she met Sean Burke, who would become her husband for over two decades.

“I was 18, wild and crazy, but had already been away from home for three years, so I felt like I got a lot of the ‘party’ out of my system. Sean was a steady, stable force in what had been an extremely chaotic life. My desire for stability and a family outweighed anything else.”

Sean knew Braunwyn was attracted to women early on. However, the couple never really acknowledged it as a sexual identity. “It was always fronted as a ‘fun’ part of my personality.”

The two quickly become engaged and moved in together, all before Braunwyn’s twentieth birthday.

Early in their marriage, Sean and Braunwyn separated, with Braunwyn moving back to Orange County for nine months. “During that time, I was in a relationship with a woman,” she admits. “However, after being diagnosed with stage-2 melanoma, I realized that life was short, and what I truly wanted was a family.”

“Sean and I moved back in together, and I was pregnant by the end of the month.”

The couple’s first few kids were born in Santa Barbara, and then the family bounced around California, D.C., Miami, until firmly landing back in Southern California.

“Our early years were pretty typical of most All-American families,” Braunwyn says. “We really didn’t have a lot of time to think about if we were happy or not – we

continued on page 49



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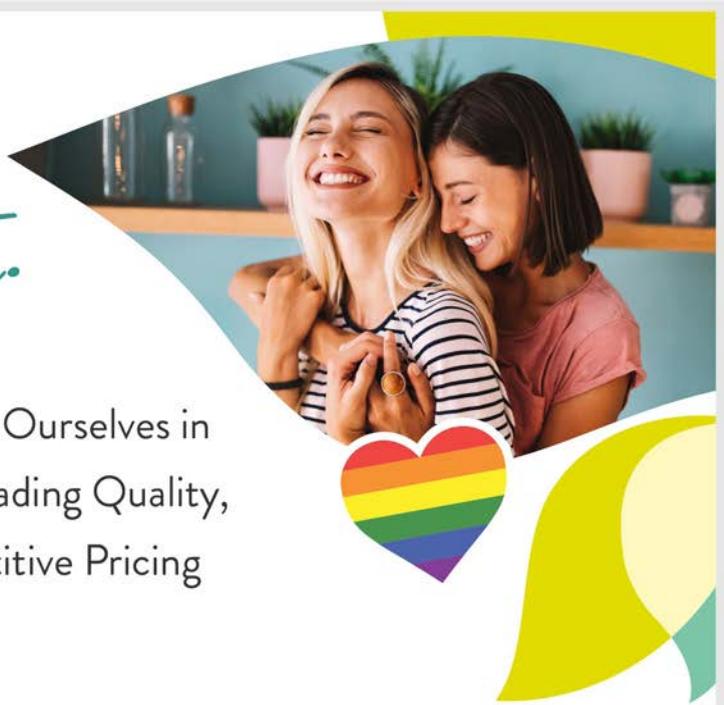
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were just *tired*.”

Braunwyn felt that her experience with straight sex was not that different from most new moms out there. “You’d hear a lot of jokes about marking sex off on the calendar as a task, like doing the dishes – which I actually did.”

For most of her relationship with Sean, Braunwyn admits to feeling like one of those ‘new moms’.

Flashing forward two decades, the couple and their seven kids found themselves in a very busy life, one where they were always planning the next adventure, whether it was going on another shopping spree or planning the next big party.

In that time, Braunwyn admits that she and Sean became very good at ‘tuning-out’ – letting the business of their busy lives hide what was in plain sight.

“Then 2020 happened, and the whole world shut down. All of our crutches were taken away.” It was the beginning of the end for the lifestyle that Braunwyn and Sean had enjoyed up until that point.

“We couldn’t travel or plan parties,” she laments. “I was also newly sober – I couldn’t drink myself into distraction. It was just us, the kids, and our thoughts.”

Starting around this time, Braunwyn found herself falling deeply in love... with her best female friend. She describes it as an emotional affair that didn’t lead anywhere, but was enough to open everyone’s eyes, and for Braunwyn to embrace that this was who she truly was.

“When I finally came out to Sean, he was relieved to know that everything (he had suspected) wasn’t in his imagination. This was real.”

Braunwyn goes on to point out that, while coming out was a relief, it was *not* easy. “When you disrupt your family of twenty-six years, there are growing pains.” She goes on to describe the experience as “intense, raw and real.”

It has been over a year since Braunwyn came out; in that time, her family has experienced a decidedly seismic shift in its makeup.

“My relationship with my husband has become platonic,” she describes, insisting that Sean remains ‘family’. “We are a *modern* family. We are best friends, parents, and each other’s rock.”

Braunwyn and Sean chose to keep their modern family together, by moving the five kids still living with them into a home with a guest house. “We are committed to doing everything we can to keep our family intact, while also knowing things can change at any moment.”

Braunwyn goes on to explain that she has recently become ‘bi-coastal’ – moving from coast to coast due to work – something that Sean has been very supportive of.

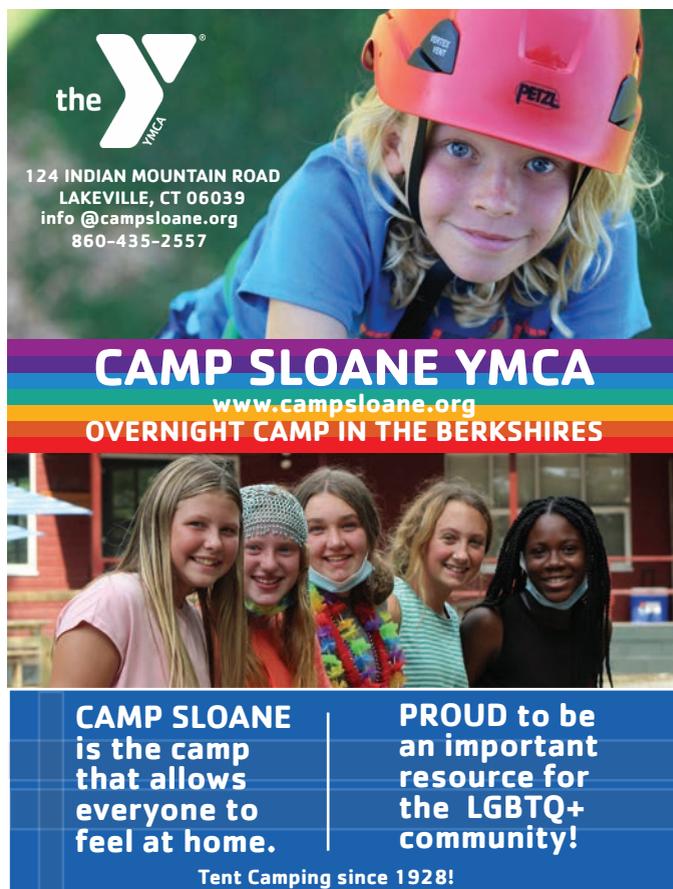
“When I am home, I am the primary parent; when Sean is home, he is the primary parent. I love that we are setting an example for our children where they see that their parents are working as a team.”

“Every day has become a learning curve for which we could have never prepared ourselves.”

As any adult who has come out knows, it is a continual, perpetual process. In Braunwyn’s case, she had seven kids to which she had something to reveal.

“Coming out to my older children was pretty easy. As a mom of two queer kids, they accepted it just as I had accepted them.”

Braunwyn and Sean pride themselves on having raised their children in a very open-minded household. “Sean and I have been



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bringing the kids to equality marches since they were very little. From the time they were young, we have normalized all kinds of relationships.”

“However,” she adds, “obviously there are growing pains when it’s your own family.”

The couple’s eldest daughter had the hardest time with her mom’s news. “Not the fact that I’m a lesbian,” Braunwyn explains, “but the idea of her family splitting up.”

Luckily, throughout the year since Braunwyn’s announcement, her daughter has come to realize that this would not be the case, “and it’s brought us closer in so many ways.”

A different tactic was taken with the younger children. “We talked about it with the younger kids in age-appropriate ways over time. We started with ‘mommy likes girls, but mommy still loves daddy.’”

“Over the past year, we’ve shown them that everything is okay. That’s the most important thing for little kids – security. My son said to me the other day, ‘am I gonna have two step mommies?’ and we said ‘yes, honey, you just might,’ and then he ran off to play.”

When asked about how her parental role has changed since



Back, left to right, Douglas, Bella, Sean, Braunwyn, Rowan, and Jacob. Front, left to right, Hazel, Curren, Koa, and Caden.

coming out, it is clear Braunwyn has spent a lot of time reflecting on this.

“My role as a mother has changed because it’s the first time I’ve given myself permission to actually be myself.”

“So often as mothers, we are taught to be martyrs,” she continues, “(now), my kids get to see their mother living their authentic life, and for the first time ever, I feel like an amazing role model. I am no longer editing myself into the mom role, I am just living it.”

Doing all of this in the public eye, though, has been incredibly challenging for Braunwyn.

She’s had to put up with all the negative feedback that comes with being a television celebrity: “Your poor children! ... You’re lying! ... What about Sean? ... You have a nice man at home, you should be happy!”

“Coming out is hard enough as it is; coming out on a public stage with seven children is even harder. The amount of criticism and anger that I experienced for coming out as a lesbian is something I was never prepared for,” she reports.

The negative feedback is not even confined to haters online; a close friend told her bluntly, of her *continued on page 54*

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The Robinson Evans Family of Southern California

By Gary Hurtubise

The Village School in Pacific Palisades, neighboring Los Angeles, has at its helm John Evans – a life-long educator from the south, who is pleased to continue serving as Head of School, while he and husband Bill raise their daughter.



John Evans on right with husband Bill Robinson and their daughter, Dylan (middle).

Born in Coral Gables, John grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his younger brother, Tate. His father was in finance and his mother was a high school science teacher. John attended Miami University of Ohio, where he earned a bachelor's degree in theater. He then pursued graduate studies in elementary education and literacy at Loyola Marymount – a private Catholic university in Los Angeles.

John describes his early childhood as idyllic, with a beautiful home and gorgeous backyard. "My parents wanted our home to be the place where

kids came to hang out, and they did!" His family was always hosting parties and welcoming new friends into their circle. "My parents were also active in our lives through sports, school and church."

John's mother was an accomplished pianist; a fond memory he has of growing up was the hours of piano she would play for him and Tate, as they sat underneath the piano bench and listened.

John knew at a young age that he was different. "And so did all the boys around me," he recalls. "I was quickly dubbed a 'sis-sy' by another boy on my school bus. I discovered decades later this boy was also gay I suppose his name calling was a deflection, a defense mechanism so to speak."

As a teen growing up in the South, things became less idyllic for him. John witnessed plenty of awful things directed towards gays. "Gay epithets, terrible jokes, and bullying seemed to be part of the culture in my community, so I got strong fast and figured out how to hide my sexuality."

John also learned how to ensure people liked him through acts of kindness and solid listening skills... "Oh, and finding the smartest most influential girls to be friends with didn't hurt either!"

John draws a link between the development of these positive people-skills and being a closeted gay teen. "I realized early in high school there was a lot of power in showing people that a boy could be more than just a jock. I endeavor- *continued on page 55*



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Braunwyn Windham-Burke continued from page 50

coming out, "I'm not buying it – how could you have been with a man *so long*?"

"To constantly feel like you have to prove yourself on something so personal feels degrading. It's like coming out over and over and over again."

To combat the feedback, Braunwyn has a simple analogy that she keeps close at hand: "I explain that my life before was like wearing the wrong sized coat. While it kept me warm and I could put it on, it never quite fit – but the first time I was with a woman, while sober, the coat finally fit."

Having been through the process of coming out for the world to see, Braunwyn laments that she was treading these new waters without much guidance.

"I didn't have a lot of role models to look at while doing this. I understand that my family is one of the first to go through this – publicly at least.

Acknowledging that she has likely become the role model for others who may be stuck in the same box she found herself for over two decades, she declares: "Break those boxes into confetti!"

"If you're a parent who's considering coming out later in life, it's never too late to smash the societal norms and live the life you were meant to."

"It's gonna be hard sometimes," she warns, "There are going to be moments walking out onto that kids' soccer field where you feel like you have lost your community – but you'll find new communities, and sometimes you even merge the two together."

"I promise," she goes on, "if you're reading this and questioning whether or not to take the *continued on page 57*

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Robinson Evans Family continued from page 52

ored to be both an athlete and a good friend to all. I felt compelled to pay attention to those kids on the outside of the popular groups; many of those kids were the interesting and creative ones. Being different and hiding a secret made me more empathetic.”

It wasn't until John's senior year of college that he fully accepted his own sexuality and fell in love for the first time. “Or fell in love for the first time and *then* accepted my sexuality,” he suggests.

When asked how his inner circle reacted to his coming out, John reveals happily that all went well. “I have incredible friends and my parents came around within days of me telling them. My brother was the best though – he said, ‘dude, I love you... I don't care who you love. I mean I care, but you get to choose, and I will always support you.’”

Bill Robinson was born and raised in Washington, D.C.. He has one younger sister, Christa. Bill's father was a lobbyist on the hill; his mother worked for Ted Kennedy, and then eventually in real estate. In contrast to John's upbringing, Bill remembers his childhood as being more intense, “with a lot of pressure to excel and be successful.”

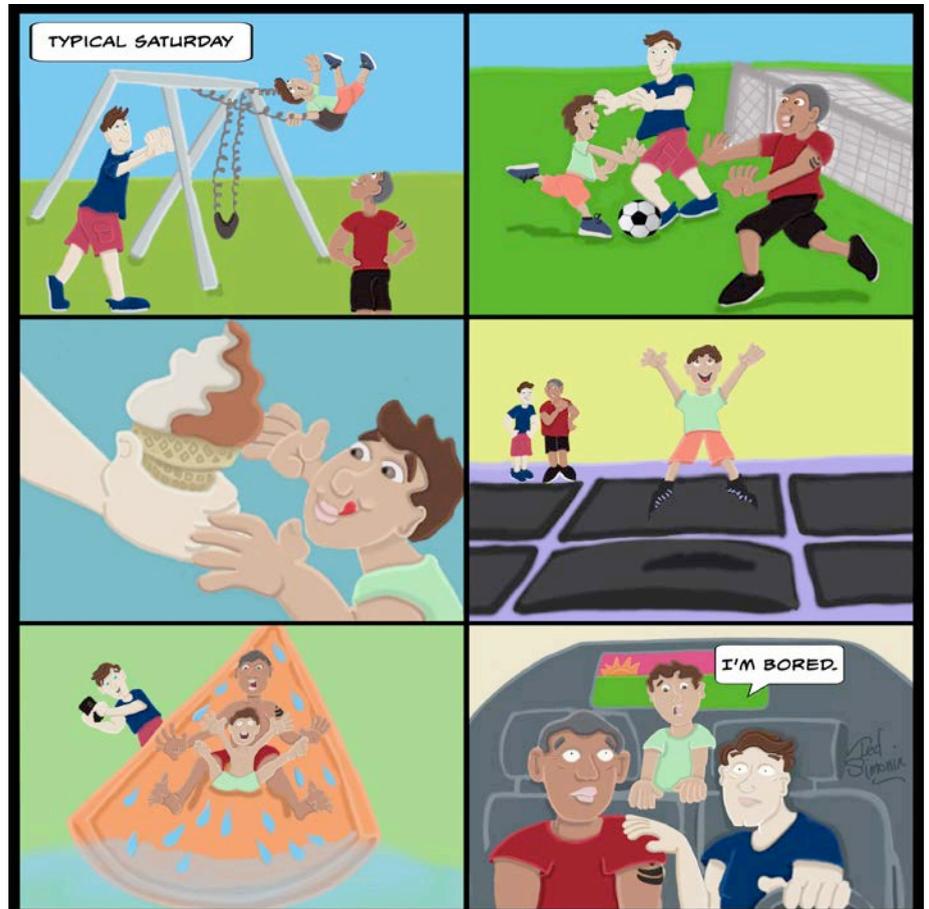
Bill's coming out was a gradual process during his years at Brown University. “I was fortunate enough to be at a liberal New England university where there was no active negativity surrounding gay students – even in the late '80s.”

Bill's friends and family have always been supportive of him, for which he is very grateful. “Their support probably led me to believe that any child we eventually adopted would be loved and supported as well.”

Bill and John met one night at a Christmas Party in the Hollywood Hills. “It was love at first sight,” John reveals,

2Dads1Daniel

by Ted Simonin



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“though we did not go on our first date until almost six months later.”

The men kept bumping into each other out in the world and having funny exchanges, until finally meeting up *deliberately* for dinner in June of 1998.

“I moved in three months later,” John admits, “and we have been together for twenty-three years.”

When asked about the longevity of their relationship, John explains, “We are a good match. We bring out some of the more dormant qualities in one another.”

Getting married and having a kid, however, was not part of Bill’s life plan. “I persuaded him,” John reveals, “and even though he was petrified of becoming a father to a newborn (going so far as to joke: ‘call me when she is two!’), he has been the most loving and devoted dad from the beginning.”

The kid-talk came on the couple’s first weekend away, as a matter of fact. “We went to San Francisco, then to Napa – it was beautiful,” John recalls. “As we were pulling up to our hotel, I turned to Bill from the passenger seat and declared, ‘I really want to get married and have kids. Thought you should know.’” Bill recalls almost turning the car around on the spot, after hearing his



Left to right, Bill, Dylan, and John.

boyfriend’s confession.

Two years later, however, the men returned to the very same hotel, where Bill was to propose. Six years into the couple’s marriage, their adopted daughter Dylan was born.

Growing their family through adoption was important to both men. John – in fact – was no stranger to adoption: his mother and aunt were adopted.

“We explored surrogacy, but the whole process just wasn’t for us. It felt important to become parents to a child who needed a loving home.”

Dylan’s was a domestic adoption. The couple describe it as, “a beautiful, healthy, uncomplicated situation... one we feel forever blessed by.”

John goes on to add, “her birth-mother was a remarkable human and made a dream of ours a reality. She will forever be in our hearts.”

The couple remember their time with baby Dylan with fondness. “We both loved waking up with her for every diaper change and feeding,” John insists. “She was such an easy baby... and we were WAY overprepared!”

Shortly after adopting Dylan, the young family decided to move to New York City to be closer to family. “This gave our



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girl the opportunity to establish formative and significant relationships with her cousins and other relatives,” John said in a 2020 CirclingTheNews.com article featuring his new role as Head of Village School. “It was also very helpful to have grandmothers and aunts nearby – the women always show up!”

While on the East Coast, John worked in a number of teaching and teaching-support positions. Bill, meanwhile, continued a career as a film and television producer, partnering with Diane Keaton, and co-founding the production company www.shadymedia.tv.

After twelve years on that coast, the family decided to move back to

Braunwyn Windham-Burke
continued from page 54

plunge – *do it*. It can be hard; there will be uncomfortable moments that feel like they last forever, but do it. Living authentically is *worth it*.”

“Coming out is amazing,” she says. “It’s like getting a second chance at life... and everyday feels like Christmas!”

And speaking of Christmas, Braunwyn finishes the interview with some thoughts on the holiday season as an out and proud mom. “Experiencing the holidays while out with my family is amazing. We are creating new traditions and new rainbow holiday ideas that will forever be embedded in our family.”

“The holidays are the perfect time when everyone is together to really hone in on what you love and appreciate about each other.”

Are you interested in learning more about Braunwyn? Follow her on social media: [@braunwynwindhamburke](https://twitter.com/braunwynwindhamburke). ▼

Gary Hurtubise lives in Eastern Ontario with his husband Trevor, their two sons Noah & Meo, and their two yellow labs. Gary attended the Royal Military College of Canada and served in the Royal Canadian Navy before becoming a high school physics teacher, and part time Ghostwriter. Gary finds time to write during those odd moments between life: at 4:30 in the morning, on long road-trips with the kids, while back-country camping, and when he should be doing his share of the chores. Gary wrote another article, on the Robinson Evans family, on page 52.

Photos courtesy of Brandsway Creative

California, where John was to take up his present role as Head of the Village School. Bill continues a decade-long partnership with bestselling author and philanthropist James Patterson.

John – who is a self-described ‘nature guy’ – saw the return to California as a homecoming. “I love the ocean and open water swimming,” he said in his CirclingTheNews.com profile. “I love California. I feel at peace here.”

Despite John’s excitement at returning to the West Coast, it was to be a challenging move for the family – made profoundly more challenging because it came at the same time as the pandemic. “We flew out to Los Angeles on March 10, 2020, so we could do some house hunting, and so Dylan and I could visit our new schools... then the world shut down on March 12.”

“Dylan leaving her comfort zone and her many wonderful friends in New York was extremely hard. She was angry for a bit, but it was her amazing new



Left to right, Bill, Dylan, and John.

school (The Archer School for Girls, on Sunset Boulevard), that turned it all around. The power of a thoughtful and engaging school community can make all the differ- *continued on page 59*



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Second Parent Adoption Sucks

By Emily Jaeger

One day I wake up and my daughter is six months old. Just like her recent foray into solid foods, she's beginning to feel a little more solid herself: her place in our family, our schedule, and her grasp on existence all delightfully crystallizing. But this recent milestone also highlights something I have been avoiding for months: adopting my daughter.

My daughter S. is what we jokingly refer to as a *lesbaby* or a *science baby*. My wife carried her using her egg, and I chose the sperm donor, a close family member. Although a geneticist might describe her as my biological niece, she looks more like me than either my wife or S's sperm donor. The first words my (very high) wife said after her C-section were: "It worked. She looks just like you."

And it wasn't just looking like me or sharing my "Jaeger genes" that solidified our connection. When I read S. bedtime stories in utero, she would reach over to me, following my voice. Due to severe complications for both my wife and daughter during the birth, I was the only parent by S's side the first night in the NICU, holding her hand, and calming her intubated, soundless cries. When she was finally discharged to the Mother and Baby ward, S. would cry if I left the room. I soon dubbed myself *Calmy Mommy* and my wife *Yummy Mommy*.

We knew before the birth that even though my name would appear on her



The author, Emily Jaeger (left) with wife Rabbi Bender, and their daughter.

birth certificate, it was necessary to have a second parent adoption on the books due to the often-tenuous nature of LGBTQ rights nationally and internationally. A second parent adoption would insure that S. would always be legally recognized as my daughter. Talking to other LGBTQ couples, we learned that this supposed formality, while necessary, could also be time-consuming and expensive.

Our friends in New York described outrageous legal fees (especially when added to the cost of the fertility treatments to make the baby in the first place), offensive amounts of paperwork, and multiple home visits from a social worker. While I was originally furious at this "gay tax" on parenthood, I later learned that heterosexual couples who use artificial insemination or donor eggs run up against the same treatment.

We used two "tricks" to mitigate some of the expense and invasiveness of this process. First, we subscribed to LegalShield, the Netflix of legal rep-

resentation, which charges a low monthly fee for general legal representation. Instead of spending thousands of dollars for a specialized adoption lawyer, we paid \$60/month for a premium subscription and then a \$300 retainer to cover an untested adoption.

Second, I decided to use the legal shortcut of a stepparent adoption. A stepparent adoption legally has the same weight as a second parent adoption, but doesn't require home visits. Non-gestational LGBTQ parents can choose stepparent adoption in lieu of second parent adoption in Washington, D.C. and 19 other states, including our home state of North Carolina. It would all simmer down to an annoying, but quick, bit of paperwork that could be completed shortly after S's birth.

Perhaps in the first few sleepless, overwhelming month or two of working full time while tending to both a newborn and postpartum wife, it was easy to excuse my inaction. Yet, here I was 6 months later, stepparent adoption paid in full, unable to get myself to send in the necessary documents. On an intellectual and emotional level, I know that adoption does not belittle or even define our relationship. We have close family friends who adopted a teenager from foster-care, from a different racial and religious background. He wasn't a part of their family for the first fifteen years of his life, yet I can only believe that their souls had been waiting for each other. He's not their "adoptive son," he's their son.

But it still feels like a personal affront, that my little twin, sitting in front of me, who I've cared for so deeply from day one, who even shares my genes, might be labeled my stepdaughter or my adoptive daughter, if only on a piece of paper in a filing cabinet. There is a gap between us, albeit a legal formality, that needs to be closed. And though I am confident in my choice not to have carried S. in my body for both my medical and emotional wellbeing, the terminolo-

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gy of adoption still brings me sorrow that I couldn't or wouldn't. In my cruelest projections, I imagine S. as a teenager grumbling, "but who are you to me anyway?" I know the true answer to this question, but I'm still in pain.

Yesterday, I gave myself until the end of the week to order the necessary certified documents: marriage certificate, birth certificate. I figured if I couldn't do it by the end of the week, I would ask my wife to be my moral support and sit next to me while I filled out the online forms. Today I sent them in unassisted, 6 days ahead of my self-imposed deadline.



Emily Jaeger with her daughter.

No matter how painful the adoption process is, I know I want to be the type of mother who creates a haven for S. to grow into herself. This does not mesh with half-filled-out paperwork and a stalled adoption. I throw the cruel thoughts out of my mind and stand up for my daughter. I will do whatever needs to be done for her, no matter the label or stigma, because that is the true definition of parenthood. ▼

*Emily Jaeger is an author and Imah (mom in Hebrew) to a precocious 6-month-old. She received her MFA from UMASS Boston in 2017 and was a 2017-18 Olive B O'Connor Fellow at Colgate University. Her first collection, *The Evolution of Parasites*, was published by Sibling Rivalry Press in 2016.*

Photos courtesy of Emily Jaeger

Robinson Evans Family continued from page 57

ence!" Eighteen months later, the family is well-settled into their new community. "I love Village School," John says, going on to describe his first year as Head of School as, "Wild, intense, hard, incredible, transformative, powerful, exhausting... we weathered the most intense of storms and got to know each other during the worst of times and I am still around!"

Though they have no extended family on the West Coast, John, Bill and Dylan have nurtured a significant group of friends who have become family to them over the years. "Being part of two school communities also helps a lot to build support systems."

When asked about challenges he and Bill have faced as gay parents, John confesses to some difficulty in answering. "It is hard to be parents, *period*. There's so much pressure to make the right decisions, and to steer your kid in the right direction."

"Being a 'gay' parent feels challenging when you are expected to fall

in line with heteronormative policies," John explains. He admits to some frustration when assumptions are made about his family, and he is required – time and again – to explain his particular family composition.

"Ultimately, I have learned to model good behavior around device use, social media, and treatment of others. "Also," John concludes, "I've learned to really *listen*, so that my kid will talk to me." ▼

Gary Hurtubise lives in Eastern Ontario with his husband Trevor, their two sons Noah & Meo, and their two yellow labs. Gary attended the Royal Military College of Canada and served in the Royal Canadian Navy before becoming a high school physics teacher, and part time Ghostwriter. Gary finds time to write during those odd moments between life: at 4:30 in the morning, on long road-trips with the kids, while back-country camping, and when he should be doing his share of the chores. Gary wrote another article, about Braunwyn Windham-Burke, on page 45.

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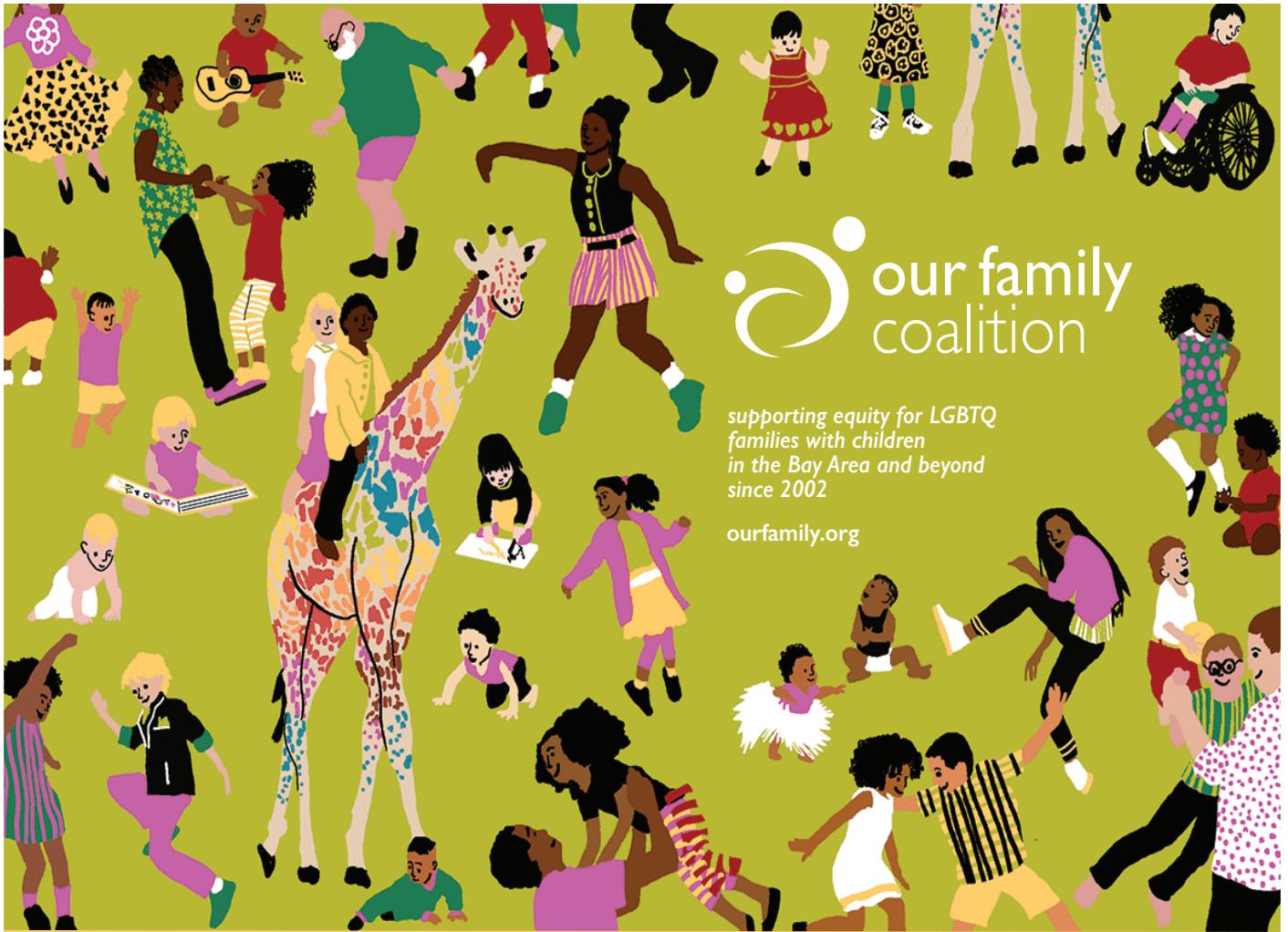
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