



**Catching up with the
LBC Party of Five**

**INSIDE: MEET THE CREATIVE AND CARING
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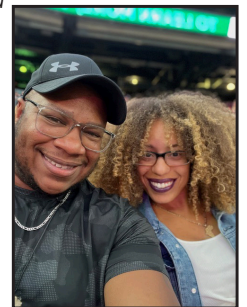
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Catching up with the LBC Party of Five - GPM first featured this family in 2016. Chelsea and Chris along with their 3 children are vloggers known as LBC Party of Five. Learn how this family has evolved since we last featured them. - page 16

Cover photo courtesy of Chelsea and Chris. Photo credits this page top to bottom: photo courtesy of Andrew Truong, Aynisa Leonardo and Suzie Dunn, Ali Rothlizzi, and Chelsea and Chris.



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SOCIAL MEDIA



Here's a pic of our family. Thanks for the shout out!

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- **Andrew Truong**

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SUPPORT GROUPS

Virtual

• **Virtual Support Group for LGBTQIA+ parents.** Every Monday from 7:15 PM - 8:30 PM is a free, drop-in group on Zoom for LGBTQIA+ parents. No commitment necessary. The group is open to expecting, adopting, and/or current parents. The group is facilitated by Meg Ryan, a nurse and PMHNP student. For more information phone 929-367-7419, email info@brooklynparentsupport.com or visit [@brooklyn_parent_support](https://brooklyn_parent_support).

Connecticut

• **Queer Parents of Connecticut.** Private Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/ctqueermamas/

New Jersey

• **NJ Queer Parents.** Private Facebook group at <https://bit.ly/3xGNlvi>

• **Rainbow Families of New Jersey,** <https://bit.ly/3W8OupF>

New York

• **The Center,** check out programs for families at the LGBTQ Community Center, 208 West 13th St., <https://gaycenter.org/community/center-families/>. Phone 212-620-7310. The Center provides counseling for LGBTQ couples and individuals, support and



*Play Day at The Center.
Photo by Richard Mitchell*

education for intended parents, and monthly play days for LGBTQ parents with young children.

• **Pride and Joy Families,** previously a support group for LGBTQ families living in upstate New York, the group lost their funding and closed in 2019. However, they've maintained this referral list: <https://bit.ly/3JPXUMW> and have a Facebook group at <https://bit.ly/43MBesU>.

• **LOFT Families.** A social support group for LGBTQ+ headed families in Westchester County and surrounding areas. This group is hosted by The LOFT

LGBTQ+ Community Center in White Plains, NY. To find out about their events please email info@loftgaycenter.org or visit https://www.loftgaycenter.org/loft_families

• **The LGBT Network's LGBT Family Program** supports LGBT people building and strengthening families. Services provided include: LGBT family potlucks, dad meet ups, mom meet ups, parenthood planning workshops, and networking opportunities. You can also download a LGBT Families Coloring Book from their website as well as a list of the top 25 LGBTQ-affirming children's books. For more information visit <https://lgbtnetwork.org/family/>

• Long Island Adoption Support Group

Email Chemene for info at liadoptivefamilies@gmail.com or visit our website at www.LIAdoptiveFamilies.org. Free peer-led support group for members at any stage of the adoption and foster care process. We offer a friendly and confidential environment for all to share their journey with others who understand.

• PFLAG Long Island

PFLAG Long Island is a part of a national organization of parents, families, friends and allies united with the LGBTQ community to move equality forward. Our meetings include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning persons, as well as parents, allies and friends who all share their experiences. We provide an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orienta-



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COLAGE - People with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer Parent. A national organization operated by and supporting children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents. Provides support, social events, education, and advocacy. Email: colage@colage.org, visit www.colage.org.

• **Queer Parents* NYC.** Private Facebook group at, <https://bit.ly/3J5NZFq>

EVENTS

May 5, 2024 - 12th International Family Equality Day. LGBTQ family organizations from around the world will join forces to increase the international visibility of LGBTQ families. This year's motto is, We Are Family. Visit <http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org/> for events.

June 1, 2024 - Staten Island PrideFest, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM, location is the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301. Usually includes activities for the whole family. Come celebrate with live music, artists, craft vendors, food, activities, and performers. PrideFest is a production of the Pride Center of Staten Island. Visit <https://www.pridecentersi.org/pride-festival-sponsorship-vendor-opportunities>

June 1, 2024 - Oneonta Pridefest, usually held on the first Saturday in June. Last year they offered an all day Block Party on Main Street in Oneonta. With performers and vendors, bring your own lawn chair. They also hold a family dance for all



Adopted baby of a gay father in LGBT Network families program. Photo courtesy of LGBT Network.

ages in February or March. For more information visit www.otsegopridealliance.org.

June 1, 2024 - Middletown PrideFest 2024, 12:00 PM-10:00 PM. Middletown, Connecticut's PrideFest is an all afternoon street fair on Main Street that combines exhibitors, entertainers, food, activities for all ages and will feature their Pride March, Pride Rally on the South Green, two Pride Showcase Concerts and a Tea Dance. Visit <https://www.middletownpride.org/>

June 2, 2024 - Westchester Pride 2024, hosted by The Loft, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM, After Party: 6:00 - 9:00 PM, Court Street between Martine and Main. Includes a pet parade and Family Zone filled with activities for children. Free admission. Visit, <https://bit.ly/3U9fToZ>

June 2, 2024 - NJ's 32nd Annual LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration, Noon-7:00 PM, Asbury Park. This event is family friendly and includes rides in their Family Zone. Admission \$10. Visit, <https://jerseypride.org/>

Hudson Valley Pride Festival. Usually held the first weekend in June. At this writing there is no mention of a Pride Festival. Visit, <https://lgbtqcenter.org/> for

updates.

June 6, 2024 - The New Queens Pride and Festival. Founded in 1993, it is the second oldest and second largest pride parade in NYC. Usually held the first Sunday in June in Jackson Heights. Produced by LGBT Network. Visit <https://newqueenspride.org/>.

June 8, 2024 - 28th Anniversary Brooklyn Pride. The only twilight parade in



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NYC Brooklyn Pride Parade is on June 8th, starts at 7:30, along 5th Ave. from Lincoln Pl. to 8th St. Their Brooklyn Pride Festival & Mainstage, last year featured a Family Fun Zone of family activities, including music, face painting, arts & crafts, story-time and more. Visit <https://brooklynpride.org/>.

June 8, 2024 (rain date June 9, 2024) - Fairfield County's Pride in the Park, 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Veterans Memorial Park, Norwalk, Connecticut. For more information visit <https://ctpridecenter.org/pride-in-the-park/>.

June 9, 2024 - Capital Pride Parade & Festival, in Albany's historic Washington Park. Presented by the Pride Center of the Capital Region. Parade kicks off at 11:30 AM starting down State St. onto Lark St. then Madison Ave. Visit, <https://www.518capitalpride.com/>.

June 9, 2024 - 34th Long Island Pride, returns to Huntington Village, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM. Features a parade, concert, festival, dancing, and a family pavilion area. Parade kicks off at 12 noon beginning at the intersection of Clinton Ave. and Main St., moving down Main Street to the intersection of Main and Prime Ave. where a festival and concert follow. Visit <https://lipride.org/>.

June 15, 2024 - 6th Annual Toms River Pride Festival, 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Washington St. in Downtown Toms River. This festival welcomes all including families. Enjoy food, vendors, performances, shopping, and festivities. Visit <https://www.exit82theatre.com/tr-pride> or facebook.com/TomsRiverPride.

June 15, 2024 - 4th Annual Pride at the Farm, 4:00 - 7:00 PM, Suffolk County Farm & Education Center. Family-friendly fun with wagon rides, crafts, animal ex-



Family in the New York City Pride March

Photo by Angelina Acain/Gay Parent Magazine

periences, music and more. Sponsored by LGBTQ Care at Stony Brook Medicine. Visit <https://bit.ly/4aRXtAb>

June 22, 2024 - Central New York Pride Festival & Parade, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM, The parade will process along Inner Harbor in Syracuse on Solar St. and turn right onto West Kirkpatrick St. Visit <https://www.cnypride.org/pride2024/> for updates.

June 22 - 30, 2024 - 40th Heritage of Pride/NYC Pride. This year's theme is "Reflect. Empower. Unite." Once again offering multiple events, as of this writing the events are during the last week of June and ending with the March and PrideFest on June 30th. Last year, they had their Family Movie Night in the fall. Check their website for updates, visit <https://www.nycpride.org/>.

June 28, 2024 - Pride Night at Citifield, 7:10 PM. Celebrate Pride Night with The New York Mets. Fireworks after the game. \$40, buy tickets at <https://lgbtnetwork.org/product/mets-pride-night/>

June 29, 2024 - 15th Annual Harlem Pride 2024. Multiple events during the month of June (check their website for events), ending with their celebration on June 29th, 12:00 PM - 6:00 PM, Harlem Pride will feature celebrity hosts on their main stage, DJs and live entertainment. Also, food vendors, medical testing and health screening, community organizations and city service providers, and a vendor marketplace. In previous years for families there was face painting and Drag Queen Story Hour. For updates visit <https://harlempride.org/>.

July 27 - August 3, 2024 - Family Week, Provincetown, Massachusetts. This is the largest annual gathering of hundreds of LGBTQ families from all over the country, sponsored by Family Equality Council (www.familyequality.org) and CO-

continued on page 8

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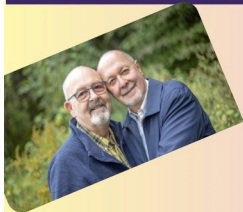
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teaches them to trust their own judgment. As a result, Steve & Kate's enables kids to express themselves freely. The counselors not only advocate but celebrate children discovering and expressing their true selves by creating an enriching environment and providing a space where children feel included and safe.

Campers will design their day in real-time by choosing from a variety of activities, including sewing, stop-motion animation, music, performing arts, makers crafts, bread making, coding, sports & recreation, and more. The children will decide what they want to do and for how long.

And just like everything else at Steve & Kate's, kids will get to choose their lunch entree daily. Most of their meals come from local vendors and are prepared just moments before lunch. They throw in snacks and the occasional frozen treat to boot!

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offers camp by the day, so families can sign up for one day here, 13 there, or pay a flat fee, which covers the entire summer. Either way, families can use their Passes any day Steve & Kate's is open this summer—without advanced notice! If your plans change, they'll even refund any unused passes automatically at the end of the season.

Does your employer offer back-up care through Bright Horizons? If so, Steve & Kate's is now available as a care provider for summer and school breaks. Visit your My Bright Horizons account to learn more.

Lunch, snacks, and all hours (8am–6pm) are included.

For more information and to register, scan the QR code or visit their website:

www.steveandkatescamp.com ▼



Photo courtesy of Steve & Kate's Camp

Events continued from page 6

LAGE (www.colage.org). Visit <https://www.ptownfamilyweek.com> for updates and to register.

August 24, 2024 - 23rd Annual Jersey City LGBTQ+ Pride Festival, 1:00 PM - 9:00 PM, Grove Street Path Plaza and Newark Avenue between Grove Street and Jersey Avenue. Last year their month long celebration will included, great tasting food, fantastic entertainers, fun for families, youth, young adults, elders and more leading up to their Pride celebration on August 24th. Visit <https://jerseycitypride.com/> for updates.

September 14, 2024 - Annual Hartford Pride Fest and Pride Fest and Concert, Trumbull St., Hartford, Connecticut. Presented by Connecticut Latinos Achieving Rights & Opportunities (CLARO). Takes place on the second Saturday in September. The annual Hartford Pride Fest and Concert is a family-centered event showcasing entertainment, food, local businesses, giveaways, activities, and numerous community organizations. Visit <https://bit.ly/3JxWdpU> or <https://www.facebook.com/hartfordpride/>.

Want your New York, New Jersey, or Connecticut Pride or LGBTQ family event listed here? Email us at gayparentmag@gmail.com.



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Family Vacation in Cape May, New Jersey

By Ali Rothlizzi

Sometimes heading south makes us nervous. Just before my children were born an older lesbian told me I was foolish to don any pro-gay bumper stickers or flags on my car after our first child arrived. While I appreciated her concern (especially knowing that any security I felt in being out had much to do with the paths that she and others like her had already braved) I disagreed that there could be any real danger in a bumper sticker - even the 244 we had on our "Dykemobile" (we were fresh out of college). But she had a point that took me a while to realize. It was one thing to jump out of planes and swim with sharks with my wife while we were fairly young and more interested in calling our spirits back, but that all changed when you have kids. I lost my mother young and even if they hate me as adolescents I hope and pray I can stave off that kind of heartache for both my kids' sakes. So between this and the flippant comment a cab driver made to me driving us just before the arrival of our first born, with the birth of kids comes the birth of fear. I was dismissive of my older lesbian friend but with age comes wisdom I guess.

This past summer our family headed south from Long Island, New York to Cape May, New Jersey. It's not south enough to make me nervous and Cape May's family familiarity draws us back year after year. Cape May was the place where I found myself longing to apologize to my kids for the world I brought them to. And this is different than we ever felt there before.

We returned to Camp Laurie. It's a flat little campground just outside of the Cape that offers a pool, a lake, and a few tennis and pickleball courts. Before the pandemic we'd gone and they had a large one story high inflatable slide as well as a trampoline that was so memorable, my little one begged us



The author Ali Rothlizzi, far right. Left to right, Ali's wife, Amy, and their children, Takoda, and Nikkan.

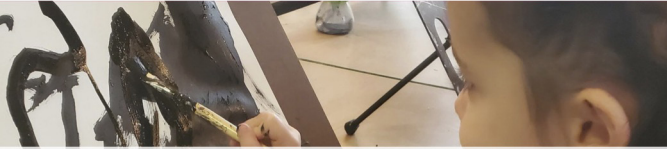
to return as soon as we could. His favorite thing to do was to climb up and jump in the lake off the sides. We did return last year but we were disappointed that the slide wasn't up. They said they didn't have the staff to supervise (even though the supervisor is supposed to stop kids from jumping off the sides and we only saw that happen once).

This year we made sure it was up before we booked. We rented a cabin again next to some friends in the neighboring cabin. It had two bedrooms, one



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with bunk beds, a bathroom, kitchen, dining and living area as well as a screened in porch. Outside we had a barbecue area, picnic table and a fire pit. It was nice this year because we could share the fire pit with our friends but we all had our own spaces to retreat. The whole campground could be so cozy, it makes me revisit my own dream of running one someday. It's got everything you need for summer fun and it's so close to the ocean beach, little touristy shops, ghost tours, Victorian Era houses and of course, Wildwood.



Left photo of water slide. Right photo of Nikkan enjoying the beach at Cape May.

My little guy swam out first thing to the slide which was a little different this year. Instead of staffing the beach with anybody it had a blown up side rail. I think this was in an effort to hinder jumpers but it certainly did not. I think his age and wisdom is emerging because he thought the better of jumping right off and instead tried out the slide, jumping off the first stair, the second, watching others jump, and eventually the third. At one point the slide starts to deflate. The other kids claimed it did this every night as a way to encourage people to head back. But it was only at this point that the

slide cleared of enough people so that my little guy felt it was okay to scurry up top. I think he was expecting to sit up top and contemplate the jump. However, when the slide begins to deflate it's the handrail that folds in first. My little guy scampered up to the very top, exhilarated to be the only one on the slide for the first time, folded the handrail, climbed over it and then was too light to keep it folded. The handrail inflated and bounced my little guy backwards into the water. It only knocked the wind out of him but it was a pretty harsh fright. After that I just forbid him to even try no matter how many others were doing it.

The place is missing something, there is

no overall supervision. There were kids running around, using gay slurs, and even at one point throwing rocks from the beach to other kids swimming in the lake. The overall culture is pretty permissive and most of the adults I saw were drinking, often heavily. The culture of the kids I find does differ from place to place. For example, I've never found a better culture of children than I did years ago in a campground near Sesame Place. Even alone these kids were personable, interested and engaged. Last year, I began to feel a kind of negativity outside an ice cream shop on the beach in Cape May that hung a large Pride flag, but I couldn't put my finger on it. This year I returned and spoke to the owner.

Apparently, it's been a difficult year for them. Their Pride flag was even ripped down (It's back up. Our colors don't run!) I asked why he thought it would be worse now that Trump is finally out of office. He said he thought they feel emboldened.

I can tell you that apart from a pack of ignorant unsupervised insecure children, and the colors I'm always wearing as we travel, nobody appeared to care one way or the other about our little queer family. Servers were friendly. Shopkeepers gave our children extra *continued on page 14*



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Aynisa Leonardo and Suzie Dunn, a Coupling of Caring and Creativity

By Gary Hurtubise

Aynisa Leonardo and Suzie Dunn of the hamlet of Holbrook in Long Island, New York, have deep ties to their community, where they are raising their eighteen-year-old daughter and four-year-old son.

Suzie was born in Manhattan, the eldest of three daughters. Her father worked in the newspaper industry, and her mother was employed by the Society for the Preservation for Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA).

Most of her youth was spent on Long Island, where she was heavily



Left to right, Suzie Dunn, Jackson, Aynisa Leonardo, and Gabrielle.

involved in the arts: performing, singing and dancing. Suzie attended SUNY Oneonta, where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Theater.

This early exposure to the arts led directly to what Suzie does today, which is "directing, choreographing, and still remaining a leader in the arts."

"I've specialized in the development of educational lab theatre," she explains, "and curriculum-based arts & education, designed to help students find their way through the theater experience."

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rience.”

Aynisa was born in Queens, and – like Suzie – grew up in Long Island. She lived with her older brother, their nurse practitioner single mom, their aunt, and their grandmother.

Aynisa went to Fordham University (described as the Jesuit University of New York) for a BA in Communications and minor in Psychology, then to Brooklyn College to study Psychology and Art, rounding out her education at Hofstra University in Hempstead for a Master’s in Creative Art Therapy.

“I was always passionate about creativity through film and photography, but also had a desire to help people, so I merged those together to form a career,” Aynisa says. “I’ve trained in a variety of trauma therapies as well as holistic services, and have always been drawn to progressive healing methods for myself as well as others.”

Growing up, Aynisa always knew she was attracted to others based on their personality. Today, she identifies as pansexual. “I didn’t know what that meant,” she admits, “because during my teenage and young adult years, there was a lack of awareness and terminology for the LGBTQ+ community.”

While not undergoing a formal coming out, Aynisa did not hide who she was. “Some people were receptive, while others were not.”

The poor receptions she experienced occurred mainly during her college years. “I was confronted several times in New York, Kansas,



Aynisa and Suzie.

Mississippi, Florida, Hawaii, and even Italy. These acts ranged from throwing objects to denying services. One hotel in Mississippi sent me and a friend away in the middle of the night, preventing us from checking in, and forcing us to ‘rough it.’”

Like Aynisa, Suzie grew up having feelings of attraction to “the person, and not their gender,” as she describes it, also identifying as pansexual.

“I came out when I was 28, but growing up in theater and being surrounded by people who were part of the LGBTQ+ community, my family was always a safe space for my queer friends to come, especially when their families didn’t accept them.”

“I also have a gay aunt who is happily married,” Suzie says, “so when I came out there wasn’t much stigma within my family.”

The main source of annoyance that Suzie has felt over the years, “is the assumption from others that I have a husband, because I present very feminine.” Being a mother, Suzie has also found that institutions – specifically schools – do not have forms or language that cater to families outside of the traditional hetero norm. “Many forms and comments are still geared towards ‘mom and dad,’” she laments, “which can be exclusionary for many family systems, including ours.”

On a positive note, Aynisa has noted that – specifically in New York over the past decade – “the movement towards overall acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community has really paved a way for myself and my family to make things much easier than they may have been years prior.”

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The two women first met in 2008 through mutual friends, remaining just friends for six years. "In 2014 our lives lined up and we decided to start dating," Aynisa explains.

In 2015, Suzie beat Aynisa to the punch when she proposed. It happened following a showing of 'Rent' – the show Suzie was directing at the time. She called Aynisa to the stage and popped the question while her cast sang 'Seasons of Love'.

Aynisa of course said yes, but wanted to do a proposal of her own, so strung their favorite tree with playing cards, each with one of the "52 reasons why you should say 'yes'" written on them.

"We were married in 2017 at our dream venue on the water, on a beautiful day in September. We each had five groomsmen, and our families, friends and colleagues packed the place with singing, dancing, and lots of love and support."

"We still to this day hear about how our wedding was the best party of the century," Suzie reports. "We had planned dance routines, and surprise performances for each other, as



Suzie, Jackson, Aynisa and Gabrielle (seated).

well as a private boat getaway into the sunset."

The couple waited until January to escape the New York winter and enjoy a honeymoon in Costa Rica.

When the two women first got together, Suzie brought with her a three-year-old daughter from a previous relationship. "Having Gabrielle as a part of our dynamic made us a little family right away, so the idea of expanding was a no-brainer," Aynisa explains.

Since Suzie carried and gave birth to Elle (what the couple call Gabrielle for short), they

decided that Aynisa would carry their next child.

However, after several years of trying to get pregnant through IUI's, a test revealed a fibroid that would require several surgeries to give Aynisa even a chance at a successful pregnancy.

"The odds were no longer in our favor," she admits. Carrying the Hunger Games references one step further, Aynisa adds: "Suzie was nice enough to 'volunteer as tribute'."

From that point on, everything fell into place for the couple, "just as it was meant to be."

"We harvested Aynisa's eggs, chose a private donor with traits, interests, and heritage similar to Suzie, implanted an embryo, and nine months later, Jackson Thomas entered the scene to complete our family."

Today, Jackson is almost four years old – and the prince of the family. "He is charismatic, smart, and extremely loving. Full of energy, he definitely keeps us on our toes." The couple admit.

"He loves to be on stage, prefers to have

Instead of giving answers, we explore all of their questions.

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a microphone in his hand, is currently obsessed with cars, trains, and everything Paw Patrol. He also loves playing instruments and making music. You can catch him in our home almost daily playing singing bowls or drums. He also loves to paint, bake, build things, and perhaps above all things, take care of our two puppies, Freddy and Coconut.”

The couple’s daughter Gabrielle will turn 19 in September, and is currently a Freshman at the Fredonia School of Music, in their honor’s program. “She’s studying Music Education with Vocal Performance and a minor in Theater,” Suzie reports.

“She loves all genres of music and performance, and plays multiple instruments. She’s been dancing for 16 years and has been in countless theatrical productions with many lead roles.”

“What stands out most about Elle’s personality,” her stepmom continues, “is her sense of humor and unwavering care for others. She’s diplomatic and has been referenced as an ‘indigo child’ throughout her life due to being wise and creative beyond her years.”

Like Jackson, Gabrielle is a lover of animals, and when she’s home from college, can be found either playing with Jackson, or cuddling with Ziggy, the family cat.

When Jackson was around six months old, the couple tried to establish that Suzie would be ‘Mama’ and Aynisa would be ‘Mommy’. Jackson had other ideas. “He decided to start calling Aynisa ‘Ba’, which oddly enough we later found out was a term for father in Asian cultures.”

When asked about how they explain their family make-up to their



Left to right, Jackson, Gabrielle, Suzie, and Aynisa. Facing page, the family's adorable Christmas photo.

a non-traditional family, like having to constantly cross out ‘father’ on forms.”

“She wove in (to her college application) a slam poetry project from the year prior, titled ‘Two moms.’” Excerpts of Gabrielle’s poem are below:

*When I was younger
I thought that having two moms was a normal thing
that more children had but it turns out
I was wrong.*

*I didn't quite understand homophobia
until I got to high school.*

Sure in middle school

Family Vacation in Cape May continued from page 10
little stickers. All in all it was a nice, leisurely family vacation. We even caught about a half dozen Progress Pride Flags and rainbow mailboxes around town.

The waves at the beach were beautiful but punishing. I don’t know why. There weren’t any storms in the area and I don’t remember feeling they were so rough last year, but we all felt it. Dolphins came within about 20 feet of my oldest at one point which is pretty commonplace for Cape May, and even though it was August we never saw a single jellyfish.

We hit Mad Batter for the first time and as soon as we arrived and we were thoroughly impressed. We’d skipped it last year as a result of Covid fears and its entirely enclosed space, but this year they opened the walls. The food was very good and the service was clean, quick and efficient. We learned from last year not to bother with the long wait for indoor dining at The Lobster House and instead slinked right around the back deck to claim a waterfront table and order incredible meals from the Raw Bar. I cannot recommend this place enough! Amy had the crab again, and I had the lobster. We shared a cup of She Crab Soup that was almost as good as Rudee’s in Virginia Beach and the kids tore into their French fries and thick grilled cheeses. Good stuff! All in all though Delaney’s on Washington Street was our bull’s eye. There was no wait, outdoor seating perfect for people watching, good food and great drinks!

We hit Uncle Bill’s again but I’m not sure this will be a priority in future



The family with their balls while playing miniature golf.

years like it has been in previous ones. There was no wait, and they offered both indoor and outdoor seating even for our party of 9, but the food was not as good as it used to be, and the service was a bit sporadic. At least there was parking.

Miniature golf was a fun farewell activity as well as ice cream up Washington Street. We saw a line up the block for a hot dog place we never thought to try but will have to see what all the fuss is about next time. We avoided the tasty but suspicious Mexican food we’d indulged in last year as I came away with a terrible stomach virus from and I wasn’t willing to take the risk to indulge this year. And once again we ignored the Whale Watching lures. We’ve never seen a whale from

one in Cape May, and the one time we saw dolphins, we’d have been closer to them if we’d stayed at our hotel. Not our favorite trip this season, but Cape May is a fairly local and inexpensive choice. ▼

Ali Rothlizzi is a mother of two and wife to her partner, Amy, of 22 years. She is an intimately genuine ever evolving author who writes about creating and raising her same sex headed family, life, and philosophy. She also a dedicated special education teacher in the city and has written several articles on travel, politics, and media reviews. You are invited to check out, comment and share her blogs on a variety of same-sex headed family issues, raising her quirky, feminist children, and general philosophy of life at <https://bit.ly/3ZLqhFH>.

Photos courtesy of Ali Rothlizzi



*I would make a friend
and ask if they wanted to come over
and they wouldn't be able to
because their parents
would always say no
no matter how many times I asked.*

*I didn't catch that it was most likely because of
my moms...*

When asked to share her thoughts on having two moms, Gabrielle has this to say: "I was so young (when her moms got together), I don't exactly remember having to adapt! It's just what I always remember."

As she grew up, Gabrielle would encounter her share of ignorance among her peers. "There were instances where I would be accused of being gay due to my moms or due to genetics, which isn't at all possible! I felt like I had to educate people often."

Outside of raising their two kids, both women demonstrate a keen interest in helping those in their community.

Aynisa is the founder of the Military Resilience Foundation (MRF), which she started in 2013, after working at an inpatient psychiatric hospital exclusively with active-duty military personnel and veterans.

"I never served (in the military) but learned trial-by-fire, mostly from the clients who told me what to read and watch, to learn how to work with and support the military on the healing side of war."

"This then inspired me to develop and found MRF outside the four walls of treatment, and in the community, providing healing outlets for veterans."

"MRF has always been a passion," Aynisa declares, "but my full-time job and how I spend most of my days, is as a treatment placement specialist. I get anywhere from three to ten calls a day, from individuals in crisis seeking support and services for themselves or their loved ones."

Aynisa publicly provides her email address and cell number (646 599 0577) so that those in need can call her anytime day or night for assistance in navigating treatment.

Also in 2013, Suzie started a charitable organization called The Cue Theatre, (www.thecue theatre.org) an educational lab theater that teaches students of all ages all aspects of performing arts. "It's a safe space for students to be able to express themselves and fit in, especially when they have nowhere else to go."

Several years later, Suzie was able to add her expertise to MRF by bringing an additional layer of creative programming and partnership. "I'm not a veteran," she says, "but I was raised by one (my father)."

As the Artistic Director of MRF, Suzie oversees partner projects with The Public Theatre (Vets on Stage) and Theatre Three in Port Jefferson (Adopt-a-Veteran Program) and provides acting outlets for many of the agency's retreats and expressive workshops.

"Coupling my love of the arts with my desire to serve those who have served, endless opportunities have opened up in our community for us to merge our passions while serving others."

Aynisa shares her wife's sentiment, adding, "the two greatest honors of my career have been serving the veteran community and serving the 'crisis' community."

When asked about their thoughts about the broader community of LGBTQ+ families across America and around the globe, the couple first acknowledge their own good fortune. "We've been very well received and supported in our lives but recognize that we are also in a very gay-friendly part of the country and the world."

Based on the awareness and acceptance they've witnessed in their daughter Gabrielle's generation, the women are conditionally hopeful for the future.

"We only hope that things keep moving in the right direction for all minorities. Progress has been made but we of course think there's always more to be done in the way of equality."

For more information about the couple's organization, the Military Resilience Foundation, visit www.milresilience.com. ▼

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.

Photos courtesy of Aynisa Leonardo and Suzie Dunn

Catching Up with the LBC Party of Five

By Gary Hurtubise

This issue, Gay Parent Magazine revisits an LGBTQ+ family first profiled in 2016. Chelsea and Chris, along with their three children, are better known collectively as ‘LBC Party of Five’ – their online handle, where they post and vlog about their lives.

Chelsea was born in Goshen, New York, the middle child of three, and spent her youth living in and around the Hudson Valley area. Her father worked as a mental health professional for the criminally insane and her biological mother was a first-grade teacher at the Christian school she attended. “Growing up,” she recalls, “we had a lot of music, food, fun and family gatherings.”

Chelsea knew she wasn’t a typical ‘girly-girl’ early on in life, finally understanding why at fifteen when she developed romantic feelings for a classmate – who ended up being her first girlfriend.

“I attended a private Christian school,” she retells, “so we had to keep our love a secret. We did so for eighteen months until we got caught kissing in the bathroom and were both outed.”

“It wasn’t really a surprise to our peers, but times being as they were, I was expelled for refusing to denounce and rebuke these homosexual tendencies.”

“Now that my secret was out there was no putting myself back in the closet,” Chelsea declares. “I was out, loud, and proud and for the most part it was well received by my friends and loved ones with the exception of my biological mother. But that’s a whole other story for a different setting!”

Chris was born in Staten Island, to a law enforcement officer, and a mother who worked as a legal secretary for two top law firms. He was one of four siblings, and like his wife, he also enjoyed a childhood filled with lots of music and laughter.

Chris was born a girl and raised as one, “which was always strange,” he reports, “because I never viewed myself that way.”

“I was always doing stereotypical ‘boy’ things: climbing trees, playing with the boys and having fun with toys that were marketed for boys.”

“I always wore hats,” Chris continues, “and would get a kick out of being called a boy if someone didn’t know me.” Chris remembers trying to ‘fix’ himself as a child – looking for ways to make himself more ‘girly’ – which never worked out.

Chris presented as a lesbian woman when he met Chelsea at a local bar where she worked. Chelsea was a single mom, having had two kids from a previous marriage – Xavier and Dyleena.

Chris and the kids hit it off very well – many of the couple’s early dates were family oriented (their first date was at a Chuck E. Cheese!). There were some growing pains when Chris moved in with Chelsea and the kids, but having a second parent around the house soon became the norm for the family.



Back left to right, Chris, Chelsea, Dyleena and Xavier. In front is Carter.

The couple had already been vlogging for years when Chris decided to post a video to YouTube in June of 2016, where he officially set out to transition. At that time, Chelsea and Chris had been a married lesbian couple for five years, and their youngest child, Carter, had just been born.

Initially, Chris’s decision to transition caught Chelsea off guard.

“I was in shock and taken back,” she recalls, upon Chris’s announcement, “but only because of the way he presented it in his own frantic state! But once we were able to effectively communicate what transitioning would look like for him, I was all in.”

While fully supportive of her spouse’s journey, Chelsea admits to harboring some concerns at first. “In the beginning, one of the main things I struggled with was how his transition would change my sexuality or how I identified.”

“We discussed what our expectations were,” she continues, “and realized we still had the same wants and goals. After that, it was much easier for me to digest, understand and support him through it.”

“Ultimately, we came to the conclusion that he was secure in his own manhood, and that my identity as a lesbian does not threaten him,” Chelsea explains. “I’ve learned throughout this journey that I love him regardless of his gender. He is my ‘person’ and nothing will ever change that.”

For Chris, he felt fortunate that, once he came out as trans, his high school and college friends were not surprised at all by his transition. “It was an obvious step for them,” he recalls. “They saw me for who I was from the beginning of our friendships, unbeknownst to me.”

The children handled Chris’s change in the way that only kids can. “They were quick to accept Chris initially,” Chelsea reports, “and then again when coming out as transgender.”

The family when they appeared in Gay Parent Magazine-New York in 2016. At top is Dyleena, middle left to right, Xavier, Chelsea and Chris. In front is Carter.





Photos on this page of Chris and Chelsea.

estly hard for me as the mother to answer this question for them. But I can say that with the proper supports (in-school and otherwise) along with therapy, they have both become successful high school graduates and are both content on their own paths to being well-rounded, self-sufficient young adults.”

Xavier was an honor roll student in high school and has been living independently and working full-time in Florida for almost one year. Dyleena is an aspiring children’s book author.

“We are proud of each of them for not allowing their diagnosis or disability to dictate what they can or cannot do.”

Things were going well for the family, when, in April of 2018, they received devastating news. “Carter was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, a blood cancer.”

Carter had to endure four surgical procedures to help in her battle against cancer, on top of the typical battery of chemotherapy sessions.

“Carter’s chemotherapy treatment plan lasted for about two-and-a-half years,” Chelsea reports. “During that time, we were fortunate to enjoy a family Make-A-Wish trip to Disney during our stay at Give Kids the World. We remain so grateful to have made so many amazingly unforgettable long-lasting memories.”

As so many Americans who goes through this type of battle – or almost any serious health care procedure – know, the financial burden can be exhausting and traumatic in its own way.

“Thankfully with the help of our family, friends and virtual family, we remained encouraged and financially stable with the love and generosity of all the donations made to our #CarterStrong GoFundMe,” the couple retell.

Happily, the family is able to share some very good news: “together, we made it through one of the hardest times of our lives and are now celebrating Carter’s third year post-treatment and remission!”

Chelsea has observed that, being a cancer survivor, Carter now lives every day of her life to the fullest.

We asked both Chelsea and Chris about how parenting has changed for

Both older children caught on very quickly to the change in Chris’s pronouns and preferred name. Carter, the youngest, was still young enough when Chris transitioned that she only every knew him as Chris or Daddy.

Supposing that Carter may have questions when she’s older, the couple have discussed how they will respond: “we have agreed and are committed to being open as honest about our identities and family dynamics as she gets curious or as questions arise.”

Speaking of Carter, her mom and dad describe the eight-year-old as an energetic, resilient firecracker. “She’s an old soul,” Chelsea insists, “we swear she has been here before, lol!”

The other two ‘kids’ are young adults now: twenty-one-year-old Xavier is described by his parents as “a gentle, loving young man who enjoys gaming, anime, going on walks and exploring.” Nineteen-year-old Dyleena is “a sensitive, loving free spirit who is very creative.”

Both older children are on the autism spectrum but have never let their diagnosis hinder their dreams.

When asked about how the kids coped with their autism as they grew up, Chelsea grows contemplative. “It’s hon-



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Left to right, Dyleena, Chris , Carter, Chelsea, and Xavier.



them, as their relationship status and identities changed over the years.

“My parenting style has definitely changed since I first became a mother at the age of eighteen,” Chelsea says. “With my first two there was a lot of trial and error, but I always strove to do the best with what I had.”

“I became a single mother at the age of twenty-two, so I was young and a bit overwhelmed at times but always gave my kids all that I had and was determined to be the mother I wish I had growing up.”

When Chris became part of the family, Chelsea says she *finally* knew what it was like to have a partner who was actually involved with the kids. “So when he expressed the desire to have another kid, I was given the opportunity to bring a child into a stable relationship for the first time. This was the experience I’d never had before, but always wanted.”

Chris feels that his experience of going from being a mom to a dad didn’t change too much in the way he parented. “I am just now parenting from a place of truer authenticity,” he says. “I’m hoping the kids see what I’ve done and shows them that you have to choose yourself first

in life in order to be happy.”

The biggest challenge Chelsea found to being a mother was the co-parenting aspect of it (with the older children’s biological father). “In the beginning, it was hands down the toughest part of the parenting journey for us. Over time and with maturity and boundaries put in place, we have come a long way.”

The best part of parenting,” the couple add, “is watching our kids grow, learn and evolve. We create a safe space for everyone in the household to be heard and express themselves authentically. We, as parents, believe in guiding and not controlling our kids; instead we nurture who they each are individually and allow them the space to decide who they are for themselves.”

The family has amassed an amazing archive of their growth together from nine years of vlogging – and they are still going strong, posting new content regularly.

“Vlogging is just like having old VHS tapes of our lives together,” Chelsea says. It’s fun to look back at how much we all have grown and how young we all looked. It’s a great bonding experience when we re-watch them (as Carter loves to do).”

Sharing online has also helped Chris and Chelsea find a community and connect with their tribe from all the around the world. “It’s been such an experience that we hope to continue for many years to come.”

To learn more about Chelsea, Chris, and their kids, find them on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, @lb-cpartyof5. The couple also started a podcast under same handle called, “Chelsea & Chris on This.” ▼

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.

Photos courtesy of Chelsea and Chris



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