

# GLAD Chat



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[www.gladdecatur.com](http://www.gladdecatur.com)

## Local Author and GLAD Book Exchange Highlight GLAD's June 14<sup>th</sup> Social

Move over, Ernest Hemmingway. Look out, Virginia Woolf. There's a new literary phenom in town, and GLAD's got her for our June 14th social.

This month our guest speaker will be Springfield author (and GLAD Chat columnist) Martha Miller. Martha has a new book currently on the presses. We'll get an exclusive sneak peek (and a chance to get a free copy).

Martha tells us: "I'm going to read from my upcoming book "Widow." It is a sequel to my first mystery (Nine Nights on the Windy Tree) and I will have a limited number of those books for free. I also have some other titles for discounted sale. "

Martha says she will accept cash or checks so bring your pocketbooks for some great summer reading.

In keeping with our literary theme this month we are also bringing back the GLAD book exchange, something we have not done in a while. Bring a book or two that you'd like to give away, and feel free to take a book that someone else has brought in.

The social will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sat. June 14th at the Peerless Corporate Training Center, 1304 N. 20th St. The potluck begins at 7:00p.m. GLAD will supply the tableware and drinks. We ask you to please donate \$5 toward our expenses. We hope to see you there.

## Marriage Equality Now Law In Illinois!

At the stroke of midnight June 1st marriage equality became the law of the land in Illinois.

For couples wanting to convert their civil unions into full-fledged "just like straight people" marriages, Sunday, June 1st was the first day they could do it. Several GLAD folks were featured on evening newscasts at courthouses doing the conversion thing.

They included Lee and Bert, featured on the WCIA (Champaign) news, and Marcus and Kevin and their children, who were spotlighted on the WICS

(Springfield) news. You can watch their story at [www.wics.com/news/top-stories](http://www.wics.com/news/top-stories)

The Illinois website [getcoveredillinois.gov](http://getcoveredillinois.gov) has set up a special enrollment period for same-sex married couples that now qualified as "married" under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act. You can go to [getcoveredillinois.gov/marriage-equality-affordable-care-act](http://getcoveredillinois.gov/marriage-equality-affordable-care-act) for all the details.

And remember, if you entered a civil union beginning June 2011 there is no charge to have that union converted to a marriage. If you are marrying for the first time, there is a marriage license fee. That fee varies from county to country.

### Upcoming Events

#### **June 12-13**

Richland Community College Diversity Conference

#### **June 14**

GLAD Social 6:30 p.m.

Peerless, Decatur

#### **June 14**

Drag Show

Ken's A-Frame, Decatur

#### **June 21**

CORAL Picnic 5:00 p.m.

Springfield

For more information or questions related to any even please join us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/groups/GLAD1](http://www.facebook.com/groups/GLAD1)



*GLAD Chat is the monthly publication of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Decatur*

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## Westboro Baptist Church Comes To Soy Town

As many of you are probably aware, Decatur's Pride Month started off with a bang.

We already knew the month would begin with the implementation of marriage equality, but our worlds were rocked on May 23rd when the titans of intolerance, the members of Westboro Baptist Church, announced on their website that they would be coming to Decatur, Illinois, on June 1st to demonstrate at three local churches.

And lo and behold, they actually did come to town. (The group is notorious for announcing a demonstration and then not bothering to show up.) We won't get into the details of the event in this short piece. There's a [Facebook page](#) that documents it pretty well. We do want to mention, however, the participation of several GLAD folks in the peaceful counterdemonstration to Westboro. They included Charla Stone, John Wylder, Rene Very, and Mary-Lynn's son Dan Feltes.

Many thanks to all of you for demonstrating that love conquers intolerance every time!

## Greg Gravemier's Celebration of Life

Contributed by Linda Ryherd-Schroeder

The Celebration of Life Service for Greg Gravemier on Sunday May 18 was well attended by about 80 people.

There were many people who shared their memories of Greg including Marcus Brown representing the NAACP. Greg and Leland were involved in so many facets for the Decatur Community Homework Hangout, Dove, and the Decatur Human Relations Commission just to name a few.

GLAD was a thriving, vibrant group of people who were seeking a safe place to gather in a time when being "out" was difficult and dangerous.

GLAD socials were extremely well attending and hosted a variety of events such as dances, talent shows, drag shows and speakers just to name a few. It was a time when politicians running for office sought out our vote.

Greg's memories will long live on in our hearts and in the history of the LGBT community of Decatur.

Many thanks go to Rev Hutchinson, Lorelei Zaker, and the staff of UUFD, Bev Ritter, Lisa Cotton and Linda Ryherd-Schroeder for putting together this remembrance.



Photo Boards at Greg's Celebration of Life

## Journalist Touré Highlights Richland's Diversity Conference June 12 & 13

This month Richland Community College will be sponsoring its 14th Annual Conference on Diversity and Globalization.

This year's theme is "SPEAK! Language and Culture Implications in Education and the Global Workforce." Friday morning's keynote speaker will be the journalist, and host of MSNBC's "The Cycle, Touré. In the afternoon, Richland professor Michelle Stephens will be presenting a program.

The conference will be held on June 12th and 13th. It starts at 1 p.m. on Thursday with 2 sessions offered and continues all day on Friday. For a complete list of the sessions and guest speakers go to [diversity.richland.edu/](http://diversity.richland.edu/) For registration information go to: [diversity.richland.edu/registration](http://diversity.richland.edu/registration)

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## CORAL Pride Picnic June 21<sup>st</sup> in Springfield

The Coalition of Rainbow Alliances, CORAL, (of which GLAD is a member) is sponsoring its annual Pride Picnic on Saturday, June 21st at 5 p.m. at Lincoln Park – Nelson Center, Shelter Number Four in Springfield.

This popular annual event is free to the LGBT community. CORAL will provide the meat and beverages. They ask that those coming bring a side dish. This is the 33rd annual picnic. That's quite a tradition, and this year we have so much to celebrate with marriage equality becoming law in Illinois.

CORAL will also preview the plans for the 2014 Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade Float to represent the LGBT community

To get to Lincoln Park take Sangamon Avenue heading east to 5<sup>th</sup> Street turn left (south) until next road (approximately 2 blocks). Turn right follow park around to shelter 4 near children's playground

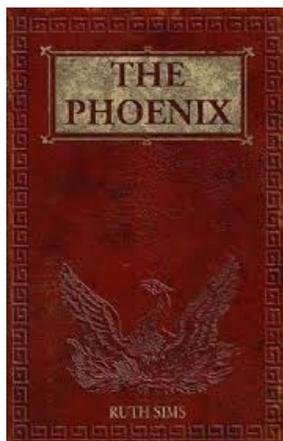
For more information check out the event on [Facebook](#) or contact Lee (217) 498-9930 or Jim (217) 692-2788.

## Rest In Peace; Danville Author Ruth Sims Passes

We were saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Ruth Sims in Danville last month.

Ruth was the author of several books including the gay romance novel "The Phoenix." Some of you may recall she was the guest speaker at a GLAD social several years ago, where she talked about the writing process, offered writing tips and signed copies of her book.

She was a strong supporter of the lgbt community and will be greatly missed.



## Pride Planters and Pretty Petunias Featured at GLAD May Social

The GLAD May Social could have been dubbed "Garden Pride." With Pride Month just around the corner, GLAD members Mary Lynn Feltes and Jim Barr demonstrated the art of making a rainbow-themed tiered patio planter.

Mary Lynn used colored plastic pots of green, yellow and red, and stacked them one upon the other – planting a variety of colorful annuals around the perimeter of each pot. Jim did a similar planter but he used terra cotta pots, which he had painted gold - like the pot o' gold at the end of the rainbow.

The results for both were beautiful, and could be displayed with pride on any LGBT or allies' patio

or deck. The results can be seen in photos posted on the GLAD Facebook page. We also had our annual plant exchange. Rene's purple flowers were particularly popular with those taking home a plant or two.

It was a low-key affair, with about 16 folks in attendance. We were happy to have a strong Springfield contingent including Lee and Bert, David and Mike, and Marty, the one-man party.

Amongst the food choices were Lee's Swedish meatball's and Mike's Cherry Texas sheet-cake.

## CORAL Float Will Be "Making Memories" This Year

In just two short months it will be Illinois State Fair Time Again. The Twilight Parade will be on August 7th.

Bert and Lee were at the May GLAD Social, and revealed the plans that are already in the making for this year's CORAL (Coalition of Rainbow Alliances) float. The State Fair theme this year is "Making Memories," and while we don't want to give too much away at this time, we will give a hint – think scrapbooking!

Of course there will be the other

exciting components of the CORAL entry including the Rainbow Flag Corps. There will also be a public open house during float construction in July, which has proven to be a very popular event over the last two years.

We will have more specific details in the July GLAD Chat, but for now mark your calendars for the parade on August 7th. Bert and Lee would love to have as many GLAD folks as possible march with the CORAL entries, and assistance on float construction is always welcomed too.



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## Martha [Lesbian] Living

*By Martha Miller*

### JUNE BRIDES

I haven't known so many people who were getting married since I graduated high school. When we get together with other couples the first question is usually, "What is your wedding date?" Everyone seems to know. Most couples, including us, are using the anniversary they have been celebrating for years (often a lot of years). When the idea of gay marriage was first introduced back in the 90's, I have to admit it sounded strange to me. These days, in my mind, it's how things ought to be. I can't see the validity of any argument otherwise. Recently a gay marriage film was shown by a grade school teacher and it got her in all kinds of trouble. The people upset with the film said it didn't show "both sides" of the issue. I am so convinced of the rightness of gay marriage, that I wondered, "What is the other side?" Is it simply a man and a woman at the altar, or do they want the teacher to show a film on bigotry and hate along with a loving same sex couple making a commitment through marriage? The idea that there are better people or people with better beliefs comes straight from Germany in the 1930's and 40's.

My problem is, as usual, closer to home. I've been writing this column over the years and have never referred to my partner by anything else than "Girlfriend," even after she moved from my "Civilly United" partner to my betrothed and then to my spouse. I never liked the word lover because it implies that our relationship is all sex, which it is not, or "partner," because it implies that our relationship is all business, which it is not. Girlfriend seemed a little juvenile, but I didn't want to use her name although most of you know her name. So what will she become: my wife, my husband, my better half, my other half?

Yesterday at the County Clerk's office, the woman taking our information asked if we wanted 'bride' or 'spouse' on our Certification of Marriage; we chose spouse rather than stand there and try to figure out which of us was the bride. As we were waiting for the clerk to enter our data, I thought about how far we've come since 1985 when I started living in line with my desires—aka 'came out.' It was a hard time for gays because with AIDS, people had a new reason to hate and fear us. I remembered some of the interviews I did for my book, *Tales from the Levee*. During the years, 1965 through 1975, Smokey cultivated a good relationship with the local police so she could provide a space for drag shows, for dancing belly to belly and breast to breast, a place to meet and drink and laugh and find other people like ourselves. With "The Den," local gays and lesbians no longer had to go east of Eden (read Chicago or St. Louis) to meet new friends and lovers. I thought about Barbara Grier who started up Naiad Press and published new and old lesbian books because she "wanted young lesbians to have books that reflected their lives." They were books that let young girls know they weren't alone. Neither Smokey nor Barbara Grier could marry the women they loved. And there I stood next to the best thing that ever happened to me in my life, and I felt tears welling in my eyes. I whispered to Girlfriend that I felt like crying. She said, "Don't you dare." The clerk who seemed very happy to be helping us asked, "Do you need a tissue?"

From what I've observed in my lifetime, laws change long before attitudes. Today I have things that gays of the past couldn't even imagine. Even my own thinking on this issue has changed so quickly and so profoundly that I wonder how those with objections to gay marriage have the audacity to open their mouths. It doesn't have anything to do with them. So as I stand on the shoulders of the generations that came before mine, I can see how far we've come. It's an advantage of old age.

See [www.marthamiller.net](http://www.marthamiller.net) for "The Best of Lesbian Living"

More about Martha's writing and contact info can be found on her web site [www.marthamiller.net](http://www.marthamiller.net)