

# Coming out

## Parents unite to promote acceptance of homosexual children



By Noreen Fleck  
staff writer

**W**HILE LESBIAN and gay groups continue to rectify a tarnished stereotype, local parents of homosexual children are "coming out" to offer advice and share experiences to the public.

In a 30 minute documentary entitled, "Listening, Learning, Loving: Parents of Lesbians and Gays," parents unite to eliminate discrimination and promote acceptance of their homosexual children.

The program aired on Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. on MetroVision community access Channel 12 in Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi. The program also aired on Channel 13 at 7:30 p.m. in Livonia and at 7 p.m. on Channel 12 in Hedford.

The program will air again Nov. 15 same time and same channels.

The documentary includes historical incidents, medical facts and diverse experiences that producer Fred Shaheen of Detroit hopes will "open doors" for understanding and push away the myths and stigma of homosexuality.

The parents interviewed throughout the program are members of Farmington Hills based Parents FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). They reveal their experiences from suspecting their child is gay to overcoming emotions of guilt, anger, denial and shame that blocked acceptance and communication in their relationship.

"EVEN IF YOU do not have a homosexual child, it will not only move you, but make you keenly aware of some of the issues felt by so many in all walks of life," said Harriet Dart, president of PFLAG and a Farmington Hills resident.

PFLAG is an international organization with 90 active chapters where parents help other parents of lesbian and gay children with support and factual information on the subject of homosexuality.

"When you first hear the news, you feel like you are the only person in the world to have this revelation brought to you," said Bill Dart. "To

know there are other people out there is reassuring that we aren't freaks."

Every four families (10 percent of the population) has a gay family member, Bill Dart said. Most people will eventually encounter a gay friend or relative and they should be more open about it, he added.

"I'm just sorry. That was three years that I wasted because Jon needed me and I wasn't there to be a father to him when I should have been," said Mickey Arnowitz of Oak Park, who appears in the program with his gay son, Jonathan, and his wife, Harriet.

"There was something wrong and I never really knew what it was. I just couldn't put my finger on it,"

said Merry, whose daughter is a lesbian. "That's when we were anguished. When she came out, I was freed. And I'm sure she was too."

Shaheen, who is also gay, designed the program as a public awareness video and hopes the show will reach out to all people not only parents of gay children.

"When I was coming out, I had to confront all of my prejudices, whether it be blacks or Jews or whatever," Shaheen said. "It's an issue of total acceptance of people for who they are."

A copy of the documentary may be purchased for \$17. Mail your check to P.C. Productions Video Tape, 1767 Commonwealth, Detroit 48208.

## Pastor welcomed

Gordon Steinke has been installed as the new pastor for First Church of God in Farmington Hills.

He and his wife, Betty, moved here from Anderson, Ind., where he served as an associate pastor and led the youth and music ministries of the church. She has just graduated from Anderson University after studies in business management, sociology and family relations.

Steinke's installation came on the heels of a groundbreaking ceremony that took place on the church grounds at 25717 Power Road. The proposed structure will be used as a fellowship hall, and portions of the existing building will be renovated for use as educational and child care facilities.

"Not only am I adjusting to being pastor, I'm trying to find my way through a building program," Steinke said.

"But I view it as an opportunity. We want to serve people where they are hurting, where they have needs. We believe that serving God opens us up to experience the most fulfilling life possible."

"The Christian faith is practical, positive and life oriented; that is how we present it. As a church community the Church of God is open to all persons. We seek to be a unifying element in a divided society."



Gordon and Betty Steinke

STEINKE IS a Canadian by birth who spent his teenage years in the western part of Michigan.

He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Warner Southern College in Florida and a master of divinity degree from Anderson University School of Theology in Indiana.

In 1986, at the age of 22, he was the youngest graduate of the School of Theology. His graduating honors included the Distinguished Senior Award and an award for preaching.

## Teen stars in TV series

Elizabeth Berkley, a former resident of Farmington Hills, is now one of six teenagers starring in the TV series "Saved by the Bell." The show airs here Saturdays at 11:30 a.m. on Channel 4.

Elizabeth is the daughter of Fred

and Jerry Berkley who left the area about a year ago to further their daughter's career in Los Angeles, Cal. She was a student at North Farmington High and this year would have been a senior there.

## In the Quiet Room

A wicker basket, designed and handmade by Darcy Connolly (at left) of Farmington Hills, is in the Quiet Room of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Providence Hospital. With Connolly are Sister Angèle Hinkley, hospital chaplain and Linda Omstead, head nurse of the unit, who put in place the satin lining and blankets for the basket that was bought with a donation from Farmington Area Community Women. The bassinet is used for babies who have died or who are not expected to live. The Quiet Room is where parents can spend whatever final time they need with their child.



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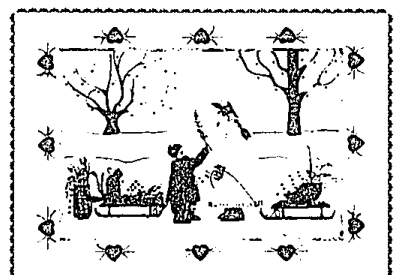
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