



## ***New Domestic Partnership Registry in Toledo***

On December 21, 2007, following the passage of legislation sponsored by Toledo City Councilman Joe McNamara, couples made history in Toledo by registering their domestic partnerships. The legislative win came about through the collaborative efforts of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Lambda Legal, the University of Toledo College of Law Legal Clinic, and EqualityToledo.

In September 2006, while finishing her last year of law school, EqualityToledo president Michelle Stecker first pitched the idea of a domestic partnership registry to Task Force State Legislative Director Kara Suffredini and UT Law Professor Rob Salem. The local law firm of Gallon, Takacs, Boissoneault & Schaffer Co., L.P.A., later donated \$2500 to fund a public interest law fellowship, which allowed Michelle to partner with national experts in Washington, DC, to plan an effective campaign. Michelle then worked with attorneys at Lambda Legal in Chicago to put the finishing touches on the legislation and to build political support.



**Merri Bame and Kim Welter register their partnership at the Toledo City Council office**

Last fall, City Councilman Joe McNamara and EqualityToledo Community Action president David Mann steered the legislation through the political process.

In a decisive and bipartisan vote of 10-2, Toledo City Council passed the ordinance on November 13. Lobbying and support from the business, academic, civil rights, religious, and progressive communities helped secure Mayor Carty Finkbeiner's signature, and the rest, as they say, is history.

## ***Safe Schools Project Receives Major Donation***



**Rob Salem accepts a "large" check from Rick Cornett, Wayne North, and Ed Hoffman to support the Safe Schools Project**

Proceeds from the 30th anniversary of the "Holiday With Heart" dinner dance at the Toledo Club were recently presented to Safe Schools Legal Director Rob Salem. The \$1500 donation will fund local educational initiatives to make youth safer in school through diversity education for teachers, staff, and administrators, and will support Gay-Straight Alliance student groups in local high schools. Under the joint leadership of Rob Salem, Dr. Susan Telljohann and Kim Welter, the Safe Schools team has trained over 500 high school employees since its inception in 2006.

## ***ET Executive Director Steps Down***

Kim Welter, Executive Director of Equality Toledo for more than two years, resigned her post at the end of 2007 in order to seek full-time employment opportunities. Kim did a great job forming collaborations, furthering Equality Toledo's mission, and tirelessly advocating for the rights of LGBT folks in Northwest Ohio. Kim helped the board increase membership and financial pledges, served as a media spokesperson, and assisted in the formation of the Safe Schools Project, Equality@Work Project, and the Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition. Fortunately for Equality Toledo, Kim has agreed to serve as a member of the board of directors, where she will assume responsibility for coordinating the Faith and Fairness initiative.

The Equality Toledo personnel committee hired Sharyl Hankin on January 1, 2008, to serve as part-time executive coordinator. Sharyl will maintain the membership list, assist the board, organize volunteers, serve as a resource for existing educational programs, and facilitate communication. She answers the Equality Toledo phone and receives electronic mail.



**Sharyl Hankin assumes role of Equality-Toledo Executive Coordinator**

## ***Trans Protections Won at UT***

In January 2008, University of Toledo President Lloyd Jacobs approved changes in UT's equal opportunity and harassment policies to include protections based on gender identity and expression. With technical assistance from National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Transgender Civil Rights Project Director Lisa Mottet, Toledo attorneys Rob Salem and Michelle Stecker of the Equality@Work Project worked with administrators at the University of Toledo for this important change to protect transgender students, staff, and faculty.

The Equality@Work Project applauds the leadership of President Lloyd Jacobs in making these progressive changes, and looks forward to seeing UT extend the domestic-partner health benefits that are currently offered to the Main Campus to employees of the former Medical University.

# EQUALITY TOLEDO

Working Together for Equality in our Community

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**Mission:** Equality Toledo works for equality for all Ohioans regardless of their marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, through education, anti-defamation efforts, and activism.

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### **Contact Information:**

Equality Toledo, P.O. Box 2659, Toledo, OH 43606  
 419-344-0045  
[info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org)  
[www.equalitytoledo.org](http://www.equalitytoledo.org)

## Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, February 19** “For the Bible Tells Me So” Film Screening – 7:00 p.m.  
Collingwood Presbyterian Church, 2108 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo, OH  
Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition and EqualityToledo
- Saturday, March 29** EqualityToledo’s Third Annual Meeting/Celebration – 4:00-6:00 p.m.  
Libbey Hall, University of Toledo Main Campus, Toledo, OH  
Presentation of Equality awards
- Sunday, June 1** “Faith and Fairness” Town Hall Meeting – 2:30-4:30 p.m.  
University of Toledo College of Law Auditorium  
Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition, HRC, and EqualityToledo
- Weekend, June 7-8** Toledo’s Old West End Festival – 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Equality Toledo Booth, 2051 Parkwood, near Woodruff  
Opportunity to purchase a new ET t-shirt and get active!

## EqualityToledo Sponsors

### Green level - \$1000

The Toledo Hospital  
Dr. Carol Bresnahan and Michelle Stecker  
Robert Salem, Esq., and Mark Mockensturm,  
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Domrose Foundation for Personal Rights  
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Holiday and Heart Charity Gala

### Blue level - \$500

Paulette Bond and Dr. Nellie Betancourt  
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James K. Larson & William P. Mies  
Linda Kaplin  
Rita Mansour  
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Law Offices of Kurt M. Young, LLC  
Madison Bistro/Central Hotdog  
Manos Greek Restaurant  
Pam and Cliff Langdon  
Sherry Tripepi and Dr. Susan Telljohann  
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Rev. Mark and Susan Bishop  
Janna and Randy Lake  
The Lunch Hour, Pam Richardson  
Rev. Steve Moulton  
Linda Wilson

For more information about an EqualityToledo corporate or business sponsorship, please contact Kim Welter at 419-344-0045 or [kim@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:kim@equalitytoledo.org)

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## Faith and Fairness Town Hall Meeting Set

Harry Knox, the Human Rights Campaign's Religion and Faith Program Director, and the Rev. Dr. Miguel De La Torre, Southern Baptist minister and professor of ethics and religion at Iliff School of Theology in Colorado, will serve as guest speakers at "Faith and Fairness Town Hall: Finding Tools for Advocacy from Your Faith Tradition" in the University of Toledo College of Law Auditorium on Sunday, June 1, from 2:30-4:30 p.m. EqualityToledo and the Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition are sponsoring this groundbreaking event, which is expected to draw more than 200 attendees.

Kim Welter, EqualityToledo board member and leader of the Faith and Fairness Initiative, observed, "We hope this event will begin a dialogue between religious leaders of diverse faith traditions and members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and allied communities in Northwest Ohio, and as a result, will foster more support, and eventually, equality for LGBT families." The Rev. Cheri Holdridge, convener of the Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition and new EqualityToledo board member, is pleased that two national religious leaders will partner with local religious leaders to discuss the intersection of faith and LGBT civil rights.

The event will be free and open to the public. If your faith or community organization would like to co-sponsor the town hall meeting, please contact Cheri at [CheriHoldridge@TheVillageOhio.org](mailto:CheriHoldridge@TheVillageOhio.org).

## Founding Board Member of EqualityToledo Passes Away

Rob Gilsdorf, a founding board member of EqualityToledo, died January 13, 2008, at the age of 44 after a courageous ten-year battle against brain cancer. In his last act of devotion to the LGBT civil rights movement, he requested that those who wished to honor his memory do so by means of donations in his memory to the Safe School Project. Rob leaves Ken Dymond, his partner of twenty-two years. We will miss Rob's smile, dedication, and enthusiasm.

If you wish to make a donation in Rob's memory to the Safe Schools Project, please call 419.344.0045 or you can donate online at [equalitytoledo.org](http://equalitytoledo.org).


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- A monthly pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ during 2007.
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  - \$100     \$50     \$25     Other (specify)

#### Equality sponsors

- Red level - \$10,000     Orange level - \$5,000     Yellow level - \$2,500
- Green level - \$1,000     Blue level - \$500     Purple level - \$250

Please return form and check to: **EqualityToledo, P.O. Box 2659, Toledo, OH 43606**

*Remember that all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law!*



## Congratulations, Equality Award Recipients!

The Board of Equality Toledo recently announced recipients of the 2008 Equality Awards, which will be presented at Equality Toledo's Third Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 29, at 4:00 p.m. at the University of Toledo's Libbey Hall. Equality Awards are given each year to people who have shown extraordinary courage and leadership in support of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender citizens.

Safe Schools Project leaders Rob Salem, Esq., and Dr. Susan Telljohann will recognize Dr. Cynthia Beekley, Superintendent of Springfield Local Schools, who invited the Safe Schools team to train over 400 teachers, staff, and administrators in her school district in January 2008. Thousands of students will benefit from a safer school environment as a direct result of Dr. Beekley's leadership.

Dr. Bob and Gene McEvoy, Marcy St. John, and the Rev. Margaret Mallory will receive awards from Faith and Fairness Initiative leader the Rev. Cheri Holdridge.

The McEvoy's hosted the Shower of Stoles exhibit in their home in Findlay when their local church governing body

voted to bar the exhibit from church grounds.

Thanks to Marcy St. John, a lay leader, the First Presbyterian Church, Bowling Green, became the first "More Light" Presbyterian Church USA congregation in Northwest Ohio, welcoming LGBT people to all offices of the church. In her capacity as the Toledo district superintendent of the United Methodist Church, the Rev. Margaret Mallory has been an uncompromising voice of support for the LGBT community, and a friend and colleague to progressive clergy.

Jewell Lightner, Director of Corporate Diversity at ProMedica Health System, will receive an Equality@Work Award for her leadership in implementing cutting-edge, trans-inclusive non-discrimination policies at ProMedica and her department's support of the domestic partnership registry in Toledo. Because of her commitment to LGBT equality, over 15,000 ProMedica employees in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan work in a safer and more diverse environment. An Equality Award will be presented to Toledo City Councilman Joe McNamara for championing Toledo's domestic partnership registry legislation.

## Safe Schools Project at "Creating Change" Conference



**Rob Salem, Susan Telljohann, Sherry Tripepi, Lisa Pescara-Kovach, and Carol Bresnahan served as trainers at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's "Creating Change" Conference.**

Equality Toledo's Safe Schools training team presented a three-hour training academy workshop, "Safe Schools Training of Trainers," at the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center in February, 2008. Members of the audience included executive directors of statewide LGBT organizations, attorneys, professional educators, and activists involved in the national safe schools movement. Dr. Lisa Pescara-Kovach, Dr. Susan Telljohann, Rob Salem, Dr. Carol Bresnahan, Noah Gillespie, Kim Welter, and Dr. Michelle Stecker shared research, training materials, legal information, and practical ways to build effective safe school trainings and collaborations.

## Interim Executive Director Named

Toledo attorney Michelle Stecker, former EqualityToledo Board President, was appointed Interim Executive Director to guide EqualityToledo through a transition before it hires a permanent Executive Director.

“We are very happy to have Michelle step up to serve as Interim Executive Director,” stated Sherry Tripepi, acting EqualityToledo Board President. “Michelle has ten years of experience leading non-profit organizations through intentional interim periods, and we are fortunate to have her expertise and training in our organization.”

Stecker remarked that an interim time is a wonderful opportunity for non-profit organizations to celebrate achievements, address challenges, reconnect with stakeholders, and plan for the future. She pledged to work closely with the transition team and the new board to help build a solid platform that will ensure the success of the new Executive Director.



**Michelle Stecker assumes new role as EqualityToledo Interim Executive Director**

## Register Your Partnership!

Through the efforts of EqualityToledo Community Action, Toledo became the first major city in Ohio to establish a domestic partnership registry. Since December 2007, forty-two couples have registered their partnerships with the city. It is easy to register—fill out the Domestic Partner Declaration form (available at [www.equalitytoledo.org](http://www.equalitytoledo.org)), have it notarized, and take or mail it with \$25.00 to the Clerk of Council, One Government Center, Suite 2120, Toledo, OH 43604. The office is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. Many employers are using the registry to help couples access health insurance benefits, and the partnership card can be used at hospitals to identify partner relationships.

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 Sharyl Hankin, Executive  
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 This event is free and open to the public.
- Weekend, June 7-8**      Toledo’s Old West End Festival – 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
 Stop by EqualityToledo Booth, 2051 Parkwood, near Woodruff  
 This year’s theme is “Vote Equality!”

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**Green level - \$1000**

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- The IanThom Foundation
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## Religion and the LGBT Community: Faith and Fairness Town Hall Meeting

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The Rev. Cheri Holdridge, convener of the Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition and new EqualityToledo board member, stated, “This event marks a historic moment in the struggle for LGBT civil rights in Ohio. It’s exciting to see religious people coming together in a new

dialogue based on love and justice.” The town hall is free and open to the public. If your faith or community organization would like to co-sponsor the town hall meeting, please contact Cheri at [CheriHoldridge@TheVillageOhio.org](mailto:CheriHoldridge@TheVillageOhio.org).



**Carol Bresnahan and Rob Salem discuss the Ohio Safe Schools Project at Creating Change.**

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## **Historic “Faith and Fairness” Event a Great Success**

More than one hundred people flocked to Faith and Fairness’s “Finding Strength and Tools for Advocacy in Your Faith Tradition” on June 1 at the University of Toledo College of Law Auditorium. The event marked the first time leaders of major world religions gathered in Northwest Ohio to discuss how religious communities can have a positive and productive dialogue about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and religion.

EqualityToledo and the Northwest Ohio Faith Coalition teamed up with the Religion and Faith Program of the Human Rights Campaign to provide resources for starting the dialogue about LGBT people and reclaiming faith. Speakers included Harry Knox, HRC’s Religion and Faith Program Director; the Rev. Dr. Miguel De La Torre, Southern Baptist minister and seminary professor; the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mallory, United Methodist pastor; Dr. Joseph Gentilini, Roman Catholic layman; and Brynna Fish, Jewish educator and social activist.

### **Meet Jon and Kellie**

Members of EqualityToledo’s Board of Directors enthusiastically announced the hire of two talented individuals – Jon Borland and Kellie Duckering – to provide leadership to our growing organization.

Jon Borland, a Graduate Academic Advisor at the University of Toledo, is our new Executive Director. Jon will provide leadership for external functions, such as public events, fundraising, and meeting with coalitions and other progressive organizations. An experienced fundraiser and LGBT organizer/activist, he earned bachelor’s degrees from UT in English and also in Communications/PR, and is finishing a master’s degree in counseling.



Harry Knox, Dr. Joseph Gentilini, & the Rev. Cheri Holdridge spoke about faith and fairness from the perspective of different faith traditions.



Brynna Fish, the Rev. Cheri Holdridge, and the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mallory champion the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in faith communities.

Kellie Duckering, Esq., a recent graduate of the UT College of Law and new member of the North Carolina bar, is an Assistant Research Coordinator and Data Manager for the National Center for Parents at the University of Toledo. Kellie is an information technology and computer expert, and will manage EqualityToledo’s new website (which she designed!), newsletter publications, and electronic communications to members.

We are very fortunate to have such talented individuals leading EqualityToledo. Please welcome and support them!

## LGBT Civil Rights Update

By Michelle Stecker, Esq.

Courts have been busy this spring issuing decisions that deny or uphold the basic civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens in the U.S. The worst decision came from the Michigan Supreme Court, which banned public employers from giving domestic partner health insurance benefits to gay employees.

In a 5-2 ruling along party lines, the court “interpreted” Michigan’s 2004 constitutional amendment banning gay marriage as forbidding public employers from offering unmarried couples access to health insurance. The court reached this baffling decision despite the assertion by proponents of the amendment during the campaign that the amendment would not strip any Michiganders of health insurance. This consequence of Michigan’s 2004 amendment is a flagrant example of right-wing judicial activism and a reminder of the mean-spiritedness of our right-wing opponents, who devote millions of volunteer hours and dollars to deny families access to health insurance.

It is time that these right-wing Michigan Supreme Court justices are voted out of office, while Justices Michael Cavanagh and Marilyn Kelly should be applauded for dissenting from the majority opinion. Kudos also to the public employers, including Michigan’s public universities, that have continued to provide insurance to unmarried partners of public employees through “other qualified benefit election.”

Fortunately for Ohio residents, last year, Ohio’s Supreme Court came to the opposite conclusion in its decision, dramatically limiting the scope of the 2004 anti-gay marriage amendment as not affecting domestic partner benefits. Public and private employers in Ohio may still provide health insurance benefits to the partners of LGBT employees.

The great victory this spring was issued by the California Supreme Court, which ruled that gay and lesbian couples should not be denied the fundamental right to marry. Although it looks like couples will be allowed to marry starting June 17, anti-gay forces recently obtained enough signatures to put the right to marriage up for a vote in the November election.

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### *EqualityToledo Fundraiser and*

### *Farewell to Michelle Stecker and Carol Bresnahan*

### **Champagne Brunch at**

### **Poco Piatti**

**Sunday, June 22, 2008**

**11 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**\$50 per person\***

**Poco Piatti Restaurant at Levis Commons  
3155 Chappel Dr., Perrysburg, OH 43551**

RSVP to Kellie Duckering by June 19  
419.344.0045 or [info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org)  
Or mail checks to EqualityToledo  
P.O. Box 2659, Toledo, OH 43606

\*\$30 per ticket tax-deductible donation

## Equality Is at Work

Members of EqualityToledo's Equality@Work initiative applaud Owens Corning and the University of Toledo for recently announcing that they will accept Toledo's domestic partnership registry as proof of a couple's relationship for the purposes of extending health insurance and other important benefits. The registry is a less-intrusive means of relationship recognition for unmarried couples. Couples may register to become domestic partners at the Toledo City Council office in the Federal Building during business hours.

## City and County Governments Support Equality

Toledo City Council and the Board of Lucas County Commissioners unanimously passed resolutions in support of the Equal Housing and Employment Act, an LGBT civil rights bill that was introduced in Ohio's legislature on March 11, 2008, with bipartisan support. Once passed, this law will make it illegal to discriminate against LGBT citizens in employment, housing and public accommodations. We thank our local elected officials for championing LGBT civil rights!

## LGBT Homeless Youth Expert in Toledo

Nick Ray, senior policy analyst at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute in New York and author of a comprehensive study on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender homeless youth, met with a dozen community leaders and policy makers at a roundtable discussion on strategies to eliminate youth homelessness at the University of Toledo College of Law on May 18. EqualityToledo's Safe Schools Project was the convener of this important event.

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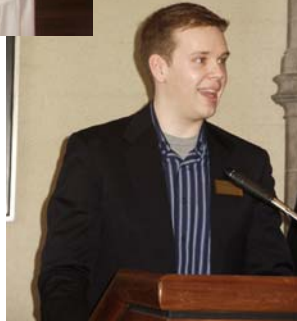
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**Annual Meeting pictures**

L-R: Diane Britton, Michelle Stecker, & Sharyl Hankin; Gene & Bob McEvoy; Joe McNamara; Libbey Hall; Jewell Lightner; Dr. Cynthia Beekley & Sherry Tripepi; Rev. Cheri Holdridge & the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mallory; David Mann, EqualityToledo Community Action Board President

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