By Vickie Tsombanos

The Safe Space program affords University students, faculty and organizations the opportunity to become part of a support network for LGBT and questioning students; it aims at creating a community “without closets.” The Bucknell Safe Space program started off with presentations given to Resident Assistants during their training and has continued to flourish. Recently, all six sororities voted to make their suites part of the support web. The decision was unanimous among the sisters living on the halls and the majority of their chapters. The program involves participation in one “active” event such as a workshop, and one “passive” event such as wearing the “gay? fine by me” t-shirts on Jeans Day. Safe Space training, about an hour long workshop, is available to as many sororities as wish to participate; Pi Beta Phi and Chi Omega are already committed. It is hoped that the reach of the program will extend to fraternities, residence halls, athletic teams, and other organizations in the future.

By Vickie Tsombanos

Civil unions, although a step, cannot stand as substitutes for the assurances and respect that come with the freedom to marry. In light of this, the second week of February is observed as “National Freedom to Marry Week.” Bucknell kicked off the festivities on Monday, February 12th, with a wonderful Valentine’s Day dinner. The Office of LGBT Awareness would like to thank everyone who attended and all those who contributed to making it a success!

For more information on marriage equality, please visit: http://www.freedomtomarry.org.
Benefits for Gay Couples Start in N.J.


TEANECK, N.J.:

Shortly after midnight, Steven Goldstein and Daniel Gross renewed their vows as New Jersey became the third state in the nation to offer civil unions for gay couples. The law that took effect Monday was “a big giant step forward,” said state Sen. Loretta Weinburg, a prime sponsor of the civil unions law, who hosted ceremonies in her office for couples including Goldstein and Gross.

The civil unions, which offer the legal benefits but not the title of marriage, were granted automatically to hundreds of gay New Jersey couples who had previously been joined in civil unions or married in other states or nations.

For Goldstein and Gross, that meant reaffirming their Vermont civil union. They would have had the rights in New Jersey even without the midnight ceremony.

Their civil union license—No.1—was completed at 12:09 a.m. Monday by Teaneck registrar Laura Turnbull.

Elsewhere across the state, a handful of town halls opened at 12:01 a.m. to accept license applications from couples who had not been joined previously. They must wait 72 hours before they can hold civil union ceremonies—just like weddings—and several planned to exchange vows early Thursday.

By midday Monday, at least 16 couples registered for a civil union license.

Partners Thomas Mannix and Kevin Pilla, who have been together since 1983, arrived at Asbury Park City Hall at about 11:30 p.m. Sunday, so they could be among the first to fill out the one-page license application as soon as the clock struck 12:01 a.m.

“The things being granted are long overdue and very important to have, so we wanted to take advantage of it as soon as it was available,” said Mannix, a 44-year-old business analyst. “But it was also bittersweet because it’s not full marriage. Once a separate class is made, a separate category, we get back to ‘separate but equal,’ which we’ve learned from the past doesn’t work.”

The American Civil Liberties Union joined in criticizing that aspect of the new law. “If such a separate system of rights and an affixation of a different label were done on the basis of race, we would decry it, call it bigotry, see it as an affront to all New Yorkers, and call it abhorrent and wrong,” said Ed Barocas, legal director for the group’s New Jersey chapter. “When it is done on the basis of sexual orientation, it is no less of an affront to all New Yorkers, and no less abhorrent and wrong.”

Among the many benefits under the civil unions law, gay couples, gain the rights to adoption, child custody, visiting a hospitalized partner and making medical decisions. They also now have the right not to testify against a partner in state court.

However, the federal government and most states do not recognize the unions. That means, for instance, that a surviving member of a civil union would not be entitled to his/hers due partner’s social security benefits. And if a partner is hospitalized in another state, the other may not have automatic visitation rights.

New Jersey lawmakers hastily created civil unions in December, less than two months after a state Supreme Court decision held that gay couples had a right to the same benefits as married couples.

Gay rights activists in the state say they’ll continue to press for full marriage rights through both political channels and lawsuits. Some social conservative groups, meanwhile, are pledging to block same-sex marriage by pressing for an amendment to the state constitution that prohibits such unions.

World News: “Mexico City Gets Gay Wedding Fever.”


MEXICO CITY, MEXICO:

More than 100 Mexican gay and Lesbian couples celebrated their registrations for civil unions in the capital city’s central plaza, wearing suits and wedding dresses and throwing rice in a scene akin to a mass engagement party.

The couples noted their intent with the nongovernmental Citizens Civil Union Network ahead of a law allowing gay couples to register their unions and gain many of the rights of married couples.

Mexico City, a semi-independent capital zone that had some of the same powers as legislatures, approved the state law in November. It takes effect March 16.

On Wednesday, Eduardo Martinez, 21, exchanged rings with his partner, Alberto Pichardo, 19, to celebrate their commitment.

“Our families support us. We have taken the decision in good conscience and we are very happy,” said Martinez.

Mexico’s northern state of Coahuila, bordering Texas, has already enacted a similar law.

Last month, a lesbian couple there registered for what officials called Mexico’s first gay civil union in a ceremony broadcast on national television. The Roman Catholic Church and the conservative National Action Party of President Felipe Calderon have sharply criticized the laws.

While homosexuality is still taboo in many rural parts of Latin America, the region’s urban areas are becoming more socially liberal. Argentina’s capital of Buenos Aires and the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul have also legalized same-sex civil unions. At the national level, lawmakers in Costa Rica and Colombia have debated, but not passed, similar measures.

And...Did You Know?

-Ireland’s High Court has rejected a lesbian couple’s attempt to have their marriage legally recognized.

-The Canadian Senate has approved a bill legalizing same-sex marriages, following a similar decision by the lower house of parliament last month.

-Two gay rangers in South Africa have become the first gay couple in the continent to get married

-Gay and Lesbian News from Yahoo.

-Argentina’s top court ruled that gay couples in long-term relationships should have the same rights to shared assets as heterosexual couples.
Study: Adoptive Parents Invest More In Their Kids

"What they’re trying to do is compensate. ... They recognize the barriers they face, and it sets the stage for them to be better parents."

Adoptive parents invest more time and financial resources in their children than biological parents, according to a new national study challenging arguments that have been used to oppose same-sex marriage and gay adoption.

The study, published in the new issue of the American Sociological Review, found that couples who adopt spend more money on their children and invest more time on such activities as reading to them, eating together and talking with them about their problems.

"One of the reasons adoptive parents invest more is that they really want children, and they go to extraordinary means to have them," Indiana University sociologist Brian Powell, one of the study's three co-authors, said in a telephone interview Monday. Powell's co-authors were Laura Hamilton, a doctoral student at Indiana University, and Simon Cheng, a sociology professor at the University of Connecticut.

"Adoptive parents face a culture where, to many other people, adoption is not real parenthood," Powell said. "What they're trying to do is compensate. ... They recognize the barriers they face, and it sets the stage for them to be better parents."

Powell and his colleagues examined data from 13,000 households with first-graders in the family. The data was part of a detailed survey called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies.

The researchers said 161 families in the survey were headed by two adoptive parents, and they rated better overall than families with biological parents on an array of criteria -- including helping with homework, parental involvement in school, exposure to cultural activities and family attendance at religious services. The only category in which adoptive parents fared worse was the frequency of talking with parents of other children.

The researchers noted that adoptive couples, in general, were older and wealthier than biological parents, but said the adoptive parents still had an advantage -- albeit smaller -- when the data was reanalyzed to account for income inequality.

In particular, the researchers said, adoptive parents had a pronounced edge over single-parent and stepparent families.

The researchers said their findings call into question the long-standing argument that children are best off with their biological parents. Such arguments were included in state Supreme Court rulings last year in New York and Washington that upheld laws against same-sex marriage.

"It's an affirmation that there are all sorts of families that are good for kids," he said. "Adoptive parents aren't less good or better. They just bring different benefits to the table. In terms of how families are formed, it should be a level playing field."

The researchers said gay and lesbian parents may react to discrimination by taking extra, compensatory steps to promote their children's welfare.

"Ironically, the same social context that creates struggles for these alternative families may also set the stage for them to excel in some measures of parenting" the study concluded.

An opponent of same-sex marriage, Peter Sprigg of the conservative Family Research Counsel, noted that the study focused on male/female adoptive couples, not on same-sex couples, and he questioned whether it shed any new light on adoptive parenting by gays.

Sprigg, the research council's vice president for policy, said he warmly supports adoption, but believes it is best undertaken by married, heterosexual couples.

Adam Pertman, executive director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, welcomed the study's findings, but cautioned against possibly exaggerated interpretations of it.

The study was funded by the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation and the American Educational Research Association.

Some Useful Websites:

-Gay and Lesbian Politics and Law Resources: http://www.indiana.edu/~glbtpol/others.html


The Office of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Awareness, is committed to making Bucknell a safe place for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. This is accomplished by supporting student groups and efforts to educating and increase awareness about LGBT issues and current public policy concerns. The office is guided by an Advisory Board comprised of students, faculty, staff, and administrators who are interested in and committed to the mission of the Office.

Given that Bucknell is dedicated to prepare its students to be morally responsible citizens, and given that societal attitudes are changing, the University attempts to promote attitudes and behaviors among its students which will create a climate of mutual respect and empower us all to appreciate diversity.

**Upcoming Events:**

**March**

**Tuesday, March 20:**

*The Birdcage*, 3rd Tuesday LGBT Film Series, 7:00pm, Gallery Theatre, ELC 301. Classic LGBT comedy starring Robin Williams and Nathan Lane, with discussion led by Dean Robert M. Midkiff, Jr.

**Tuesday, March 27:**

*Guerrilla Girls on Tour* “Silence is Violence,” 7:00 p.m. in Tustin Theater. A live theatrical event highlighting the struggles and triumphs of women’s activism. Sponsored by the Women’s Resource Center, the Office of LGBT Awareness and others.

http://www.bucknell.edu/LGBT.xml