

GUARDIAN

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Free event scheduled for Saturday, October 2 from 10am to 2pm

Take a Stand to End Florida's Adoption Ban

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida urges everyone to take a stand against Florida's adoption ban by gay men and lesbians.

You are invited to a free event to gain the information and skills necessary to change the hearts and minds of your friends, neighbors, and communities on **Saturday, October 2 from 10 AM to 2 PM** at the Pride Community Center of North Central Florida, 3131 NW 13th St., in Gainesville.

The event is sponsored by the ACLU of Florida, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Family Equality Council, and Equality Florida.

Florida is the only state that categorically prohibits gay people from adopting children. This discriminatory law hurts thousands of children languishing in Florida's foster care system, denying them a forever home.

On September 22 a Florida appeals court struck down a state law barring gay people from adopting. The decision affirms an earlier family court ruling in the case that would allow Martin Gill to adopt two foster children he is raising with his partner (*see article at right*). It's not clear as of this writing if this is in fact the end of the adoption ban or if the case will be appealed to the Florida Supreme Court.

The October 2 training, which includes a light lunch for participants, will include a GLAAD adult speaker and media training to learn the basic skills and information necessary to take a stand against Florida's adoption ban. The Family Equality Council will sponsor a youth program for those ages 9-13, which focuses on increasing self-esteem, building community, and developing leadership skills in the context of age-specific issues such as responding to

Breaking News:

Appeals Court Strikes Down Adoption Ban

From the ACLU of Florida press release – A Florida appeals court on Sept. 22 struck down a state law barring gay people from adopting. The decision affirms an earlier family court ruling in the case that would allow Martin Gill to adopt two foster children he is raising with his partner. The American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Florida, which represent Gill in the case, called the decision a victory for the thousands of children waiting to be adopted in Florida.

"This is just the news that we have been waiting so anxiously for here," said Gill, who has been a parent to the two boys for more than five years. "This is a giant step toward being able to give our sons the stability and permanency that they are being denied."

"Florida's law unconstitutionally singles out gay people and the children in their care for unequal treatment, denying many children the long-term security that comes with adoption," said Leslie Cooper, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU LGBT Project who argued the case before Florida's Third District Court of Appeal. "We are grateful that the court saw the cruel consequences this law has on children, especially those in foster care who may never know the security of a permanent home."

On November 25, 2008, Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Cindy Lederman granted Gill adoptions of the now six- and ten-year-old brothers, after a four-day trial that highlighted scientific evidence and recognition by the Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) that gay and straight people make equally good parents. As the appeals court recognized in its opinion, the scientific evidence shows that "there are no differences in the parenting of homosexuals or the adjustment of their children. . . [and] the issue is so far beyond dispute that it would be irrational to hold otherwise; the best interests of children are not preserved by prohibiting homosexual adoption."

The Sept. 22 decision by the Florida Third District Court of Appeal is the first time that an appellate court has ruled that Florida's law barring gay people from adopting is unconstitutional.

bullying and engaging social media. This training is intended to prepare youth to tell their personal stories in support of efforts to repeal the state's adoption ban. There will also be a children's program for those ages 3-8, which focuses on celebrating LGBT and all loving families through arts and crafts, games, stories and more.

You can register online for the October 2 free training at www.acluf.org/training. For more information call 786-363-2713 or email training@acluf.org.

Finally, there are two free events regarding Florida's adoption ban: On Tuesday, September 28, from 7:00 to 8:40 PM there will be a film screening at the Hippodrome of *In Anita's Wake: The Irrational War on Florida's Gay Families*, followed by audience Q&A. On Wednesday, September 29, from 12 to 1 PM there will be an adoption ban panel discussion at the UF Levin College of Law, Room 345. The panel will feature Martin Gill, the foster parent who challenged the law; ACLU Attorney Shelbi Day, attorney for Mr. Gill; Professor Joseph Jackson, coauthor of an *amicus* brief filed in the appeal; and Dr. Lauren Fasig, an expert in child development.

HRCNCF Endorses Rick Nesbit and Jancie Vinson for November 2 School Board races

In August the Human Rights Council of North Central Florida endorsed to its membership Alachua County School Board candidates Rick Nesbit, Gunnar Paulson and Jancie Vinson for their respective races in Districts 1, 3, and 5.

Paulson won his election outright with more than 50% of the vote in the August 24 primary election. Nesbit and Vinson were among the top two vote-getters in their races, but since neither achieved more than 50%, both are on the November 2 general election ballot in their respective runoff races.

HRCNCF President Susan Eichner urged HRCNCF members to be sure and get out and vote for candidates Nesbit and Vinson: "As demonstrated by their civic record, their responses to our questionnaire and at our forum, candidates Nesbit

and Vinson demonstrated an excellent grasp of LGBT issues in our public school system."

Absentee ballots can be requested by calling the Supervisor of Elections office at 352-374-5252. Early voting starts on Monday, October 18, and runs through Saturday, October 30. On Election Day, polling precincts are open from 7 AM to 7 PM.

Celebrate Gainesville PRIDE Days 2010 from October 15-24

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida is proud to support the 2010 Gainesville PRIDE Days activities:

Friday, October 15, from 7 to 8:30 PM: 11th Annual PRIDE Community Awards Dinner & Silent Auction. Sweetwater Branch Inn, 625 E. University Ave. in Gainesville. Tickets are \$40 each or \$350 to sponsor a table of 8 and are available at Pride Community Center. Social Mixer and Silent Auction begin at 6 PM. Recognition awards will be presented for Woman, Man, Community Person, and Business of the Year. Keynote speaker is Gainesville Mayor Craig Lowe. *Note the change of venue this year to the Sweetwater Branch Inn.*

Saturday, October 16: Multi-Artist Art Show to Celebrate PRIDE at Pride Community Center, 3131 NW 13th St.

Sunday, October 17, 10:15 AM: PRIDE service at Trinity MCC, 11604 SW Archer Road: "Community and Friends Sunday", a service for the entire community.

Sunday, October 17, from 12-3 PM: PCCNCF sponsors PRIDE Picnic at Westside Park. Lunch and beverages available for small donation. Organized games such as Frisbee, horseshoes and volleyball will be available.

Thursday, October 21, from 7-9 PM: GatorBear's Pride potluck and collection for TREE, a program to provide household products for people in Alachua County with HIV or AIDS. At the Pride Community Center.

Saturday, October 23, at 1 PM: Annual PRIDE Parade. From West 7th St. down University Avenue to downtown Bo Diddley Community Plaza. Parade begins gathering at 12:30 PM at the staging area at Ayers Medical Center parking lot. If your group wants to participate in the parade, contact the Parade Director at parade@gainesvillepride.org.

Saturday, October 23, from 2-9 PM: Annual PRIDE Festival at Gainesville's Bo Diddley Community Plaza. Live music, vendors, and a Kids Space. Free and open to the public.

Sunday, October 24, from 6:30-10 PM: Garden Party at Spikes, 4130 NW 6th St., Gainesville.

The next meeting of the HRCNCF Board of Directors is October 14, 2010, at 7:00 PM at the Pride Community Center of North Central Florida, 3131 NW 13th St., in Gainesville. The *Guardian* is published quarterly.