February/March 2005

h.e.r.s.

houston . entertainment . rights . sexuality

Women For Change

All New! Shoe's Music Review

Ask Lola

Tips for planning your retirement

First Anniversary Issue

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Cover photo by:
Shaunte Angelo

Letter From the Editor

What a long strange trip it has been. We are officially one year old and oh-so-mature (wink wink). I have certainly learned a lot over the past year and would like to take a moment to share my profound insight with you.

First off, the purpose of the magazine was to give Houston women, primarily lesbians, a publication they can call their own. We wanted to give women a fresh outlook, good advice and a glimpse at the lives of local women throughout the community, while representing what we stand for: Houston.Entertainment.Rights.Sexuality. Based on the criteria, I'd say we succeeded.

An underlying goal of mine was to unite our fragmented community. My vision was to get all women—no matter what age, income, background, ethnicity, or even orientation—involved in the greater good.

We learned who our friends are real quick, like Nick, the owner of Chances, who threw caution to the wind and bought the back page for a full year, and that was before we even had a first issue. Also, the guys at Outsmart, especially Tim and Jack, who have been available to me for both questions and support. There were several businesses that could not afford to buy advertising, but allowed us to distribute there.

Along the way, we have had a handful of people excited to help us and who understood our vision. Our "staffers" have rotated in and out over the past year, but they have all left their mark in some way.

Several businesses were interested in doing trade-outs. We did trade with a few influential organizations, and I am thankful for their generosity: GLYP, The Chamber, Pride Houston and Houston Women's Festival. They made it possible for us to be in the parade, and have a booth at Empower and The Houston Women's Festival. As for the rest, it was a kind offer, but there are only so many trade-outs an upstart magazine can do without losing too much money.

I have to say that the women I have spoken to and have worked with over the past year, have expressed some concern over the lesbian community in Houston, all with the underlying theme of unification. I know that our community is fragmented—sometimes clique-ish or elitist, or just geographically spread out (I mean I had no idea so many lesbians lived in Pearland or Kingwood). But I have faith that we can gather together and rejoice in our sisterhood, not just as lesbians, but as women. With another 4 years of Bush in office and with the Texas legislature trying to take away our rights, now is the time for uniting, not dividing.

I urge all of you to get to know other women outside of your comfort zone, outside of your church, school, or sport of choice. Socialize and make a difference by volunteering with groups like Pride Houston or Equality Knocks. Give back to the community by helping our older sisters in need through Assisthers. Visit the GLBT Community Center on lesbian game night. Break out of your shell!

The women featured in this issue know a thing or two about helping, healing and nuturing the spirit. Lucy Watson and Pat Gandy spend countless hours helping our community as officers of LHI. They are just two of the women with that or-

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h.e.r.s.

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We welcome all women to participate in this forum regardless of orientation, gender identity, age, race or beliefs.

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(Continued from Page 4)
ganization who really put their heart in their work. Thanks to them and all of the women who volunteer at LHI for the wonderful work they do.

Lexie Peveto is a local artst who is passionate about her talent, and sharing her work with others. She has made it her mission to donate her work to various charities to find a cure for AIDS.

We also meet a group of women who make *change* a part of their agenda. OLOC, or Old Lesbians Organizng for Change, meet regularly to combat ageism, sexism and homophobia. Who says life is over at 60? These women will show you that it has only just begun.

I hope these stories motivate and strengthen you to make a difference and to strive to be the best women you can be. I am making my to-do list for the new year now.

Two events in February are sure to get you out and socializing: LHI's Valentines Gala on February 12 at the Warwick Hotel with special guest Suzanne Westenhoefer, and the h.e.r.s. First Anniversary Party sponsored by h.e.r.s., Chances, and The L Word, which will be held at the newly renovated Chances on February 20. Don't miss the "Drag King Revue" after the premiere of *The L Word*. Come by for food, drink specials and prizes.

Lastly, I want to say a special thank you to the businesses that placed consecutive ads with us: Chances, Community Gospel Church, Pampered Spirit, and Robinhoods Hair Salon.

And to all of the women and men I have met or worked with over the past year, thank you for the lessons I have learned and the friendships I will treausre.

Take care,

This issue is dedicated to Shirley Chisholm 11/30/1924-1/1-2005. May her spirit inspire us all.

Homophobic Conference Coming to Houston

by Shaunte Angelo

Grace Community Church is welcoming the homophobic group Focus on the Family on February 19, 2005, for a conference entitled "Love Won Out." This group is dedicated to transforming gays and lesbians into heterosexuals through Jesus Christ. The conference is also aimed at instructing freinds and parents of gays on tactics of how to help free their loved one from this "preventable condition".

A call to protest was made on a forum found on the website www.craigslist.com. The blogger urged Houstonians to organize a demonstration because he or she lived out of town. "I went to this conference (as a protester) and it's terrifying. I think my favorite quote was in reference to properly socializing your male child. The speaker suggested throwing the child up in the air and catching him repeatedly so that he would learn that fear is fun and therefore be appropriately masculine. He ended this suggestion by saying "Even if you drop him on his head a few times, it's better than the alternative" —the alternative, of course, being that the child grows up to be gay."

On the website, www.exodus.to, one will find several photos of smiling ex-gays, thankful to the organization for saving their lives. Many of the speakers at the up-coming conference are transformed homosexuals.

The chilling statement from the website says it best:
"Focus on the Family is promoting the truth that homosexuality is preventable and treatable — a message routinely silenced today. We want people to know that individuals don't have to be gay. That's why we've developed a one-day conference for those looking for answers on this often-divisive issue. Whether you are an educator, parent, concerned citizen or even a gay activist, Love Won Out will inform, inspire and offer you hope."

As if.

Calendar

Compiled by Kristen Kemp

february

february 1: Houston Ethics Reform Summit hosted by Campaigns for People 6:00 p.m., University of St. Thomas, Jones Hall, free & open to the public, limited seating, www.campaignsforpeople.org

february 4: Ani DiFranco @ Verizon Wireless Theater

february 5: Casting Call for Drag King Revue Auditions @ Chances (1100 Westheimer), 2:30-5:30 p.m., Drag Kings with attitude, any age, wanted for Drag King Revue. Come to impress with 3-5 minute song, lip-synch only, costumes mandatory, props preferred. CD player provided. For more info. call 832.640.6878

february 8: Pride Houston Production meeting, www.pridehouston.org

thru february 12: "Happy Nude Year" media exhibition @ Anya Tish Gallery 1740 Sunset Blvd, 713.524.2299

february 12: Gay Games Team Houston 2006 meeting
4:00-5:00 p.m., GLBT Community Center, meets 2nd sunday of month, www.gaygamesteamhouston.org

february 12: LHI's 2005 Valentine Gala
6:30 p.m. - 12:30 a.m., tickets $75, Warwick Hotel, Suzanne Westenhoeffer to perform, www.lhihouston.org

february 17: Texans for Medical Marijuana Lobby Day
for more info call Karen @ 512.220.9209, www.texansformedicalmarijuana.org

february 20: Chances Grand Re-opening, "L Word" Premiere Party & h.e.r.s. magazine 1st Anniversary Party Drag King Revue/Contest, Drink Specials, & much more! Chances (1100 Westheimer), 8 p.m.

february 25: Critical Mass Ride Meets 5:30 p.m. at reflecting pool in front of City Hall, ride begins 6:00 p.m., last friday of every month, criticalmassrides.info

february 26: Patrice Pike, McGonigel's Mucky Duck 7:30 p.m., $10

february 27-march 6: The Winter Party @ Lake Tahoe www.ascentlaketahoe.com

march

march 13: 16th Annual AIDS Walk Houston
www.aidswalkhouston.org

march 19: Global Day of Protest on the 2 Year Anniversary of the Iraq War

march 23-27: Dinah Shore Weekend 2005
www.clubskirts.com

Monday:
Ladies Night Live w/Jen Frisco, KPFT 90.1, 1 a.m. – 6 a.m.
The First Sex, KPFT 90.1, (2nd Mon.) 10-11 p.m.
Queer Voices, KPFT 90.1, 8-10 p.m.
Tuesday:
Open mic night @ Taft Street Coffee
Open mic @ Helios
Musical Theater Night @ Meteor
Women Only Drum Circle, SuperHappyFunland (2nd Tue.), 7 p.m.
LHI monthly meetings (1st Tues.) 713.603.0023
Happy Hour @ Hollywood Restaurant, 6:30 p.m.
Montrose Social Group, 7:30 p.m., room 224, Bering Church
Wednesday:
"Ladies" Night @ Bocado's
Professional Women's Night @ Meteor (1st & 3rd Wed.)
Skating hosted by OutSkate Roller Skate Club, Zenith Roller Rink, $5, 281.933.5818
HGLPC meets GLBT Community Center (1st Wed.) 7 p.m.
Lesbian Coming Out Night, (1st & 3rd Wed.), 6-7:30 p.m., GLBT Community Center
Uncommon Legacy Foundation, (3rd Wed.) Hollywood Cafe, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday:
Cherry Bomb @ Chances
Open Mic w/FO @ Chances
Montrose Writers Project, last Thursday of month, 10-11 a.m., GLBT Community Center
Friday:
Lesbian Film Night (4th Fri.), 7 p.m., GLBT Community Center
Women's Game Night (2nd Fri.), 7 p.m., GLBT Community Center
Midnights @ Landmark River Oaks, specialty viewings, 713.866.8881
HATCH meets 7-10 p.m.; Youth Line 713.529.3590
Saturday:
Live Bands @ Chances
Yale Street Market (1st Sat.)
After Hours: KPFT 90.1, 12 a.m.
Habitat (after hours) 1415 California, 713.522.7066
Sunday:
LOAF monthly meeting (3rd Sun.) 2 p.m., 713.869.1482
HATCH meets 6-9 p.m.; Youth Line 713.529.3590
Black on Black: KPFT 90.1, (3rd Sun.) 2 a.m.

Submit your events to thescene@hershouston.com

Carol Wyatt Sounds Off Against Torture

I remember when I discovered that America isn't perfect. Let's face it – public school history classes aren't exactly written to expose our country's warts. Anywho, I was a high school senior when I first learned about the Japanese internment camps in California during World War II. For those of you who might have slept through that particular class, the US government rounded up people of Japanese descent – the great majority of them US citizens – and confined them to what amounted to prison camps for the duration of the war. There were no charges or trials. They were guilty of no crime other than their Japanese heritage. They lost their homes, businesses, property and their freedom. Their freedom was finally restored, but all their assets were long gone.

At 16, I was appalled to find out that this kind of travesty could happen in our country. Wasn't this unconstitutional? Did the average citizen know what was going on? Who stood up to fight for internees? Surely nothing like this could ever happen again. And since I have a strong Don Quixote streak in me (always tilting at windmills, doncha know!), I remember vowing that I would fight injustice whenever and wherever it might rear its ugly head. This type of thing would never happen on MY watch!

Do you imagine that members of that "Greatest Generation" from World War II are proud of having looked the other way while our government violated the fundamental rights of fellow human beings – our fellow citizens? I think not.

We are currently facing our own generation's challenge of honor. Even as we speak, the Bush administration is violating International law, the US Constitution and the basic standards of human decency in its handling of prisoners and detainees rounded up during Shrub's "War on Terra". Will we have the courage to stand up? How will future generations judge our actions, or lack thereof?

Don't believe the lies that Abu Ghraib was an aberration conducted by a few night shift sickos. Torture and other unspeakable abuses have occurred and CONTINUE to occur at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and several other off-shore prisons. Even now, the US government is making plans to create a prison for the permanent interment of detainees for whom they do not have sufficient evidence to charge and take to trial. Just thinking off the top of my head here, but if you don't have enough evidence to charge them, shouldn't they be released???

The Guantanamo prisoners are entering their third year of internment. Despite the specific instructions of US courts, only a handful of those prisoners have been charged or have been allowed access to an attorney. Of course, they may be the lucky ones ("lucky" being a relative term here). The CIA is spiriting some prisoners away to secret locations, presumably to be questioned in countries where interrogators are even less hobbled by the Geneva Convention that we are at the moment (and that bar is pretty darn low!)

Yes, I know that they are not US citizens, and yes, I know that their bad guys have perpetrated ghastly acts against us. But aren't we supposed to be wearing the white hats here? Shouldn't the USA stand for fair play and honesty and the rule of law? Is our commitment to justice so shallow that we are willing to throw it overboard at the first sign of threat? Is the government taking these actions in YOUR name?

The Alberto Gonzalez confirmation hearings have brought torture to the front page again, although the back pages have been simmering for weeks with proof that the abuses are on-going and are widespread. The nation's next chief law enforcement official wrote the memos that called the Geneva Convention "quaint". He made the arguments justifying our use of interrogation methods, methods that you would certainly define as torture if they were being applied to you. And the spineless Democratic Senators mustered only feeble attempts to hold him (and Bush) accountable for what is going on.

There are a million reasons to fight what is happening. It's not right. It's not fair. It makes the rest of the world hate us all the more. It isn't even particularly effective at getting actionable intelligence. It gives our foes the license to treat US prisoners just as obscenely. Pick any arguments that resonate with you, but please find a way to take this issue to heart.

I don't know how to stop it. But a good first step is to raise the level of water cooler discussion. Bush is a consummately political animal. On the rare occasion, he has shown himself vulnerable to public opinion. Of course, it took three days to shame him away from brush clearing at his faux ranch to make a public statement of concern and commitment for the tsunami tragedy. But he did hear the rumblings of public criticism, and he responded.

I don't know how to stop it. But I do know that saying "I didn't believe I could make a difference so I didn't even try" makes us just about as morally culpable as the despicable minions who are carrying out Bush's de facto policies. Not on MY watch!

SHOE'S MUSIC REVIEW

Welcome to the new section of h.e.r.s. magazine and what is to become my little platform of musical insight. I thought about jumping into this without so much as a greeting or explanation of my cynicism. From my experience as a DJ, I have been disheartened by some of the requests I receive both at Chances and Numbers. But, there have also been times when I've been pleasantly surprised, especially during my night at the G-Spot when I received requests for Joy Division or The Smiths. Now, I am not here to cast broad and sweeping generalizations towards you the reader, for I know the sad state of music in general concerning the heterosexual community, not just ours. Instead, I want to light a fire in this community and hopefully inspire a new fervor for music. The whole nation is in a crisis politically and musically.

A problem with music today is that the corporate music industry has the state of music in a headlock. The list of major labels is shrinking into an even shorter list. Radio stations are owned by only a handful of corporations. Live venues and clubs are being weeded out by corporations like Clear Channel and local governments misguided by their war on drugs which translates into a war on fun. Don't get me wrong, I am not advocating the use of drugs, that is your own personal business. The war on drug's impact affects the innocent just as much. It is comparable to collective punishment.

The internet has sparked a revolution against these major labels and the RIAA, unfortunately it is also taking a toll on local music retailers like Record Rack and my old favorite haunt, Noo Beat Records. We are being spoon-fed sub-par music from all directions. It is not easy to jump into this mess and fish out the good stuff from the bad. This has created the apathy so prevalent across the nation.

Last month I attended The Magnetic Fields' first concert in Houston at Numbers. The turn out was completely disappointing, even though it was a momentous occasion for them to even be performing in our city.

I firmly stand against supporting artists just because we share the same sexuality. In fact, when I first discovered them it was unknown to me that the lead singer, Stephin Merritt, and occasional singer/cohort Claudia Gonson were queer. Their music is superb and borders on utter genius.

Of course, it is a double-edged sword concerning gay artists. I know my stance on the situation, but I still expected a larger gay audience. It was painfully obvious not just to me, but Claudia as well when she launched into several 'public service announcements' about being free to be gay in the 4th largest city of the United States. I'll try give the benefit of doubt that many were at the Mirah show. Even though she's been to Houston before and more than likely will be returning again, not to mention there was an early show for The Magnetic Fields so that you could have gone to both.

It was really a poor decision on you, the imaginary target of my shame, to have made.

If I were to listen to the stereotypes, your taste in music would comprise of people like Melissa Etheridge, K.D. Lang, The Indigo Girls, Ani Difranco, country music and/or hip-hop. There is also the underground stereotype of listening to bands like Le Tigre, Sleater-Kinney, Bikini Kill, and Cat Power. Nevertheless, I know we are more complex than that! Right? It is good to have an eclectic taste in music. Currently, I am listening to Gang of Four; a British post-punk band from the late 70s and 80s whose political diatribe is one of the smartest put to music. Later I might listen to Madonna, This Mortal Coil, Felix Da Housecat, Le Tigre, The Magnetic Fields, or an opera. There's nothing wrong with listening to artists that fall into our stereotypes but it should not define us.

Therefore, I challenge all to not accept what is so easily accessible, to make a concerted effort to dig for meaningful or creative music. In the issues to follow, you will find CD reviews, articles, interviews and tidbits of direction.

The Arcade Fire Scores High, Gwen's Solo Stumbles

by Shoe

Gwen Stefani – *Love. Angel.Music.Baby.* – Interscope

Waiting For A Consistent Album

Gwen Stefani was clearly too eager to come out with a solo album. This is a typical over hyped album plagued with the problems of all too many 'superstar' albums. Stefani, or more than likely the money people, was too worried about the success of the album; they enlisted help from scores of the who's who in the music biz.

The album begins strong with "What You Waiting For." The song is dance friendly and catchy. The deep bass line is sure to get the hips gyrating while the firm beat tells you exactly what your feet should be doing, stomping on the dance floor. Vocally, it is also the strongest on the album and the most dynamic. The honest lyrical content concerning her embarkment of her solo career is refreshing.

It quickly degrades for my taste to a reggaeton tip on "Rich Girl" and "Hollaback Girl" is virtually unlistenable. On "Hollaback Girl," she decided to use a drumbeat for an entire song that is better served during breaks and brings annoyance to a new level.

"Cool" is like the ointment to the rash of "Hollaback Girl." Its down tempo synthpop ballad borders on being too sweet and cheesy, but maintains from teetering off. With "Bubble Pop Electric," it is easy to hear the influence of a watered down Fischerspooner. The title is quite reflective of the song's feel. It stands out from the bunch in its mesh of pop and the relatively inaccessible influences of 80s industrial and new wave.

The rest of the album shows off its influence like it were wearing a nametag. "Hi, my name is 80s derivative, schizophrenic pop saturated flea market." Not even New Order could do much for Stefani. They were approached by her repeatedly as they were in the studio for their own upcoming album, each time saying no. Apparently, they caved in and offered her demo tracks from "Bizarre Love Triangle." The song is still good, you can't go wrong with Peter Hook's bass and the New Order synth line. I highly recommend creating your own Gwen Stefani CD with What You Waiting For, Crash, The Real Thing, Danger Zone, Cool, and Serious.

Overall, there are a handful of decent songs that are overshadowed by inconsistency, poor lyrical content, and a few throw away songs. We can only hope on her next album the record executives give her more time and trust her with more control.

- C

The Arcade Fire – *Funeral* – Merge Records

Canada seems to be the "it" place for music these days and The Arcade Fire adds to this country's already talented roster among Tiga, Broken Social Scene, Stars, Metric, Chromeo, The Stills, and the recently disbanded Unicorns.

Funeral, their debut album on Merge Records, takes us into a very personal journey echoing their pain and memories of loved ones recently lost.

This is not your typical album that is filled with trend-of-the-month processed cheese. It is genuinely heartfelt, painted with elegantly layered instrumentals covered with exchanging vocal duties by spouses Régine Chassagne and Win Butler. Régine's vocals are reminiscent of a sultry Bjork with the sensibility of a Kate Bush while Win reminds me of Peter Gabriel's Solisbury Hill.

Win Butler takes most of the vocal duties that perfectly compliments the mood and the music. Here the vocals are every much an instrument itself. While most of the album's mood makes you yearn for a roof to lie on and stare at the stars, a few upbeat albeit even dancey songs round off *Funeral*.

Ten songs is a little short of a full album and comes in at just under 50 minutes. That is my only complaint for there are few bad or boring songs.

"Rebellion (Lies)" is the most upbeat of the lot, relying on a Britpop feel that will get your head bobbing as well as "Neighborhood #3 (Power Out)." "Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels)" starts the album like you've just woken up gently. A piano accents the morose, dark theme until you're fully awake.

The Arcade Fire is competent in song climaxes, which is evident through most of their songs. Sometimes the vocals can wear thin, but overall it's a solid and consistent album leaving you anticipating their next album.

The Arcade Fire is on tour now and recently played Mary Jane's Fat Cats on January 23rd.

– B+

Women For Change

Meet Some Women Who Make Caring Part of their Daily Lives

Bringing Health Services to Those Who Need It Most

Getting To Know the Leaders of LHI

by Michelle B. Good

Lucy Watson and Pat Gandy are partners in life, and partners in leading the Lesbian Health Initiative. LHI is a non-profit organization that works to ensure that women in the GLBT community have access to sensitive and responsible health care. With the help of a collective of caring individuals and organizations, Lucy and Pat have been able to significantly expand the services and the outreach of this very worthwhile organization.

This writer had the pleasure of visiting with these remarkable women to learn more about them and their work with LHI. Here's what they told me:

Pat: *"LHI was formed in 1992 by a group of women who were concerned by studies which showed that lesbians were more likely than straight women to get breast cancer. That's because lesbians are generally less likely to have babies. (Having a baby makes you less likely to get breast cancer.) I joined the organization shortly after it was formed and, in 1994, I became its President. At that time, I was also very involved in politics, and I was a full-time teacher, as well. It soon became obvious that being president of LHI was like having another full-time job. Before long, I gave up the presidency in order to focus on my teaching job and my political activities."*

Pat met Lucy in 2001. At that time, Lucy was Secretary of LHI. Lucy caught Pat's eye and, before long, Pat became deeply involved in the organization once again. In 2002, Lucy was asked to run for president of LHI. She said she would take the position if Pat would serve as Secretary. It seems that the two of them make a great team, on both a working level and a personal level.

Lucy: *"I've been involved with LHI since the spring of 1999. At that time, I lived in Kingwood and I wanted to become more involved in the local GLBT community. I volunteered to work at one of LHI's health fairs. Shortly after that, I was asked to join the Board, which I did, and promptly became Secretary. In 2001, I was elected President."*

Lucy Watson, President, and Pat Gandy, Secretary of LHI. *Photo by Gabriel Tran*

Lucy's background is in nursing so she is especially sensitive to the health care needs of women.

Lucy: *"It means a lot to me to see women get the help they need. I feel like I'm helping people -- people who really need help. For women who have very little money and can't afford health care, especially in Texas, there is no safety net. If you can't find private health care or get on the county Gold Card system for health care, you're stuck. The Harris County Hospital District has what they call the Gold Card. If you qualify, then you can get health care through that program. At our health fairs, we offer the paperwork needed to apply for the Gold Card. We also include information in our news letters (which Lucy publishes) on how to apply, and we give the website where they can apply."*

Lucy has a special understanding of the plight of women who can't afford health care. She has osteoarthritis in several joints and needs a hip replacement but doesn't have the insurance to cover the high cost of the surgery.

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Pat: *One of the reasons I joined LHI was that I had breast cancer. I've been fortunate to have good health insurance, but when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I went to a doctor who was obviously uncomfortable with my being a lesbian. His recommendations were very radical. So I consulted an oncologist, Dr. Allene King, whom I'd met through the Houston Women's Group. She presented me with a clearer set of options, with a good chance that I wouldn't need such radical surgery. Sure enough, she did the surgery and the outcome was successful."*

Lucy: *A lot of lesbians don't feel comfortable going to conventional physicians' offices, especially if they will need to reveal their sexual orientation, and there is good reason for their concern. Health care providers are human, and humans can be judgmental and discriminatory. These women want a place where they can go that is safe and non-judgmental, and we provide that.*

Pat: *"Since my background is in education, I get very involved in the educational outreach part of LHI. We distribute a number of health-related educational materials at events such as Empower and the Houston Women's Music Festival. We also give talks, participate in panel discussions, and hold safe-sex seminars at places such as The Women's Group, HATCH (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals), AssistHers, and the University of Houston at Clear Lake during Breast Cancer Awareness Month."*

Attend LHI's Valentine Gala
Saturday, February 12, 2005
6:30 pm to 12:30 am
Warwick Hotel in Houston

- Entertainment by comedienne Suzanne Westenhoefer
- Dinner and dance
- Silent auction and raffle
- Mardi Gras theme (masks optional)

Tickets: $75 per seat. Purchase individually or as table of ten. The Warwick is offering a special package room rate with breakfast, if you'd like to stay overnight. For reservations/ticket purchase, call: 713 603-0023 or email: lhi@lhihouston.org

Pat is obviously proud of the job Lucy does as President of LHI.

Pat: *"Lucy is an exceptional president. She just naturally seems to know what needs to be done, and she does it. She puts in 40+ hours a week, almost every week, on LHI. It's definitely a full-time job. But thanks to her hard work in writing grants to obtain funding, we've been able to expand the services that LHI offers. In the past, we were only able to do the health fairs and provide mammograms. Now we're offering blood pressure exams and blood sugar screenings, cholesterol screenings, and bone density tests. When a woman takes advantage of all the tests we offer, she's getting more than $750 worth of tests. And if she has to go for any follow-up testing, she'll be getting more than $1,000 worth of health care. The services we provide are vital for women's health, and in the GLBT community, there is a great need."*

LHI offers health fairs twice a year: in June and November. The next one will be held June 4, 2005 in the Montrose Clinic Building, 215 Westheimer.

Lucy: *"A lot of women don't realize that we can provide mammograms at any time of the year -- not just during health fairs. That's one of the ways we've expanded. If a woman needs a mammogram, she just needs to contact us. We provide around 100 mammograms every year. Sometimes a woman has a mammogram through our program, and the results come back 'positive.' They call us and say, 'What do I do now?' And we're here to help them. We will send them to The Rose (a non-profit breast health organization) and we'll pay for a diagnostic mammogram and an ultrasound. By that time, perhaps they'll qualify for the county Gold Card or the program at The Rose where they can get their biopsy done. We'll help them through all of this. We also have connections at M.D. Anderson Hospital so, if it turns out that they do have cancer, we'll do everything we can to help get them into M.D. Anderson."*

Lucy: *"We have a lot of clients who come back year after year. We often receive cards and letters from people we've helped. Some of them say, 'You saved my life!' I guess maybe we do because, if we didn't provide this service, they probably wouldn't have gotten a diagnosis soon enough and they wouldn't have gotten the life-saving treatment they needed."*

At LHI's 2005 Valentine Gala, Dr. Allene King will be officially recognized for her contributions to the community. To learn more about the Valentine Gala, and the services and activities of the Lesbian Health Initiative, check them out on the web at: www.lhihouston.org

To contact the LHI, call 713 603-0023, or send an email to: lhi@lhihouston.org

The Art of Light

By Jessica Gonzales

When meeting Houston artist Lexie Peveto, you can't help but feel like you're reuniting with an old friend. Her gentle spirit and illuminating smile are hypnotic, but ultimately it is her generous heart that earned her the alias "Lumiere", French for light.

Her career as an artist has earned her respect and recognition from the art community on both a local and a national level. Devoted to friends and family, Lexie's art is a testimony of her life and the events that have sculpted it.

Growing up in Houston, Lexie credits her mother and grandparents for encouraging her artistic curiosities.

"My mother Jodi influenced me by making me doodle with her in sketchbooks for years just to keep me occupied," she says, " I remember her drawing these amazing life-like portraits with the most expressive eyes. My grandmother Bea is an excellent painter, I grew up watching her touch up negatives by hand back in the days when they did not have digital cameras."

Her grandfather, Frank Cricchio had his own photography studio and darkroom and was president of the Professional Photographers Association of America. " I was constantly playing in his space on weekends and during the summer," Lexie recalls.

Today her mediums of choice include oil paints, prisma colors, mixed media collages and classic darkroom or digital photography.

Lexie's work entitled KC and Sarah Kiss Blue.

Peveto posing with one of her paintings.
Photo taken by Jhane.

During her teen years, Lexie's mother was in an abusive marriage. "There was a lot of chaos and fear in our household. Rather than turn to drugs or alcohol, I turned to art, being creative saved me, it became my outlet for the pain I was feeling."

Looking back, she says, "Art allowed me to safely express my emotions and transform my heartache into something constructive." Inevitably, there would be more sorrow in her life, but she continued to use her art to heal and more importantly, to grow.

Lexie's first art exhibition was held at Hermes, while she was only 18 and still in high school. She would go on to have her work displayed in The Grand Kempinski and The Children's Museum.

Things seemed to be

(Continued on Page 13)

(Continued from Page 12)

going well for the young artist until the loss of her best friend to the AIDS pandemic. This event had a profound impact on her career path. "She was a major part of my life for seventeen years," says Peveto, "When she passed, my art career took off in a entirely new direction." She goes on to explain, "I became passionately involved in the fight against AIDS and began displaying my art at Neiman Marcus and donating the proceeds to various AIDS charities. I have been using art to benefit charities ever since."

Most notably is her creation of "Binky the Butterfly," the global symbol used to bring awareness to pediatric HIV/AIDS victims. The symbol was launched here in Houston in 2003 with sponsorship from Hilton and Double Tree hotels, along with radio station 104 KRBE.

Lexie says, "I was asked to speak live on the radio to bring awareness to the pediatric AIDS epidemic because 3.2 million children are infected every year. And the global number of AIDS orphans, infants and children will reach 40 million by 2010."

In addition to her work with HIV/AIDS organizations, Lexie is involved with numerous other charities. "I just donated two custom art certificates to be auctioned off for the Houston Aeros Charities and Round Up for Autism benefit. The winners receive custom-made art for their home while supporting the Autism Treatment Centers of Texas and Aeros community education initiatives."

Self Portrait by Lexie Lumiere

Another favorite is Oxfam, this organization works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide relief to countries in crisis and extreme poverty. She explains how this organization differs from others she has worked with,"Instead of selling products to the public to raise funds they sell actual necessities that go directly to the family or individuals in need."

For example, this program allows contributors to purchase a school desk and chair or blankets for AIDS orphans at a set price. $46 will help train a midwife to deliver children safely. "The American dollars have so much power if put to good use and we can be so wasteful with our money," she notes.

Like many artists, Lexie Peveto has endured many obstacles in her life, only to emerge stronger and wiser. She currently works on various creative projects for a large, upscale, hotel chain. In the past eight months she has created $150,000 worth of promotions for the chain and purchased $60,000 worth of art from local galleries to hang in the hotels.

Recently, however, she discovered via one of her primary media links her employers intended to withhold funding for her projects. "Personally, it was rather disappointing to meet with so much resistance from the same people I had worked so hard to help. My comfort is in believing in spiritual justice," Lexie asserts.

Even with her disappointment, her warm spirit remains evident. "Like a magician who pulls projects out of thin air," she says, "I never ask permission to create a project, I just do it. And at the end of the day I have to remember that, as an artist, I have a responsibility to share my art, my message with the world and it is important that some of my projects develop a legacy of their own. I may come up against obstacles like jealousy and pettiness but I am not dimming my creative lights for anyone, in the words of my favorite childhood song, ' This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine... let it shine.'" And indeed she does.

To view work by Lexie Peveto, a.k.a Lumiere, visit her website: www.imagesonly.org. Also, visit www.binkythebutterfly.com ALL proceeds will help fund various children's AIDS charities.

Two, Four, Six, Eight -- How Do You Know Your Grandma's Straight?

Old Lesbians of OLOC stand up, speak out at 2004 Gathering

by Michelle B. Good

Co-directors Shaba Barnes and Jan Griesinger at 2004 Fall Gathering of OLOC.

Last October, Houston's Renaissance Hotel hosted the 2004 Gathering of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change. Notice the use of the word "old," instead of "older" or "senior." Members of OLOC proudly wear the word "old," and are committed to confronting ageism wherever they find it.

Lesbians from all over North America attended the gathering. OLOC is an organization for lesbians who are 60 years old or older (or the partners of such lesbians). Under the theme, "Our Legacy, Our Commitment," the gathering was designed to help build a powerful movement to challenge ageism, sexism and homophobia. The group is also intended to serve as a united and powerful force for change in the 21st century.

On the agenda was the official introduction of the two new co-directors, Jan Griesinger and Shaba Barnes, and a tribute to the retiring co-directors, Arden Eversmeyer and Vera Martin, and the retiring Secretary/Treasurer Charlotte Avery. Eversmeyer and Martin are both from Houston.

Griesinger said, "OLOC was founded to create a safe space for lesbians 60 and older who often didn't feel welcome in other spaces, and also to address the issue of ageism -- the systemic discrimination against the old. Most of our efforts have to do with confronting ageism. OLOC is probably the strongest organization that I know of that combats ageism. We also offer support to old lesbians wherever they live -- to honor the lives of old lesbians, to give visibility to old lesbians, and to honor the diversity of old lesbian experiences."

Barnes added, "As feminists, this is part of the work we do together -- to make sure that we all understand and respect the diversity among ourselves and to get that message out to others. One way we do this is through our quarterly newsletter which goes to approximately 1000 people. We are also present at other gatherings where we hold workshops and provide consciousness-raising literature."

The group's approach is two-fold: raising awareness of ageism in the lesbian community, and confronting ageism, sexism and racism in the wider community.

"Gaining visibility for old lesbians will act as a powerful political force," said Barnes. "We've marched at the Gay Pride Parade in Washington in past years. The Old Lesbians were right up front and were interviewed by National Public Radio."

Barnes continued: "We want to increase awareness, not just in the gay community but in the greater community, overall. When we help old lesbians, we're not just helping old lesbians -- we're helping old women, in general. We believe we're helping women around the world. We're just doing it from a lesbian point of view, because we're free. A lot of heterosexual women don't feel that they have the freedom to be politically active feminists. But lesbians have that freedom, and *old lesbians have all the freedom because we take it!*

Griesinger said, "We speak out on broad issues such as Social Security and health care. The lack of universal health care is devastating our country -- employment, families, almost everything our lives are built on."

"All kinds of people help us," noted Barnes. "Some people, who can't afford to be visible in this movement, support us from behind the scenes. There are still-closeted lesbians -- high-profile wealthy women -- who help with donations and grants.
We're like the tip of the iceberg. We're bigger and more powerful than you might think."

OLOC will hold its next gathering in Durham, North Carolina August 17-20, 2006. To learn more about OLOC, check out their website at www.oloc.org, or send email to: info@oloc.org

Do you know a lesbian over age 70 whose life story should be told?

Lesbians who were born in the early part of the 20th century lived in an environment that was very different from what we experience today. Their life experiences need to be recorded so that the struggles they experienced and the courage they exemplified will not be lost to today's, and the future's, lesbians. OLOC is proud to be a part of preserving these life stories through the Oral Herstory Project.
.
Arden Eversmeyer is a lesbian activist who lives and works in Houston, TX. She is interviewing, recording, and transcribing the life stories of lesbians over the age of 70. Arden or one of the interviewers working on the project will come to the home of any one who is willing to have her life story recorded. The recorded and transcribed herstories will be archived so that, in the future, they will be available to interested herstorians, students, and researchers.
For information write:
Old Lesbians Organizing for Change - OLOC, Inc.
P.O. Box 980422
Houston, TX 77008
or Email us at **info@oloc.org.**

Ask Lola

Q: Dear Lola:

I am a twenty-one year old college student and I recently found out that my best friend had a sexual encounter with a couple that she is friends with. Apparently after a long night of drinking, the guy in the relationship persuaded my friend and his girlfriend to get in bed together and make out while he watched, joining them later.

I don't know how to deal with this. This is behavior that I would never expect from my friend and I feel that the guy may have taken advantage of the situation. I tried explaining this to my friend, but she shrugged it off. I've known her long enough to know that she probably regrets the incident, but won't open up about it. What should I do?

-Shocked

A: Dear Shocked:

It is perfectly normal for people to experiment with different sexual senarios, especially at your age. I am sure you are concerned about your friend and feel that you are unable to help her. Perhaps she doesn't need any help. She may have enjoyed herself, but now feels uncomfortable talking to you about it.

Another element to be considered is that you feel left out. I'm not suggesting that you want to have a threesome, or even that you want to sleep with your friend, but this was an event that did not involve you until your friend decided to share. I advise you to have a serious heart-to-heart with your friend and clear the air. Explain that you are not trying to control her life, but you are concerend about her well-being. The important thing is to remain open to whatever answer she gives you. She may tell you she wants to do it again.

If this is a friend you intend on keeping, don't judge her, but rather be supportive. If she is using this time in her life to experiment then she will not feel comfortable talking to you if she is met with negative reactions, and you could push her away.

If your friend truly feels that she was taken advantage of against her will, then urge her to go to the authorities. No experiment is worth a loss of dignity.

Q: Dear Lola:

I'm a lesbian and I really love to go out. I find that I am more comfortable when I hang out in straight bars. The only problem I have is that I tend to meet only straight women who want to experiment or are married. At this point in my life, I'm ready to have a girlfriend and not someone who always says "make love to me" or wants to keep our relationship a secret. What can I do to move away from the straight girls and sneaking around in my life?

R.H.

A: Dear R.H.:

Some women would envy your dilemma, but I do understand your situation. Staying away from straight bars would be my first suggestion. The fact that you are more comfortable in straight bars tells me you may be intimidated by large groups of lesbians. I know that straight women can be exciting and married women are certainly taboo, but they don't do much for your spirit. Sneaking around is no way to live your life. You deserve a woman who wants to be with you all of the time, not just when it's convenient for her.If a straight girl does take an interest in you, don't blow her off just because she is straight. If she stimulates your mind and truly likes you for who you are, then go for it. I know of several relationships of this mix that are still happy and healthy.

If you want to give up on straight girls forever, then try to find a "Happy Hour" at a local lesbian bar and stop in for a drink. The crowd is usually more professional than what you may find on Saturday night. If that doesn't work, look for a social group that shares your same interests, the Gay and Lesbian Yellow Pages is an excellent resource for GLBT organizations in your community.

Ask Lola!

Please submit your questions on sex, relationships, or advice to asklola@hershouston.com. Questions appearing in the magazine will be anonymous.

Exploring Your Retirement Plan Distribution Alternatives

By: Grace S. Yung, CFP®
Vice President - Investments
UBS Financial Services Inc

You may not have to retire to be entitled to receive a distribution from an employer-sponsored retirement plan, such as a 401(k), profit sharing, money purchase pension, defined benefit or employee stock ownership (ESOP) plan. You may, for example, be entitled to a distribution if you are leaving your company, if your company is terminating its retirement plan, or if you are the beneficiary of a deceased plan participant.

Regardless of when and why you become eligible for a distribution from an employer-sponsored retirement plan, what you decide to do next may well be one of the most important financial decisions you will make.

Since your qualified retirement plan (QRP) distribution could represent the largest sum of money you'll ever receive at one time, it is important to do your homework and evaluate your options *before* you receive your distribution. It also makes sense to consult with a financial advisor and/or tax attorney who can provide expert advice and help you select the best distribution alternative to fit your individual circumstances.

Although the number of distribution alternatives available to you will vary depending on the terms of your specific QRP, there are three common distribution alternatives:

Annuitized Payments
Generally, when you elect an annuity form of payment from a QRP, you will receive a set monthly benefit amount either for your life (or the joint life expectancy of you and your spouse) or for a predetermined number of years. Most annuity options are structured to guarantee you (and your spouse, if you are married) will not outlive your retirement savings.

The annuity form of distribution has several distinct disadvantages to be aware of.

- You generally cannot elect to modify the payment terms should your financial circumstances change.
- Depending on the terms of the annuity, distributions often may cease at your death, meaning that no further benefits under the annuity contract would be paid to your heirs.
- You bear the risk that the purchasing power of your annuity payments may not keep up with inflation.

Lump Sum Distribution
Many QRPs permit the participant or beneficiary to elect to have the entire benefit amount paid in the form of a lump sum distribution. Under certain circumstances, taking a lump sum distribution may entitle you to special tax treatment. For example, when all or part of your lump sum distribution is comprised of employer securities, you may be eligible to defer taxes on the portion or your distribution that constitutes "net unrealized appreciation" (NUA) until the stock is sold.

If you elect to take a lump sum distribution from a QRP, you will generally have to decide between:

- Paying taxes on the entire lump sum distribution in the first year, or
- Rolling over part or all of the distribution to a Rollover IRA.

If you are not eligible for special tax treatment, your lump sum distribution generally will be included with your other taxable income. That means it could be subject to a federal tax rate, which could be as high as 35%. State income taxes also generally apply to lump sum distributions.

Rolling Over Distributions to an IRA[1]
The third distribution option available in under many QRPs is to roll over the amount of the retirement distribution to an individual retirement account (IRA). By rolling over some or all of the distribution to an IRA, you can defer taxes on the amount rolled over and you will have the ability to decide how to invest your money. There are significant benefits to rolling over your distribution to an IRA:

- The avoidance of what could be a hefty, immediate tax burden, allowing you to invest more money now;
- The opportunity for faster accumulation of your money over time through tax-deferred growth, and
- The ability to invest your retirement assets any way you would like.

Understanding the Mandatory Federal Withholding Rules
Any portion of an eligible rollover distribution that is paid directly to you is subject to mandatory 20% federal income tax withholding.[2] And if you are younger than 59½ at the time of distribution, you may be subject to a 10% early distribution penalty tax in addition to ordinary income taxes. (If you separate from service during the year you become age 55, or later, however, and then receive a distribution from your former employer's QRP, the 10% penalty tax will not apply.)

Making the Choice that's Right for You
To help you decide how to receive your distribution, your employer is required by law to give you written notice (at least 30 days but no more than 90 days before the distribution) describing your options, including direct rollovers. At this point it would be prudent to review the advantages and disadvantages of each distribution option with your tax and/or financial advisor and determine which option best meets your personal needs and circumstances.

(Footnotes)
[1] If you are a non-spouse beneficiary of a deceased QRP participant, you are not eligible for the Rollover IRA option.
2 Certain types of distributions are exempt from the mandatory 20% tax withholding.
* UBS Financial Services Inc. does not provide tax or legal advice. Consult with your tax and legal advisors regarding your specific situation.

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In the end antiblack, antifemale, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing - antihumanism.

Shirley Chisholm

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness, in a descending spiral of destruction. The chain reaction of evil must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Drag Kings Wanted

Feb 5, 2005 at Chances (1100 Westheimer), 2:30-5:30 p.m., Drag Kings with attitude, any age, wanted for Drag King Revue. Come to impress with 3-5 minute song, lip-synch only, costumes mandatory, props preferred. CD player provided. For more info.call 832.640.6878.

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Juli Ashton
www.heyjuli.com

Play in the Gay Games 2006
www.gaygamesteamhouston.org

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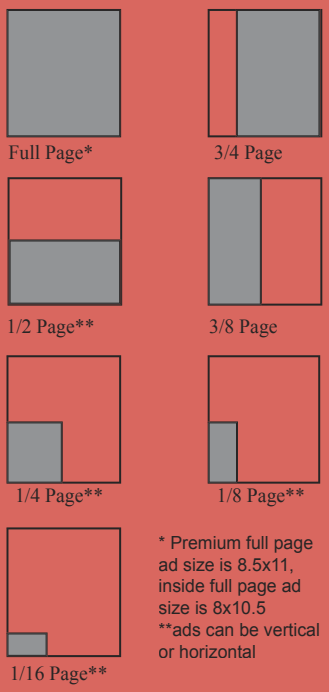

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The prefered method for submitting graphics is EPS. PSD and tiffs will also be accepted and need to be at least 300 dpi.

All ads placed in the publication will also be included on our website at www.hershouston.com

Out and About

Saturday Night at Chances
photos by Renee Rodriguez

Bitch at Chances photo by Shaunte Angelo

Pampered Spirit Grand Opening featuring Urban Gypsy Belly dancers photo by Kristen Kemp

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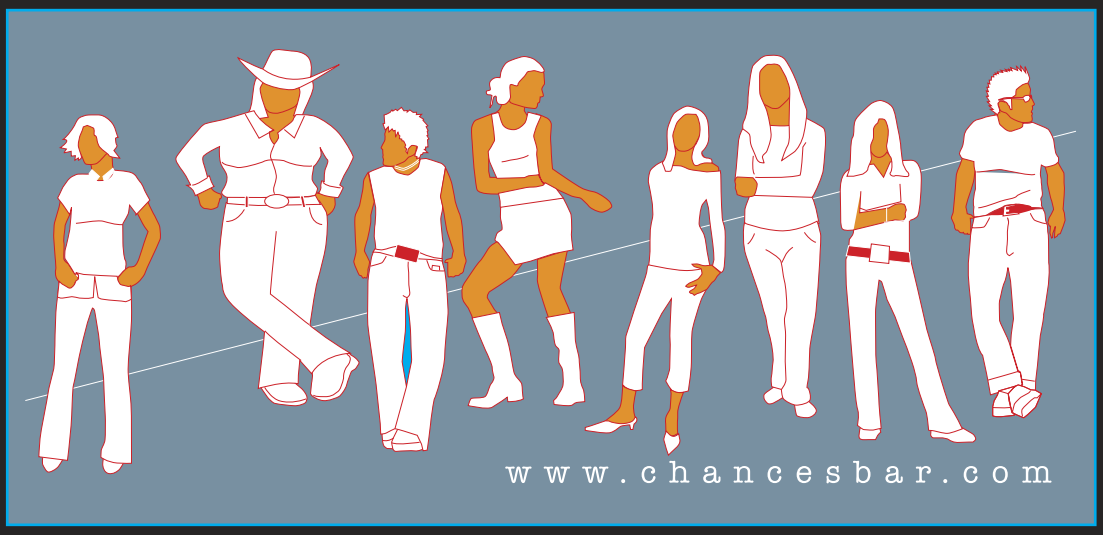

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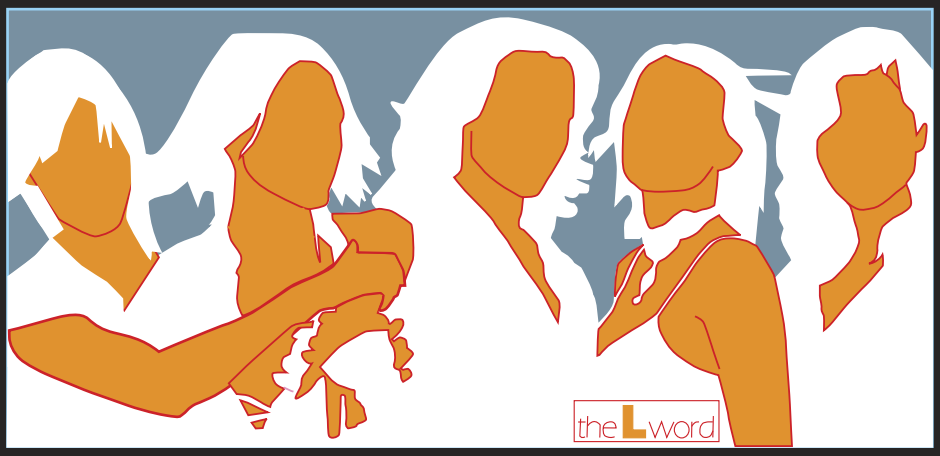

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