

The

Harmonizer



Vol. 3, No. 02

Monthly Newsletter for Music City Couples

February 2008

Serving Nashville & All Of Middle Tennessee and Surrounding Communities

Current News



Our many thanks goes to Russ and Don for opening their home for our February "Valentine" Social Event. Russ and Don are known for their warm hospitality, large spread and variety of Sandwiches, Hors d' Oeuvres, Canapés, and delicious desserts. Each year they continue to surprise and amaze us with a fun filled event. Event pictures available on our website: http://www.musiccitycouples.org/event_photos.htm



Poster provided by Larry and Bobby which included all couples who had replied with an R.S.V.P. to attend.

Benefits for same-sex domestic partners make good sense for business and family

Employers need to stay competitive to attract the best employees

by
M.B. OwensContributor

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Hosts Needed

Music City Couples is in search of couples willing to Host a Party in their home, back yard, or even a Park. If you have the desire to be a Host, please contact Larry and Bobby. info@musiccitycouples.org
615-824-9966 – Home

Movie Night Out

Several of our couples have been asking if we plan to re-instate the monthly movie night out. We need your help. If you would like to take charge of our Monthly Movie Night Out, please drop us an email: info@musiccitycouples.org

Dinner Night Out

Everyone loves to eat. Certainly you have a favorite Restaurant. If you would like to see us have a Monthly Dinner Night Out, please forward your Restaurant Choices and help us plan the monthly event. Simply send us an email: info@musiccitycouples.org

Camping

Contact Barb & Jane
Kingston, Springs, TN
info@musiccitycouples.org

Up Coming Events

Feb 16:
Nashville Film Noir Festival
7:30p People's Branch Theatre
presents Death and the Maiden
9:30p Out & About Today TV

Feb 17:
Nashville Film Noir Festival

Anniversaries

- Feb 08 - LaTonya (LaWanda)
- Feb 11 - Chris (Tanya)
- Feb 11 - Peter (Martin)
- Feb 18 - Chelsye (SheaRee)
- Feb 21 - Bev (Anne)
- Feb 25 - Rochelle (Melissa)

Birthdays

- Feb 04 - Tony & David (10y)
- Feb 14 - LaWanda/LaTonya (2y)
- Feb 15 - Charlotte & Patricia (1y)
- Feb 24 - Dayna & Lisa (2y)

SPOTLIGHT

We decided to do a spotlight on two of our couples this month. We sent out email requests to 4-couples and figured we would spotlight the first one; however Angie & Debbie, and Chris & Tanya came in together. If you were contacted and did not submit your information, go ahead and get it to us, as we will soon be working on the March spotlight:

Angie & Debbie

Please meet Angie & Debbie, who recently joined Music City Couples just this past December/2007:



Debbie was born July 31, 1963 to a family that was currently residing in Pineville, Louisiana. Debbie grew up in Louisiana and

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Many Nashville area employers are following a nationwide trend by offering benefit packages to employees and their same-sex domestic partners, just as they do for married couples. Employers are doing so because it makes good business while helping employees and their families.

According to the magazine *Government Executive*, nationally more than half of the Fortune 500 corporations, along with thousands of other companies, provide benefits for domestic partners and their employees. So do hundreds of state, local governments, colleges and universities.

In Nashville, employers offering same-sex domestic partners include Vanderbilt University and Medical Center, HCA, Deloitte, Kroger, Ford and Aetna.

"Businesses and organizations are offering these benefit packages to help recruit the best candidates and to keep existing employees from leaving for greener pastures," said John Wade, president and chairman of Nashville GLBT chamber of commerce. "The most talented employee for a position may have a domestic partner at home that needs health insurance, dental insurance or some other benefit. Employers need to offer these benefits if they want to be competitive in a changing multicultural marketplace."

The largest private employer in Nashville, Vanderbilt University and Medical Center, has offered benefit packages to same sex couples since January 2000. To date more than 200 couples have participated.

"It is what brought me here as part of a supportive work environment," said Jerry Jones, senior information officer at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who began working at the facility in 2000.

The Vanderbilt benefit package offered to an employee's partner is quite broad.

"Insurance benefits include health, dental, life, vision, accidental death, dismemberment and survivor," said Jane Bruce, human resources benefit director at Vanderbilt. "Also a domestic partner is treated as a family member for medical and personal leave."

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7:00p Gill and Orlishaham: In Recital at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center
 8:30p Scion Sunday Night Jazz Series Presents Monica Ramey
 9:00p Tonight at the 5 Spot
 10:00p Out & About Today TV

Feb 18:
 Inside Out Nashville on Stands
 Nashville Film Noir Festival
 2:30p Frist Art Trunk Show: Chinese Painting
 5:30p Gay and Lesbian Weight Watchers Meeting
 6:00p Classic Lit Bok Clubat the downtown library

Feb 19:
 Nashville Film Noir Festival
 7:30p Healing Circle at Goddess & the Moon

Feb 20:
 Nashville Film Noir Festival

Feb 21:
 Nashville Film Noir Festival
 6:00p Music in the Grand Lobby
 7:30p The Nashville Jazz Workshop Presents; Jazz Night at Z's Five Points Deli

Feb 22:
 Nashville Symphony Presents: Broadway Tonight
 Nashville Film Noir Festival
 6:00p Music in the Grand Lobby
 9:00p The Outta Sight Records Super-Bad Soul Revue w/The Dynamites featuring Charles
 10:00p Out & About Today on NewsChannel 5+

Feb 23:
 Nashville Film Noir Festival
 Nashville Symphony Presents: Broadway Tonight
 9:30p Out & About Today TV

Feb 24:
 Families and Food: Understanding Eating Problems in Today's World with panel
 The Rock Metropolitan Community Church
 Nashville Film Noir Festival

Texas. She has 3-brothers and 1-sister. Debbie attended school at South Grand Prairie High School, in Grand Prairie, Texas. Angie was born May 3, 1968 in High Point, North Carolina. Angie grew up in North Carolina and Tennessee. Angie has 2-brothers, and attended Science Hill High in Johnson City, Tennessee. We are told that Debbie and Angie actually met online and have been together now for 1-1/2 years. Debbie has been an "Oversize Load Escort Driver" for L & D Flag Car for over 4-years. Angie is a stay at home mom and wife. Debbie loves seafood, (who knew, as she is a Louisiana Cajun), and Angie's favorite, "Italian" food. They both love watching television and love The "L" Word. Debbie's favorite movie is "Saving Face, and Angie's is "Gia". We had the opportunity to meet Debbie and Angie at Russ & Don's Valentine Party this month. They immediately became part of the group and joined in with all the others sharing stories and laughing until the night came to an end. We asked them what the funniest thing is that ever happened to them, but neither could think of anything. So, we hit them with the next question, asking what the most embarrassing thing that every happened to them. Their reply, "Not Sure". I guess they live pretty quiet lives out in Johnson City, Tennessee. In either case, we are glad they joined Music City Couples, and look forward to getting to know them better.

Chris & Tanya

Also, please meet Chris & Tanya. We have known Chris & Tanya for several years.

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At Vanderbilt an employee is required to register as having a domestic partner through a certification process allowing the partner to become eligible.

According to Bruce, the employee and the partner must meet with a designated official of the human resources department, fill out a form stating they are the same sex and not related by blood, and both be over 21 years old and not married to anyone else. In addition, they must state they are in a common household sharing joint responsibility and have been in a committed relationship for at least six months.

Participants are required to provide documentation, such as a checking account or lease agreement, with both names at the same address. Both must sign a document confirming the information is correct.

Jones said that his partner, Travis Smith, who as an independent contractor could not get benefits through an employer and could not afford them on his own. So far Smith has only used the vision insurance after registering three months ago.

"It is good to know the benefits are there when I need them and they make a difference in the quality of our life," Smith said.

However, not everything is equal for domestic partners and married couples because of federal regulations.

"As required by law we have to tax the employer's subsidy on the health care cost for domestic partners," Bruce added.

Vanderbilt pays about 79 percent of the health care cost for both the employee and the partner. Due to the law, the employee must cover the tax on the partner's benefit paid by the institution.

Smaller employers in the Nashville offer similar benefits.

Reverend Cynthia Andrews-Looper, pastor of Holly Trinity Community Church of the United Church of Christ (UCC), said she receives benefits for her partner and eight year old son through UCC.

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10:00p Out & About Today TV

Feb 25:

Inside Out Nashville on Stands
Nashville Film Noir Festival
2:30p Frist Art Trunk Show: Chinese Painting
5:30p Gay and Lesbian Weight Watchers Meeting
6:00p Do I look Fat: - A documentary about body image disturbance and eating disorders

Feb 26:

Nashville Film Noir Festival
7:00p EDCT Community Chat The Domino Effect: Trauma and its Influence on Eating
7:30p Healing Circle at Goddess & the Moon

Feb 27:

Nashville Film Noir Festival

Feb 28:

The Nashville Symphony Presents: The Art of Percussion
Nashville Film Noir Festival
6:00p Music in the Grand Lobby
6:30p Evening of Song & Story with Tracey Gold and Kim McLean

Feb 29:

Nashville Film Noir Festival
The Nashville Symphony Presents: The Art of Percussion
6:00p Music in the Grand Lobby
10:00p Out & About Today on NewsChannel 5+

Favorite Recipe

This spot will highlight your favorite recipe, that you would like to share with our couples

- Favorite Dessert
- Favorite Drink
- Favorite Entrée

Type them up and send them in. We will post them in our next issue.

They began attending our Music City Couples when Bobby and Larry lived in Portland, Tennessee also. We asked Chris & Tanya the same standard questions, and this is what we found out:



Chris was born on February 11, 1965 in Louisiana and grew up in Texas before moving to Tennessee in 1995. Something we never knew is that Chris has a twin. She also has 2-brothers, of which nothing else was said. We wonder now about her twin. Is Lesbianism genetic? Tanya was born on August 18, 1966 in Chicago, Illinois. She grew up in the suburbs of Chicago called Fox River Grove, and later moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in 1979, and then moved to Tennessee in 1992. Tanya has 2-sisters and is a "Stay at Home" mom thanks to Chris.

Chris and Tanya met at Ralph's Bar on 2nd. Avenue in Nashville. Chris was doing some painting in the bathroom at Ralphs, and Tanya was relaxing at the bar. She saw Chris going and coming from the bathroom just a bit too frequently, and assumed she was in there doing drugs. Later, she discovered she was working, and painting the bathroom. They struck up a conversation, "sparks" flew and later that week Tanya had to go fetch her. After their 1st date, they pretty much continued talking till they moved in together a couple months later. They have been together now for 10-1/2 years and have

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"Our benefits include insurance for health, dental, drugs and life; plus my partner has rights to my pension in event that something happens to me," she said.

The broad healthcare policy provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield is certainly essential in terms of existing medical needs of her family because it includes features such as preventative checkups and testing along with major medical, Looper said.

Without the package available through UCC she would not be able to afford the health insurance, she continued.

Another Nashville employer, the U.S. government, appears to be the next big entity planning to extend domestic partners to its employees.

On December 19, 2007 The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligation Act was introduced by both houses of Congress allowing government employees' with same-sex domestic partners to become eligible for federal health benefits, family medical leave, group life insurance, long-term care and retirement benefits.

"If signed into law this legislation would have a positive impact on the well being of many Nashville employees, their partners and families," said Wade. "It is something that is good for the local and business community."

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Announcements

Send us your announcements, and we will post them here, to share with our couples.

Help us keep Music City Couples alive and active, share your stories and announcements here



Music City Couples is an organization of committed gay and lesbian couples in the Greater Nashville and Middle Tennessee area.

The organization serves to provide a forum for gay/lesbian committed couples to strengthen their own relationships while also providing a social and supportive structure for their fellow committed couples. Music City Couples holds no religious affiliations and makes every attempt to respect the privacy of its couples.

Privacy Policy

MUSIC CITY COUPLES values and respects the privacy of all our members and guests. When we collect your names and contact information, only members of the Steering Committee have access to it, and only to keep you informed of MUSIC CITY COUPLES events. In all our communications with our members, including our newsletters and this website, we only identify individuals by first name, or occasionally by first name and last initial. The individuals, who may appear in photographs on this website, whether in individual or group shots, have all explicitly agreed to the use of their pictures. We do not post pictures of anyone without their permission.

News Letter Submissions

Send us your Current News, Favorite Recipe, and Announcements that you would like to have added to our Monthly Newsletter. Send all submissions to,

Webmaster@musiccitycouples.org no later than the First Friday of Every Month. Anything received after that Friday will be included in the next month's issue

been celebrating their anniversary ever since June 13, 1997.

Chris and Tanya were talking about starting a family, back when they were attending events at Larry and Bobby's home in Portland, Tennessee. They fought hard, through IVF and after several miscarriages and heart ache, they continued with the IVF but they prevailed and are glad they did. They welcomed a son, Peyton, on January 12, 2006 via IVF. If we have any other couples, with children, Chris and Tanya welcome your friendship and look forward to a play date.



The Music City Couples Network, an organization of hundreds of loving and committed gay and lesbian couples believes that the Federal Marriage Amendment is an unconscionable assault on the rights of millions of American citizens, and is joining other organizations seeking its defeat.

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the amendment "would not only deny marriage to same-sex couples but could also deny any state legislature or electorate from ever voting to pass their own state's domestic partnership, civil union or marriage laws. Under the Federal Marriage Amendment, courts could be barred from enforcing the legal protections that a legislature provides through civil union or domestic partnership laws."

Civil marriage, other forms of relationship recognition, and basic civil rights protections are essential components that make all families, including families headed by same-sex couples, safer and more secure. Civil marriage and religious marriage are two separate things.

Religious institutions will never be forced to bless relationships with which they disagree, just as today religious institutions can refuse to marry couples of different faiths or individuals who have been divorced