



crossbeams

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Drury University Offers Benefits to Partners of Gay/Lesbian Faculty

by Peter Browning

On June 1, 2007, Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, began offering benefits to the partners of gay and lesbian faculty members. The Board of Trustees approved this policy change at its May meeting. As Drury University's executive director of communications, Bill Noblit, stated, "We look at it as an affirmation of all people's worth in our community. Increasingly, it's a common benefit among Fortune 500 companies, our peer institutions and some states."

Drury's academic dean Dr. Charles Taylor said benefits for partners will include medical and dental coverage, tuition assistance, fitness center privileges, library privileges, the university's tax-saving plan as well as coverage under the federal Family Medical Leave Act.

In the days following the decision, The Springfield News Leader praised the new policy. As the editor wrote, "Around here, Drury University is in line for heaps of criticism after deciding to grant domestic partner benefits to gays and lesbians employed at the university. Already, letter writers have sharpened their pens and attacked the private liberal arts university for daring to 'endorse' what the letter writers call the 'homosexual lifestyle.' Indeed, what Drury endorsed was good business. Common sense. Leadership. ... We salute Drury

for making a decision that makes it a leader in higher education in Missouri, but makes it just another member of the 21st century higher education and business community elsewhere."

Commenting on the decision, the then-president of the university Dr. John Sellars (who resigned in May to accept a position as president of Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa) mentioned the influence of the newly adopted equal opportunity statement: "Without providing the same type of benefit package (as is available for heterosexual employees' spouses), we were actually discriminating and that we were not in line with what we had said within our equal opportunity statement."

Chaplain Peter Browning strongly supported the new benefits. "Drury was founded by Congregationalists in the 1870s who believed in social justice," he explained. "The early days of the institution were marked by a commitment to non-sectarianism in admissions and hiring; the presence of women on the faculty and the student body at a time when that was rare; and an openness to ethnic diversity with many first students being Native Americans. This decision in support of social justice is in keeping with our church-related heritage and its commitment to value all members of the human community."

Send us your e-mail address and we'll let you know when the next Crossbeams is on-line:

Forming a Local GLAD Chapter

Did you know that GLAD is not just a nationwide organization but also meets in local chapters? GLAD has active chapters in New York City, Southern California, and Indiana.

These chapters vary in their level of organization and activity. The Pacific-Southwest chapter has its own Design, officers, and annual business meetings. The New York City Chapter, focused around Park Avenue Christian Church, is much less informal in its organization. Activities in New York have at various times included people from other churches in the area, Pride Events, movies, and potluck dinners.

The Terre Haute chapter started from a group of 6 people at Central Christian Church about 5 years ago. For several years the chapter met monthly either at the church or in people's homes. Sometimes a potluck, other times a service project at the church.

In the process Central Christian became Open & Affirming and the LGBT presence at Central Christian has grown.

Chapters need a purpose or they will lose their energy. Sometimes that purpose is support of the local LGBT Christian community, working to move congregations towards becoming Open & Affirming, or service, such as to a local student group.

To learn more about Chapters and how to become a chapter, read the full article at news.gladalliance.org.

Gay and Lesbian relationships? Equal Marriage? Inlaws & Outlaws is a Must See

With remarkable honesty, good humor, great music and real heart, *Inlaws & Outlaws* weaves together true stories of couples and singles, gay and straight to celebrate what we all have in common: we love.

Inlaws & Outlaws tells the true stories of couples and singles — both gay and straight — a collective narrative that is as hilarious as it is heartbreaking.

This documentary film by Drew Emery is not only entertaining but an excellent resource for starting discussions in your congregation around gay and lesbian relationships and equal marriage.

At the top of the film, you meet real people one on one. You don't know who's gay or straight or who's with whom. As their stories unfold and stereotypes fall by the wayside, you won't care because you'll be rooting for everybody. With candor, good humor, great music and real heart, *Inlaws & Outlaws* gets past all the rhetoric to explore what we all have in common.

For information on local screenings, hosting your own screening, or supporting this project go to www.inlawsandoutlawfilm.com.

For links to the trailer and video responses to *Inlaws & Outlaws* go to news.gladalliance.org.

Also at news.gladalliance.org

- How can faith leaders help end hate and fear in Ohio?
- HRC's Coming Out Kit for National Coming Out Day
- African-American mega-church pastor preaches inclusion

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Resource for Youth: *The God Box*

Lambda Literary Award-winning author Alex Sanchez tackles a subject ripped from headlines in this exciting and thought-provoking exploration of what it means to be both religious and gay. A great resource for youth and young adult ministry, thought provoking for anyone who cares about youth.

Synopsis: High-school senior Paul has dated Angie since middle school, and they're good together: they have a lot of the same interests, like singing in their church choir, and being active in Bible club. But when a new boy, Manuel, transfers to their school,

Paul has to rethink his life. Manuel is the first openly gay teen anyone in their small town has ever met, and yet he says he's also a committed Christian. Talking to Manuel makes Paul reconsider thoughts he has kept hidden, and listening to Manuel's

"Alex Sanchez evokes the crucifying experience of adolescents wrestling with their sexual identity and their identity as Christians. He does a remarkably faithful job of opening up long-abused biblical passages often used as proof texts to denigrate homosexuality. This book is a gift not just to teenagers, but to those who love and work with them."

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church

interpretation of Biblical passages on homosexuality causes Paul to re-evaluate everything he believed. Manuel's outspokenness triggers dramatic consequences at school, culminating in a terrifying situation that leads Paul to take a stand.

The God Box, to be published in October, can be pre-ordered on the GLAD Alliance on-line bookstore.