



VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

Facets



MAY 2009

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Gems Go Shopping at Dress Barn!

On March 28, 2009, Dress Barn in Carmichael closed its doors to the public at 7pm and welcomed 31 Gems and friends for a private shopping event.

The group had the whole store to themselves, including 16 fitting rooms and five attentive sales associates. The manager and staff remembered many in the group from last year's event, and were delighted to have the Gems back in the store. "This group is so much fun," said store manager Shannon Smith. "We couldn't wait to see everyone again."

Dress Barn pampered everyone with free bottled water, chocolate kisses, a coupon good for 15% off their total purchase, and a cute spring tote bag for every attendee. The Gems supplied a buffet of hors d'oeuvres and sparkling cider.

The Dress Barn sales associates gave every shopper personal attention, offering advice and even bringing different items and sizes to the fitting rooms. They went out of their way to make sure that everyone had a good time, and judging by the excited buzz in the store, they succeeded!

All the attendees commented on how much they love the Dress Barn clothing line. Nearly everyone bought something, and many found several perfect outfits suitable for upcoming Gems events.



"I tried on two dresses and ended up buying both, as well as a bracelet and necklace," said happy shopper Melissa Jean. "The evening was great, with friends everywhere I looked and encouragement to try on multiple things."

Another private Dress Barn shopping event is planned for the fall of 2009.

Marchers Wanted

The River City Gems will be taking part in the San Francisco LGBT Pride Parade on Sunday, June 28, 2009. Those who marched last year say that being in the parade was the experience of a lifetime! You are welcome to dress as a "Southern Belle" or in regular street clothes. Volunteers are also needed to work in the TGSF beverage booth on Pride day. If you are interested or have questions about marching or volunteering, please contact activities@rivercitygems.org. All are welcome to participate!



Mark Your Calendar
River City Gems
May Events

May 9
Monthly Social

May 22
Drab Gab

May 23
Game Night

For details, please visit our events calendar at www.rivercitygems.org/events.html



My First Makeover

By Andi Robertson

Almost as soon as I first learned about makeup, I was repeatedly told, "Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize!" So it's not surprising that one of the first things in my makeup kit was some moisturizer which my wife, Kathy, bought me. Kathy uses a lot of Mary Kay products, and had warned me to be careful about buying products at the drugstore. She said I could waste a lot of money on stuff that didn't look very good. So, when I asked her if she'd get me a bottle of her moisturizer, she did. That bottle lasted me over a year!

However, about a month ago, I could see I was going to run out soon, so I asked Kathy if she would mind if I introduced myself to her Mary Kay sales gal, Joanne Chasey, so I could buy more. Reluctantly, she agreed. At first, I think Kathy was worried about what Joanne, who lives in our neighborhood, might think about me and also her. On the other hand, she didn't really know what products I should use, and honestly she wasn't *that* worried. It would be yet another test to see how people would react to the "other" me.



So, I wrote Joanne and introduced myself as a transgender person interested in learning more about makeup. I mentioned my wife's concerns about being outed in our neighborhood, and asked if she had ever met a transgender person before. She told me she had seen a couple of crossdressers, but had never actually spoken with one before, adding that she would never do anything to betray our confidence. As she wrote, it became clear that she didn't have any problems with me, and even invited me to her home for a makeover, which I accepted. She said she would prefer if I was dressed and had my makeup on, so she'd get the look right and know what recommendations to make.

The day arrived, and I was wearing skinny jeans and a cute red and black top with a tie in the back, and Mary Jane flats. I'm not normally nervous about going out en femme, but this was different. This was in our neighborhood, at somebody's private residence -- a friend of my wife's -- who had never talked to a crossdresser before. Would she laugh? Would she think I was a pervert? Would her husband be there? What would the neighbors think? I was all by myself and very nervous when I knocked on the door.

When Joanne answered, she immediately smiled warmly, and invited me in. She kept saying how impressed she was with my makeup and how good I looked in general, confiding that she had not known what to expect. I said, "Me neither!" I think she sensed I was nervous, because she asked, and I replied "yes, a bit." So, she offered me some iced tea, and a warm brownie right out of the oven. Before long, I felt very comfortable, and my nerves calmed, especially when she told me she had visited the Gems website and read my profile there and was glad I had decided to embrace my feminine side.

We got started and chattered away like magpies for the next two hours. By the time we were finished, she'd had me do a complete makeover on myself, and we both thought I looked quite nice. I left with a bag full of goodies specifically chosen for my skin, which I knew exactly how to use, not to mention lots of helpful makeup tips, like how to keep from getting lipstick on my teeth or how to use an eyebrow pencil by bracing my wrist on my face. I went home absolutely glowing and full of confidence! But, the best part of the evening was when I got home and Kathy was waiting for me. She looked at me, smiled, and said "Gee honey, you really look very cute. Do you like it too?" I said I did, and recounted all the things we did that evening, and how much fun we had.

For any of you who are interested, I can provide details on how to get in touch with Joanne. Just contact me at timewontw8@gmail.com. Every woman deserves to have her very own makeup consultant!

Join Us

Show your support for the **River City Gems** by becoming a member today.

Annual dues are just \$50 for an individual, or \$75 for a couple.

Members receive a \$5 discount on door fees at all Gems events.

You can join or renew your membership online at:

www.rivercitygems.org/membership.html



13 RULES

By Keri Renault

Over the years, my wife Sunny and I have learned a few lessons that I consider the secrets of our 13 year success. They are among the primary reasons we remain not simply married, but happily together, deeply contented in love as best friends, partners and spouses.

Here are my Lucky 13 Rules to a Successful Relationship (Please bear in mind that luck is only a metaphor and actually has nothing to do with success):

Secret #1

I deceive only myself by denying the truth. Deceit is the seed of separation and profound sadness. Communicating the truth takes courage, but builds conviction and character in our marriage.

Secret # 2

The truth continues to set us free.

Secret # 3

There is magic in truth. It is a magnet which is infinitely attractive in a relationship, making it impossible to pull apart.

Secret # 4

All the answers are within.

Secret # 5

I write my own "Good Book." Following the intuitive rules of the heart makes my choices abundantly clear, correct and illuminates the path.

Secret # 6

I cannot control the actions of others, but I can master my emotions and be empowered by my reactions.

Secret # 7

I freely choose to be with my wife every day. No legal code or moral creed can compel me to remain when the relationship is wrong.

Secret # 8

I cannot serve the needs of others until I serve my own.

Secret #9

Honesty is always our best policy.

Secret #10

Try to walk in her shoes first even if it creates blisters.

Secret #11

I have one life to live; it should be mine to live as I choose.

Secret #12

Live fully in the reality of today. Tomorrow is nothing but a dream.

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What is your favorite transgender movie?



Ellie Owens – *Tootsie* is a great movie. I love the line at the end, where Julie asks Michael, "Will you loan me that yellow dress?"



Pam Gray – I like *Different for Girls* because it's a movie where a nice transgender woman gets to meet Mister Right.



Holly Gerrett – In *Normal*, Tom Wilkinson plays a MtF transsexual stuck in the rural Midwest, without any resources, information, or tolerance from any direction. It's humbling to remember how much easier it is for me to live in a community with more sources of positivity than negativity.



Rachel Morley – I love *Ma Vie en Rose*. It's a cute, feel-good movie and I especially like how the mother and grandmother are encouraging of Ludo's desire to be a girl.



Reflections On The 4th Annual Transgender Leadership Conference

by Elena Kelly

In the fortieth anniversary year of the Stonewall riots in New York City, over 200 transgender leaders converged on the UC San Diego campus for a three-day leadership summit held March 27-29, 2009. The theme was "Building Powerful Transgender Communities," and the program certainly reflected that purpose nicely.

Opening night kicked off with a PowerPoint presentation by Professor Susan Stryker, outlining the history of transpeople in the U.S. with a focus primarily on the heroes of the movement who stood up for the right to live their truth.

Following Susan, Sylvia Guerrero, the mother of the murdered teenage transwoman Gwen Araujo, spoke. Since her daughter's death, Sylvia has dedicated her life to championing transgender causes and working to end the violence that takes the lives of too many transgender people.

Saturday sessions began with a bang, as Masen Davis, Executive Director of the Transgender Law Center in San Francisco, unveiled for the first time, the results of TLC's 2008 statewide transgender survey to ascertain the economic health of the California transgender community.

The survey demonstrated the dire need for training in places of employment, in healthcare, in shelters, and to the general public.

The remainder of the day on Saturday was filled with workshops on topics ranging from self-empowerment to healthcare and media issues. The evening speakers were advocates and activists. Mara Keisling, Executive Director of National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) closed the evening's sessions. She shared a story with the crowd that had them on their feet in applause. One day recently she was working in her office and the phone rang. It was President Obama's aide. He told Mara that the President was going to sign a proclamation honoring women and children. He wanted to know if Mara could come for the ceremony because he wanted to include a transgender woman as well.

Sunday was the final day of the conference, and one of the closing speakers was Shannon Minter, Attorney and Legal Director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), one of the nation's leading advocacy organizations for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. He said there are three things we need to focus on:

We are not helpless victims. As Mr. Obama said, "We are the ones we have been waiting for." We need to claim our place at the table.

We should focus on how to make things go right, instead of criticizing when things go wrong.

We can build a community where every person counts, no one left behind. Again quoting Mr. Obama, "Our individual salvation depends on our collective salvation."

Cecilia Chung wrapped up the summit with humor and sincerity. She is the founder of Trans March, the largest transgender event on Pride weekend in San Francisco, and she is also Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco.

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Shannon Minter (left) with Elena Kelly

Check It Out!

From the River City Gems Library

Lannie! My Journey from Man to Woman

San Francisco-based author Lannie Rose reveals all in this real-life memoir of her journey from male to female. From her childhood, to her decision to transition at age 49, to the uncharted territory of living as a post-operative transsexual woman, *Lannie!* delivers a poignant, funny, and heartfelt story that affirms the value of being true to yourself.



Gems members may borrow books and DVDs at any monthly social. Visit the library table to see what's new!



River City Sparkle 2009 - Coming October 3rd!



The River City Gems are excited to announce the date for River City Sparkle 2009: "Ruby Rendezvous"!

October 3, 2009 - Doors open 6:30pm
The Martinique Ballroom - Red Lion Arden Village
1401 Arden Way - Sacramento, CA 95814

Tickets go on sale June 1st for this gala event, featuring dinner, music, dancing, and an all new entertainment lineup. Sparkle is an elegant transgender celebration for the whole community. It's your night to shine!

Advance tickets are just \$50 (\$45 for River City Gems members). For more information, visit www.rivercitysparkle.org.

Gems to Receive \$750 Verizon Grant

When Verizon employee Ellie Owens learned about the grants offered through her company's Volunteer Incentive Program, she immediately thought of the Gems. "I had just read the news about the Gems becoming a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and I realized that we could be eligible," Ellie said. The Volunteer Incentive Program, or VIP, is administered through the Verizon Foundation. Verizon employees who participate in the program must log 50 volunteer hours with a qualified nonprofit. When the hours have been verified, the nonprofit becomes eligible for a \$750 grant.



Ellie approached the Gems board of directors to ask how she could help out. She began volunteering in March, and is already nearing the 50 hour mark. Ellie keeps an online volunteer journal, recording the hours she works on Gems projects. She has been actively involved in several key areas, including member outreach, the production of *Facets*, and helping to plan this year's River City Sparkle. "Just because I finish my 50 hours doesn't mean I'll stop volunteering," Ellie said. "I'm having too much fun."

Ellie hopes her story will encourage other Gems members, and their spouses and family members, to find out what kind of community service incentive programs their employers offer. "Also, a lot of companies also offer matching gifts for charitable donations, so it's worth finding out if your company will match your membership dues and contributions," she said.

Is Ellie worried that volunteering for a transgender organization through the VIP program will "out" her at work? "Not really," Ellie said. "The Gems are a legitimate charity, so why should anyone question my choice? But if I am asked, I'll just tell them that I crossdress."



13 Rules

(Continued from page 3)

Secret #13

My wife is my most important relationship; I know now why I feel so incredible every day.

Maybe the most important lesson we've learned is we cannot truly "hold" each other; nor can we really "have" each other. We can't hold onto a relationship that lacks mutual trust, respect and love. We can't hold on to one if the other wants out. We can't hold onto a nostalgic past or a rose-colored future any more than we can hold water in our hands or the air we breathe in our lungs. Sooner or later we have to let go. It's in this simple irony that we discover one of the greatest truths of life. Letting go can sometimes be the best way of holding on.

Keri Renault is a transgendered woman on a simple quest: to live life to the fullest. You can find her blog, Words that Trans-cend, at <http://kerirenauld.blogspot.com>.



We are pleased to welcome these new members to our River City Gems family.

*Renee
Vanessa
Jasmine*

Leadership Conference

(Continued from page 4)

She said that all changes start with the courage and commitment of an individual. Every person has a purpose for being in this world. We can help others discover their unique purpose and potential. She said that we all want our voices to be heard, but we have to listen to what others have to say too. Only then are we on the way to building a world without hate and discrimination.

Elena Kelly is a member of the River City Gems and a resident of Stockton. She traveled to San Diego to participate in the 3-day conference, which is scheduled to be held in Sacramento next year.

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The River City Gems is a non-profit organization with a mission to improve the lives of transgender individuals and their families by providing education, resources, peer support, social networking opportunities, outreach programs, and services focused on the specific needs of the male-to-female transgender community. Contributions are fully tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.