

BE A CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Submit original articles, relevant news issues, upcoming events, personal stories, photos, poetry and art pertaining to the Straight Spouse Experience. Send submissions for consideration, in the form of pdfs or word documents to Daphne Callen, SSNDaphneChicago@gmail.com.

The Straight Spouse Experience

After someone discovers their spouse is not straight, their life changes forever. And whether a spouse is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, the effects on the straight spouse of having lived with a closeted person are very similar. The Straight Spouse Experience is much different from the demise of a straight/straight marriage. The lack of affection and intimacy, and questioning the foundation of the marriage are some of the issues we explore in our groups. This is why peer support is so vital in the acceptance and healing process for those new to this experience.

Our Facilitators and Support Contacts have been through the process and decided to help others in turn. Their energy and dedication are extraordinary, considering they work exclusively as volunteers, thus proving their depth of sincerity. This brings the Straight Spouse Experience to a higher level, a place where we unite to support one another and find strength to move forward.

WELCOME to this new year's first issue of News&Notes. We're here to present relevant information and insights for Straight Spouses, their families, Facilitators, Support Contacts, Group Participants and Straight Spouse Network supporters. And we want to inspire worldwide understanding and recognition of the Straight Spouse Experience and the important work of our organization.

Your News&Notes Team

Editor in Chief - Daphne Callen
Managing Editor - Janet McMonagle
Associate Editor - Peggy Montgomery
Creative Director - Linda Ehle-Callens

Contributors to This Issue-

Janet McMonagle	Amity Buxton
Linda Ehle-Callens	Randy S.
Daphne Callen	Bob C.

IN THIS ISSUE

STATE OF THE NETWORK

2015 IN REVIEW.....	pg 2
SUPPORT GROUP NEWS	pg 2
BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE	pg 3

REACHING OUT

PR STRATEGIES.....	pg 4
SOCIAL MEDIA.....	pg 4
AMITY IN PRO-FILES MAGAZINE	pg 5

IN THE NEWS

A NEW BOOK BY MAGGIE KNEIP	pg 6
EMILY FAY REESE ON TED	pg 6
DEAR ABBY	pg 6

EVENTS

CREATING CHANGE CHICAGO	pg 7
-------------------------------	------

STRAIGHT THINKING

ARTICLE: PROTECTIVE DENIAL	pg 8
----------------------------------	------

2015 - ANOTHER RECORD YEAR

1,714 STRAIGHT SPOUSES

This past year, the Straight Spouse Network Triage Team responded to 1,714 new people. We are the only organization of our kind that offers wide-ranging support for Straight Spouses. It's estimated that we get as many as 100,000 hits a year on our website.

When a new person reaches out through the Straight Spouse Network's web site, they are referred with the highest degree of privacy to the nearest contact for their area. Depending on each case, they might also be offered other means of support, as well. Each and every new person is contacted personally, mostly through email, or sometimes through a phone call. If there is no contact for a new person's area, they are offered many other types of support options.

Our number one goal is to make sure they know they are not alone, and then to help them find their way and restore a sense of balance. This is how people who contact us for support can process the next steps in what is best for them.

SSN has a wonderful network of volunteers who are the Support Contacts and Support Group Facilitators who reach out to our new people. We have contacts in almost every state. To date, the only places that don't have a contact are WY, SD, ND, WV, and HI. If you feel you're in a position to give back, please think about becoming a contact/group leader. It truly is rewarding to help those who are taking their first steps on this journey. Please contact our Executive Director Daphne Callen at SSNdaphnechicago@gmail.com for details on how to apply.

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

Peer support groups have been helping post disclosure Straight Spouses since 1991. That is when the San

Francisco Bay Area group, facilitated by Amity Buxton, began meeting with the Berkeley PFLAG chapter before the Straight Spouse Network was founded. The group, now in Oakland, continues to serve the entire range of spouses of LGBT mates, including those who stay married. In contrast to earlier days, almost half of their current group members are straight husbands.

Other long-time groups include the one in Houston, Texas. Their current facilitator, Bob C., reports, "Our chapter, named 'Out Together,' was started in 1997 and has been meeting ever since. Our founder, a newly outed lesbian, was seeking a group to help her husband understand and meet with others facing the same issues. The couple is still married and they have a grandchild whom they love together. To date, 244 people have reached out to our group for support. Many old-timers still reach out to Newbies, and many have become fast friends over the years. Currently, more spouses of transgender people are reaching out to us for help; so anyone willing to be a resource for them, please send me, BClark@fkp.com, your contact information to share with them."

Meanwhile, new groups are popping up, here and abroad. We now have two Facilitators in New Zealand. We also have a new group in Northern Maryland which was launched in June by former Baltimore group member, Joan R., after her retirement from 38 years of work in special education.

– Janet McMonagle

Special thanks to all our Support Group Facilitators and Support Contacts, new and old. Here's to an even more productive 2016!

STATE OF THE NETWORK

THANKING OUR BOARD MEMBERS FOR A JOB WELL DONE

Two of the Straight Spouse Network's distinguished board members have reached the end of their terms. We express our sincere gratitude for their dedicated service and hard work.

Lanny Bailey helped us through some significant challenges, including the website rebranding project. Lanny's expertise was essential to complex technical issues we faced while changing our server.



Lanny Bailey



Betsy Ring

Betsy Ring served as our Interim Secretary. The Board and Staff will miss our two friends, and we will always be grateful for their service.

A strong Board of Directors is a vital part of the Straight Spouse Network. Board members represent us publicly. They protect the organization's legal standing and make sure we are funded so that the Staff, who handle day-to-day operations, have the support and resources they need to do their jobs. And Board members have to meet certain criteria and make important decisions. And every Board Member does all this on a volunteer basis.

We are truly fortunate that all who have served in the past, and our current Board members, have such a strong commitment to helping Straight Spouses and furthering our mission.

APPLICATIONS ARE STILL BEING ACCEPTED

If you are interested in serving on our Board, please go to our website's homepage, www.straightspouse.org for full information on position details and how to apply.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

• 2016 •

ANNOUNCING THIS YEAR'S MEMBERS

Carter Cortelyou has been re-elected President. He is a longtime Support Group Facilitator in Detroit, MI. He is a minister with the United Methodist Church and is happily remarried.



Carter Cortelyou



Ron Exler

Ron Exler has been re-elected Vice President.

He is happily remarried; his wife is also a Straight Spouse. They work together as co-facilitators.

Pattie Gabriel has been on the Board since 2014. She is now stepping into the Board Secretary role. She is a registered nurse and mom from Pennsylvania. She has been with the Straight Spouse Network since 2009.



Pattie Gabriel

Bill Robins will take the Board Treasurer position.

Sam Cheney is returning to our Board. He is a Support Group Facilitator/Support Contact in the Philadelphia area. Sam has run the VOY forum on our website for a very long time; he is credited with being the originator of that community.

Charlotte Osa, originally from Washington, DC, is a Straight Spouse in Los Angeles, CA. She has been a Pasadena support group member and a supporter of the organization since 2014.

Laura Long is also a new member on the Board.

The Straight Spouse Network thanks the entire Board for their dedicated service.

PR STRATEGIES

OUTREACH TIPS FOR 2016

Get your support group meeting information onto local Community Event Calendars. Another recommendation: many local newspapers offer, at little or no cost, the opportunity for a group facilitator to publish events. Just list a quick explanation about the organization and the fact that on a given date you will host a local support group meeting. No need to list the location, just the phone number at which one can get additional information. A third strategy is to register your group with the local media, which will provide you with a code. With the code, information about your events will not only go across the ticker on the TV several times, but will also be listed on the web page of the local radio station. If nothing else, this PR information gets the Straight Spouse Network's name out there!

– Randy S., longtime Support Contact and support group member

“To these PR strategies, you can also request Straight Spouse Network flyers from the Straight Spouse Network. Email LindaE@straightspouse.org. Attach your own address label on them so folks can contact you. You can place them in the public racks of local libraries, community centers, including LGBT centers, and in churches or temples as well.”

– Amity Buxton, Founder of the Straight Spouse Network

Straight Spouse Network is 'COMING OUT' Via Social Media

We have a very active presence on social media. You may have seen our public Facebook page, but did you know that we are on Twitter and Linked In as well? We invite you to follow us on all of our social media channels. When you follow us, our organization builds visibility and the world knows that Straight Spouses

are not alone. Linked In? Why are we on Linked In? Isn't that just for job related profiles? No, Linked In is actually a great way for organizations like ours to get the word out about the Straight Spouse Network to our networks and professionals who can assist Straight Spouses, and keep them informed about what we do. How many times have Straight Spouses worked with counselors or attorneys, or sought help from clergy or physicians, only to be told “Really? There's a support group for that? I had no idea!”

When you follow us on Linked In, you see updates from us. You can make the choice to share those with your contacts if you feel it is okay for you to do so – or you can just be updated. No one sees what companies or organizations you are following in your profile.

Many of the updates we share on social media are articles from Straight Talk, the blog of the Straight Spouse Network. Here's a preview of some recent articles:

HOW LGBT PEOPLE CAN SUPPORT STRAIGHT SPOUSES

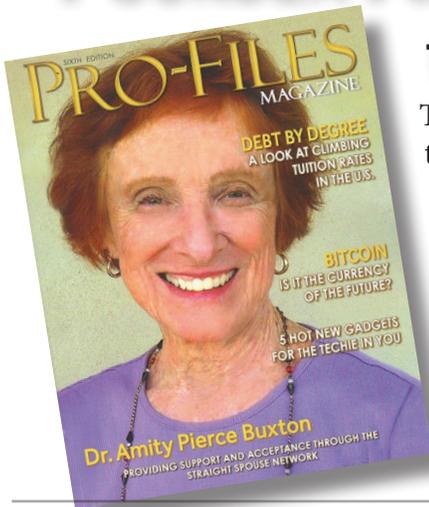
Many of us have continued to be “straight allies” in the struggle for marriage equality and standing up to homophobia. We now need the LGBT community to be our “gay allies.” You chose us to be part of the rainbow family, regardless of which colors on the spectrum we and our children represent. We choose to rebuild our lives by moving forward day by day in a positive, independent direction.

HAPPY NEW YEAR MAN

Sometimes men need to talk with other men about what's happening. The Straight Spouse Network is for women AND men seeking support. If your local group has no men, or you aren't near a group, and you're a man who wants to talk with another man who understands, there are many of us available.

cont'd on pg 5

FOUNDER **AMITY PIERCE BUXTON**



featured in **PRO-FILES MAGAZINE**

The Straight Spouse Network's tireless founder, Amity Buxton, is on the latest cover of Pro-Files magazine. This slick publication spotlights professionals in various interesting and dynamic fields. Amity is proud to represent us in the magazine. She is always finding new ways to let the world know about us. She wants everyone possible to see how all-inclusive we are, providing support and education to current or former heterosexual partners of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people and mixed-orientation couples. To see the article, go to:

<http://www.pro-filesmag.com/6thedition/apbuxton/#358>

– Janet McMonagle

Love Quotes.... – Anonymous

These are some of my favorite quotes about love. All of them resonate in different ways for me. I'm sure they could be significant to a lot of other Straight Spouses. But the last one in particular struck me, and has stayed with me, since I saw Don Juan DeMarco. I'm a huge Johnny Depp fan, so of course, I had to see this film (for the first of about 100 times...) as soon as it came out. That was in 1994. I did not know at the time that my husband was gay...

“If you love somebody, let them go, for if they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were.”

– Khalil Gibran, The Prophet

“And, in the end The love you take is equal to the love you make.”

– Paul McCartney, The Beatles Illustrated Lyrics

And this is the one...

“No fire, no heat... no heat, no life. That's ... that's the equation.”

– Jack Mickler (Marlon Brando) in Don Juan DeMarco

‘COMING OUT’ *cont'd from pg 4*

HOW COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS CAN HELP STRAIGHT SPOUSES: AFFIRMATION, RESPECT & EMPATHY

We want therapists to know that when you start working with a Straight Spouse, it is extremely important to recognize the individual person before you. And do that by Affirming, Respecting, and showing Empathy for that person. Too often a Straight Spouse's initial experience with therapists and counselors is met with difficult questions like, “What did you know? When did you know it?” “How could you not know?” “Let's explore how you avoided knowing.” “Really? How can you be sure?” Some of these questions may be helpful at some point in addressing specific issues, but in the beginning, Straight Spouses are typically shattered as individuals, and in need of Affirmation, Respect, and Empathy.

– Janet McMonagle

One of our SSN Manhattan members gave permission to use her words...

“I count SSN as one of the many silver linings I've discovered as part of the process of healing.” – Stephanie

Now Everyone Will Know

New book by Maggie Kneip

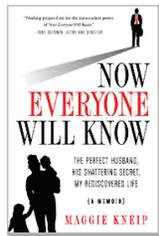
The Straight Spouse Network congratulates Maggie Kneip on the publication of her book *Now Everyone Will Know*. Maggie's story recounts how she survived when her seemingly perfect husband was infected with the AIDS virus in 1980s New York City. After his death, Maggie struggled with keeping the circumstances of her husband's death a secret, in a city which then was extremely paranoid about the stigma of the virus.



Maggie Kneip
Photo by David Dreyfuss

Twenty-five years later, societies all over the world are experiencing increased tolerance for LGBT people. And, after a journey into self-discovery, Maggie now gives us the gift of her story which honestly examines the damaging effects of secrecy and dishonesty in

relationships, from Maggie's intimate and experienced perspective. *Now Everyone Will Know* will be available for purchase in the reading section of our website soon.



A Straight Spouse Speaks Out on TED

Straight Spouse Emily Fay Reese has recently given a TED talk. TED is a nonprofit organization which is devoted to spreading significant ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks given by proactive individuals. Emily's presentation describes her experience in learning and coping with the discovery that her husband is gay.



Emily Fay Reese

Emily is the author of the popular blog, *Same Sides Support*. Her blog's main purpose is give support to straight spouses who suddenly find themselves in the same unique and unexpected situation she did. Emily also encourages LGBTQ people to live an open and authentic life, so that other people won't be unwillingly pulled into a relationship that results in tremendous pain. Emily is also an English teacher for at-risk students. She is proud to be a strong, independent, single mom, who is raising her children amicably with her Rainbow Family. We'll be sharing the TED video on our website and on Facebook.

Straight Spouse Network Featured Again In Dear Abby

January 28, 2016. Long Marriage Is Left in Limbo by Wife's Attraction to Women

DEAR ABBY: After 27 years of marriage, my wife told me she is attracted to other women. To my knowledge, she has acted on this only once. Every day I wonder where our relationship stands. One day she can't see herself without me; the next, she says we should divorce. I don't know if I should end this or wait to see where it goes. I will need counseling if we divorce, but currently I can't afford it. Yes, I love her, but what matters most to me is that she is happy. I don't have anyone else to talk to about this. Any suggestions? -- MR. D. IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR MR. D.: After 27 years of marriage I can only imagine how shocking your wife's revelation must have been for you. That she is ambivalent about your marriage must be deeply painful because you are being treated like a yo-yo. The book "The Other Side of the Closet," by Amity Pierce Buxton, Ph.D., has been mentioned before in my column and has proven helpful to others in your situation. There is also a support group called the Straight Spouse Network (www.straightspouse.org), which offers emotional support after a wife or a husband comes out as yours did. Please don't wait to read the book and visit the website. I think you will find them comforting.





Every year the National LGBTQ Task Force presents the CREATING CHANGE CONFERENCE, a long-standing event which takes place in a different major US city every year. The 2016 conference was held in Chicago in January. Nearly 4,000 people attended the conference this year.

Our goal is to see fewer LGBTQ people feel the need to stay in the closet and marry Straight Spouses.

Last year, the 2015 conference was in Colorado. Carlos from the Houston group attended with four Straight Spouse Network volunteers from the Denver group; Janet, Barbara, Connie, and Nancy. Carlos presented a Straight Spouse Network's workshop titled, "Straight Spouses: from Trauma to Advocacy." The presentation's objective was for attendees to learn how the straight spouse population is hurt by anti-LGBTQ attitudes and marriage definitions. The overall feedback and level of participation were very satisfying.

In carrying on the tradition, in January 2016, the Straight Spouse Network's Board of Directors' President, Carter Cortelyou, our Hotline Director, Jeff C. and Executive Director, Daphne Callen attended this year's conference in Chicago. Their goal was to bring to the forefront of the LGBTQ community the Straight Spouse Network's mission and role as an ally and advocate for LGBTQ issues.

Carter, Jeff and Daphne took great advantage of the opportunity to network with many other allies. They made personal connections with participants and leadership from the LGBTQ Task Force. They also connected with COLAGE, Family Equality Council,

AIDS United and Funders for LGBTQ Issues. They talked with people from other non-profits who provide both support and advocacy, sometimes with a limited set of resources and increasingly diverse needs.

The number of specialized groups in attendance was almost staggering. Many gay-friendly groups were represented; including religious, secular, agnostic, atheist and humanist groups for gay rights. They learned about new HIV drugs that work as prevention and a morning after type pill called PrEP. And the restrooms were gender neutral.

They met Trans men (female to male) and Trans women (male to female). It's important to note that in the past few years, the Straight Spouse Network has seen a large influx of Straight Spouses married to Transgender people who are coming out. Increasing our knowledge and understanding in that area is crucial for our Triage Team, our Group Facilitators and Support Contacts.

The numerous personal contacts and learning seminars offered interesting and practical knowledge as well as connections that will aid us in helping Straight Spouses with special focus on those who are married to people who are somewhere on the transgender spectrum.

The Straight Spouse Network looks forward to continued communication with these groups. Our goal is to see fewer LGBTQ people feel the need to stay in the closet and marry Straight Spouses.

Next year, the 30th Creating Change Conference will take place in Philadelphia. You can find more information at <http://www.creatingchange.org>.

PROTECTIVE DENIAL YOUR BRAIN'S LITTLE GIFT

by Linda Ehle-Callens



Most of you have said, “I should have known.”

You saw little red flags. Your husband was obsessed with Cher. Or your wife was obsessed with Cher. You wondered, “Could my spouse be gay?” then, “Nah, I’m just being paranoid.” Your first reaction was denial. Psychologically, denial is actually a good thing. It’s a little gift from your brain that gives your mind time and space to prepare for an inevitable, painful truth.

Sometimes red flags are so explicit there should be no question: damning texts, photos, rooms strewn with sex orgy leftovers, porn. When evidence is so obvious, does that stop the mind from denial? No. Again, your mind automatically goes into self-protection mode to slowly let the shock wear off before it allows you to recognize and accept harsh reality.

Sometimes it seems impossible to break free of the denial, especially when you hear, “It’s not what you think,” or “A friend used my car,” or “I must have been drugged,” or “I love only you.”

DISCOVERING HOW DENIAL WORKS IS KEY.

At first it is a protection. But if it goes on too long, it can be harmful. You know your spouse’s extramarital activities can be dangerous to your health. You realize a marriage devoid of intimacy is dangerous to your emotional health.

When vets returned home from Vietnam, they didn’t talk about their war experiences. Many went into denial and were plagued by those memories for the rest

of their lives. But there is more compassion for today’s returning vets. Recently one of the recommended treatments for soldiers, many living in denial of their PTSD, is participation in support groups where they have open discussions with other vets. This is proving to be extremely healing.

Some psychologists suggest that one of the best ways to get past denial is to talk to someone you don’t know. The right therapist might be of great help, if they happen to have a frame of reference.

Straight Spouse Network volunteers are a very specialized group who have seen a myriad of traumatic situations in those who contact the network for help. Group facilitators have lived through the difficulties and challenges of learning their spouses are LGBT, have been in groups, and have found resolution in their own situations and have come out the other side. They are a point of reference for those just starting the journey.

The most difficult thing for many Straight Spouses is just going to that first meeting. When they do, and start sharing and comparing their stories, they find the courage to finally break through the barrier of denial.

The first step in truly moving forward is recognizing that we all experience denial, how it works for us and how we can and must eventually let it go. When we do, we can finally begin to move forward, make important decisions and start living a better life.

Linda Ehle-Callens is a writer/art director, over eight years post-disclosure. She has been a Straight Spouse Network Supporter for eight years and a Group Facilitator for five years.