

The Harmonizer

Vol. 2, No. 2

Monthly Newsletter for Music City Couples

April 2003

Potluck Proves Successful

Despite the weather alerts and bad road conditions in the near vicinity of Donelson Bowl, many members and six new couples showed up for a wonderful evening of food and fun.

Chair couples got an early start preparing for dinner by setting tables and hanging decorations. By 7 pm guests were greeted with a full spread of drinks, dinner, and plenty of desserts. Many new couples brought children who enjoyed the bowling lanes outside our private room.

After dinner an assortment of door prizes were awarded from donations by *Tribe*, *Jaded Mary's*, and *group members*. After everyone had eaten, each couple went around the room introducing themselves and sharing personal experiences involv-

ing the group.

Camping and, of course, food were the big topics of discussion on most people's minds; also, ideas of a future yard sale and cookout was peaking a lot of interest as well.

Risa and Angela had their hands full with New Member packets and freshly printed newsletters to hand out (in full color!) Barb and Holly kept the evening running smoothly making sure everyone was feeling welcome and having a great time! Donald and Jeffery handed out door prizes while Larry and Bobby captured lasting memories for the website.

The evening drew to a close by 10 pm, but everyone left with thoughts of what the coming months will have in store. From such a great turnout, it was established the

open-guest potluck was a great success! At least one new couple signed up before the night ended. Special thanks to all that helped out starting weeks prior up through that Friday night. For more pictures go to the website at:

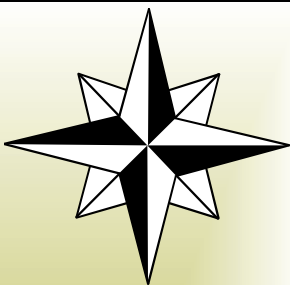


Credits:

Top photo, prospective new members enjoy the company and great food! (by Larry)

Middle photo, Bobby and Larry showing their affection for each other!

Bottom photo, Kaitlyn (of Shawn and Dorothy) stole the show and beat everyone in bowling!



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www.musiccitycouples.org

SPOTLIGHT

The Spotlight returns this month focusing on our Chair Couple, Donald and Jeffery. After celebrating their 15-year anniversary, they should have something to share with the rest of us.

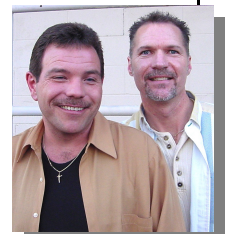
"Really, the best advice is to be open and honest with one another and don't try to live your lives now as they were in the past. Your relationship now is very different from what your past relationships once were," says Donald!

Currently, Donald and Jeffery are "living with the in-laws while our new house is being built

[in Mt. Juliet] (both are stressful on their own), commuting 1 – 1 ½ hrs to work, then again in the evening. We worry about both of our mother's health, taking on a part-time job in the evenings, and of course being nominated and elected Chair Couple for Music City Couples!"

They had met at the old *Warehouse*, which was "the place to be and be seen." On their first date Donald said he was hoping Jeffery

(Continued on page 3)



New Board Meets For First Time

by: Stefen (Steve)



MUSIC CITY COUPLES BOARD MINUTES MARCH 2003, 3:00 P.M.

In Attendance: Jeffary, Donald, Barb, Holly, Elaine, Herb, John, Marcus, Brian, Bobby, Larry and Stefen

Donald brought the meeting to order at 3:00 pm

AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Financial Assistance:**

It was discussed that some of our couples had financial hardships. The board discussed and agreed that former couples from last year can rejoin and pay their dues over a six month period. This will be a onetime event only. Couples need to ask the board and it will be handled on a case by case basis.

- March Potluck:**

The potluck will be a new membership drive. It will be advertised in Xenogeny and the Nashville Scene. Donald will be in touch with Linda at Xenogeny to get pricing for the advertising. It will be held at the Donnelson Bowling Alley.

- Non-paid Members & the Discussion Board:**

No dues will be prorated for couples unless they are new and that will allow them to be paid up until the first of the year at which they will responsible for paying in full at the beginning of each year.

Current Members that have not paid will have until March 31st to pay; and if they have not paid, they will be removed from having access to the members-only discussion board. Bobby will send each of them an email warning them.

- Newsletter:**

It is ready to go. It will be sent out in hard copy or via email depending on what the couple signed when they joined the organization. Marcus and Brian need filler articles to add to the newsletter that are good quality and not just fluff. All chair couples are being asked to submit. Submissions will be needed by the 3rd week of each month to make it into the next newsletter. Also discussed was the publishing of the board minutes. It was agreed that they will be posted monthly in the newsletter.

- Events Calendar:**

The *Tuesday Night Out* dinners will remain. The board made the decision to have dinners start at 6:30 P.M. Locations for the dinners will be decided by the board.

The *Easter Egg Hunt and Brunch* will be held in April as the monthly function.

A *Camping Trip* will be the monthly function for May.

- Gay Pride Event:**

Elaine will chair the pride committee and will attend the meetings held at the rainbow community center.

Stefen will contact NAPP regarding MCC couples participating in the Business Mixer held during pride week.

- Fundraisers:**

The topic was brought up and some ideas were discussed but due to time limitations the topic was table until the next board meeting.

- Board Position Terms:**

Terms will follow the current bylaws with Chair Couple and Events Couples serving two-year terms and all other board couples will serve one-year terms.

- Next Board Meeting:**

Will be held April 6 at 4 pm at Elaine and Anna's house. She will get directions out to the group as soon as possible.

- Meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.**

Financial Status

March 28, 2003

By: Ana (Elaine)

YTD Revenues:

Membership Dues:	\$678.00
Misc. Revenue:	\$15.00

Total Revenues: \$693.00

Previous Expenses: \$128.00

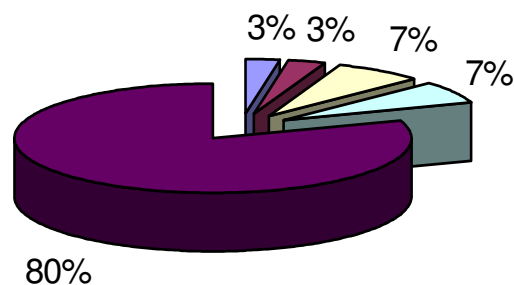
March Expenses:

Bank Service Charges:	\$11.00
Newsletter Expenses:	\$22.00
Website Expenses:	\$0
Quarterly Couples Nat. Dues:	\$0
Pride Expenses:	\$0
Events Expenses:	\$0
Other Expenses:	\$0

YTD Total Expenses: \$139.00

Beginning 2003 Balance: \$230.86

Current Bank Balance: \$762.86



■ Newsletter

■ Bank Service Charges

■ Quarterly Couples National Dues

■ Events Expenses

■ Available Funds: \$762.86

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The date many of us don't want to think about is April 15th or tax day. Many people have a lot of stress especially if you think you or your partner may owe money. What are some considerations before filing your taxes to reduce the amount of stress you and your partner feel?

Did you know gay couples actually have better tax benefits than married couples? I know you think I'm kidding right?

Actually, when I first filed our taxes as a gay couple, I thought that we had to cut all the deductions in half. I claim half and he claims half. The first step you have to complete is to look

The following are websites to help with some gay issues such as taxes and other topics:

<http://www.hrc.org/familynet/>
<http://www.planetout.com/pno/money/>
<http://www.gfn.com/>

at the total picture. Always look for the best solution for both of you rather than individuals. The ultimate goal should be to reduce the amount of taxes that you pay for your household. Before you take anything I say as law, please use a tax advisor or call the IRS for specific questions.

I can only speak from our experience. If some of you have other suggestions let me know. Below are some techniques to consider:

- **Bunching**

One way to reduce taxes is to bunch itemized deductions. For example, Steven can take all of the itemized deductions while Stefen uses the standard deduction. Switch this setup and rework the taxes to see if it would be a better outcome for your family. Straight married couples can't do this!

There are a few steps to do this legally so seek some financial advice. For example, it is best to have a joint checking account for bills and deductions including charitable deductions. Another example would be to have the home mortgage in both partner's names.

- **Adoption credits**

If you adopt a child, you can receive tax credits for up to \$5,000 of expenses paid in the year the adoption becomes final, until 12/31/01. The person who writes the check gets the tax credit.

- **Filing your taxes**

If you have a lot of deductions such as, you travel for your business, I recommend that you get a professional to file your taxes.

A professional will find many more deductions for the most

part. Plus the fees charged can be itemized. Also if you own a business you can do lots of items to involve your partner and reduce your taxes.

It's Tax Time Again!

by: Steve (Stefen)

If you want to do your own taxes, Stefen and I have used <http://www.quicken.com>. You don't need the software at the store just an internet con-

nection; however, the software can help you if you have a business, a farm, or other strange setups. It can also help you organize your deductions throughout the year. Always do the taxes on paper first so that you know what to expect.

You will of course file each

person separate using with the 1040EZ (standard) or the 1040A (itemize). You can get forms at your local library or download from the Internet. The post office doesn't have tax forms.

Filing your taxes online reduces the chance you or your partner will be audited and you can actually get your refund faster if you file early. The program will walk you step by step and can help you find and calculate deductions that you may not catch.

We have used *Quicken* for the last four years. In fact, we don't have to enter a lot of basic information year to year because it remembers previous year's information.

I hope your stress this year won't be so bad this year.

SPOTLIGHT cont'd

would pay, "but he didn't. The bill came to \$19 and some change and all I had to last me the rest of the week was \$20! I hope that the waiter wasn't too offended?"

After dinner, he goes on to say, "After about 1/2 hour of trying to tune the stereo in I began to get suspicious of [Jeffrey's] intentions (wink!)"

They enjoy life and being happy together. Donald says, "I love Jeffrey's sense of humor, his street smarts and his mouth (where he's liable to say just about anything)!" While Jeffrey counters with, "I love Donald's practicality, sensitivity and he's the only person I've truly trusted!"

When describing an ideal evening together they agreed on, "coming home after a hard days work and knowing the yard work is done, plants have been watered, the house has been cleaned, table is set and dinner is in the oven!" But when they need to get away, "a week away, in a bungalow, on a white sandy beach, under a clear blue sky in St. Augustine, FL., WITH NO PHONE," sounded best!

Donald and Jeffrey care deeply about their furry family: "The Girls" – Lady Cleo and Baby Piazadora (Boston Terriers). Cleo and her daughter Pia both were about 15 when they passed (Cleo passed July '01 and Pia passed Feb '03). They were both loveable, sweet, quiet, playful pets (they thought they were people) who loved down time and loved to give kisses. "The Boy" – Sir Roman is a cross between a Chocolate Lab and a Brittany Spaniel. Roman is now 10 months old so imagine, if you will, a 9/10 year old child that needs Ridlin or Zolof! He loves to run and jump and play, ALL DAY! How many more months of this can we stand?"

It is safe to say there is never a dull moment amongst this couple. Music City Couples elected these guys to lead everyone for the next two years as the Chair Couple. It is not hard to see their devotion to our organization. Kudos to Donald and Jeffrey!



How Gays & Lesbians Have Progressed



by: Jeffery (Donald)

I had just started a new novel on how gays and lesbians shaped Hollywood and a paragraph has stayed in my thoughts since reading it.

A 92 year old gay actor was remembering the Friday night Bridge games he and his friends used to throw in the Hollywood Hills during the 1950's - where the gray smoke hung low - where Rock Hudson often did the honors of mixing the drinks - publicists would swap news of the studios - where deals were struck and history was made and where every man and woman was 'gay'!

He savored that memory!

Nowhere else in America did gay's have such a way of being together, of not worrying about their

jobs, of just being who they were. It struck me that they were almost a secret society. How far we, as gay's and lesbian's, have come in the last 50 years. True, in some arenas we still have a long way to go, but now we have many outlets and methods of support within reach. My wish is that someday we will have 100% acceptance in all aspects of our lives. Though, it may never happen in my lifetime, I'd like to think that it would be possible.

This is what Donald and I talk

"I hope that every member is aware of the support that exists within us, within our group"

most of. In this group, Music City Couples, we instantly felt a comfort level rarely experienced in past venues. We feel as though we have formed lasting friendships that we had not found before. I hope that every member is aware of the support that exists within us,

within our group!

I know that Donald and I feel that we would be there to offer help and support in anyway that we could.

Now, if we could just host a "Hollywood Bridge Party" where Rock Hudson mixed the drinks?

GOOD STUFF



From Angela's Kitchen

CHESS BARS

Ingredients:

1 Box Yellow Cake Mix	1 Box Confectioner's Sugar
1 Stick Margarine, room temperature	8 oz. Cream Cheese
1 Egg	2 Eggs

Combine cake mix, margarine and 1 egg until creamy. Put into an oblong pan and pat down to the edges. Next, Combine sugar, cream cheese and 2 eggs in a bowl. Whip with a mixer until creamy. Pour over cake mix, bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes.

Cool before cutting. Serves 10- 12. *ENJOY!!*

Simply Speaking...

Editorial by Brian

Spring has finally arrived! Like everyone else, I was very tired of winter and was grateful to see some nice weather finally come along. Spring is my second favorite season next to fall and I just love it when all of the trees and spring flowers are popping out seemingly overnight and bringing some much needed color to very dreary landscape. Seeing the sun was also a big help as well! Winter is definitely losing its grip here and the evidence is everywhere.

It's kind of hard to miss the obvious signs of spring...longer hours of daylight, daffodils dotting the landscapes, forsythia bringing loud splashes of yellow to our yards, redbud trees bringing color along the edges of forests, and Bradford pears' beautiful white flowers. All of these combine to provide us with a spectacular show here in Middle Tennessee. We can enjoy all of these things as we drive down the road or walk into our places of employment, and it is a refreshing change. However, have you ever stopped and looked at the smaller wildflowers and plants that also herald the coming of spring?

Violets are adding splashes of purple in lawns and along garden paths. Just today when I was walking the paths of The Hermitage, I noticed that very tiny violets were also blooming. They are no bigger than an eraser on the end of a pencil! Spring beauties were also making their all-to brief appearance around some of the trees. In places like Cedars of Lebanon and other woodland areas, trout lilies are also setting out their delicate nodding blossoms. All of these small flowers are easy to miss if you aren't really looking for them.

I am just as awed by the grand displays of nature as the next person. There are no words adequate enough to describe the feeling you get when you get your first view of Yosemite Valley or when you reach the rim of the gorge overlooking Fall Creek Falls. Places like these provide us with connections to a more primal time and are sources of inspiration. Usually, I feel closest to a higher spiritual power in these places than at any other time. Our world is one of contrasts though. While these places move us deeply, the less grand views can do no less if we take the time to look at them and see the beauty in front of us.

You can almost miss them. Doesn't it seem that's how many things in our lives go these days? When we are so busy with the daily grind that we fail to see the smaller wonders around us. Anyone who's ever gone on a hike with me knows how often I pick out the small things that are easily overlooked. I try hard to find those subtle things because I feel they reflect the true artistry of our natural world. But I also apply this to my day-to-day dealings with people as well. I notice the small gestures of friendship and how people react to a sincere expression of "hello" and "how are you doing". Sometimes the little gestures from people can make you feel really good about your day. Holding open the door for an elderly lady at the mall and their gratitude is often enough to make me feel good for the rest of the day.

Take a little time out of your busy life to slow down a little and notice the smaller things that surround us. They may not be that impressive and produce an "ooh, ah" feeling, but they certainly will make a lasting impression. Let the subtle things move you as deeply as the grander things. Life will be most definitely richer when you do!



Music City Couples Operating Committee

Chair Couple
Donald & Jeffary

Finance Couple
Elaine & Ana

Vice Chair Couple
Stefan & Steve

Media Services Couple
Brian & Marcus

Events Couple
Barb & Holly

Member Services Couple
Risa & Angela

Web Services Couple
Larry & Bobby



It's Easter Time!!
Join Risa and Angela for
Easter Brunch followed
by an Easter Egg Hunt.
With great prizes.

Saturday, April 19th
at 11:00 am.

Directions will be posted on
line. Please RSVP by email
by April 15th.

Anniversaries

- John and Herb, April 10th



New Members

- Charlie and Dina



Birthdays

- Julia (Tara) April 11th
- Elaine (Ana) April 9th



Announcements

- April 8, Nashville Cares Dinner Out for Life. A list of local restaurants has gotten on board with this great fund raiser. Show your support and log on to: www.diningoutforlife.com for details.
- April 13, Board Meeting. Monthly organizational meeting open to chair couples and all active members. Time and Location TBA.
- April 15, Tuesday Dinner Out, 6:30 pm. Join MCC for our monthly evening with good food and company. Time and Location TBA.
- April 19, Easter Egg Hunt & Brunch, 11 am. Risa and Angela have graciously hosted this fun for April. Children, both young and old, are encouraged to attend.
- April 21, Call for May newsletter articles. We would love to see this forum grow and be a great benefit to the group. Open to all members with something to say!
- May 23-25, National Couples Convention. Hosted by the Golden Gate Couples affiliate in San Francisco. This event Email Brian & Marcus for an application form if you are interested in attending!
- June 2-7, Nashville Pride Week. Mark your calendars early! The week of festivities ends with the annual parade on that Saturday. MCC plans to man a booth and generate a lot of interest. Be There!

**AS OF PRINT DATE, THESE ARE THE MOST CURRENT EVENTS.
PLEASE CHECK THE MESSAGE BOARD FOR UPDATES OFTEN.**

If you know of any couples that are interested in our organization, this is a great time to bring them to scheduled events so they can get to know the members and learn more about our organization. The success of our organization depends not only on addressing the needs of our current members but also in attracting new members. We must build upon the foundation of the current members and encouraging other couples to see what we are all about. This effort has to be a combination of group gatherings, member support, and involvement by *you*.

Contact any of the Chair Couples for further information!

eden
a garden store

Nancy Robison
Proprietor

2800 Bransford Ave.
Nashville, TN 37204
Phone (615) 383-0038
Fax (615) 383-0607




Good Food & Company





Pictured above: Shane, Steve, John, Holly, Herb, Stefan, Greg and Marcus (not pictured)

Music City Couples once again got together on the third Tuesday of March for "Dinner Nite Out." Everyone met at *The Alabama Grille* inside Oprymills.

April 2003

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8  Dinner	9 Elaine (Ana) 	10 John & Herb 	11 Julia (Tara) 	12
13 Board Meeting	14	15 MCC Dinner Out	16	17	18	19 Egg Hunt & Brunch
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May 2003

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 	16	17
18	19	20 MCC Dinner Out	21 	22	23 National Convention	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Look for the MCC article in the April Edition of *Out&About!*



Mission Statement:

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

The organization serves to provide a forum for those member-couples to strengthen their own relationships while also providing a social and supportive structure for their fellow member-couples. Music City Couples holds no religious or political affiliations and makes every attempt to respect the privacy of its members.

The Harmonizer is a monthly publication of Music City Couples. Production of the newsletter is the responsibility of the Media Couple. We encourage all members to submit articles to appear in the newsletter. The Media Couple reserves the right to select and edit all articles for publication.

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