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Buffalo Belles Newsletters

The Madeline Davis Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,
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Buffalo Belles

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The Buffalo Belles Newsletter

December 2001 Issue

What happened in December's meeting?

We had a great turnout and a wonderful time. It was nice to see everyone. I myself hadn't seen that much food in a long time! (cont. on page 2)

Meeting time for our regular monthly meetings is 6:00pm. It was 7:00pm in the past. Someone had forgot and asked, so here it is for the girls who may not know this. Also, the doors open at 5:00pm if anyone needs to arrive early to get dressed.

Info Line

(716) 879-0973

Mail Correspondence to:

Buffalo Belles

P.O Box 1701

Amherst, NY 14226

Or Email:

buffalo_belles@juno.com

Dues for year 2002 can be paid this January. Regular membership is \$25 and \$15 for supporting. You can send your dues to the P.O. Box and make your check out to "The Buffalo Belles"

Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Spiritual Concerns & Studies

First Congregational Church of Christ
822 Cleveland Ave.

Niagara Falls, NY 14304

an open and affirming congregation

Contact: >>Jean2ts@aol.com 716-283-4707

WHEN: 3rd Sat. of every month //

TIME: 6:00 - 9:00 (about)

Downstairs on left side of Church

EVERYONE IS WELCOME AT THIS

FUNCTION AND SUNDAY

WORSHIP SERVICE!

Sunday service starts at 10:30 am

Directions: From Buffalo. Go to north Grand Island bridge. Exit to the Robert Moses Parkway. Travel to the end. Turn right and go to 3rd St. Turn left. This changes to Whirlpool Street. Turn right onto Cleveland Ave. Church on the left.

From Lockport: RT 104 to Whirlpool Street. Turn left onto Cleveland Ave.

God made us alive with Christ. He

forgave us all our sins, having canceled the handwritten code (the law of Moses) that was against us and stood to oppose us. He took it all away, nailing it to His cross. -- Colossians 2:13 - 14 (what a mouthful and no better place to start.)

December meeting

(cont. from page 1)

We had enough snacks to make any dress fit a little too tight. Once the meeting got "formal" we had an open discussion and talked about some different things. First someone asked about paying membership dues at the meeting > No problem. Next it was suggested that if anyone would or could receive an e-mail version of the newsletter to cut printing costs down it would help out. In last month's newsletter I mentioned having a make-up demonstration. This will probably be in March or April as the woman I have in mind has a busy schedule. After some talk about our meeting place most of us felt good about donating something to the kind folks who let us use their space (they are doing some costly renovating). It'd be a token of thanks from all of us. Best would be to include it with your membership dues. And finally a super nice girl offered to give us free ski lessons. Contact Patty J. at PJ362536@AOL.com.

Belles poll question at our December meeting;

What are the 3 most important items in making one as passable as they can be?

- o Confidence
- o Good Make Up

- o Wig/Hair styled well
- o Not being too tall (say over 6')
- o Shapely hips (corset)
- o Female Mannerisms
- o Having a feminine Voice
- o Walking like a woman
- o Appropriate outfit for the occasion
- o Long nails
- o Breastforms

How you voted;

- (1) Confidence (43 %)
- (2) Female mannerisms (16 %)
- (3) Appropriate outfit for the occasions (14 %)

Here is a wonderful event that GLBT's, friends, families and allies can enjoy (& it's free)...The Fourth Annual Winter Solstice Celebration of Spirit "WE ARE ONE"

A Buffalo Niagara Spiritual Event
Thursday, December 20, 2001, 7:30pm
(7:00pm - instrumental music to enjoy)
Temple Beth Zion (805 Delaware Ave,
near Summer St, Buffalo)
Featuring: "The Celebration of Spirit
Choir". Free and open to the Public - All
are Welcome. Reception To Follow.
-Wheelchair accessible, Sign Language
interpreter present, large print programs
available. Parking is available in the
Temple lot. Additional parking is
available at the Red Cross across the
street on Delaware Ave. Also, the City
of Buffalo has made it possible for
Winter Solstice attendees to park on both
sides of Delaware Ave, Linwood Ave
and Barker St.
For more info call: Rainbow Spirit
Rising - (716) 636-3999

from Michelle Fox ;

Our newsletter was called "The Journey" in the past but the two newest issues were not if anyone has noticed. This was intentional. With the groups permission I would like to call the newsletter simply "The Buffalo Belles Newsletter". The word *journey* to me implied a dynamic quality-the idea of a kind of progression. This may be true in some people's lives. But there are members in our group who are not on any such journey. Why should our newsletter contain a specific orientation within its title?

When I was given the job of editor I felt strongly about printing articles as close to "as-is" condition as humanly possible. At the same time however, our newsletter should be a first rate paper, telling all that read it we're a class act. There are some 20+ organizations nationwide that receive our newsletter in addition to the entire Buffalo Belles membership. Some articles submitted do, and will in the future contain grammatical and spelling errors. No problem. I'll dot the i's and cross the t's. At least I know I won't have to delete even the smallest of flames- because we're head and shoulders above that. You can write something too! Our articles can be about anything. You can write about an experience, feeling or reflection you feel comfortable with sharing. This next article is something I have been thinking about for a while, maybe we all have.

No such thing as crossdresser or transsexual;

by Michelle Fox

We've heard the terms before and believe we are categorized into one of

the two groups. Either you're one or the other, right? I'm not so sure. Over the past year I have met a lot of different people-from different walks of life. As I have talked with them and got to know them a little better the black and white have become gray. I have met crossdressers of whom I query "Would you ever want to become a woman for real?" and they answer "Yes but..." and they go on to explain how their home life and/or job would be ruined by a transition so they have chosen to keep their feelings private. A very tough, painful and private decision to make. I feel for them deeply and wonder what they'd do if things were different. The other side of the coin here is I've seen transitioned girls who almost exclusively dress with lots of flavor and seem to avoid loose fitting clothes. (Gosh I wish I could, but I'm too fat!)

Here's my question >What do you call a person who meets criteria of both groups? Are they transsexuals who enjoy the mystique of dressing up or are they crossdressers who are Gender Dysphoric?

I believe I can answer this one. Everyone fits under the umbrella somewhere; the point of interest for us is what we need to do in life to successfully deal with our feelings. What's it going to take to turn depression into happiness? What do we have to do to get on with our lives? Is it crossdressing in another city for a weekend with some friends or starting down the trail "Destination > Gender Reassignment Surgery"? . Different solutions for different people. As for determining where it is under the umbrella we stand, that part should be done with a qualified therapist (after which you both come back to the question "So what do I do about it?").

There really is a difference between a cross dresser and a transsexual. The difference is the different treatment necessary to make that person as happy as she can be.

There really are similarities between a cross dresser and a transsexual. They are the overwhelming feelings of fear, guilt, shame and sense of isolation burdened. We both say "No one understands..." or "Why did she have to leave? "

Both groups are different, but yet share a lot in common. That's why I said there's no such thing as a crossdresser or a transsexual-we're just people, doing what we need to do in order to be happy.

from Rebecca J.

Chesnutt

This is in response to the column entitled "Nancy's Perspective".

I was at the May meeting. Nancy's perspective on what happened that day is not entirely the case. I explained to Nancy that what she had written hurt me deeply. She had written in her column that maybe only Cross Dressers would be admitted into the Buffalo Belles, and that is why it was originally formed. I had interpreted her comments to be exclusive only of Cross Dressers and the Transsexuals who were members of the Buffalo Belles would have to be excluded from the group. This statement was very destructive to the group as a whole. At that period of time we observed that Transsexuals held many positions. Many of us (Transsexuals) were so upset that we decided to remove ourselves from the group. This meant that many of us who were in key positions no longer wished to be a member of the Buffalo Belles as

long as it would remain an exclusive group. We had decided to form a group that was completely inclusive to all who wished to join. This included anyone who wished to support the Queer Community (Gay, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgendered, Transsexuals and Straight). The corrections that were made to her columns were made to correct misspellings, grammar, punctuations and inclusive language. The journey was sent to many individuals outside of the group and reflected whom the Buffalo Belles were. This was done to inform the community so we might obtain help and benefactors who would support our community. Many people, who made decisions of whether or not they would help our group, read the articles written.

I had asked Nancy for her phone number so I might talk with her about some of her upcoming articles; she refused to give it to me, which severed any communication that I had with her. There was no way of contacting her about anything contained within her articles. This made it impossible for me to work with her, concerning anything within her column that might be misunderstood by others. If we had some form of open communication her column then would reflect what she really had intended for everyone to read and not hurt the feelings of anyone. If she had wanted nothing to be changed within her column, then it would have been printed as is. We all say and do things that we wished we hadn't. It is for this reason we need to have a sounding board, someone, to reflect our actions against. By doing this we help each other.

Sincerely,
Rebecca J. Chesnutt
Former Editor of "The Journey".

NANCY'S PERSPECTIVE

Greetings!

Are you a captive audience? I'm not sure how that works. I would think that the very fact you're reading this would put you into that category.

A lot of things have happened in the last six months and I'm not talking world events here. For one, I'm writing a column for our newsletter again. Note the word OUR!! This is certainly not my publication alone nor is it the voice of some chosen few. This is your chance to stay in touch with things going on in the transgendered community, and with the Belles in particular. I hope you feel free to use this newsletter as a forum for your thoughts and suggestions. Success is measured by how everyone participates. Remember, this is a support group and all of its members need to step up and offer their services.

Actually, I was asked to start writing again. As you know we have been going through a rough period. I'm not saying it's over, but hopefully we have turned the corner. Kathy L. called me after the October meeting and we had a nice talk (as always). I'm going to start coming to the meetings again and of course will be adding my viewpoint via the Belles Newsletter. Please keep in mind that these are my thoughts and observations and in no way do they reflect on anyone else. I have no agenda nor do I want to get personal. I will sometimes ask questions; make comments; offer suggestions; ask for your help; try to make you aware of something I feel is important and may, at times, try to inject some humor into my monthly dissertation. If you read my column last month you know I've had some pretty emotional days since last May. The old roller coaster ride. So thanks Kathy - for asking me to participate again. Thanks also to our new editor Michelle. Last month's issue was most welcome in my mailbox.

I will always be happy to talk with you at a meeting if you have a problem or question with something I write about. Keep in mind we're all in this together and an open dialogue is vital. I'm looking forward to writing again because it's something I enjoy doing. We all have thoughts and ideas running amok in our mind and being able to put mine down on paper has proven to be a tremendous way to vent. I bet a lot of great things would end up in a diary if you were to start one. Note I said diary and not dairy. That's a whole different ball game.

My last thought for this time: COME TO A MEETING!! There really is strength in numbers. Since we are all part of a small minority it behooves us to stick together. Once a month is a welcome outlet and certainly will give you a chance to show off that new outfit, or to share some makeup secrets with others. You might want to check out the girls in Rochester. They are meeting on the first Saturday of each month. A road trip while all dolled up feels good. It really does. They would love to have you visit.

Until next time then. Keep those memories alive. Take care and stay beautiful. Happy Holidays too!!

Your sister,
Nancy

So...why do I dress up anyway?

by Michelle Fox

Has anyone ever wondered why we crossdress in the first place? I sure did, as have others I'm sure. It just seems so odd that one would risk so much in their life to wear clothing that permits them temporary membership into the opposite gender. When I was confused and looking for answers I did some reading and found a few possible explanations.

The first reason was erotica. Female clothing providing sexual arousal, and is the main ingredient in a fantasy. The next idea was a relief from tension by providing an opportunity to step away from the male role. A chance to express a part of themselves they would otherwise feel uncomfortable doing in everyday life-like gentleness, sensitivity and being passive. Other feelings trying to get out might be the need to flirt, to be beautiful or to act helpless. All of these are commonly associated with women.

It has been suggested that *some* crossdressers are envious of women, but also that their view of women's social standing is unrealistic. Other CD's just enjoy fooling the world. They appear in public and blend into the crowd while attracting the attention of admiring men—a testimony to their success in the masquerade. Some have an alternative female personality "my sister" complete with her own social circle of friends and history. "She" is known to be an illusion in an ongoing drama created by the crossdresser.

For others their female presentation is a theatrical art form that involves make-up, costumes and acting. They consider it a hobby that pleasantly

occupies their spare time. Some female impersonators simply call it "a job" and feel no stronger about it than that.

Ask Miss Suzi

Dear Miss Suzi,

I am a transgendered girl and new to the Western New York area. I am currently out of work and seeking employment. I was wondering if you have any suggestions that will help me in my search. I am not a performer, so drag is out of the question. Do you know of any places in Buffalo where a transgendered girl might apply for employment?

Thank you for your help,

Elaine

Dear Elaine,

Thank you for your kind introduction. Welcome to Buffalo darling. It is my pleasure to meet you indeed. Looking for work, are you dear? Well, me too. This retail nonsense is just not cutting it. I have been running Miss Suzi's for 3 years now and I'm still not getting paid for it, teeheehee! But seriously... This is America... You can find work wherever you're both needed and qualified, can't you? No one would ever dare to discriminate against the transgendered (or any other bio-socio-ethno-cultural group) now, would they?

Prospective employers cannot ask about your sex... and I do not believe that anyone is actually allowed to take a peek either, are they? I think that would be rude... and probably is illegal to boot! Therefore, prospective employers do not know what sex you are because they are not allowed to ask or check. Now, there may be a company dress code, which, like all workplace things, cannot be discriminatory in any way, right?

So, for reasons of safety and standard company policy, there may be a

dress code in place consisting of particular options for **all** employees with possible suggested sets of options for women and for men... even though assuming, or asking if, someone is either one or the other of those is discriminatory and probably illegal. As long as you stick to the company's dress code for **all** employees, you should be fine, don't you think? Why would any employer want to discriminate against a qualified individual who does her or his job well and sticks to the company's (non-discriminatory) policies regarding job performance, employee safety, and a standard company dress code?

Okay, So am I looking at the world through rose-colored glasses or what? Well, just call me Pollyanna (Miss Pollyanna, that is!). My instinct is that all of this might be much easier once one has one's foot in the door. Because once you are **in**, you are able to prove yourself by simply performing your job well (Of course, good communications skills and a spirit of cooperation with coworkers, yada yada yada, will go a long way on any job as well). The problem lies, then, in getting in the door. I can think of only two possible scenarios... the honest route and the dishonest route.

In the honest route, you appear at the interview dressed and groomed in a way that is "appropriate" for your chosen or preferred gender in that business setting or perhaps even an androgynously toned-down version, *which is still honest to both yourself and to the rest of the world who sees you.* In my "rose-colored" world, the prospective employer has reviewed your résumé, checked out your references, sees that you look sharp and communicate well, and tells you to start

Monday morning. But... in the **real** world, however, she or he looks at you, guesses which gender you are "supposed to be", sees that you have chosen otherwise, and tells you that the position has been filled but "we'll keep your résumé on file".

In the dishonest route, you bite bullet and disguise yourself as the gender you are "supposed to be". You show up for the interview (15 minutes early, of course), the prospective employer has read your résumé, has checked your references, looks at you, sees that you look sharp and communicate effectively, makes assumptions about your supposed and displayed gender, finds them to appropriately match her or his prejudicial expectations, and tells you to start Monday morning... **Only after which**, you begin the gradual process of coming out and transforming your appearance to your preferred gender... slowly and deliberately... one step at a time, while keeping your nose firmly to the grindstone and doing your job the very best way you know how.

It is sad that people should ever have to lie or hide any part of themselves that would otherwise be true and honest and sincere in order to not upset the delicate sensibilities of a world that has not been enlightened quite enough yet to accept transgendered people (and ALL people) with the warm, accepting, open arms that we all deserve. Yes, the world is changing. Tremendous strides are being taken every day. Some of our brave sisters (and brothers) are pioneering the ways for us to follow. Old ideas are being challenged. Laws and policies are changing. The words "transgender", "gender preference" and "gender identity" are being added to legislation and corporate policies that

prohibit discrimination against us on the job and in society. General Motor's employee relations representatives recently stopped by my boutique to discuss some of the issues that affect transgendered people in the workplace with a view to establishing new policies that will protect us from unfair and discriminatory practices there in the future.

So, Elaine, you have some decisions to make regarding the approach you will take on your quest for employment. How honest or dishonest are you willing to be? Honest enough to risk **NOT** getting the job (unless my rose-colored Pollyanna vision really does have some hopeful merit)? Or dishonest enough to secure the job and ensure your financial livelihood in a dog-eat-dog world where we do whatever we must in order to survive? I wish you all the best and encourage you to please network in our community. There are some real heroines and heroes among us who can help. Good luck to you dear... See you **at work** soon!

Thank you for asking Miss Suzie



PEP Calendar

"People Exchanging Power"

More info: Phone 559-3062

<http://www.geocities.com/pepbuffalo1>

January 5th at 8:00pm

Happy Blue Year

A demo on Japanese rope bondage

January 19th at 8:00

PEP Play Party

Free play and use of our equipment.

February 2nd at 8:00pm

"Fetish Potpourri "

Topics will include foot fetishes, cross-dressing, knife play, abrasion, age play, and more!