

New Website Offers Support For Adult Children of Homosexuals

A woman who grew up with a same-sex-attracted father has launched an effort to help similar people deal with the pain they experience.

BY GAIL BESSE

Register Correspondent

October 8-14, 2006 Issue

Posted 10/4/06 at 8:00 AM

LONDON, Ontario — She had every daughter’s natural need for affirmation, but that was something her homosexual father just couldn’t give his little girl.

Now in her 40s, Dawn Stefanowicz knows there are others like her — others who as children ached with silent hunger for that missing connection. To help them, she has set up the first website that specifically addresses the impact of homosexual parenting from the adult child’s perspective.

“It pierces the inside of you when you know the truth. Men who struggle with their own masculinity cannot affirm femininity,” she said. “Six-year-olds cannot tell you how they’re being impacted. We can’t comprehend what we went through until we’re adults.

“People aren’t comfortable sharing this, but keeping it hidden hurts children,” she said. “The secular media is not carrying the message that this impacts children long-term.”

Now an accountant and home schooling mother of two, Stefanowicz and her husband of 22 years live in Ontario.

Her website, <http://www.dawnstefanowicz.com>, went online in early September. It outlines her childhood story, which includes being exposed to nude beaches, “gay cruising” sites and sexually transmitted diseases. The website lists scientific studies and news articles, secular and religious support groups, and confidential contact information.

Her Christian faith and counseling helped Stefanowicz come to terms with her past and with the biological father whom she loved but lost to AIDS.

In the past three years, she has testified in the United States and Canada on behalf of marriage protection laws, and she appeared Sept. 21 on EWTN’s “Life on the Rock.” Her autobiography, *Out from Under: Getting Clear of the Wreckage of a Sexually Disordered Home*, will be out in 2007.

She went public because children’s voices were one dimension missing from the same-sex “marriage” debate. Adults who as children had first-hand experience of the “gay” lifestyle could speak for them.

“Dawn is a very brave woman to be reaching out,” said Seana Sugrue, chairwoman of the department of politics at Ave Maria University and author of *Canadian Marriage Policy: A Tragedy for Children*.

She said that in trying to “normalize” the raising of children by homosexual parents, society is reconstructing the family so children’s needs are secondary to the sexual desires of adults.

“This hurts children, as it did Dawn. It will likely prove to be validating to children raised without sexual boundaries to discover her website,” Sugrue said. “They’ll learn that they are not alone, and that it’s safe for them to admit that they were hurt when they were young and vulnerable.”

Vehicle for Healing

Mary, a Catholic from New York City who was also raised by a homosexual father, found some peace in reading Stefanowicz’s testimony. She asked that her last name not be used.

“Dawn’s story breaks my heart yet somehow heals those wounds,” Mary said in a phone interview. “She and I have so much in common. I recognize the girl whose identity as a woman was blurred in the mire of homosexuality. For years we were silent because society had no idea we existed, and now a deaf society won’t allow our voices to be heard.”

Reaction to Stefanowicz’s website has been positive so far. She now knows of more than 30 other adult children of homosexual parents.

Her pioneering effort is welcomed by Salesian Father John Harvey, the founding director of Courage International. Courage is a support group for people with same-sex attraction who wish to live chastely according to Church teachings. Its offshoot, EnCourage, offers support to relatives and friends.

“I’m sure this new website will help both our efforts and those of conservative Protestant and Jewish groups,” Father Harvey said. “It’s necessary to get this message to the public and to legislators. The issue of homosexuality has social, ethical, psychological, physical and spiritual dimensions — all of which need to be addressed when considering a child’s welfare.”

A host of parental problems can challenge children raised by those who act out same-sex attraction, according to Dale O’Leary, a writer and researcher for the Catholic Medical Association and author of *The Gender Agenda: Redefining Equality*. For example, boys reared by two “mothers” face hostility toward their masculinity within the lesbian community.

“Same-sex attraction is the tip of the iceberg,” O’Leary said. “Many such people were victims of sexual child abuse themselves and have multiple problems. Many have suicidal impulses, anger management issues, drug and alcohol abuse, a high level of partner change, serious depression and mental illness. The scary thing is, when children are raised by dysfunctional parents, they often think

the problems are their fault,” she said.

Even adult children hesitate to discuss their pain for fear of hurting their parents, Stefanowicz said. Some become promiscuous, when they are really seeking love. Others become perfectionists, seeking a sense of identity through their profession.

She hopes her website will be a vehicle for mutual support and healing, and a resource to uphold marriage as the union of a man and a woman for the sake of all children.

Gail Besse is based in

Hull, Massachusetts.

Article URL: <http://ncregister.com/site/article/191/>