

Different Strokes ...

by Stephanie Maciel

Channels and psychics and gays, oh my!

Sedona is a plethora of fascinating people, from hippies to timeshare sales men/women, the townspeople are anything but boring. The greatest thing about our community is the level of acceptance and tolerance of differences that prevails.

I have lived in Sedona for 13 years and am grateful for the acceptance and support the community has given me. Several years ago, I "came out" in an article in a local paper and wasn't certain how it would be received. To my great relief, things went rather well.

I'd all but forgotten about the article when a customer from a large firm called and asked if it had hurt my business. I stood up, looked out the window of my office, and saw a lobby full of people. "No, apparently not," I replied.

While some people were shocked, they all felt I was courageous and admired my honesty. Not one negative consequence came from it. Many customers came forward to tell me how proud they were of my willingness to stand in the truth of whom I am.

Of course gay is only a tiny portion of who I am.

A professional woman, community minded, eclectic and independent, in many ways I'm just like everyone else. I put my shoes on the same way, I own a home, two cats and a dog. I'm grateful for parents who love and accept me and for a thriving business in a beautiful town. For me, it's all about being joyful and at ease with myself.

While I don't feel the need to shout my personal life from the rooftop, I certainly am not ashamed of who I am. When I'm talking with a customer, I don't announce "I'm gay." After all, you wouldn't

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say, "Guess what, I'm heterosexual," would you? But if people ask, I have no problem telling them.

I am extremely pleased with the introduction of this column. While there is a large community of



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gay people in Sedona and the Verde Valley, it is difficult to meet others of like mind. Other than a monthly potluck, which not many know about (for info call (928) 445-8800), there aren't any bars or nightclubs that pursue the gay community. I would love to see a small gay flag outside an

establishment to welcome gays or a weekly meeting place for a collective, conscientious group to get together.

There is no need to segregate – just include us.

I want to dispel the myth that gay people are odd or different. I am an example of that. When people see that, they lose their issues. If I could educate the people in Sedona, dismiss the stereotype, and help them understand how much alike we are, I would find that very rewarding.

This monthly column can be a great way to do just that.

How wonderful to have a platform to speak out from, to share issues or information. Other's can contribute from the gay viewpoint and share their experiences, or questions can be e-mailed, (stephanie@redrockreview.com) which I

will happily answer.

It's a good way to let others know, hey we're safe here, come out and play.