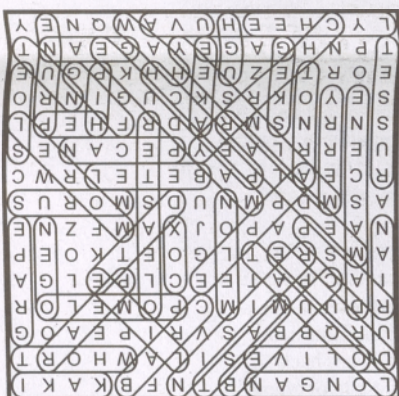
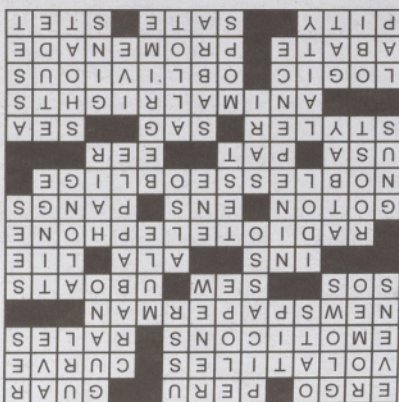


Answers to puzzles on page 15



VENDOR PROFILE

April Harrison

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

Family is important to April Harrison, and she has had to make hard choices for herself and her loved ones.

April grew up in Utah and cared for her father until he died as a result of diabetic complications. She was caring for her ailing mother until conditions made it unbearable for April to stay in the state.

"I was born and raised in the LDS religion. My whole family is very, very staunch Mormon," April said.

"My soon-to-be wife is transgender. I'm bi(sexual). I knew I was different a long time back, and I'd been hiding it from my family. It was really hard because being raised in the Mormon religion, (my situation was) a sin in their eyes."

April came out to her family with mixed results. Her grandparents disapproved, but her mother's reaction was different.

"I told my mom: I want you to understand, I love you to death, but this is who I am. I'm in love with this person (who is

transgender) and it's not going to change. ... My mom gave me her blessing. I was shocked. She said, 'I want my daughter to be happy. So if being with a woman makes you happy, do it.'"

Last year, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced a new policy that could result in excommunication of Mormons in same-sex marriages. In addition, the children of these marriages are barred from joining the Mormon church until they turn 18 and only if they disavow same-sex cohabitation or marriage.

The new policy is distressing to April for more than one reason.

She sighed. "I also have two children who are being raised by a male-to-male gay couple in Utah.

"I had the hardest choice," April said. "I had to give them up because I didn't want to raise them in this life. I didn't want them going from home to home to home. So it came

down to giving them the life they deserved. Those two men may be gay, yes, but they have been the best parents to my children.

"So if my children ever decide to be baptized in the Mormon religion, they would have to disown me and their adoptive parents."

April and her fiancée came to Portland for the tolerant atmosphere and support for her fiancée's gender transition.

"We decided to come up here and make a fresh start," she said.

Before the couple left Utah, April had a full-time job at Walmart and a place to live.

"I've done it before; I can do it again," April said. "I have faith in myself.

"But in the meantime, I am a vendor here at Street Roots, which I love doing. I love people. I'm a people person. I also love volunteering for Sisters of the Road. Both have given me great work experience.

"My next step is trying to find a full-time job so I can get us from the shelter and into a stable place. And then gradually I want to get back into college."

April still feels tugs from home.

"I'm still a little homesick from time to time," she said. "We may have our

differences, but family is family. If my mom or my

grandparents

ever needed

me to

come

home, I

would be

there in a

heartbeat.

But this has

been a good

decision for my

life and Tina's life,"

April said. "I think

there was a reason that

the man upstairs brought

us together.

"This is who I am. This is

what my life has been about, and

I want to make my life better."



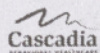
CORRECTION

The photo caption for May 20 "Housing is Health Care" article incorrectly identified the clinics in the pictures. The clinic pictured are from the Downtown Clinic in Nashville, Tenn. It is a Health Care for the Homeless, or HCH clinic.

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