

VOTE

Leanne
McGee

for

Arts
Rep

VOTE



"Hi, It's just us, the neighboring homosexuals."

VOTE

Susan Wynne

for

Vice
President
Finance

VOTE

The slow, first steps out of the...

by Matthew Perry
The McGill Daily Lesbian and
Gay Issue
'Coming out' confronts every
gay person. The decision to come
out can either take very little time,
or cause endless periods of worry
and stress.

It is with good reason that a
large body of literature exists deal-
ing with this issue. Coming out —
to friends, family, and oneself —
can be among the most difficult and
stressful situations for a gay per-
son, as well as the people to whom
they come out.

Many people wonder why a gay
person has to come out at all. Straight
people don't sit down and tell their
parents that well...uh...they're
interested in the opposite sex. Why
should a gay person's parents or
friends care about their sexual
preference?

But 'gayness' is commonly defined
solely by its sexual aspect, when it
is in fact much more. Mainstream
society presumes heterosexuality
and for many gay people it's
important not to be typed as
something they're not.

If you've ever come out to
someone, or had someone come
out to you, you are probably ac-
quainted with the long beats of
silence that succeed "Uh, I'm gay."
The reaction that follows takes
many forms as there are individu-

If you are about to come out to
someone, or if no one has yet come
out to you, what your parents al-
ways told you usually holds true.
Honesty is the best policy. Discus-
sion leading to mutual understand-

ing is much easier to have if both
parties are honest. Having a friend
or family member react by saying
"fine", and then not talking about,
it is often more worrying than being
confronted with questions, con-
cerns, and even objections when
they are raised honestly.

It's important to remember that
although you have gone through
the process of coming to terms with
being gay, those people you tell are
often unsuspecting and have not
even begun to work this out.

Coming out can be difficult. It
can also be wonderful — many
experience a new freedom of iden-
tity. Contrary to many myths, it
often cements friendships,
strengthens ties and promotes a deeper
and better understanding of both
the gay and the straight persons as
individuals.

Coming out remains however
an extremely personal and individ-
ual event that depends very much
on circumstance. For some it is
easier not to come out at all, for
others, to come out selectively, and
still others, to be openly gay. There
is no formula for coming out, no
hard and fast rules to follow.

This idea is strongly reinforced
in some of the literature dealing
with coming out. In *Now That You
Know*, Betty Fairchild and Nancy
Hayward try to present a guide,
primarily to parents, for what to
expect after your child comes out
to you. Much of what is said is not
specific to parents but applies
equally well to friends or associ-
ates.

The book, is increasingly out of

date. It was first published in 1979
and a third edition was just released
to include a chapter on AIDS, but
with no statistical updating. Never-
theless, it has some important points
to make. It underlines the value of
forethought on the part of the gay
person — planning and preparing
play important roles in determin-
ing the ease or difficulty with which
a gay person comes out.

If you are about to come out,
take a look at the literature avail-
able. New books come out all the
time and while some are good,
others are less so. Reading about
and planning a strategy often help
the gay person put this step into
some kind of perspective. It gives
an idea of what might be expected
and serves as a reminder that you
are by no means alone in this step.
It also shows the parent or friend
that they are not alone. For both
parties, it is a strong reminder that
people go through this everyday
and live to tell the tale.

These books should be read criti-
cally, though. If you buy a book for
your parents or friends and there's
a passage you don't agree with,
write it in. Show you care enough
to prepare, think and be concerned
about this.

Coming out depends very much
on instinct and intuition. Timing is
important, and a strong, positive
outlook on being gay helps bring
the newly initiated into the light. It
doesn't take much effort, but it
means a great deal. All that are
required are an open mind, hon-
esty, some forethought and a will-
ingness to talk.



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