Stanford Pride is an organization whose mission is to create and foster a diverse LGBTQQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex)-affirming community of alumni, students, faculty and staff to guide Stanford to become a model institution on LGBTQQI issues and to support Stanford students. Every year, they award at least one Stanford Pride Fellowship to current Stanford students who are interested in spending a summer addressing LGBTQQI issues by working fulltime with an organization actively engaged in this area of work. In the summer of 2003, Adam Forest, a sophomore in 2002-2003 academic year, was awarded the Stanford Pride Fellowship. He used the fellowship to join the Family Acceptance Project being conducted by San Francisco State University. The following is an interview with Forest about his experience and thoughts on the project he was a part of in the summer of 2003.

Q: How would you briefly describe the research/project that you were a part of in summer 2003?

A: Growing up as a queer youth in this country is no cakewalk. Few are lucky enough to have parents that are not outright rejecting; those who do are sure to face ridicule and sometimes hatred from their peers and the larger community. And—though it be perhaps an obvious point—LGBT people do not reproduce: queer youth are almost always forced to seek their identity alone, without the help of supportive culture or family. It should come as no surprise, then, that queer youth have elevated rates of depression and dropout; suicide rates for queer youth are 4 times that of average youth, not counting those who never had the courage to come out before completing a suicide.

The Family Acceptance Project is the first research project to study queer youth and their families together. Aimed at increasing the resiliency of LGB youth, the project looks at what factors contribute to the psychological and physical health of LGB teens ages 13-18. It also seeks to discover what types of knowledge parents need in order to help them be more accepting and supportive of their queer adolescents. When finished, the project will provide tools to health care professionals and community service providers to assist LGB youth and their families in living healthier lives.

Q: What was your role in this project?

A: As a summer intern, I did a number of things for the project. Graphic design was my favorite part of the work that I did: in the end I designed a booklet that was printed as a recruitment tool to persuade LGB youth and their families to participate in the study. I also spent hours pouring through audiotapes of the interviews that were being conducted with LGB youth and at least two of their family members, listening for common themes and experiences. On top of this I did a variety of other smaller jobs, like interacting with the Board of Advisors and recruiting youth at the San Francisco Pride Parade.
Q: How has this experience shaped your Stanford education?

A: LGBT activism is something that is very important to me, personally and academically. As a straight white male, it is very easy to make heads turn when people learn about my involvement in LGBT work. My continued activism, from working at the LGBT-CRC on campus to researching with the Family Acceptance Project of SFSU, has enabled me to be educated about the realities of being queer in contemporary American culture, and has informed much of my study related to civil rights law and political philosophy.

Q: Has this experience changed any of your perspectives towards LGBT community and if yes, how?

A: Going over all those audiotapes, it was striking just how similar many of the LGBT youth’s experiences were. In fact, they were nearly identical at times. The coming out experience, for example, was an incredibly intense moment for all of them, characterized by fear and uncertainty. This was especially the case when coming out to one’s parents. On the other end, the experience of parents whose children came out to them was also very similar. Many of them brushed it off as a phase or something that they child would grow out of; this was often cited as a source of frustration and hurt for many LGB youth, who wanted only to be taken seriously by their parents.

Q: What was the highlight of this project experience?

A: The highlight for me was working with a staff of very dedicated, intelligent staff and faculty from SFSU. They are completely committed to the project and all shared an intense desire to reshape the experience of queer youth toward a more livable adolescence. It is uncommon, I think, that individuals possess the desire to positively affect a group of people that is not their own. The staff of the Family Acceptance Project stood to gain nothing personally from improving the lives of gay youth; in this sense it is substantially different from fighting for gay marriage or protection from discrimination. Knowing them was a blast, and a privilege.

More about the project Adam was involved in can be found at http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/index.htm

Adam is currently a senior at Stanford University majoring in Philosophy and is writing his honors thesis on sex change and health insurance in Ethics in Society. For the past two years, he was on staff at the LGBT.CRC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender – Community Resource Center) at Stanford University. He is also currently a residential assistant at Theta Delta Chi on campus. Adam is a founder and the current Editor-in-Chief of Six Degrees, A Stanford Journal of Human Rights. He is planning to take a year off and move to Buenos Aires after he graduates. After his stay in Buenos Aires, Adam plans to attend law school in United States and study civil rights law so that one day he may be a part of rolling back the discriminatory legislation against LGBT people.

**Special Features**

**Family Resource Desk:**

*Connecting Patients with Community Resources*

_Nancy Wang_

Stanford undergraduates working at the Family Resource Desk (FRD) strive to address the non-medical but clearly health-related needs of Stanford Emergency Department (ED) patients and their families. Staffed and coordinated by Stanford undergraduates, the FRD serves the information needs of children and their families by connecting them with community resources and services. The resource desk was the brainchild of Dr. Ewen...