Affirmation and Value

We Are Everywhere...
in every culture, occupation, religion, state, socioeconomic class, country, marital status, and race. Virtually anywhere you go, you will find men and women who are gay or lesbian. Amazing isn’t it?

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) was a Swedish statesman and Secretary General of the United Nations from 1953 to 1961. Because of his tireless work to promote peace worldwide, Hammarskjöld was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961.

We Are Contributors...
in the arts, economics, politics, literature, academia, business, psychology, agriculture, medicine, architecture, athletics, mathematics, history, philosophy, religion, engineering, anthropology, and education. Amazing isn’t it?

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was a Russian composer and one of the most popular composers in history. Some of his most popular works include Romeo and Juliet, Francesca da Rimini, The Manfred Symphony, Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and The Nutcracker. In 1891 Tchaikovsky conducted his Marche Solennelle at the opening concert of Carnegie Hall in New York City.

We Influence History...
in early times as conquerors, medicine men and women, philosophers, and authors, as well as in more contemporary times and places. Amazing isn’t it?

Buonarroti Michelangelo (1475-1564) stands as one of the most noted and influential of the great painters and sculptors. Probably one of his most well-known works is the decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which stands as one of the great masterpieces of the world.

We Are Important...
as human beings with hearts, souls, dreams, aspirations, loves, feelings, talents, skills, families, children, parents, joys, goodness, and worth. Amazing isn’t it?

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), an American poet, was one of the most popular poets of her era. In 1922 she was the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for The Ballad of the Harp Weaver. The freshness and vitality of her work was praised and admired by her contemporaries as well as commemorated by a stamp issued in her likeness.

Amazing Isn’t It?
Yes, it is truly amazing that so valuable a group of individuals have difficulty remembering, believing and living with dignity and pride.

Yet we live in a society that propagates myths, fears, and irrational beliefs about homosexuality. It is no small wonder then, that among persons with a gay or lesbian sexual orientation, a common concern is a sense of rejection and isolation-- from friends, family, and society-at-large. Prejudicial and misinformed social attitudes often lead gays and lesbians to feel anxious, depressed, and guilty. Such feelings are often significant hurdles in the process of developing a positive sense of self-identity and esteem. While these feelings are real and may feel overwhelming at times, they seem to be a response to myths and negative, self-defeating stereotypes.

The American Psychological Association has taken the unequivocal position that, *homosexuality, per se, implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capacities.* Stated differently, there is no evidence that gay or lesbian individuals differ from heterosexual individuals in their psychological, social, vocational, or emotional health.

Gay and lesbian individuals find two important barriers to developing an affirming or positive sense of self-identity. First of all, there is a lack of readily available information that clarifies and debunk the damaging and irrational social myths about homosexuality. Second, they feel uncertain about where to find an affirming, supportive, and valuing environment in which to receive help in dealing with concerns and feelings.

Myths and Facts

Myth: Gays and lesbians can be identified by certain mannerisms and physical characteristics.
Fact: Gays and lesbians come in as many different colors, sizes, and shapes as do heterosexuals. Actually, the only clear difference between heterosexuals and gays and lesbians is sexual orientation (Moses & Hawkins, 1982; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1985).

Myth: Only a few people are gay or lesbian.
Fact: Most reliable estimates of the current gay and lesbian population in America range from 10 to 20 percent of the American population (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Darty & Potter, 1984).

Myth: Most gays and lesbians consider themselves to be members of the opposite sex.
Fact: Gay men and lesbians develop gender identities that are consistent with their gender. In other words, gay men consider themselves to be male and lesbians consider themselves to be female. Gay men and lesbians do not want to change their sex (Moses & Hawkins, 1982).

Myth: Most child molesters are gay.
Fact: Most child molesters are married male heterosexuals who victimize young girls (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1985).
Counseling as a Source of Support

Counseling is a process in which a nonjudgmental, caring, and trained therapist helps a person arrive at effective solutions to problems or life tasks. While specific methods may vary, most counselors would support the notion that helping involves facilitating an individual's self-exploration, self-understanding, self-acceptance, and self-esteem. Helping a gay or lesbian individual come to value and esteem his or her sexual orientation certainly fits into this philosophy.

Counseling offers assistance in:
1. Identifying and clarifying issues.
2. Identifying, clarifying, and expressing feelings.
3. Deciding what to do.
4. Developing and enhancing relationship skills.

Gay and Lesbian people in our community, neighborhood, campus and world are of value and importance. This self-help brochure provides a starting point for information to develop and establish a positive view of gay or lesbian self-identity.