

Walking in My Shoes  
page 8

Bearing False Witness  
page 18

In Praise of Our Madness  
page 22

My Cats Trained Me Well  
page 32

A Little Help from Friends  
page 41

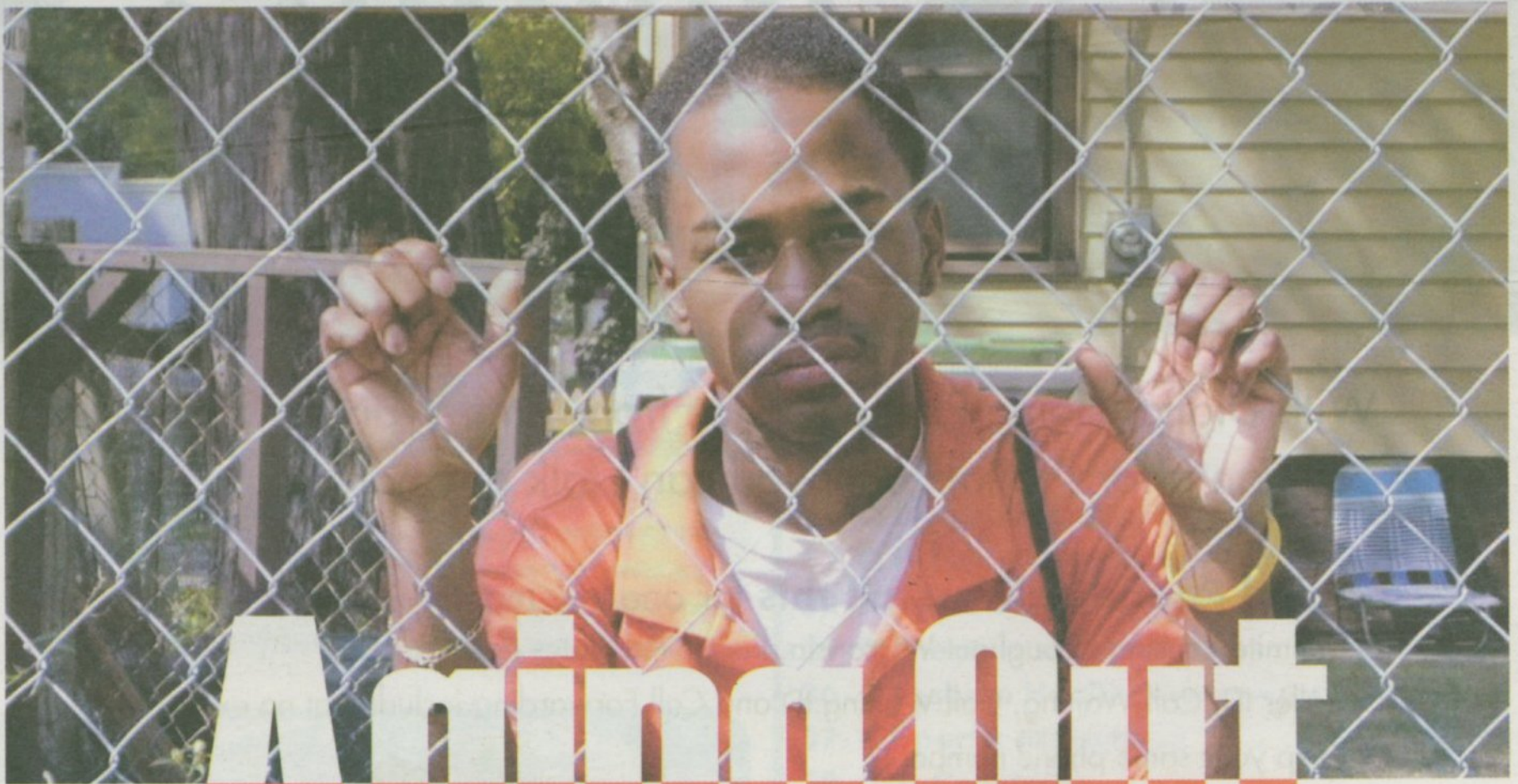
God Is Not a Trickster  
page 45

Naked Boys Singing!  
We're B-A-C-K!  
Page 43



Vol. 1, Issue 11 - October 2005

Wisconsin's Premiere LGBT News Leader • QUEERLIFENEWS.COM



# Aging Out

By Holly Grey

## Foster care youth are ejected from the system with little or no support

**I**f you are a gay kid, turn 18 and are aged out of the foster care system with no job skills, no home and no high school diploma, what do you think is going to happen? What options do you have? Prostitution becomes a real option when you are a kid thrown into this situation," explained James Pekrul.

"I know what these kids go through. I was in foster care for 18 years and was abused. At 18 I was thrown out of my

home with no high school diploma and no job skills. I was homeless. I vowed at that time that one day I would help kids to keep from becoming like me."

All these past experiences culminated in Pekrul founding the Foster Youth Independence Center of Milwaukee (FYI) three years ago.

Aging out is a term used to describe the state mandate that says when a foster child turns 18, all the State's custodial rights regarding the child cease. At the

same time, payment to the foster family for the child's care stops. So for many of these young adults, like Pekrul, life as they know it ends; they are left homeless and alone.

Materials produced by FYI say that "children who age out of foster care in Wisconsin are 12 times more likely to become homeless than other children" and "over 20 percent of these children report living in five or more places within 18 months" of aging out. In all, a little

over one-third of aged-out children do not have a high school diploma or GED and fewer than one in 10 attend college.

A recent study by the Wisconsin Independent Living Advisory Committee found that aged-out children experience unemployment or underemployment. In addition, they are far more vulnerable to physical and sexual victimization and utilize public assistance in higher

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Latin Pop Star Jade Estaban Estrada to Perform

page 24



AIDS Walk Wisconsin Raises \$383,028

page 11

Why Are We So Late? | Page 3