

Universal unions: Couples celebrate gay marriage

By Lisa Chamoff
Staff Writer

Article Launched: 10/16/2008 02:56:02 AM EDT



NORWALK - In June, after Eniko Mikle entered into a civil union with Cheryl Hensel, her partner of 14 years, she had trouble explaining to her Hungarian mother what that meant.

There were no words in her mother's language to describe it.

But after the state Supreme Court's 4-3 decision Friday, Mikle, 44, can give her family good news: She's getting married.

"It's so hard to describe to someone who doesn't know the ins and outs of laws what civil unions mean," said Mikle, a financial adviser who lives in Fairfield. "Marriage is so much easier. It's universal."

Mikle and Hensel joined dozens of couples

celebrating the historic ruling Wednesday night at the Norwalk Inn & Conference Center.

The event was organized at the last minute by gay rights advocacy group Love Makes a Family and Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, or GLAD, a Boston group that in 2004 filed a lawsuit on behalf of eight lesbian and gay couples with the intent of overturning Connecticut's ban on same-sex marriage.

Guests mingled while eating finger foods and sipping cocktails. A sheet cake set out on a table had one word across it: Victory.

The event promised to be one of the first of many celebrations.

Wilton residents Jeffrey Busch and Stephen Davis, plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said they look forward to talking to other couples about their wedding plans.

"Stephen wants to elope, and I think I can whittle the (guest) list to 300," Busch said.

One of the biggest reasons for the couple's fight for marriage equality was their 6-year-old son, Elijah.

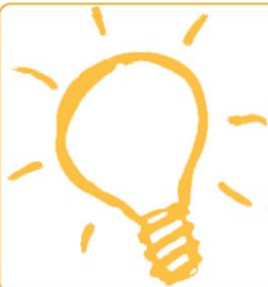
"Win or lose, we wanted our son to know that we did everything we could to make our family more secure," Busch said.

Anne Stanback, executive director of Love Makes a Family, which has been working for eight years to secure marriage rights for same-sex couples, said it was surreal to accomplish their mission.

"It's so rewarding to see so many happy couples and so many happy people," Stanback said.

But the fight is not over, she said. There will be

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

The ADVOCATE

challenges if voters next month pass a ballot measure calling for a state constitutional convention, or if opponents introduce a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage when the legislative session begins in January.

"We absolutely believe we have the votes to defeat that," Stanback said. "That said, we're taking nothing for granted."

U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Bridgeport, and his Democratic opponent, Jim Himes, stopped by to congratulate the crowd.

"I think it's important we respect the court's decision," Shays said. "A relationship between two men or two women isn't in any way a threat to the institution of marriage or to any individual heterosexual relationship."

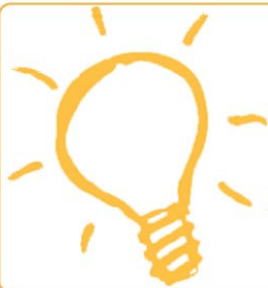
Connecticut is the third state, after Massachusetts and California, to legalize same-sex marriage through the courts. New York recognizes same-sex marriages from other states.

For many couples, Friday's decision means they no longer feel like second-class citizens.

"Even when the civil union thing came out (in 2005), we just felt it wasn't what we wanted," said Fairfield resident Val Bogner, who went to the celebration with her partner of four years, Linda Torzsa. "We were waiting for the real deal."

- Staff Writer Lisa Chamoff can be reached at lisa.chamoff@sctn.com or at 750-5348.

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™