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Ready or Not...They're Gay

Midwestern parents share personal story, tips for families of gay children

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - This spring, Iowa became the first Midwest state to allow gay marriage, bringing this controversial topic away from the coasts and into the heartland. With the gay marriage debate making headlines more than ever (how could anyone forget the Perez Hilton-Miss California smack down?), many are being forced to reevaluate their definition of the all-American family.

Paul and Hjordy Wagner are down-to-Earth folks from Wisconsin with two adult sons, Brad and Andrew. Married for more than 35 years, their boys had happy childhoods filled with school, sports, church and friends. But when Brad came out to his parents at age 19, followed by his brother Andrew five years later, the Wagners were forever changed.

The couple quickly embraced their gay sons, but are well aware this is not always the case for young gay people who come out to their friends and families. In their new book, *Ready or Not...They're Gay* (Synergy Books, May 2009, 978-0-9815462-8-5, \$14.95), Paul and Hjordy share their personal story to acceptance of their sons' sexuality to help others approach the news of a gay loved one in a healthy, positive way.

"Parents will easily identify with Paul and Hjordy. They welcome us into their lives and share with us the joys of having two gay sons," writes Jody Huckaby, executive director of PFLAG National. "At times they fear for the safety of their sons and struggle to keep their family together; all the while emphasizing acceptance. We can all learn from their stories about the importance of unconditional love in a world that is oftentimes cruel to our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender loved ones."

Offering a broad range of perspectives, *Ready or Not...They're Gay* features insight into the coming out process from both Brad and Andrew, as well as personal reflections from their grandmother, a family minister and others with connections to the GLBT community. With helpful tips and checklists, the Wagners provide advice for educators, family and friends of gay loved ones and even young gay people thinking of coming out. They complete their book with stories from contributing authors.

Ready or Not...They're Gay includes topics such as:

- The Wagners' personal experience having two gay sons
- The religion question: How they found their own spiritual peace with their sons' sexuality
- How to respond when a loved one comes out: Tips for families and friends
- Children: How to have a positive coming out experience
- A checklist for making schools a safer space for both gay youth and educators
- Parents: A top 10 list for accepting your gay child

Paul and Hjordy currently reside in Eau Claire, Wis., and they also spend time in Las Vegas, where Andrew has made his new home. They are recently retired as educators for more than 30 years. In addition to appearances and presentations on GLBT topics, they volunteer in their church, schools and community. Visit www.readyornotstories.com for more information.

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To schedule an interview with the Wagners, or to receive a review copy of *Ready or Not...They're Gay*, please contact Amy Currie at (512) 478-2028 ext. 211 or acurrie@phenixpublicity.com.