

# What are Reviewers & Readers saying about Ready or Not?

See full reviews inside

*"Ready or Not...They're Gay is a powerful book capable of changing attitudes and a must-read for everyone seeking to better understand what it means to be gay. Appropriate for readers 13 and older." Reading Specialist & Reviewer for Journal of International Reading Association Special Interest Group on Literature for the Adolescent Reader*

The Wagners' book is a model in many ways. It's a model for kids who think they may be gay but need more information. It's a model for kids and families who are going through the coming out process. It's a model that prepares us for the times when we have only once chance to do the right thing. But more than anything else, it's a model for families who, no matter what the life-changing news may be, need to find a way to just love one another and act like the generous-hearted, non-judgmental, supportive people we all hope to be. *University Library Media Program Director*

I believe educators at many levels will find this book to be a wonderful addition to their curricula. *University Professor*

"Thanks" seems like such an insignificant word, but I'm at a loss for a better word." *Parent*

"What an inspiration to your sons, their partners, and to all those who have suffered long enough in the world of judgment." *Parent*

"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." *PFLAG National*

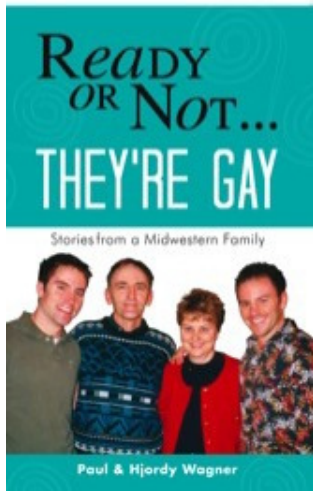
"I believe your story should be heard by everyone! I wish I had heard your story when I was 16 and came out to my parents." *Student*

"An engaging, personal, and charming book, Ready or Not...They're Gay is a tremendous resource, offering the views of different members of a single family." *Psychologist*

"I'm thankful to them for writing this book. This collection of experiences connects us to other human beings who go through the same struggles and victories in a society where it's easy to feel isolated." *Straight Ally*

"The candid simplicity of Ready or Not is what makes it so valuable to any parent of a gay child or, for that matter, to any person concerned about the many issues surrounding being GLBT in a straight world." *Reviewer*

"Having many voices speak throughout the book, and keeping a nonjudgmental, open, and loving tone, make this lovely family history accessible to all readers." *Reviewer*



## Inside this issue:

Educator Reviews	2
Lavender Review	3
Parent Comments	3
Facebook Fan	4
PFLAG Endorsements	4
Amazon Review	5
Student Response	5
Indepth Review	6-7
Media Interviews	8
About the Authors	8

## Words of Praise:

- PFLAG National
- PFLAG Twin Cities
- University Professor
- Ready Specialist & Book Reviewer
- Library/Media Professional
- Readers
- Psychologist
- Parents
- GLBTs

## What are educators saying?

I read the entire book yesterday afternoon. I cried. I was humbled by the power of love in action, inspired by Hjordy and Paul's words of strength and fortified by the courage of each voice which invites us all to be part of the fabric that weaves a better day.

*Cheryl Rosebrook is an Honor Roll Teacher and Teacher of Excellence, Minnesota Teacher of the Year Program, 1999. She is the Former Executive Director, Minnesota Inclusiveness Program.*

### The Wagners' book is a model in many ways

*"Hjordy and Paul are simply among the world's best parents, who have given their children the confidence and security that comes from unconditional love."*

Hjordy and Paul Wagner have given us a book for those times when there really is only one chance to listen closely and then to do the right thing. Their sons, Brad and Andrew, are both gay. In a very personal, intimate collection of stories, the Wagners describe their own memories and reactions to each son's "coming out," relate how they shared the news with their family and friends, and inspire us with accounts of each son's success and happiness in life. Brad and Andrew each share their own stories of being gay and coming out as well. Though the process was certainly difficult for all of the Wagners, it's easy to see how Brad and Andrew could become the healthy, happy, well-adapted men they are now. Hjordy and Paul are simply among the world's best parents, who have given their children the confidence and security that comes from unconditional love.

The Wagners' book is a model in many ways. It's a model for kids who think they may be gay but need more information. It's a model for kids and families who are going through the coming out process. It's a model that prepares us for the times when we have only once chance to do the right thing. But more than anything else, it's a model for families who, no matter what the life-changing news may be, need to find a way to just love one another and act like the generous-hearted, non-judgmental, supportive people we all hope to be.

*Gyneth Slygh, Ph.D. was the Program Coordinator for Library Media Education for the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire.*

### Educator & Reviewer—A Must Read to Better Understand Meaning of “Gay”

*Ready or Not...They're Gay* is one couple's journey of acceptance upon learning not one, but both of their sons are gay. Paul and Hjordy Wagner share their story through succinct recollections and reflections; provide an eclectic collection of tips, checklists, and advice for parents, friends, and educators; and invite others to share their stories. Writing with authentic voices and clear prose, the Wagners demonstrate deep love and respect for their sons and reach out to others struggling to understand gay family members. The result is an easy-to-read and insightful book that demystifies gayness. *Ready or Not...They're Gay* is a powerful book capable of changing attitudes and a must-read for everyone seeking to better understand what it means to be gay. Appropriate for readers age 13 and older, *Ready or Not...They're Gay* would be a valuable addition to most library collections.

*Arlene Radtke is a retired Eau Claire Area School District reading specialist and a regular reviewer for SIGNAL Journal, Journal of the International Reading Association's Special Interest Group on Literature for the Adolescent Reader*

## “Thanks seems like an insignificant word.”

Thank you for speaking at the Eau Claire Borders this evening. Sometimes a person forgets that they are not alone in this journey called life. I called and told my daughter that I attended the book signing tonight and she said, "Wow, I'm impressed Mom." Your willingness to share your story will bring comfort and support to many parents, like myself. "Thanks" seems like such an insignificant word, but I'm at a loss for a better word. My heart is lighter tonight...thank you! - Parent

## Lavender Magazine Review : June 2009

Minnesota born and raised, Paul and Hjordy Wagner met on Valentine's Day in 1970. They went on to have two sons, Brad and Andrew. At age 19, Brad announced he was gay. The book stems from this announcement, and Andrew's later revelation that he, too, was gay. In "Memories from Mom" and "Reflections from Dad," the authors recount their personal feelings and reactions to the boys' news, while "Brad, Andrew and Grandma Say a Few Words" offers more facets

of this family drama. Throughout the book are thoughts and support the Wagners give to other families whose children will have their own "October 29," and who, even like the authors—down-to-earth, faith-oriented, and loving—still have adjustments to make in their plans and expectations for their children's lives. Having many voices speak throughout the book, and keeping a nonjudgmental, open, and loving tone, make this lovely family history accessible to all readers.

## “It is a Matter of Unconditional Love—Period”

*"I was humbled by the power of love in action."*

Reading the article online in the Leader this morning, I am emailing to say YAAY for your courage to move forward with the book and your family story! What an inspiration to your sons, their partners, and to all those who have suffered long enough in the world of judgment. My husband and I agree whole heartedly with you that it is a matter of unconditional love - period. No need to justify,

or convince anyone of your belief, unconditional love—period.

Our 19 year old son recently came out and although I've known since he was very young that this may be a possibility, it is always good to wait until they are ready to tell you. Living with a gay brother and having lots of same sex friends,

and customers created opportunity to open to the possibilities early on.

This book is a god-send for EVERYONE!!! Congratulations again, you have 100% of our support as you tour the country with your loving message. - Parent

## A Family's Story with Authenticity, Honesty & Insight

*Ready or Not...They're Gay* is an important contribution to the discourse related to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual civil rights movement in this country. Hearing the voices of three generations of one family in their quest to love and support one another as they navigate the integration of their sons' gay identities into their lives is what makes this book so compelling.

Paul and Hjordy Wagner present their family's story with such great authenticity, honesty, and insight that is all at once touching and informative. I believe educators at many levels will find this book to be a wonderful addition to their curricula as they address such issues as family diversity, social justice, sexual orientation, and acceptance. I know I will include it in the courses I teach.

Todd A. Savage, Ph.D., NCSP  
Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

### “It inspires me to give back & pay forward.”

“I am thankful for Hjordy and Paul, who give me so much hope as to what my parents can be one day. I’m also thankful to them for raising a son who has redefined what friendship can be for me. I’m finally thankful to them for writing this book. This collection of experiences connects us to other human beings

who go through the same struggles and victories in a society where it’s easy to feel isolated. I think it’s one of the most giving things that they could do. It inspires me to give back and pay forward and ultimately be a better person.”

- Brooke Jordan, Contributing Author, Ready or Not

### Psychologist Recommends Ready or Not

An engaging, personal, and charming book, Ready or Not...They’re Gay is a tremendous resource, offering the views of different members of a single family. Highly recommended for parents seeking to understand their own situation and to better support their gay child.”

- Stephen White, The Rainbow Connection & San Diego Psychologist

### “An honest account of real stories.”

“Paul and Hjordy share an honest account of real stories and inspiring perspectives of experiences encountered over a ten-year span. This is a wonderful resource for parents, grandparents and families when they discover their loved one is gay.”

-Deb LeMay, PFLAG St. Paul/Minneapolis

*Psychologist highly recommends for parents seeking to understand their own situation and support their gay child.*

### A warm response from a Facebook Fan of Ready or Not

"I got the book and loved it! I am going to give it to my grandmother to read and see if she thinks my parents would be receptive. I was able to identify with so many things about your sons. It was so fun to read the book, because upon turning every page there was something with which I

could identify - from the never kissing a girl to staying in the closet, etc., the list is endless. Thanks for your book - I'm sure it was a collective effort. It's wonderful."

Kansas Facebook Fan

### PFLAG National Endorses “Ready or Not”

“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. 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.”

- Jody Huckaby, Executive Director, PFLAG National

## UW-River Falls Unity in the Community

Thank you so much for coming to UW-River Falls to share your story. The topic of parenting with GLBTQ children is one overlooked easily when it comes to student-run GLBTQ organizations such as the GSA. I believe your story should be heard by everyone! I wish I had heard your story when I was 16 and came out to my parents. It would have given me a better perspective on

what my parents were going through. Once again, thank you so much for your hard work and time advocating for the GLBTQ community and being amazing allies in the fight for GLBTQ rights.

*Member of UW-River Falls Gay Straight Alliance*

### **A wonderful story of a family's experiences as two sons come out**, May 20, 2009 by David N. Parker (Amazon.com review)

This is a wonderful story of a family's experiences and thoughts as Paul and Hjordy's two sons come out to them and their community.

Their story is presented from various points of view - the mother, the father, each of their sons, and their grandmother. Each of them has a section, with multiple short chapters that bring out a specific event along this journey and the emotions related to that event. Throughout these recollections, a family with great internal strength, love, and acceptance of each other for who they are comes through.

Coming out to family and friends can be risky and traumatic, even in a loving home. Parents are often, if not usually, unaware of their child's feelings in regard to their sexual orientation. While their child has been struggling with their identity and orientation for years, their parents feel blindsided when their child comes out to them. Ready or Not ... THEY'RE GAY provides guidance for parents and other family members

in the importance of how you react. In Part IV, the book offers tips for parents, friends, and children on how best to handle this experience. Fortunately, their real life experience was quite positive and instructive.

In Part V, six brief chapters and a newspaper editorial add stories from others about their coming out experiences.

Most parents claim unconditional love for their children; it is a common goal. It is life's challenges that test this love. For many parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender children, their child's coming out announcement is a severe test of their love. Too many fail this test; the Wagner's pass with flying rainbow colors.

*David Parker regularly reviews books for Amazon.com.*

"For many parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender children, their child's coming out announcement is a severe test of their love. Too many fail this test; the Wagner's pass with flying rainbow colors."

## Ready or Not...They're Gay Book Review, May 2009

John Boettjer, PFLAG Naples, FL

Ready or Not...They're Gay: Stories from a Midwestern Family by Paul & Hjordy Wagner, Synergy Book, 2009, 150 pp., 16 pp. b&w illustrations, \$14.95, \$4.00 S/H. Order at [www.readyornotstories.com](http://www.readyornotstories.com), or go to Indie Bound to find a bookstore near you or use the traditional online bookstores.

Have you ever been to a PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meeting? If not, please consider visiting your local PFLAG group. Meetings are generally held monthly. You will be warmly welcomed, and all meetings are confidential. Most PFLAG gatherings have an informative section (less than an hour) when a speaker shares information on a subject relevant to the GLBT community. Or perhaps there will be a short video or other program with a brief discussion to follow.

The most important part, many participants feel, of a PFLAG meetings in a post presentation storytelling session, as here in Naples (third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m., call 239-513-4568 for location). Attendees who wish to participate join a smaller private discussion group where they share, if they wish, their particular issues—discovering their child is homosexual, coming out, handling discrimination and any other matter of personal importance. Each person, who has the option of remaining silent, can gain from the insights of others. Help is made available, if requested. The book Ready or Not...They're Gay is like a PFLAG storytelling session.

Narrated in the simplest of prose, this personal testimony of a Wisconsin couple tells how they react to first one and then the second of their sons telling them he is gay. The book is Quaker simple. There is little or no attempt to embellish. Paul and Hjordy Wagner, both retired public school teachers, move slowly from naiveté to anguish, insight, acceptance and, finally, celebration. This is a personal story, not a psychological treatise or political manifesto.

*"This is a personal story,  
not a psychological  
treatise or political  
manifesto."*

The candid simplicity of Ready or Not is what makes it so valuable to any parent of a gay child or, for that matter, to any person concerned about the many issues surrounding being GLBT in a straight world. In particular, the book is an excellent primer for anyone first confronted with the issue of homosexuality in their own family. The most basic questions are clearly asked—and answered—in a manner everyone can follow.

The organization of the book reflects this intimate, personal character. Divided into very short chapters, sometimes less than a page, Part I is "Memories from Mom." In it, Hjordy recalls when her eldest son, Brad, a handsome clean-cut high school athlete comes out. Then, several years later and still suspecting nothing, she is stunned when her second son, Andrew, comes out. Again there is anguish, self-blame, questioning and, ultimately, unconditional love and acceptance.

The bare, unadorned story continues in Part II, "Reflections from Dad," where Paul Wagner relates his own view of his sons' coming out and includes a "Top Ten List" of principles to follow. Among them are: having an open mind, getting educated, being nonjudgmental, showing support, and looking to the future.



## Boettjer Review, continued

Part III is from Brad and Andrew. Like his brother, Brad, Andrew is a very handsome all-American “boy next door” who is initially puzzled by the disconnect between what he feels and what society expects. Luckily, his parents and, in particular, his grandmother rebound quickly from the shock of hearing their second son or grandson is gay. Again, the text is direct, clear and unembellished. Nothing comes between the reader and the gut-wrenching realities of a family struggling with an issue which, ultimately, brings them closer together.

Part IV, “Tools for Navigating Your Own Story” is a self-help kit of basic advice for parents, friends and educators. Even a relevant “Dear Abby” letter is reprinted.

Finally, Part V, “Stories from Others,” provides six additional perspectives on being gay or having homosexual children. While each of the sections has its own significance and style, I was particularly impressed with the longest chapter (15 pages) “How I Found My Way to a Loving Relationship.” It renders the lifelong struggle of a woman realizing, however reluctantly, that she is a lesbian. Cheryl Sutter eloquently records the many steps forward—and backward—in her spiritual journey from the condemnations of her childhood religion, the Wisconsin Synod of the Lutheran Church, to an accepting Methodist congregation. Cheryl concludes: I have “come to understand that God, The Divine, or any other name for The Sacred, is available to us all just as we are. Thank God.”

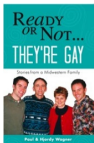
*“Nothing comes between the reader and the gut-wrenching realities of a family struggling with an issue which, ultimately, brings them closer together.”*

A final, brief chapter, “A Look at the Authors,” brings us up to date on Paul, Hjordy, Brad, and Andrew. Given how close the reader has come, through reading *Ready or Not*, to each of these family members, it is like receiving one of those circuit letters written at Christmas. We are pleased to receive it all ends happily. Mom and Dad are emotionally, intellectually and spiritually enriched by having two gay sons. The sons, Brad and Andrew, are in long-term relations and doing well in their careers. As Jody Huckaby, Executive Director of PFLAG National says on the back cover of *Ready or Not*: “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.”

Thank you, Hjordy and Paul, for this moving, direct book based on your personal experiences.



*John Boettjer is currently retired and resides with his partner in Naples, Florida.*



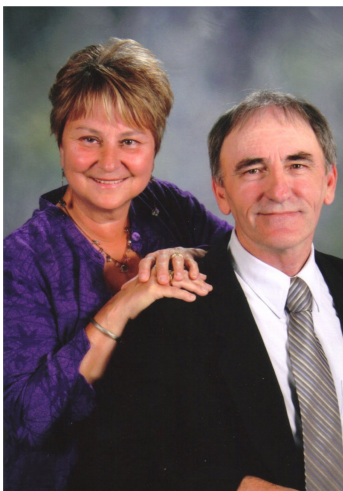
Paul & Hjordy Wagner

Ready or Not... They're Gay  
&  
Ready or Not...Let's Talk

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[readyornotstories.blogspot.com](http://readyornotstories.blogspot.com)  
 Facebook: Ready or Not Fan Page  
 Home Phone: 715-834-9728

## Online Author Interviews & Book Reviews

- Unity in the Community Presentation: Waiting for the tape
- Spectrum WPR Radio Interview with Jim Oliver:  
[http://clipcast.wpr.org:8080/ramgen/wpr/eau/Spectrum/sw\\_090612\\_wagner.mp3](http://clipcast.wpr.org:8080/ramgen/wpr/eau/Spectrum/sw_090612_wagner.mp3).
- Caledonia MN News Article:  
<http://hometownargus.com/content/view/1816/1/>
- KSTP Twin Cities Live Television Interview:  
<http://twincitieslive.com/article/stories/s942046.shtml?cat=11215>
- Ready or Not Book Launch Recap DVD:  
[http://www.youtube.com/v/P\\_kOQILLpvw&hl=en&fs=1&](http://www.youtube.com/v/P_kOQILLpvw&hl=en&fs=1&)
- Book Expo America Podcast:  
<http://www.bookexpocast.com/authors-studio/2009/06/05/ready-or-not-theyre-gay/>
- Lavender Podcast with Wanda:  
<http://www.lavendermagazine.com/wandawisdom/2009/06/19/lbr873-ready-or-not-theyre-gay/>
- Lavender Magazine Book Review: (Note there are some mistakes on dates!)  
<http://www.mygazines.com/issue/1137/129>
- Eau Claire WI Leader Telegram News Article:  
<http://www.leadertelegram.com/story-news.asp?id=BKI96AUHKTH>
- WEAU TV 13 Interview with Judy Clark:  
<http://www.weau.com/interviews/headlines/50852627.html>
- Maverick Radio Interview: Waiting for the tape
- Volume I Newspaper Article:  
[http://volumeone.org/magazine/articles/707/Proud\\_Parents.html/page/1](http://volumeone.org/magazine/articles/707/Proud_Parents.html/page/1)
- Fox 6 Wake-up Interview with Kim Murphy: Milwaukee, WI  
<http://www.fox6now.com/videobeta/watch/?watch=c30e2419-14ab-4bcd-9d8d-031b2215bcb9&src=front>



### About the Authors

In their new book, *Ready or Not...They're Gay*, the Wagners share their personal story in the hopes of helping other families who find themselves in a similar situation, or even other young gay people who are considering coming out to their friends and family. *Ready or Not...They're Gay* takes you on their journey of being the parents of two gay sons, offering reflection, insight and helpful advice for families, schools, and workplaces. The book also includes personal accounts from Brad, Andrew, their grandmother and even their minister, on the coming out experience. Paul and Hjordy have been invited to share their story and insights with universities, workplaces, churches, Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG), conventions, workshops, and community forums. Their story has reached beyond the United States into Canada, Europe, and South Africa. They look forward to their upcoming Ready or Not Skype Tour USA.