

Use

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in Wildwood where they experienced a short delay due to the unchanged format of the application, but the glitch was quickly resolved.

"They were very apologetic and made sure we were taken care of," Burke said.

The two were married at the county administration office by County Clerk Rita Fulginiti, whom they said did a "phenomenal job" and made the ceremony exceptionally special.

"She's a really genuine person. For not really even knowing us, the time she took to do the whole thing was very moving," Burke said. "I was very impressed by her. She made it all very special."

Redman said finally having the ability to marry Burke has had a profound affect on their long-term relationship.

"It feels different. Even though we've been together for 14-and-a-half years, it's like it's more than that now," Redman said. "It's like we're acknowledged now. It was something kind of hidden, you just live life day to day and now it feels good we can be seen as a couple like everyone else. I had never really thought about a civil union until recently, because it was something specifically reserved for persons who were gay. I wanted something that was for everybody, for two people who loved each other."

Burke and Redman were the first same-sex couple to register for a marriage license in Wildwood, which as of this

writing has had two couples register. Lower Township has had seven and Cape May City has had two. City registrar Patty Harbora said she expects more couples to register in the spring because of Cape May being such a popular wedding destination.

Craig Van Baal of the GABLES organization said the group is extremely pleased with the court's decision. GABLES of Cape May County is a non-profit that was organized in 1995 as part of an effort to establish an organization in every New Jersey county with a similar mission. GABLES is a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) group with currently over 200 dues paying members. Van Baal said to have same-sex marriage allowed in New Jersey is a major leap forward for the gay community.

"It puts us head and shoulders above other states like the one across the river," he said. "It gives people greater equality and a feeling of being more a part of their community."

Redman said she felt the wrath of inequality and prejudice about a year after she and Burke had been together. Her former church found out about her relationship and didn't allow her to be a member or continue teaching Sunday school classes.

"I was not accepted here I was, because the pastor had found out I was gay and they said they couldn't accept that relationship. I could no longer be a member and I couldn't teach the children.

I could come, but that's as far as it went. I couldn't be a member," she said. "That was very, very hard for me. My faith was a very large part of me, but I gave that up because I was kind of shunned."

She and Burke then became a part of the Beth Judah Temple, a synagogue in Wildwood that was more receptive and accepting of their relationship. Burke said the dear friend who told them they should get married is also a member of the synagogue.

"Our family is sort of extended and unique in that sense," Burke said. "You want to be a part of your community and you want to be accepted. Like the golden rule - you're hopefully being treated the way you would treat someone else."

Van Baal said he is thrilled to see couples like Burke and Redman finally be able to wed, because it's been a fight GABLES has been leading in New Jersey for many years. He said in the late '90s, GABLES was one of the leading groups of five or six in the state fighting for domestic partnership, which eventually led to the allowance of civil unions.

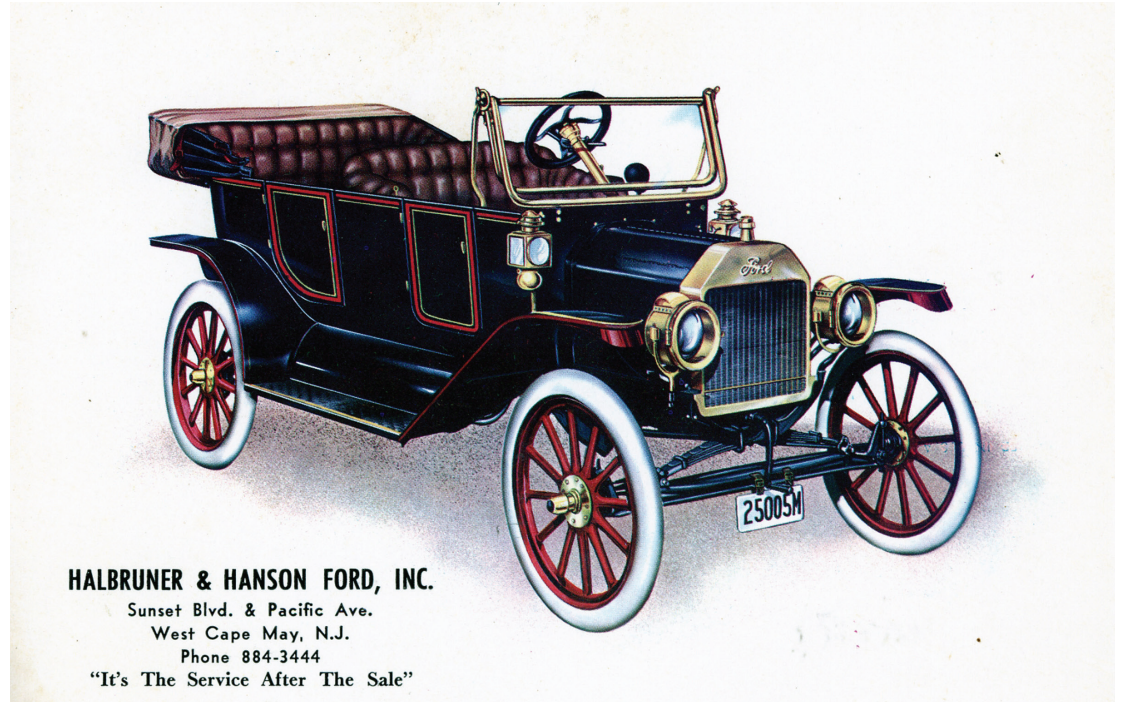
"We knew the fight would have to take occur in increments - one thing at a time," he said. "It's funny to think little Cape May County was leading the fight at that point, spearheading the drive. We were there before and I'm glad we're still here after. This decision gives gay couples 1,000 benefits they didn't have before."

Van Baal said the next battle is to push for the "Employee Nondiscrimination Act."

"Because of the Supreme Court decision, there's a lot of momentum there," he said. "This is the best chance we've had yet to push this bill through."

Whether the Employee Nondiscrimination Act passes or not, Van Baal said GABLES and other supporters of the gay community will still continue to pursue equal rights. He said the New Jersey Supreme Court ruling is a historical and momentous event that brings same-sex couples one step closer to equality.

"A decision like this takes you from being a second class person to a first class person. But, there shouldn't be second class people in America to begin with," he said. "Everyone should be first class."



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Photo submitted to the Cape May Star and Wave

Above is an image advertising the former Halbruner & Hanson Ford dealership on Sunset Boulevard. The dealership's old sign is still showing today after siding blew off in a storm. This undated image submitted by Ed O'Neill of Lower Township also contained the phrase "Lithographed in the U.S.A."

Access

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etation and dunes to reopen the beach access.

Mahaney said the situation all came about when people were coming out of nearby taverns and coming onto the beach after beach hours, using the access point, causing public safety issues. He said because of the frequent police presence now in that area during the summer, that shouldn't be a major concern.

Mahaney said he would like to see the access point reopened, however, there is another beach access exactly 154-feet west of it. He said the city has obtained funding through the years for American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramp access to numerous points along the beach.

"People really expect something for access every square block," he said.

Mahaney said the trip and fall incidences are being resolved and the city will try to seek state approval to reopen the access point.

Cain Chamberlin
Cape May Star and Wave

Above right and right, views of the blocked access at Jackson Street Beach.



ACE in borough cutting branches

By **CAIN CHAMBERLIN**
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY - Borough Emergency Management Coordinator Dan Rutherford said Atlantic City Electric workers will be on Cape Island in the coming weeks to trim vegetation around power lines.

Rutherford said the electric company is only trimming trees around power lines on the streets, so it is imperative that residents inform AC Electric about similar problems on private property so hazards can be eliminated.

"They won't necessarily be looking on your property at your cable lines, your power lines, your telephone lines running from the pole to your property..." Rutherford

said. "You need to make sure your lines are clear, because if your lines aren't clear, it doesn't really matter what happens on the street. If a tree limb take down one of your power lines running from the pole to your house, you'll be without power."

Rutherford said with winter approaching, a heavy snow or ice storm can bring down tree limbs onto the power lines.

For further information or to report potentially hazardous tree limbs around power lines, call Atlantic City Electric Staff Forester Nick Bocchicchio at 625-6023 Vegetation Manager Matthew Simons at 625-6021. Mayor Pam Kaithern said AC Electric would only be performing the tree trimming during weekdays.

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Parks

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He said to apply for the revitalization funding, the municipality had to be within the nine counties affected by Hurricane Sandy, including Cape May County.

"It must be an effort that will help the economic development of the city, which Rotary Park would, as would the mall and the beachfront," he said.

He said Lafayette Park was also affected by Sandy because the neighboring creek partially flooded the grounds during the storm.

As for the Lafayette Open Space Park, City Manager Bruce MacLeod said at the Nov. 4 meeting that demolition of the Vance's Bar property is still anticipated to occur before the end of the year, so the development and revitalization of the park can get underway as soon as possible.