

## ***Angie and Tonya Rolando v. State of Montana***

### **About the Plaintiffs**

#### **Angie and Tonya Rolando**



***Go Bobcats! Tonya graduated from Montana State University and Angie taught there for five years.***

It's a cliché, Angie jokes. She and Tonya met playing on the same softball team in 2009. "My first up to bat warming up, I hit a foul ball right into her car. Pretty sure it was the universe connecting us."

Tonya, 33 and Angie, 37, have been together ever since. The couple lives in Great Falls where Angie works for the State of Montana and Tonya works as an EMT. Angie has a 16 year-old son from a previous marriage, and Tonya has a 10 year-old son from a previous marriage. They share custody with their sons' fathers.

The couple enjoys going to baseball and MSU football games and travelling.

In 2010, Tonya legally changed her last name to Angie's last name, Rolando, to reflect the commitment the two share. But they would like to get married to have that love and commitment legally recognized. Beyond the protections it would provide them, they believe marriage equality is a fundamental human right.

"My every day is her," says Angie. "I can't think of a part of my life without her connected to it."

## Ben Milano and Chase Weinhandl



*Chase Weinhandl and Ben Milano enjoying Montana's wild country*

Ben and Chase live in Bozeman with their three dogs: Boston Terrier Olive, Pit Bull Orville and Great Dane Stella. They have been committed to one another since meeting at a mutual friend's barbecue in 2007. In 2011 they entered into a civil union in Chicago, and they were married on the Big Island of Hawaii in January 2014. Same-sex marriages were so new to Hawaii that the courts available to perform them were limited. The juvenile drug court judge presided over Chase and Ben's wedding – one of the judge's first – in front of a contingent of excited court staff, who lined up and clapped for the couple after their nuptials.

Ben said he knew they belonged together forever when, "something switched in my head. 'Me' became 'We.'" Now they want their marriage to be recognized in Montana, their home. "I feel like I'm being punished for my love," says Chase.

Ben, 30, was born and raised in Minnesota but spent summers and winters with his mom in Montana. Ben attended the University of Wisconsin Whitewater and then moved to Bozeman in 2006 and works for a Chicago-based marketing firm. Chase, 29, was born in Great Falls and graduated from high school in Charlo. He attended Montana State University and has worked for Costco for the past 10 years where he is now a member of management.

The couple enjoys hiking, camping, great food and travel. They can't imagine life without each other. "We just click," says Chase. "To this day I'm always excited to come home to him."

## Shauna and Nicole Goubeaux



*Shauna and Nicole Goubeaux with their son, Aden*

Shauna, 43, and Nicole, 35, live in Billings with their beautiful, red-headed, 1 year-old son, Aden. Both are nurses and have been together for 11 years.

“We want Aden to grow up knowing that we are a family like any other family,” says Shauna. “Marriage is part of being a family. By being plaintiffs in this case we are showing him his mommies will stand up for what is right and stand up for him.”

When they were living in Wyoming, Shauna and Nicole drove to Iowa to get married because at the time it was the closest place where marriage equality was legal. When they returned to Cody they had a large reception with family and friends featuring karaoke and Chinese food from a local restaurant.

Family means a lot to this couple. Even before Aden, Shauna dressed up like Santa to leave presents for the children in their extended family. At Easter the two dress up like the Easter Bunny and hide eggs for the whole family.

## Sue Hawthorne and Adel Johnson



*Adel and Sue enjoy hiking and exploring Montana's back country with their dog Chloe.*

Sue and Adel have been a couple for 16 years. They live in Helena, where Sue is retired from the U.S. Army and Adel works for the Montana Department of Military Affairs.

The couple met for the first time in 1995 at Montana's first Pride event in Helena, but did not really get a chance to know one another until reconnecting at a 1996 golf tournament. From that point on, however, it became quickly evident that they were meant to be together. Adel recounts that shortly after that tournament she went on a backpacking trip with friends in Utah. After a 15-hour drive home to Butte, she could have collapsed but only wanted to drive one more hour to see Sue in Helena.

Adel, 44, and Sue, 49, married earlier this year in Washington State and are hosting a celebration of their vows with family and friends this October in Helena. Still, they want their marriage to be recognized by the State of Montana.

"I'm a fourth generation Montanan," says Adel, who grew up in Philipsburg. "I think it's very important that our state jump on board with marriage equality."

Sue, who served 28 years in the Army, agrees. "If I'm an American, I'm supposed to have the same rights as everyone else. So why don't I?"