

# Affirmations' friend dies at 42

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Mario Cirefice knew how to make people smile. If not because of his kindness then because of his tickling fetish.

"He was a very caring, spiritual and friendly man, eager to help when you needed him, and sometimes when you didn't," said Peter Cooper, a longtime friend who lives in Oak Park.

Cirefice, 42, died on Feb. 7 in St. Petersburg, Fla., as a result of a heart condition. He was a self-employed landscaper and caregiver who lived in various locations, including Ferndale and Brighton. He was also active in Detroit's leather community. Cirefice belonged to the Metropolitan Community Church Detroit, where he met Cooper, and attended the Affirmations Men's Discussion Group, where his easy-going attitude attracted many friends.

"No one was a stranger to Mario," Cooper said. "He quickly made friends with neighbors and co-workers. He loved to schmooze and exaggerate."



Mario Cirefice, 42, died of a heart condition on Feb. 7. Photo courtesy of Peter Cooper

Cirefice had a fascination with '60s entertainment and paraphernalia, including "Bewitched," The Monkees and Lily Tomlin, who he e-mailed numerous times.

"He even got (her) to answer his several dozen e-mails," Cooper said. "He was persistent."

Cooper has many fond memories of Cirefice, who he knew for 20 years, but

he'll especially remember the time he spent with his friend in the late '90s. Cirefice's perfection and enthusiasm for his job at Clean Care in Oak Park (one block from Cooper's home) led to several raises, which allowed him to afford a basement apartment on Ardmore Drive in Ferndale. He furnished the nook in '60s deco and frequently entertained friends and family there.

"It was a great place to just crash when I felt like company," Cooper said.

Cirefice is survived by his parents, Luigi Mario and Sharon Cirefice of Brighton, three brothers and three sisters and many nieces and nephews. A service was held at the Herrmann Funeral Home in Brighton on Feb. 13, followed by internment at the St. Hedwig's Cemetery on Warren in Dearborn Heights. Gifts and memorials may be made for pediatric AIDS support or to the charity of one's choice. To contact the family or for other information, write to MensRap6PM@hotmail.com and messages will be forwarded.