



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

As I sat down to the computer this morning to work on this column, I pondered possible topics. Procrastinating just a little, I flipped over to my e-mail program to see what had come in overnight. I noticed one that was directed to pflagmchenry@pflagillinois.org, so somebody had been on our NI website. The writer identified herself and then went on to say this:

I'm interested in getting involved in PFLAG. Can you give me an idea what membership involves?

As I began to write, I realized that the response might just be the stuff of which a column could be made, a column that starts off a new year reminding all of us in PFLAG just what we're supposed to be about: supporting, educating, and advocating.

Here's what I wrote:

Dear *****,

Thanks for asking about PFLAG!

Some people support the work of PFLAG financially but never attend a single meeting. Others do both. Meetings are great places to come together with people of like mind. We try to carry out PFLAG's 3-fold mission of support, education, and advocacy in a variety of ways.

First, support. We're there for "new" parents who come to us seeking a better understanding of their child's (no matter what age) sexual orientation or gender identity. However, support isn't limited to parents. Many LGBT people find community in PFLAG. Educators come to meetings; mental health professionals come to meetings. Supporters come to meetings. These are open forums for discussion.

Next, education. We educate ourselves through speakers, films, and documentaries. In addition, we educate the public. Some of us go out into the community, speaking about PFLAG to community groups like Rotary clubs or providing continuing education for organizations, examples of which are P.A.D.S. (Public Action to Deliver Shelter), C.A.S.A. (Court-appointed Special Advocates), school groups, or corporate diversity groups.

Finally, advocacy. We write letters, march in parades, visit elected officials to discuss our LGBT friends and family, encouraging legislators to promote actions that benefit our LGBT loved ones. Many of us participated in the March on Springfield in October of 2013 to show our support for marriage equality here in Illinois and to ask for the General Assembly's support.

What unites all PFLAGgers is our quest for equality, social justice, and an environment in which our LGBT loved ones can flourish.

However, we're not just parents. Many LGBT people themselves participate in PFLAG, and our voice is stronger and richer because of them. Many are allies who simply believe in the cause whether or not they have LGBT loved ones themselves (which they probably do even if they don't know it).

To support PFLAG financially, simply go to <http://www.pflagillinois.org> and click on "give" and look for the membership option. A minimum membership of \$45 is divided like this: \$15 goes to the national office to make one a member of the parent organization. \$20 goes to the chapter one selects, and the remaining \$10 goes to the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois to fund its programs that benefit all the chapters in the council.

So, I pose this question to you: What do you think that membership in PFLAG means? How would you have answered that question? If you'd like to e-mail me your responses, I'll compile them into a column for next month. Send them to me at twweaver@earthlink.net

Happy New Year! Happy New Year moving equality forward!

- Toni Weaver

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay persons. PFLAG is not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic or political group.

OPEN DOORS is a publication of the Northern Illinois PFLAG chapters. Articles that appear do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PFLAG, its Board of Directors or members. We reserve the right to edit any submissions. Priority is given to original work by the membership.

Send submissions, comments and photos to:

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Quarterly Council Meeting Report January 17, 2015

Twenty-two folks gathered at First United Church of Oak Park for the first council meeting of 2015. Here's a quick summary of the meeting.

Membership: The Fall membership drive netted 110 paid members. Many more people than that attend our chapter meetings, the majority of whom do not become dues-paying members. How can we change that?

Equality Illinois: At-large member Patty Dillon from Equality Illinois touched on the initiatives being promoted by Eqll: working with the Cradle, an adoption agency in Evanston, to promote adoptions by LGBT couples, expanding the outreach of Eqll to the NW suburbs, planning an informative and educational Institute Day for April (last year's was fantastic!), and putting together a website that would list LGBT resources by county.

LGBT Film Festival at Sea: Nancy Johnson presented on Pride of the Ocean, a cruise that features LGBT films and filmmakers. See <http://www.prideoftheocean.com>.

Trans ally survey: Betsy Cucci, a 5th year doctoral student at Adler, requested our participation in a survey geared for helping people discover just how good of an ally they are to transgender people. The survey is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TAID>

New Adler Interns: Peter Ji introduced our two new Adler interns who will be available to assist chapters in their various tasks: Allie Hock and Chelsie Howerton.

Opposing Gov. Rauner's choice for Chair of the State Board of Education: We join with Illinois Safe Schools in opposing the nomination of Rev. James Meeks because of Rev. Meeks' attitudes toward LGBT people. We fear that he would not support the types of initiatives designed to protect LGBT students.

750 Project: We agreed as a council to support Tracy Baim's initiative to raise funds for housing homeless LGBT youth.

Workshop Day: We basked in the afterglow of a successful workshop day in November. Another workshop day, focused on educating ourselves about issues of concern to transgender people and their families, is in the works.

The next council meeting will be held on Saturday, April 18.



What's Happening in Our Chapters?

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Happy New Year! Our December meeting, our annual holiday pot luck, was filled with cheer and delicious food. We enjoyed a great variety of delicious dishes and had a wonderful party. Members contributed to our donation project for the Crib and the Night Ministry, by bringing travel size personal toiletries, socks, warm gloves and caps, hard candy and gum, playing cards, and pens and small note pads. We also collected gift cards from places like Subway, Dunkin Donuts and Target. After our meal, we filled large holiday stockings the Night Ministry had provided, which was the perfect end to a wonderful day to kick off the holidays.

Our speakers in January were Antonia Clifford and Michael Newcomb from the IMPACT LGBT Health & Development program at Northwestern University. They conduct translational research that directly improves the health of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community and increases understanding of the development of sexual orientation and gender identity. Michael is an assistant professor in the Department of Medical Social Sciences at Northwestern and a research scientist in the IMPACT Program. He has a PhD in clinical psychology, and his research focuses on LGBT youth and HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug use, and mental health problems. He and Antonia answered several questions from our group. Michael also spent time with a new couple attending their first meeting.

Our February speaker is Gustavo Varela who plans programs for Hispanic LGBT youth.



OAK PARK CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

We had a successful screening of Scrooge & Marley (www.scroogeandmarleymovie.com) at the library on December 14. It's a gay take on "A Christmas Carol" made in Chicago with local actors, director (Richard Knight), producer (Tracy Baim.)

We had West Suburban SAGE and OPALGA cosponsoring the screening with us. After the film we had a carol singing after party at First United Church next door to the library. Sylvia Menninga and Richard provided piano music. Sylvia made little gingerbread men for snacks.

Our December meeting had only a few people mainly there in case any newcomers showed up, but none did. January we only had a few as well, probably because of the snow. We discussed the 750 Club, and what we might like to do in the coming year. We've turned in our application for doing a bake sale at the Oak Park Farmers Market. We also took paper and envelopes home to write letters to our Illinois legislators about the new governor's disappointing choice to chair the State Board of Education.



PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Arlene Collins

In November, Carolyn Wahlskog of 360 Youth Services was our guest and spoke of all the services that 360 provide. 360 Youth & Family Services is a private, not-for-profit agency specializing in community based intervention services for youth and their families in Naperville Township and the greater Naperville area.

We enjoyed a Pot Luck celebration and camaraderie for the Holidays at our Dec. 11th meeting and welcomed two women in their 20's, one of whom is the daughter of a PTI member. They were gracious to speak with us and share their experiences along their journey to attain their true self. They told us they never identified with the label they were given at birth and had gender identity issues from an early age. Support from their parents was never an issue. They shared their emotions, the discrimination they had to face and still do at times, safety issues, and relationships. Listening to other trans sons and daughters tremendously helps our members relate and embodies us with more information in our quest to help our children and understand the difficulty and courage it takes to make that decision to finally be their authentic self.

Our January meeting was cancelled due to frigid temps and the fact that many of our members travel long distances to attend PTI.

We will have popcorn and movie night on Thurs. February 12th. The movie we will view is [Trans, the movie.](#) Discussion will be held after the movie and we will talk about any issues that are facing us. All are welcome to attend.



DUPAGE CHAPTER

By John Hickey

Happy New Year from PFLAG DuPage!

We closed out 2014 with a great meeting sharing good conversation and a wonderful variety of dishes provided by all who attended. Thank you to our members for their generosity in providing funding for gift bags for the young folks participating in 360 Youth Service's Transitional Housing program. The residents were very pleased and grateful for your kindness and generosity.

2015 is kicking off with some great events. We participated in a panel discussion at Elmhurst public library; Several of our members participated in the West Suburban Call to Action – Outcast panel discussion in Naperville- The event made the front page of the Naperville Sun read more:

[Naperville Sun](#)

Some of us also attended a performance of October Mourning - a play about Matthew Shepard. The play was based on Lesléa Newman's book, "October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard". Read more here: [October Mourning](#). I recommend reading the book / collection of poems. The play was powerful and moving.

Our January 18 meeting featured Prairie State Legal where we learned about the services they provide and legal concerns of the LGBT community. This is a great organization offering many services to those in need. Looking forward there are also some great events to consider:

On January 30 at 6:00 pm, we hosted a movie night at St. Paul Lutheran church in Wheaton. We served pizza and watched Lady Valor, a documentary featuring transgender ex-Navy Seal, Kristen Beck.

We will be hosting a PFLAG table at MBLGTACC this year

at ISU on February 14th. **MBLGTACC 2015** will feature a keynote by Laverne Cox of Orange is the New Black and entertainment by Kit Yan (spoken word / slam poetry) and Bianca Del Rio (New Orleans Drag Queen). If you have college age students or friends have them check it out!

HRC will be hosting the 2015 **Her HRC** Fundraiser at Mayne Stage in Chicago. This is the 4th annual Va~Va~Vaudeville Her HRC event! Doors open at 6:30. Tickets are \$20 or \$35 for VIP.

February 27th from 8am to Noon Plainfield East High School will be hosting a community resource fair. Maria Prekop has secured a table for PFLAG. We are looking for volunteers to help at the table.

The Naperville Community Network: Professionals Supporting LGBTQ Youth and Illinois Safe Schools Alliance will host a County-wide Institute day of education. The workshop is entitled: A Day in the Life of Transgender Students: Creative Approaches to Teaching and Parenting Elementary, Middle and High School Youth.

March 8 at 2:00 we will be hosting a PFLAG information meeting with Rev. David Weasley, Family and Youth, Outreach and Missions Director at Zion Lutheran Church, ELCA in Tinley Park. We are hoping to find folks interested in starting a chapter in the area. We welcome your participation.

Upcoming PFLAG DuPage Meetings

Our February 15 meeting will feature a discussion with representatives of [OneWheaton](#), a community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and allied (LGBTQ&A) alumni and students of Wheaton College (Illinois).

March 15- Movie– Title TBD.

April 19- We will have Lorry Luscri from the VA. Lorry has organized and hosted three "Do Ask, Do Tell" events for the VA since the repeal of Don't ask, Don't Tell. We will host a shortened version of **Camouflage Closet** and a discussion.

We welcome you to attend any of PFLAG DuPage meetings. Guests are always welcomed. We meet at 2 pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month at St. Paul Lutheran church in Wheaton

MCHENRY CHAPTER*By Toni Weaver*

This report of our January meeting is in the words of our guest speaker, Betsy Powers:

> Betsy Powers, daughter of members Jerry Powers and Barbara Marian, was guest speaker at our January meeting. She shared her experience as a recovered alcoholic now 11 years sober and alcohol's relationship to her coming out story.

> She stressed that alcoholism is a physical and mental disease that can be treated. The disease is progressive and when left untreated, it most often becomes fatal. Many people around the alcoholic also suffer.

> Betsy shared that the alcoholic carries an allergy to alcohol and mental illness --often manifested as a "loud, distorted, obsessive mind" --which nearly always takes the alcoholic back to another drink. After forming the drinking habit, alcoholics find it nearly impossible to overcome the problem on their own, as the phenomenon of craving, (both mental and physical,) are for most alcoholics, a lethal obsession.

> As many gays and lesbians have experienced prejudice in their lives and still live closeted, the alcoholic LGBT often enters the closet with their drinking problem, and this kills far too many.

> Betsy found help in a recovery program of action, which she practices daily. She formed an LGBT friendly AA group in Salem, Oregon, which provides fellowship to many alcoholics, a life-giving alternative to the gay bar just a mile down the road. She urged PFLAG members to check local AA clubs for LGBT AA and Al-anon groups for recovery and fellowship for our gay brothers and sisters and their family and friends.

**HANNIBAL/QUINCY CHAPTER***By Elizabeth Hayashi*

The Hannibal/Quincy Chapter of PFLAG (pflaghannibal.quincy@gmail.com, PFLAG Quincy-Hannibal on FaceBook) meets in Quincy, IL, and includes leaders, members, and visitors from Hannibal, MO, across the Mississippi River. We began meeting in April, 2014.

On a cold Monday evening, December 1, we partnered with the Adams County, IL Health Department to commemorate World AIDS Day. Walkers ranging from young school children to those in their 70s convened at Washington Park, the main town square, and walked several blocks with red and white helium balloons to publicize the ongoing threat of HIV/AIDS, and need for a cure.

At our destination, City Hall Plaza, we enjoyed refreshments and fellowship. We then headed inside, where the Mayor opened the City Council meeting with a Proclamation addressing the importance of continued support for AIDS patients and research.

Along the way, local media interviewed organizers of the walk and individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

Check out the link:

<http://www.connecttristates.com/news/story.aspx?id=1130216-.VH4V4Tbnaig>

STAY
CONNECTED

To stay updated on what is going on with PFLAG National, check out these links...

Stay current with PFLAG National: [PFLAG national](#)

Follow PFLAG national on Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/pflag>

See what PFLAG National is tweeting about:
<http://twitter.com/#!/PFLAG>

Check out recent posts on PFLAG National's blog:
<http://blog.pflag.org/>

Watch PFLAG national on their YouTube channel:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/pflagnational>

ALSO

PTI Chicago has a new Facebook page. Please check it out and LIKE it: [PTI Chicago Facebook](#)

What PFLAG Means to Me

People come to PFLAG for different reasons and at different stages in their lives. Here are some of the reasons why...

"Four years ago, it was a lifeline. Today, it is a vehicle for volunteering, advocacy and making such wonderful friends and continued life-long learning."

"PFLAG is my second family. It's home for me."

"An excellent resource for my wife, our gay child and me. Thanks! Very helpful."

"Gives me a sense of inclusion in my community."

"Opportunity to provide support and compassion to all who need it."

"It's my second family and a very dear one."

"PFLAG means I have a place where I know I'm safe, understood, free to be who I am and speak my mind and experience honestly. It's a place of support and a place where I can learn how to talk to people and deal with difficult issues."

"Family and support of our children."

"People who accept all people for who they are."

"PFLAG was initially a safe place for me to share my stories about my gay son. It gave me a start on advocacy and continues to be a platform for advocacy for LGBT rights. It gives me a secure feeling of legitimacy for my work." N.J.

"Support and camaraderie."

PFLAG is a gathering of diverse individuals with whom I can share my story; receive knowing nods, smiles and hugs. I look to PFLAG to help keep me grounded, keep me current on local issues and help me grow in my responsibilities as a person."

"PFLAG means a lot to me. It serves as a sounding board, a shoulder to cry on, a continuing balance beam to the ups and downs, a rainbow of wide and supportive spectrum of people with different backgrounds and experiences."

"A place to be understood. I love it!"

Share what PFLAG
means to you!

PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley

Meetings held 2nd Sunday – 2 pm
 New England Congregational Church
 406 W Galena Blvd, Aurora 60506
 pflagaurorafoxvalley@pflagillinois.com

PFLAG Metro Chicago

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 pm
 Center on Halsted (Senior Room)
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613
 pflagchicagometro@pflagillinois

PFLAG Deerfield

Meetings held 2nd Thursday – 7:15 pm
 Congregation BJBE
 1201 Lake Cook Rd, Deerfield 60015
 pflagdeerfield@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG DeKalb County

Meetings held LAST Tuesday – 7 pm
 158 N 4th St
 DeKalb, IL 60115
 pflagdekalbcounty@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG DuPage

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 pm
 St Paul Lutheran Church
 515 S Wheaton Ave, Wheaton 60187
 pflagdupage@yahoo.com
 www.pflagdupage.org

Entre Familia: PFLAG En Espanol

Meetings typically held 2nd Sunday – 1:30 pm
*Please contact us to confirm date,
 time and location*
 pflagenespanol@pflagillinois.org

**Please join us
 for any chapter meeting.**

**If you are not comfortable meeting in a
 large group, arrangements can be made to
 meet one-on-one.**

**Contact any one of our chapters
 for more information.**

PFLAG Hinsdale

Meetings held 1st Sunday – 2 pm
 Unitarian Church Hinsdale
 11 W Maple, Hinsdale 60521
 pflaghinsdale@pflagillinois

PFLAG Joliet

Contact Lea Anne Stoughton
 lastoughton@gmail.com
 815-793-5138

PFLAG Kankakee

Contact Barbara Lohrbach
 815-932-2845

PFLAG McHenry

Meetings held 2nd Tuesday – 7 pm
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd
 McHenry 60050
 pflagwoodstockmchenry@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Oak Park

Meetings held 4th Sunday – 3 pm
 First United Church
 848 Lake St, Oak Park 60304
 pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Palatine

Contact Deirdre O'Connell
 herself68@yahoo.com

Parents of Transgender (Chicago)

Meetings are held the 2nd Thursday – 7 pm
 Center on Halsted
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613
 parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org

Parents of Transgender (McHenry)

Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday –
 7 p.m.
 (not in December)
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
 flynmb12@gmail.com
 marygenzler@hotmail.com