



# OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

## President's Column

### Support, EDUCATION, and Advocacy...PFLAG's 3-fold mission.

I purposely capitalized education since that's my focus this month, and the focus is on educating myself.

This summer will mark my 13<sup>th</sup> year in PFLAG, and I'm still working at educating myself so that I can be a better resource to the people who come to my chapter. I think I'm pretty knowledgeable but, sometimes, I still find areas where my education is lacking.

Case in point – drag shows. I have always associated drag shows with gay culture. Gay bars have drag shows; college pride clubs have drag shows; LGBT events have drag shows. Men and women both tuck neatly folded dollar bills into strategic locations on the costumes of drag queens and drag kings. I've never given it another thought. I tuck my buck with the best of them!

Then I publicized the drag show being organized by the Pride Club at Lake Forest College. It's especially nifty because the club is donating the proceeds from the event to PFLAG. Wow, I thought! This is great. To my surprise, a trans woman in my chapter wrote to me saying that to many transgender persons "drag is to transgender persons what Blackface is to Black persons." Oh... I never thought about that. Then I asked two other people, both of whom I hold in highest esteem, and basically they said the same thing, that drag shows are derogatory to transgender persons, that "many trans people struggle with their presentation and to have a drag show, whether staged or casual, could prove to be quite embarrassing to those who are less than successful with their presentation."

Obviously, not everyone agrees. However, enough do so that I need to be aware of people's sensitivities. I don't have an answer, but I'm working on it. This would make for a great discussion in our chapters. We need to be sensitive; we need to be caring; we need to be aware.

Toni

### THE 750 CLUB

Tracy Baim, editor of the *Windy City Times*, is passionate about addressing the needs of homeless LGBT youth. To donate, or to find out more information, please go to...

[https://secure2.convio.net/afoc/site/Donation2;jsessionid=4D500D3096256E422A307851558F41B7.app260a?df\\_id=2000&2000.donation=form1](https://secure2.convio.net/afoc/site/Donation2;jsessionid=4D500D3096256E422A307851558F41B7.app260a?df_id=2000&2000.donation=form1)

Where it says "Team Captain" type either PFLAG or PFLAG + name of your chapter.

*Thank you for your generosity!*

PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered 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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og4equality@gmail.com



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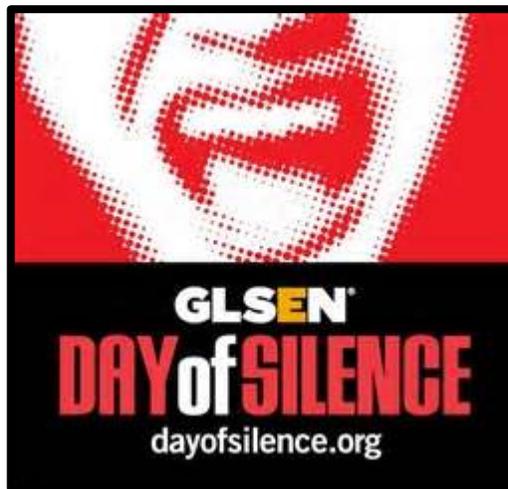
www.pflagillinois.org  
www.pflag.org

## Looking to get involved? Look what's coming up!

**WE ARE THE CHANGE**

2015 PFLAG National Convention  
October 16-18, 2015 Nashville, TN

For more info, visit <http://community.pflag.org/2015convention>



APRIL 17, 2015

**WHAT:** 2012 Day of Silence / Night of Noise  
**WHO:** Chicagoland middle and high school students  
**WHERE:** The Night of Noise celebration is at the Thompson Center Plaza, 100 W Randolph St in downtown Chicago.

The Night of Noise features young leaders from city and suburban high schools who will take the stage to talk about their efforts to improve school environments for students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that Illinois students who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual or four times more likely to have been threatened and twice as likely to have been bullied while at school.



# What's Happening in Our Chapters?

## HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Our March speaker, Gustavo Varela, spoke about the programs he is involved in that benefit Hispanic LGBT youth through Vida/SIDA in Chicago. The programs are many, and include after-school tutoring, speaking to school groups, and running an all-volunteer health clinic that devotes a lot of resources to clients with HIV and AIDS. They also have a housing program, which furnishes housing for homeless at-risk hispanic youth. Currently 23 young people live there, for about a year on average. Case managers help with job searches, education and life counseling.

Since our April 5th meeting is Easter Sunday, we will be showing a film, "Daddy & Papa," by Johnny Symons, about gay fathers in America. Taking us inside four gay male families, Daddy & Papa traces their day-to-day challenges, including those of interracial families in America, issues surrounding surrogacy and adoption, and the complexities of marriage, divorce and parenthood within the gay community. You are welcome to join us for this presentation!



## OAK PARK CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

We will be really glad when it gets to be warmer weather so we can get back to doing what we love to do! Namely:

- May 31 - PFLAG Family Potluck
- June 7 - Day in Our Village
- July 4 - Parade
- Sep 5 - Bake Sale

At our March meeting, our speaker was Joy Messinger, Deputy Director of Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH.) ICAH has been in existence for 37 years. They have a leadership-training program for area teenagers who do peer education at local high schools. The youth learn to present information on health, sexuality and

gender identity. They receive a small stipend for their work as peer educators. The group consists of youth of all genders and sexual identities. They learn to be sensitive to preferred pronouns, and everyone is treated with respect in the group. ICAH seeks applicants for the leadership training during the spring and summer. If you know of any teens that might be interested, have them contact ICAH: [www.icaah.org](http://www.icaah.org), [joy@icaah.org](mailto:joy@icaah.org), 312-427-4460, ext. 239.

The issues in Springfield that ICAH are working on are banning parental notification before a girl has an abortion, and the conversion therapy ban.

Joy also is a leader in the Asian Pacific Island LGBT group, Invisibility to Invincibility (i2i.) It provides support, education, and advocacy for Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT people. Immigration policy is one of their major issues. They have a social support group and a monthly potluck. The support group meets at Asian Human Services, and the potluck meets at various places. Their website is: [www.chicagoi2i.org](http://www.chicagoi2i.org).

Both ICAH and i2i (Invisible 2 Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago) have Facebook pages.



## PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Arlene Collins

At our PTI meeting on the March 12th, we welcomed 5 new members to our group and expressed how happy we were that they could join us. We did not schedule a speaker for the meeting because we have wanted to watch the movie, "Trans". It documents the lives of several trans men and women; young adults and older. We discussed aspects of the film and also talked about some of our experiences we've journeyed through with our "kids".

Our next meeting is Thurs. April 9th and Owen Daniel McCarter will be our guest. He is an attorney in Chicago and has associations with many organizations; including Chicago House <http://www.chicagohouse.org>. Presently he is the Policy & Advocacy Director of Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. He will be discussing his model policy for the

Advocacy of K-12 Rights of Trans students in Illinois.

The second half of our meeting will be devoted to discussion between our PTI group and sharing our concerns and experiences. Our meetings are open to all especially the parents, families and friends of transgender/gender non-conforming individuals.

Four members of PFLAG: including myself, Toni Weaver, Marcia Prichason and Raina Hodgson, attended the LGBT Equality Institute March 20 & 21 in Chicago. We presented a Workshop which was entitled "Fostering Ally Development through Support, Education and Advocacy. The workshop was very well attended and we thank Equality Illinois for inviting us and being a part of this very important event that is held annually.



Raina Hodgson, Toni Weaver, Arlene Collins and Marcia Prichason



**DUPAGE CHAPTER**

By John Hickey

We had another great meeting in March with over 30 participants sharing and supporting... We were happy to hear from Kimberly Lux, a licensed clinical social worker, whose work at Howard Brown Health <http://www.howardbrown.org> focuses on serving transgender children and youth as well as their families. Kimberly provided information on the services and work being done at Howard Brown and helped us to expand our understanding of LGBTQ youth. Howard Brown Health Center exists to eliminate the disparities in health care experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people through research, education and the provision of

services that promote health and wellness.

- We will be hosting a table at the "[Big Gay Gathering](#)" at Elmhurst College- currently planned for May 1. Elmhurst College welcomes HS students from GSAs throughout the area.
- We are planning on hosting another educational [movie night](#) on May 29<sup>th</sup>. We plan to view Milk (rated R). Harvey Milk Day is May 22- <http://www.harveymilkday.co/>. Mark your calendar. More details to follow.
- [Chicago Gay Men's Chorus](#) (CGMC) will be performing in Naperville at Wentz hall on May 24. Tickets should be on sale soon. <http://www.cgmc.org/events/season>
- June 28 is the Chicago Pride Parade. PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois will host a place in the parade.
- July 4 is the Wheaton Independence Day Parade. If you are interested in participating, please mark your calendar. This is an important community event for our chapter.

Upcoming PFLAG DuPage Meetings:

- 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 plan to view a shortened version of [Camouflage Closet](#) with a follow on discussion.
- May 17- We will be viewing a Ted Talk with Sam Killerman... recorded at UIC in 2013: Understanding the complexities of gender.
- June 21 Father's day. Program TBD.
- July 19- View a video clip entitled "[The Imam and The Homosexual](#)" to be followed by a facilitated discussion by Jamil Khoury Founding Artistic Director at [Silk Road Rising](#). The clip is and is part of the process of developing the play [Mosque Alert](#).
- August 16- We will be joined by Owen Daniel McCarter Esq. Policy and Advocacy Director Illinois Safe School Alliance.



**MCHENRY CHAPTER**

By Toni Weaver

In March we screened **Faces and Facets of TransGender Experience**, a documentary produced by Jean Hodges, current president of PFLAG National, which details the lives of transgender people and

gender-diverse people and their families. As a chapter we are working diligently at educating ourselves about as many aspects of transgender as we can as more and more “new” parents with trans children walk through our doors. Of course, we have the added advantage of having a Parents of Transgender (PTI) group to which we can refer these new parents. However, we feel the importance of having all of our PFLAG members educated. Much to the group’s surprise and delight, two ladies who regularly attend our chapter meetings were featured in the film!

The film comes with a discussion guide and page of resources that makes it the perfect primer for those just beginning their education on transgender. According to the guide

“The purpose of creating this film is to reveal a glimpse into the lives of transgender and gender diverse people and their families in order to expand understanding and dispel misinformation and stereotypes held by some members of the general public. Our expectation is that this film will serve as a resource for families and organizations that work directly with families (i.e. counselors, clergy and medical professionals). Our hope is the viewing **Faces and Facets** will touch minds and hearts to change long-held prejudices and misconceptions as well as to change behaviors as people interact with transgender and gender diverse persons in more informed and sensitive ways.”

We continue our outreach to the GSAs in McHenry County’s high schools, and we are pleased to say that a total of three high schools have already taken us up on our offer to purchase a Pride flag for their GSA. In addition to the flags, we deliver information about PFLAG and provide the advisers with resources to help them in their work with students. One of those advisers, a school psychologist, attended our March meeting to see for him the work that we do.

In April we will welcome Meg and Fred Valentini from the Chicago Metro chapter to talk about their commitment to the AIDS Ride and share their experiences with us.



**DEERFIELD CHAPTER**

*By Sue Ginsburg*

Rachael Marusars of the Aids Foundation of Chicago (AFC) was PFLAG’s guest and speaker at the meeting on March 12. Rachael is the director of corporate and

foundation relations at the Aids Foundation of Chicago.

The foundation, located in Lakeview, is 30 years old, founded in the 80’s as a grass roots response to the Aids crisis. It provided support and cared for people with Aids and brought groups together to create awareness and educate about the causes of Aids and the courses of treatment that were available. It focused on educating policy makers about the LGBT community and provided advocacy on the public stage.

The group now works with 75 community organizations in Cook County and the collar counties. Through awards and fund raising it has an annual budget of 16 million dollars. The AFC and the organizations associated with it provide testing, teach about prevention and care of Aids, work with partner organizations to provide support to community organizations and clinics -- coordination and collaboration.



**PTI McHenry**

*By Marya Flynn*

The main focus of our group is parents of transgender individuals supporting one another. We listen to each other’s stories and share our experiences. We periodically invite guest speakers and show pertinent videos.

At our February meeting we watched a brief video called “No Dumb Questions”. A family with three young daughters, ages 6, 9 and 11, documented their families discussions about and initial meeting with their Aunt Barbara. Previously she had been their Uncle Bill.

The kids where encouraged to asked any questions that they had and told that there were “No Dumb Questions”. We see the kids trying to sort out what language to use and wonder what physical changes Uncle Bill will go through to become Aunt Barbara, including hair removal and certain body parts. Their questions and discussions reveal their confusion over why someone would decide to change their gender.

If you are the parent of, or a significant adult person in the life of, a transgender individual, please feel free to join us.

If you have any questions you can reach me via email. [flynnmb12@gmail.com](mailto:flynnmb12@gmail.com)

## PFLAG GIVES AWAY “KISSES”

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, is only a month away, and with that comes our annual “Kisses from Mom” Mother's Day fundraiser.

**Sidetrack**, a favorite LGBTQ gathering place, graciously welcomes PFLAG for the afternoon/evening. As we solicit for donations on the sidewalk outside, we exchange chocolate Hershey's Kisses (tagged with PFLAG contact info) and REAL hugs from PFLAG moms (and other members).

It is a great opportunity to feel the amazing outpouring of love and appreciation for the work we do in support of our own LGBTQ loved ones. It also allows volunteers from different chapters to meet and spend time together.

This fun and emotionally gratifying event is also rewarding financially. Proceeds from the fundraiser are split, with 50% going to Council and the remaining 50% divided amongst the participating chapters.

The event will run from 3:00 – 9:00 P.M. and will be broken into 3 shifts, with each shift lasting 2 hours.

### Shifts are as follows:

1st 3:00p - 5:00p  
2nd 5:00p - 7:00p  
3rd 7:00p - 9:00p



Anyone wishing to volunteer for a shift should contact Marcia Prichason via e-mail at: [mprichas@gmail.com](mailto:mprichas@gmail.com)

Please provide your name(s), your chapter, email address, contact telephone #, and 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> choice for shift.

Please make a commitment to be there if you sign up, as some people are turned away each year due to the limited amount of slots per shift.

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](#)

## A PFLAG Member You Should Know . . .

By Marcia Prichason

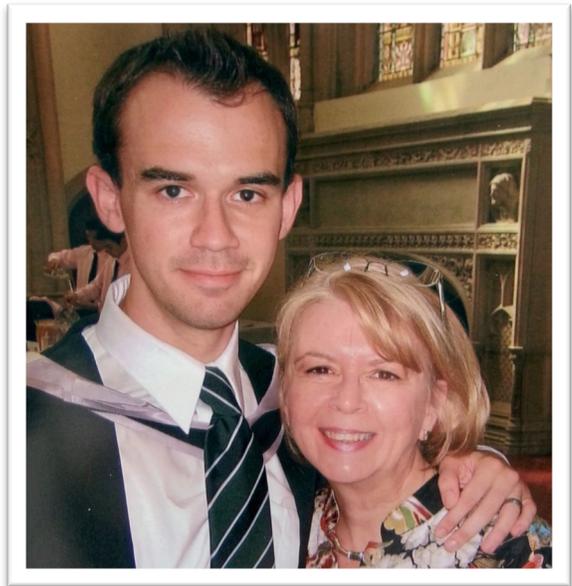
Jackie Frett came to PFLAG the same way many others do. In 2004, her then 21-year-old son told her he was gay. This information came as quite a shock. She was close to her son, and they were able to talk about everything; or so she thought. She was surprised and ashamed that they had never had this conversation; that he had struggled with this alone. And, she had the nagging question . . . for how long?

Jackie readily admits she had a difficult time with the news. Like so many others, she had never given much thought to what it meant to be gay. She had a wealth of misinformation that she had to overcome. Somehow, what she had been taught being gay was and who she knew her son to be just did not match up.

So began her journey. Her son was living at home at the time and since Jackie was having a difficult time processing this new information, he suggested PFLAG. He first introduced her to the PFLAG Mom of one of his friends. She came to her home, and they talked for hours. This PFLAG Mom's husband is a minister and, as a Roman Catholic, she found that very comforting. In the Catholic Church she grew up in this was such a taboo topic it was never mentioned, *never*. This PFLAG Mom helped her find the courage to come to a meeting. She would not let her chicken out. She called and waited for her at the door. And Jackie stepped in!

Jackie has been a member of PFLAG Hinsdale for 10 years now, and in that time has been a dynamic, contributing member to both the chapter and to the community. She has served on the board as vice president and president. She is the contact person for the website and maintains the chapter e-mail list. She has also worked with local area social workers in the middle schools and High School to bring awareness of GLBT issues. She was invited to Hinsdale Middle School to give a presentation to the teachers on "It's Elementary"-Talking about gay issues in school, a documentary by Debra Chasnoff. Additionally, she has worked with the faculty advisors of the Gay Straight Alliance at Hinsdale Central and invited them to speak to the Hinsdale chapter. She is in contact with local area libraries and makes donations of GLBT resource books in the name of PFLAG Hinsdale. For a time, she wrote a monthly article for the Chicago Tribune, TribLocal on GLBT issues.

Jackie states that, "having a gay son has changed my life, and PFLAG is the vehicle that has allowed me and every other PFLAG Mom and Dad to make a difference. PFLAG introduced me to the obstacles put in my son's way by religion, politics, and ignorance. It introduced me to the people I needed to know to help make change."



One of Jackie's greatest joys is that DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, has been overturned. This law prevented her son from sponsoring his Australian husband to live here and even made visits difficult. Now that DOMA has been overturned, both her son and her husband feel welcomed in this country.

Jackie has found that PFLAG has become a big part of her life. She says that, "we work together to support each other and to make change to create a better world for our children." She finds it most rewarding to answer the calls and e-mails from people looking for help. "I try to repay the kindness shown to me when I was new to this and everything was raw and difficult. It was a pretty dark place, but I know the way out and I feel privileged to help others find their way."

Jackie Frett is truly a PFLAG member you should know!

\*If you would like to be interviewed (or know someone who should) for this column, please contact Marcia Prichason at [mprichas@gmail.com](mailto:mprichas@gmail.com)

**PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley**

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

**PFLAG Metro Chicago**

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

**PFLAG Deerfield**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> St  
 DeKalb, IL 60115  
 pflagdekalbcounty@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG DuPage**

Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday – 1:30 pm  
*Please contact us to confirm date,  
 time and location*  
 pflagenespanol@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Hinsdale**

Meetings held 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday – 7 pm  
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church  
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd  
 McHenry 60050  
 pflagwoodstockmchenry@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Oak Park**

Meetings held 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – 7 pm  
 Center on Halsted  
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613  
 parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org

**Parents of Transgender (McHenry)**

Meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday –  
 7 p.m.  
 (not in December)  
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church  
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050  
 flynnmb12@gmail.com  
 marygenzler@hotmail.com

**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.**