



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

Transgender is the *New Gay*

The New York Times (March 21, 2016) carried this brief news story coming out of North Carolina:

The General Assembly will hold a special session on Wednesday to consider blocking a Charlotte ordinance that would broaden local protections for gay and transgender people. The measure — which officials in Charlotte, North Carolina's largest city, approved last month — is to take effect April 1 and forbids discrimination in public accommodations, like restrooms, because of a person's sexual orientation or gender expression. Opponents, including Gov. Pat McCrory, condemned the plan as a threat to public safety, and at least three-fifths of the Republican-controlled House and Senate agreed to the special session. In a statement on Monday, legislative leaders said, "We aim to repeal this ordinance before it goes into effect to provide for the privacy and protection of the women and children of our state."

The underlining is mine. The words "a threat to public safety" made me cringe. How badly misunderstood are our transgender brothers and sisters. Look at the discrimination they face every day. Look at the pain and tears welling up in the moms and dads who love their trans kids, knowing that their children are facing a cruel world. We, the parents of gay sons and lesbian daughters, can see a light at the end of the tunnel. While we haven't yet "arrived" in terms of society's total acceptance of our kids, we've made incredible gains, but the world hasn't yet caught up when it comes to understanding and accepting the fact that some people have a fundamental identity that is not reflected in their physical bodies. They are now where we were twenty years ago. However, the gay rights movement has opened doors, so perhaps, the journey to acceptance for transgender people will be hastened.

If we, the members of PFLAG, are faithful to our three-fold mission of support, education, and advocacy, we might be the very ones to speed the process. This is not the time for sitting back and letting others do all the work. We have a voice; we have the power of the pen; we have the power of the vote. Fear and ignorance mustn't be allowed to prevail.

Toni

It's happened in other states, and now it's happening in Illinois. A shameful bill, which would force transgender students to use separate school facilities from their peers, advanced to the Illinois House Human Services Committee. Equality Illinois and LGBT advocates all over the state vow to stop the measure in its tracks.

HB 4474, sponsored by state Rep. Thomas Morrison, is an awful and harmful policy proposal. By writing discrimination into Illinois law, HB 4474 will make schools less safe by singling out and stigmatizing transgender students.

The Illinois House Rules Committee assigned it to the Human Services Committee for a possible hearing in April.

Equality Illinois is calling on opponents of discrimination to sign a petition against HB 4474. The petition will be presented to committee members and to the House member who represents each signer. **Individuals can sign the petition at tinyurl.com/HB4474-petition.** We are also planning an LGBT Equality Lobbying Day on Wednesday, April 13 in Springfield, when citizen lobbyists can join us in making the case against the bill, among other issues. Registration for LGBT Equality Lobbying Day is at: <http://tinyurl.com/2016-advocacy-day>.

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.

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www.pflagillinois.org
www.pflag.org

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REMEMBERING SHEILA

Sheila Healy (1959-2016)

A number of years ago, a chance encounter between Barbara Schon-Lundberg (former editor of Open Doors, past president of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois, and member of the then



Glenview, now Deerfield, chapter) and Sheila Healy led to Sheila's involvement with PFLAG. Living in McHenry County, Sheila joined PFLAG Woodstock and for a short period of time, sat on the council as one of the two chapter representatives. Her friendship with Barbara led to Sheila's involvement with trying to get a PFLAG chapter established on Chicago's Southside, one of Barbara's goals as council president.

When Barbara developed brain cancer, Sheila was a constant visitor and comfort to both Barbara and her spouse, Larry. After Barbara's death, Sheila continued her supportive presence to comfort the grieving Larry.

The smile on Sheila's face was never broader than when she was marching with the Woodstock/McHenry PFLAG chapter in the annual Crystal Lake Parade. Usually rather dour looking, Sheila's whole countenance changed as she marched the parade route. She couldn't be prouder of who she was, and she took this opportunity to show the world that being lesbian was perfectly A-OK.

Unbeknownst to us until just recently, Sheila designated the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois as the sole beneficiary of an insurance policy she took out sometime after learning of her diagnosis of lung cancer. She believed in the organization. She believed in us. She believed in the fight for equality.

We remember Sheila with grateful hearts, and we'll honor her memory by faithfully using the funds to promote equality for all.

To learn more about her, please see

<http://funerals.pro/tribute/details/428/Sheila-Healy/obituary.html>

Toni

Equality Illinois is sponsoring an **Advocacy Day** in Springfield on April 13. The event kicks off at 11AM with advocacy training and a box lunch. Additional training in specific pieces of legislation will precede actual visits to legislators. The day will culminate in a wrap-up session and a "sending forth," concluding by 5PM at the latest.

Participants will need to provide their own transportation to Springfield. Cost of registration is \$15.

If you are interested in attending,
please contact Patty Medairy at pmedairy@equil.org





in Our Chapters?

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Lisa Guzman & Eileen Matthies

Our March speaker was Owen Daniel-McCarter, the Policy and Advocacy Director for Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. The Alliance advocates for LGBTQ+ students in Illinois through different events, groups, etc. They provide professional development for school educators; they also do a lot of policy work. Currently their main focus is on transgendered individuals, i.e., what goes on with athletics, locker rooms, name change, dress code, teacher curriculum, etc. Instead of focusing on "anti-bullying" (sort of after the fact), they try to prevent violence from occurring. Owen talked about gender identity (how we think about our brains) vs gender expression (how we outwardly express ourselves - constantly evolving). If students aren't affirmed as to who they are, this can lead to depression, anxiety, even suicide; based on a national study, 41% of trans students try to kill themselves, as compared to 4.5% of the general population.

Our speaker in April will be Carolyn Wahlskog, who is the Program Director for 360 Youth Services in Naperville. This organization provides counseling, prevention, mentoring, and housing programs. Carolyn deals with issues related to LGBTQ youth.



PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Joelle Spiegel

PTI Chicago was happy to host guest speaker Dr. Deborah Wilkie, LCPC at our meeting on March 10 at Center on Halsted. Dr. Wilkie is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in private practice in Bolingbrook. She has served the transgender community for eighteen years and has assisted over three hundred individuals transition. Dr. Wilkie founded and ran the first professionally facilitated support group for transgender persons in Illinois and it is still in existence today. Members in attendance at the meeting shared personal experiences, insights, and support about our families and Dr. Wilkie spoke about her clinical experience working with transgender clients. Our next meeting will take place on April 14 at 7pm at Center on Halsted, 3656 North Halsted.

Deerfield CHAPTER

By Janet Svatos & Sue Ginsburg

We were honored to welcome Lizzy Appleby, MSW, and Pride Youth Coordinator at "Angles." (Formerly known as "Links.") Lizzy has a background in youth development, sex education and leadership development. Angles has undergone several changes in the past year so we thought it would be a good idea to get an idea of what changes have taken place and what resources and support Angles can now offer to our LGBTQ community.

While Angles is located in Northfield, it offers services to other north shore suburbs such as Evanston, Palatine, Gurnee to list a few. When Angles did a needs assessment, it was found that the trans youth was not getting the same support in the schools as the other members of the LGBTQ community. Their "Pride Social" effort builds friendships of youth between the ages of 14-20.

There are two support groups available. One is in Evanston, for middle and high school students; the other is trans-specific, where different topics are explored each week.

There is also a youth leadership internship for students 14-21, whereby they develop curriculum while teaching workshops in schools, such as peer led health classes. They might discuss the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity; how to be an ally; how to support LGBTQ people; why it's wrong to "out" people. They learn about responding to scenarios that actually happened in their own lives. There are also social events and service projects that in which students can take part. Unfortunately, there is no policy in place yet to address homeless LGBTQ youth.

Angles tries to coordinate with Youth Outlook's "Transcend" program, which is one of support, while Angles is more social. Angles is thinking of a 'bridge' program to serve those 20-26, although funds are not yet available for that. You are encouraged to call Lizzy for specific information regarding times and events.



McHenry CHAPTER

By Toni Weaver

Our March meeting was very special and gave us much upon which to reflect. We saw the intersection of “religion” and LGBT reality as it was reflected in the life of our guest presenter whom I shall simply refer to as JP. JP was born into an extremely religious family, an African-American family. Her father was a bishop in the Church of God in Christ, a Pentecostal denomination. However, her father did anything but reflect the biblical principles he claimed to espouse. From the time she was a child she heard condemnations of homosexuality preached from the pulpit. Her brother, too, heard these same sermons and was afraid – afraid of the wrath of God and afraid of the wrath of their father.

Eventually their father discovered the sexual orientation of his son and as a result, totally rejected him. Only the love and acceptance of their mother gave him a reason to live. Sadly, she died, leaving him to navigate the world alone. He had already withdrawn from the family, assuming that the other family members shared the opinions of their father. Sometime after her death, JP’s brother took his own life, unable to face life without the love and support of his mother. The details are gruesome. He had been dead three weeks before his body was discovered, and it was his father who found him. He was not accorded a funeral, nor did the family know what had become of his ashes following cremation, a practice not normally followed in this church.

Upon the death of her father, JP learned from the funeral director that the ashes of her brother had been stored in the back of the funeral home for several years and not been interred, as she had been led to believe. The ultimate irony came when she asked the funeral director to place the urn containing her brother’s ashes in the coffin with her father. Her father had lost a leg due to complications from diabetes, so there was a space where the leg should have been. That space was given to her brother. There they would spend eternity together.

This “holy” man of God had been involved with pornography and had kept a mistress on the side while he was married to JP’s mother. He preached but did not live the gospel, yet he made life so miserable for his son that his son could no longer go on. Without love, life is lost.

At the funeral, a grand affair involving bishops from across the United States, JP heard glowing accounts of her father’s holiness. She and her siblings turned to one another with questioning looks in their eyes. Whom were they talking about, certainly not the father they knew! What a powerful

testimony!

In April we’ll celebrate Jill Hartman, one of the founding members of our PFLAG chapter. Jill is moving to Boston to be closer to one of her daughters. We’ll get a sense of our history as Jill talks about the early years and how the chapter came together. It will be a quiet time of reflection as we both look back and look forward, envisioning an even greater outreach in McHenry County.



Tinley Park CHAPTER

By Deborah Medina

PFLAG Tinley Park is slowly growing with new attendees each week. We are conveniently located in the south suburbs. Join us on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 2pm at Zion Church, 17100 69th Ave, Tinley Park (east of Harlem Ave).



DuPage CHAPTER

By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

Thanks to all who were able to attend the March meeting of PFLAG DuPage. It was a great meeting: several new people attended (that makes 12 this year!) and we had a wonderful speaker.

The presentation by Rachel Arfa of Equip for Equality highlighted the legal rights of underserved and indigent individuals on Civil Rights matters. Her practice includes providing counsel to and representation of people in the areas of education, housing, employment, and public accommodation. She included helpful information for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Rachel grew up in the Chicagoland area, obtained her undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan, and received her law degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is currently a fellow with Leadership Greater Chicago, a higher level leadership training and networking opportunities with established business and community leaders who serve as mentors to tomorrow’s leaders. Some of her affiliations include: Midwest Center on Law and the Deaf, the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation (ITAC), and the Chicago Cultural Access

Consortium.

If you would like to know more about Rachel, please contact us.

The following announcements were made at the meeting:

School Outreach – There is growing interest at administration levels in DuPage schools. Anyone interested in helping out should contact one of our chapter officers.

On February 26, 2016, four chapter members met with a representative of the DuPage Regional Office of Education. The meeting was very productive. The long-range plan is to help the ROE develop educational programs for district administrators, school administrators, and faculty regarding LGBTQ+ issues. There are 42 school districts in DuPage County, so the potential for making a widespread difference is great.

February 26, 2016 – community resource fair, Plainfield – Peter & Kristin Shulman represented PFLAG DuPage.

March 4th, 2016 – Workshop sponsored by the DuPage Community Network on LGBTQ+ Youth: Incorporating Affirming Policies, Practices and Supporting Intersectionality in Schools. Ten PFLAG DuPage members attended.

March 6th, 2016 – Chicago Her HRC Presents: 5th Annual Va ~ Va ~ Vaudeville! Six PFLAG DuPage members enjoyed a dinner together before the very interesting and entertaining performance!

We received an invitation from Malik Gillani, Executive Director of Silk Road Rising, to attend the stage play "Mosque Alert," which will perform at Silk Road Rising in downtown Chicago (77 W Washington St, Lower Level, Chicago, IL 60602) from March 24th thru May 1st. Inspired by the "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy in New York City, "Mosque Alert" tells the story of three fictional families living in Naperville, Illinois, whose lives are interrupted by a proposed Islamic Center on the site of a beloved local landmark. "Mosque Alert" explores the intersections of zoning and Islamophobia with humor, family drama, and refreshingly blunt honesty.

The PFLAG ticket rate for previews (March 24th thru April 1st) will be \$15 (\$25 per ticket to the general public). Our ticket rates for regular run (April 2nd thru May 1st) will be

\$25 per ticket (\$35 per ticket to the general public). Additionally, they offer \$8 parking near their theatre for those driving (3 blocks west of us at Self Park).

The intimate theatre seats 80. Due to its small size, they don't hold tickets. They recommend PFLAG members buy tickets as soon as possible (visit www.mosquealert.org to purchase tickets; when buying, enter discount code PFLAG to receive a \$10 discount per ticket - this discount is deeper than our group sales discount). If there are youth in the group, student tickets are only \$12.50 for previews and \$15 for the run.

To buy tickets and to learn more (directions, parking, etc.), just visit their play website: <http://www.mosquealert.org>. There are no fees to buy online. Just remember, in order to get your discount, enter the code PFLAG when buying tickets.

Performance times are:

Thursdays at 7:30pm

Fridays at 8pm

Saturdays at 4pm

Sundays at 4pm

Next month's educational program will feature a video "So you think you can ally?" by Jamie Henkel and Jean-Marie Navetta of PFLAG National.



PFLAG DuPage members at the LGBTQ & Youth Workshop

Oak Park CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

Our speaker at our February meeting was Willie Morris who has been volunteering at St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 5700 Midway Park in Chicago. They have been preparing to open a drop-in center for homeless youth, 13-24. The Harbor Drop in Center, open the first Friday of each month, had its first opening on March 4. Several members of Oak Park PFLAG went to meet the pastor, Fr. Christopher Griffin, many of the church volunteers, and to see the space itself. (picture below.)

Harbor is open for all homeless youth, but they have a special interest in reaching LGBT youth and ensuring it is a safe space for all the participants. They are also cooperating with Night Ministry, Affinity, the Locker program, and Introspect Youth Services. We decided we wanted to help them in bringing this important and needed service to the West side of Chicago.

When Willie spoke to us, he told us that Harbor needs toiletries to make up dignity bags for the youth. We're tentatively planning a potluck at the church in May, and having a "dignity bag filling party." We've also been discussing ways we can help by collecting items for the bags, and earning some money for the program.

Our March meeting falls on Easter, but we'll be meeting anyway. Our bake sale application has been submitted. Due to the Farmers Market changing its rules, all organizations will be participating in a lottery, since there are more organizations wanting to do a bake sale than there are slots for the sales! Our fingers are crossed that we'll be baking this year!



Kankakee CHAPTER

By Pamela Valentine

After cancelling our February meeting due to illness among our troops, we returned in March with Owen

Daniel-McCarter, the Policy and Advocacy Director of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. He informed us of two very important and critical bills, HB6073 and HB4474, that were, at the time, in Rules Committee. Both bills were assigned to the House Human Services Committee this week. We should begin contacting our state rep directly and voicing our opinions on these bills.

Owen also shared ways in which we can reach out to schools and districts, especially proactively. He generously offered to match make board members, administrators, and secretaries with already successfully inclusive schools. He shared the administrative procedure of Berwyn South School District 100, which boasts an impressive policy and support plan for trans and gender fluid students.

This information will help us organize a method to reach out to districts in and around the Kankakee areas, and hopefully to improve policies within the schools, as well as training for staff and administrators. Our hope is to work with Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and the Gay Straight Alliance, to help districts develop inclusive policies and to foster a more accepting and safe environment for the entire LGBT community, both students and staff.

Our April speaker will be a parent from the Chicago area, who has been instrumental in creating an online network that connects parents of transgender children all over our state.



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>

Support the PFLAG Council of Northern IL when you shop on Amazon:
<http://www.smile.amazon.com>

PFLAG Gives Away “kisses”

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 8th,

is only a short time 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 members.

It is a great opportunity to feel the 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 Coordinator Marcia Prichason via e-mail at: mprichas@gmail.com or telephone: 708-602-4543

Please provide your name(s), how many people will be participating, your chapter, email address, contact telephone #, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd 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.

Sidetrack
3349 North Halsted
Chicago, IL 60657

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO BECOME A MEMBER...SUPPORT PFLAG

By becoming a PFLAG member, you will help provide support, education and advocacy. All information we collect from you on this form will remain confidential, and we will only share it within PFLAG.

Membership runs from October 1 to September 30; no partial-year membership is available.

Please check:

New Membership Renewal Membership Donation



(Name) _____

(Date) _____

(Address) _____

(City) (State) (ZIP) _____

(Preferred Phone Home Cell) _____

(E-mail Address) _____

(Notes or In Memory of In Honor of) _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

PFLAG Superhero \$500+ Parents Flag Waver \$100 Household/Individual Membership \$45

PFLAG Hero \$250 Supporting Membership \$60 Donation \$ _____

SELECT A CHAPTER:

Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Hinsdale Aurora/Fox Valley McHenry County McHenry Parents of Transgendered Individuals Deerfield Chicago/Metro Chicago Parents of Transgendered Individuals Joliet Kankakee/Will/Iroquois Palatine Oak Park DeKalb County DuPage Downers Grove Tinley Park

Check enclosed payable to PFLAG

Please charge my credit card (Visa MasterCard Amex Discover)

(Credit Card #) _____

(Exp Date DD/MM) _____ (CVV – V/MC/D 3 digits on the back – AX 4 digits on the front) _____

(Name on Card) _____

Please return form to your chapter representative or mail form and to:

PFLAG Membership P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126

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
 Federated Church of Sycamore
 612 W State St
 Sycamore, IL 60178
 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

PFLAG Tinley Park - NEW

Meetings held 2nd Sunday – 2-4 pm
 Zion Lutheran Church
 17100 69th Ave.
 Tinley Park, IL 60477

PFLAG Downers Grove

Meetings held 2nd Wednesday – 7p.m.
 First Congregational UCC
 1047 Curtiss
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

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 Will, Kankakee, Iroquois

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 1st Monday – 7 p.m.
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
 flynnmb12@gmail.com
 marygenzler@hotmail.com

Parents of Transgender (North Shore) - NEW

Meetings are held the 3rd Sunday – 6 p.m.
 Winnetka Presbyterian Church
 1255 Winnetka Rd
 Winnetka, IL 60093

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.