



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

PFLAG Shines During Pride Month

Pride month offered so many fantastic opportunities for PFLAG to be out in the community building visibility, crating welcoming spaces and building bridges. PFLAG volunteers attended the Equality Rally in Andersonville. We also hosted PFLAG informational tables with pin making and pride button making at: Family Night at the Morton Arboretum, honoring LGBT families, at the Chicago Children's Museum, at an Equality Illinois event, and at Navy Pier's second annual Pier Pride day. Topping it all off was the Chicago Pride Parade on June 25th.

PFLAG families from all over northern Illinois showed up in force for the Chicago Pride Parade to show their love and support for our community. It was a gorgeous day with temperatures in the 70's, plenty of sunshine, and a nice cool breeze. The floats, trolleys and walkers were an amazing rainbow of beauty, loving support and high energy inspiration. Folks mingled and talked as we waited for our start time. People were catching up with old friends, making new friends, and sharing their stories. The trolley proudly wore the PFLAG banner and was aptly decorated in pride flags and rainbow streamers and fringe. Even our driver was decked out in a rainbow hat at one point. The energy and engagement from the crowd was so uplifting you could feel your heart swell. The crowd roared as the PFLAG group came past. There were endless cheers, waves, hugs and high fives as we made our way along the parade route. The love and affirmation was undeniable and overflowing. Though the route is about 3 miles long, it just seemed to fly by.

This year we had lots of newcomers to the parade as well as a bunch of returning participants and seasoned veterans. Based on the smiles, cheers, laughs and tears, it seems a great time was had by all.

I want to thank everybody who helped with all of the events this month and all those who were able to join us for the Chicago Pride Parade! I know many more of you were with us in spirit too. Be sure mark your calendar for June 24th, 2018 and plan to join us for another amazing experience.

In Love and Solidarity,

John



P.S. Check out this clip of TV coverage!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo9CGPen3gk>

PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender 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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PFLAG Council of Northern IL
on



PFLAG Fundraiser Found Successful

The annual PFLAG “*Kisses from Mom*” fundraiser was held at Sidetrack on Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 14th. PFLAG-ers handed out kisses (both chocolate and real) to patrons and passers-by and asked for donations. 50% of the money that is raised at this event goes directly to Council and is used primarily for our spot in the Chicago Pride parade. The other 50% is divided up amongst the chapters that volunteer. It’s a win/win all around.

Volunteering for the “Kisses” event is always personally satisfying as we receive such a warm welcome! There are also so many poignant stories. One PFLAG mom states, “A man thanked me for being there because his own mother didn’t get the whole “gay thing.” One PFLAG mom explained to two young man exactly what we do when they asked if we were “for or against them.” Another young man proudly showed off his “straight” brother and, very excitedly told us how awesome it was that he was there with him.

These stories and more remind us that our mission to support, educate, and advocate are what we do on Mother’s Day and EVERY DAY!

We will be outside of Sidetrack again next year on Mother’s Day, and I hope YOU will be there!

Marcia Prichason

Kisses from Mom Coordinator
Hinsdale Chapter





McHenry CHAPTER

By Toni Weaver

Katie Thomas, past president of the Chicago Gender Society and co-chair of HRC's steering committee for Transgender Outreach for ten years, returned to PFLAG McHenry this month to once again address our chapter

on removing the "one-size-fits-all" approach to being transgender.

Since childhood Katie has known that she was born in the wrong body and had planned to remedy that as soon as it would become feasible. However, at the tender age of 17, she met the love of her life, Shirley, the woman who has been her spouse now for 59 years. Thoughts of transitioning were put on hold. She maintained her male persona through the birth of their children and in her professional life. Even now Katie continues to live a portion of her life as Tom, not Katie.

The decision she has made doesn't alter who she is. If she self-identifies as transgender, she is transgender even when dressed as Tom. I think her story challenges us to accept the fact that some people choose to break out of the mold we have cast for them. Katie has something to teach us, and we need to listen.

On July 2, PFLAG McHenry will once again be marching in the Crystal Lake Independence Parade, an activity in which we've been participating since 2007, the year after the rowing events for the Chicago Gay Games were held in Crystal Lake. Anyone who wishes to join us is welcome. Please email me for details:

twweaver@earthlink.net.

Deerfield CHAPTER

By Sue Ginsburg

Our June meeting is one of my most favorite. For the past 19 years, Cynthia Drey, a past member of PFLAG Deerfield, flies in from her home in Texas to award scholarships to deserving LGBTQ students from our area. Cynthia funds these scholarships, and chooses the winners in loving memory of her son, John Paul Ohadi. We celebrate with a huge cake and goodies, as we meet and learn about the many and varied accomplishments of these students. This year we had

two young women who are going into engineering, one biomedical the other civil, one at Cornell, the other at Illinois. We had those interested in management, costume design, nursing, marketing and dance!!!! While we didn't have a regular meeting, we welcomed 4 new families to our meeting. I'm hoping they'll return next month, as this was a taste of what a wonderful group we have. Along with the scholarship money, each winner was given a plaque to commemorate the occasion. It was simply a wonderful evening and we thank Cynthia, once again, for her endless generosity.

Oak Park CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

Our May speaker was Ramon Rodriguez, the President of Dignity Chicago, and a former board member of the National Dignity.

Although we were somewhat familiar with Dignity, we learned more about the history of the Chicago Chapter, and their philosophy. They believe that everybody is entitled to sacraments of the Church, and their mission is to change Church teaching. They welcome women priests and believe that sexism has the same root as discrimination against LGBT people.

Dignity Chicago is interested in partnering with PFLAG, and would like to get involved in any projects that our Northern Illinois Chapters might be engaged in. You can contact Ramon at rrodriguez.rivera@gmail.com. He's a good speaker and is interested in visiting other chapters.

For the second year in a row, members of our chapter helped the Oak Park Area Lesbian, and Gay Association (OPALGA) with making donuts at the Oak Park Farmers Market on Saturday, June 25. We were able to send 6 volunteers: Gy, Phil, Teri, Katie, Sandy, and Nancy. We all had a pleasant time, and hope to volunteer again next year. It was a pretty cool day, so workers inside the building didn't get too hot, except maybe the ones who were standing over the vats of oil cooking the donuts! (None of us were cooks!) I had shared the information with Dignity Chicago, and 2 Dignity members came to help too!

This is a labor-intensive undertaking, requiring 40 workers to fill the work schedule which starts about 4am, and ends with the last shift cleaning up the kitchen, donut coating area, and the outside selling areas. Coffee and juice are sold as well as donuts.

We didn't have a meeting on Sunday, since it was Pride Day, and Phil took some photos at the parade.

Our bake sale date is July 22, and we're looking forward to selling our goodies again this year at the Oak Park Farmers Market. We don't have a speaker scheduled for July yet, but Owen Daniel-McCarter is our speaker for August.



Sandy, Phil and Nancy making the donuts!

Hinsdale CHAPTER

By Suellen Cook

At our June meeting, Dr. Deb Wilke from Compassionate Counseling presented to the group. Dr. Wilke shared that she provides counseling services for people with issues with gender identity and sexual orientation. Dr. Wilke also shared that Ed Searl, minister of the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, was the only minister that supported her request to start a transgender support group in the fall of 2000. This group still meets at the church seventeen years later.

Time was spent discussing and understanding physical anatomy and the sex we are assigned at birth versus gender identity, which is the perception of the sexual self; i.e., how we know ourselves. Dr. Wilke recommended several websites to learn more about transgender concerns: (WPATH.ORG) and also trans-friendly companies (HRC.ORG). World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) is an organization with a mission to promote evidence based care, education, research, advocacy, public policy, and respect in transgender health. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is an organization that represents a force of more than 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide. As the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization, HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and

can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Dr. Wilke's web address is

<http://www.compassionatecounseling.com/Therapist.html>. Our July meeting takes place on the holiday weekend, so no organized program has been planned. We will, of course, be available for anyone who comes to us seeking support.

DuPage CHAPTER

By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

In May, PFLAG DuPage welcomed Mike Ziri of Equality Illinois. Mike was very gracious to have visited us between assignments in Springfield. It's a very busy time Downstate as lawmakers debate, among other bills, legislation that affects the LGBTQIA+ community. Mike described several "good" bills and a couple of "bad" bills. Prospects for the good bills look good. Happily, the bad bills are stuck in committee and likely will not go any further. Mike will keep us informed when it is time to contact our legislators and speak out for or against pending legislation.

Since the April meeting, the chapter has participated in or attended a number of events in the community. These include:

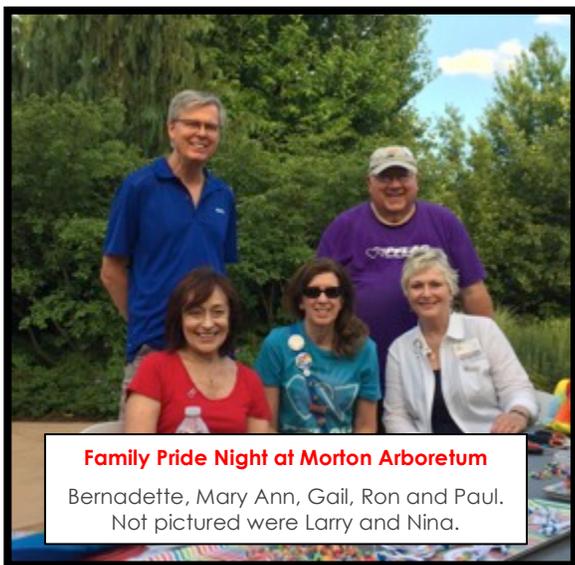
- May 4 — International Family Equality Day at the Chicago Children's Museum on Navy Pier. We displayed PFLAG materials and provided safety pins and beads for a very popular children's activity!
- May 9 — The inaugural Lavender Ceremony, a Waubonsie Valley High School event celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of graduating seniors who consider themselves a member or ally of the LGBTQ+ population — Owen Daniel-McCarter was the keynote speaker.
- The Wheaton Interfaith Council (WIC) meeting at the Theosophical Society — PFLAG DuPage is a "Founding Member" of the group whose mission statement is "The Wheaton Interfaith Council is committed to affirming religious diversity in Wheaton, celebrating our similarities, understanding our differences, breaking down stereotypes, and defending human rights and human dignity." Membership includes Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Mormons, various Christian

denominations, Buddhists, and people of no faith. Rev. Jay Moses, pastor at Hope Presbyterian in Wheaton and a leader of WIC, spoke briefly about the initiative.

- May 19 — A meeting of Romeoville area individuals who are interested in forming a PFLAG chapter — John Hickey’s presentation was modeled after a typical chapter meeting and it included information on how to become an official PFLAG chapter.
- June 14 — California Pizza Kitchen, Warrenville — Fund raiser for PFLAG DuPage — This was a very successful event.
- June 17-18 — Chicago Pride Fest by North Halsted — We were pleased to see and hear Kim L. Hunt and Eva, the daughter of Theresa Volpe and Mercedes Santos.
- Sunday, June 18 — At our June chapter meeting we had a memorial of the Pulse Nightclub tragedy.
- June 22 — The first ever Family Pride Night at the Morton Arboretum — We hosted a table of activities for the children. They decorated safety pins (the coilless variety) with beads of many colors and cut out preprinted images that we made into pinned buttons with our newly purchased 2.25" button machine! We also distributed our quad-fold PCNI brochure and other resource information.
- Saturday, June 24 — Family Pride Day on Navy Pier, including activities at the Chicago Children’s Museum — Once again we came equipped to provide the pin decorating and button making activities for those who stopped at our tables.



- Sunday, June 25, 2017 — Chicago Pride Parade
- Next Month: Tuesday, July 4, 2017 — Wheaton’s July 4th Parade. The theme is “There’s No Place Like Home.” PFLAG DuPage has marched in this parade every year since our inception. We will be wearing our newly designed T-shirts that express the parade’s theme.



Family Pride Night at Morton Arboretum
Bernadette, Mary Ann, Gail, Ron and Paul.
Not pictured were Larry and Nina.



Our display at the entrance of the California Pizza Kitchen on the night of our fundraiser.

A 50th high school reunion story

OK, so now you know how old I am. My 50th high school reunion took place on June 3, the same exact date on which we graduated 50 years ago – June 3, 1967.

In the last two issues of Open Doors we've been reading about the late John Cepek and how he would share his story about his son and his own involvement in PFLAG at the drop of a hat. Following in John's footsteps, I, too, did exactly that at the reunion.

Most of the people who were there that night were folks I hadn't seen in 50 years. The standard question was "What have you been doing for the past 50 years, and what are you doing now?" Anyone who asked me that got an earful about PFLAG: what it is, why I'm involved, and how important it is to be an advocate for the LGBT community. Now, remember, I graduated from Carmel High School in Mundelein, a Catholic high school in Lake County, originally staffed by The Order of Carmelites (priests) and by the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs). Anything I ever wrote for the alumni newsletter about my involvement in PFLAG never got published. (Imagine that!)

One classmate, Sue, responded to my PFLAG exposition by saying that we had a classmate whose 43 year old son had recently come out as being transgender, and she didn't know where to turn for information or support. She felt very alone and confused.

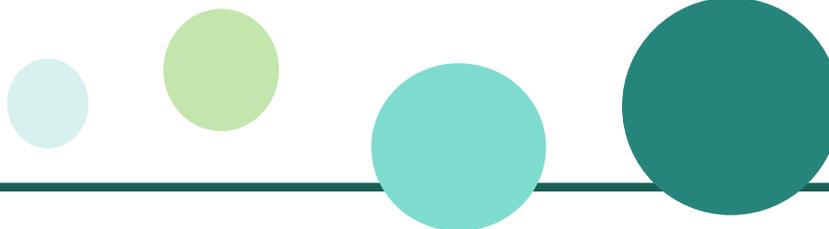
Boy oh boy, did my ears ever perk up! I had two questions for Sue: could she tell me our classmate's name, and is she here tonight? She answered "yes" to both questions. Together we sought out Barb, and my first words to her were "Sit down, Barb. You and I need to talk!" We spent most of the evening together as I answered her many questions and tried to reassure her that everything was going to be ok.

Barb has since attended her first PFLAG meeting and will be attending her first PTI meeting later this month.

The moral of the story? Use every opportunity to spread the word about PFLAG and the importance we place in our involvement with making the world a better place for our kids and those we love and for all LGBTQ people everywhere.

Thanks, John, for your good example.

Toni Weaver



Transgender news!

Andrew Zanevsky, a PTI parent, has compiled a most comprehensive resource list and published it on our www.pflagillinois.org website. This is going to be an invaluable tool!

You'll find the direct link below:

Parents of Transgender Individuals (PTI) chapters of PFLAG of Northern Illinois have prepared a list of resources for support of transgender people and their allies. Please visit <http://www.pflagillinois.org/transgender/>

PRIDE MONTH in CHICAGO



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 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

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
 www.pflag.wixsite.com/pflagdg
 pflagdg@gmail.com

PFLAG Hinsdale

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

PFLAG Joliet

Contact Maria Prekop
 maria.prekop@navigant.com

PFLAG Will, Kankakee, Iroquois

Meetings held 3rd Sunday, 2-4 pm
 1045 W River St
 Kankakee, IL
 plagkankakee@pflagillinois.org

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

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.
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
 flynnmb12@gmail.com

Parents of Transgender (North Shore)

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

PFLAG Rockford

Meetings are held the 1st Monday – 6:30 pm
 Rockford Public Library
 215 N Wyman St, Rockford, IL
 (use entrance off Mulberry St.)

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.