



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

A little over a year ago I asked John and Char Cepek to write a brief history of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois since they were there at its inception. For newcomers to PFLAG, especially, this overview is important to better understand the function of the Council. John, by the way, is past president of PFLAG National, and Char is a past president of the NI Council.

The PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois: A (Very) Brief History

By John and Char Cepek

For those of you who are relatively new to a PFLAG chapter in the Chicago area, we thought it might be useful to give you a little background on the what, when, who, where, and why of the Council. Many moons ago—probably nearly 20 years—there were only a few chapters in the area: the mother chapter in Chicago, and then two break-away chapters, one out west, in Hinsdale, and another north, in Glenview. As time passed, more and more chapters came into being, and a group of members from the various chapters eventually met to discuss more effective ways to 1) communicate with all members, the result of which is our wonderful newsletter, Open Doors; 2) pool resources, especially regarding the purchase of materials from the national office; and 3) arrange for a trolley for the annual Pride Parade. It was decided that a portion of each local membership would be used to grow a Council treasury, and that the funds in that treasury would be used to buy materials, which would then be distributed to Council member chapters on an as-needed basis, and to pay for the parade trolley.

As time passed, the Council decided to undertake a variety of other activities, from fundraising events to local conferences. The Council has sponsored workshops, such as the diversity training it hosted a couple years back, and has collaborated with other organizations, particularly Equality Illinois, in activities that would further both organizations' goals. The Council was instrumental in the pilot program that led to the hiring of Caroline Staerk as a field organizer for Equality Illinois; the Council was also very involved in providing volunteers to throw out illegal petition signatures when right-wing groups tried to roll back LGBT provisions in Illinois' human rights ordinance. Finally, the Council has given start-up grants to new chapters to aid them in getting up and running.

The Council, which is comprised of two members from each chapter and four at-large members, is overseen by an executive committee elected/selected from the council members. **The Council is not a governing body; it does not take away the autonomy of the individual chapters. The Council exists to serve** the member chapters by providing a forum for discussion with the goal of strengthening individual chapters and funding services to the chapters (website, help line, liability insurance, and those services listed in the Cepek's article). The Council unites the chapters in the greater Chicagoland area and allows them to present a unified face for PFLAG to those who live in this large metropolitan area.

Not a member? Join today!

By Toni Weaver

PAST PRESIDENTS

John Larson *
Char Cepek
Jeff Wedig
Peter Ji
Barbara Schon-Lundberg *
(* deceased)

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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Little Black Dress

by Claire Buchanan

My first task was to ask if my girlfriend was going to wear heels. I have about six inches of height on her, so if she declined that meant I couldn't wear them either. It's time to pick out a black dress for the Equality Gala 2014.

The Hilton-Chicago hosted the beautiful black tie event this past February. The Equality Gala 2014 began quietly with finger food and glasses tinkling with ice. A silent auction ensued with art pieces, getaways, and gift baskets. The room slowly and then turbulently gained hundreds of people. Friendly faces and embraces lit up the hotel's vast ballroom. Chatter continued, as everyone was encouraged to enter the main room for dinner.

The first course included frisee lettuce salad with roasted vegetables and basil pesto marinated tomatoes. The main course to follow incorporated a balsamic reduction with potato-crust bread of chicken, sweet potato puree, and heirloom carrots and asparagus. Dessert was just as scrumptious! Introductions of congressmen and other were made throughout dinner.

The gala this year included Dalila Fridi, Senator Mark Kirk, and Lana Wachowski. Numerous important persons and advocates for the LGBT community shared the stage. Fridi, chair of the Equality Illinois Education Project, shared a wonderful speech about the journey to equality. In her speech, Fridi stated " ...in every state in which marriage equality legislation was passed, efforts were made to repeal or diminish its effects. Fridi also stressed that advocates will need to be able to assist public offices in the implementation of the law."

The most captivating speaker earned the final speech of the night; a shocking pink, but a welcome sight. The Chicago filmmaker earned the recognition of the Equality Illinois Freedom Award. Lana Wachowski quieted the room with her riveting speech. The power of her speech was not in a raucous tone, but rather the potency of her words. Wachowski mentioned in her speech "...as scared as I get being up here, fear is not something I let rule my life." Furthermore, she commented that being born gay or straight is totally natural. The final hours of the gala were spent on the dance floor; one could look left to right and feel an overwhelming happiness with being right at home in the LGBT community.



Matthew C. Clark (Feb. 10, 2014) *Equality Gala attracts pals, celebrates progress.*

Retrieved from Windy City Times

What's Happening in Our Chapters?

Deerfield Chapter

By Maureen Goldin

Our February meeting was delightful and inspirational. Although we did not have a speaker, it proved to be a wonderful meeting. We had about 17 people in attendance, 4 of which were new folks, so the extra time to have group discussion was helpful for our first-time attendees.

Sharing our personal stories and varying emotions when our loved ones came out, was comforting to all who were there. Everyone ended the evening on a positive and uplifting note.

We are excited to welcome Peter Ji to speak at our March meeting. He will talk to us about how we can boost our membership and interest in PFLAG.



McHenry Chapter

By Toni Weaver

Everyone has been the new face in a sea of strangers. Attending the first meeting can be intimidating and this month, the PFLAG McHenry chapter welcomed a new person. One of our own shared her stories with a church last month. Her trenchant words and charisma brought in the new comer.

A few members from the chapter shared stories about their experiences with the LGBT community. A married couple contributed a beautiful story about their gay son, explaining their discomfort with how others would view their son and family. Their faith and ties with the church made their decision for acceptance a little more difficult. When the family did recognize that they do indeed have a gay son, they became ambassadors for parents with LGBT children at their church. Two more stories followed with a lesson in each of them.

One member delved into her son's story, explaining that at a young age, it seemed likely her son would be gay. Her daughter had some hesitation with her brother's sexuality, but a strong family can overcome

adversity. The meeting ensued with a veteran PFLAG member sharing her experience of having her youngest child come out a lesbian. Her efficacious speech can draw any person in. Nearing the end of her segment, she told the group that she continues to come to the PFLAG meetings because she leaves feeling inspired, gaining insight each time. A round of applause for those who shared a piece of their life with the chapter; it's a wonderful thing to have everyone so engaged, full of questions, and genuine friendship.

Acceptance, kindness, and welcoming environment (with hugs all around) are the allurements of the McHenry chapter. The meeting ended with the new person telling the group what brought her there and why it took so long to take the steps. Hopefully this new experience has been a great one. We hope to see her back next month!



DuPage Chapter

By John Hickey

2014 is off to a great start. We enjoyed viewing the speech by Bishop Gene Robinson in January and hearing from the Naperville North HS GSA leadership in February. I find the outpour of welcoming and support from our members to be heartwarming during this frigid winter. We also really enjoyed sharing the PFLAG message with the IMSA GSA group in Aurora in January and the HER HRC fundraiser at the Mayne Stage in Chicago in February.

Looking forward:

- Our March 16th program will feature a discussion with Mark Hodar, with Mark Hodar, LCPC, on the Self-esteem of LGBTs- and the role we play in shaping it. This is an important topic for all of us to better understand.
- Our April 20th meeting is on Easter Sunday this year. We plan to view a video on that day. The specific title is still to be decided.
- We are looking forward to attending the

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus performance of *Bouncing Off the Walls: Broadway Our Way* coming up on June 1st in Naperville. For info see <http://www.cgmc.org/events>

Please feel free to join us for a meeting. PFLAG DuPage meets at 2:00 p.m. on the 3rd Sunday each month at St. Paul Lutheran Church at 515 S. Wheaton Ave, Wheaton, IL.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the importance of authentic leaders with unwavering conviction to their values. This week I was proud to see a letter from my employer, Northrop Grumman President and CEO, Wes Bush, urging the Governor of AZ to veto AZ SB 1062. The bill would allow businesses that asserted their religious beliefs the right to deny service to gay and lesbian customers. Thankfully, on Thursday Governor Brewer did veto the bill.

As Martin Luther King Jr once wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". So, while progress in the world is encouraging, the LGBT community needs the voice and support of the broader community for there to ever be full inclusion and equality. So, to Wes Bush and Governor Brewer, and all advocates for equality, I say thank you for providing that voice so clearly.

Warm wishes and hoping for spring to arrive early...



Hinsdale Chapter

By Barb Medley

Our February featured speakers were Bonn Wade, Director of the TransLife Center of Chicago House and Shannon Parker, Care Coordinator for TransLife, who talked about how the Center is positively impacting lives. We had a good size group to greet them, learn and participate in a good discussion.

The Center is the first transgender housing center in the nation. Bonn provides support and helps link the Center's clients to trans-affirming health care. Shannon links those who need it, to HIV programs.

The TransLife Center has a legal department, an employment program, and a residence for homeless and those with unstable housing, where nine rooms opened in August. In addition, there are apartments in scattered sites to provide needed housing. The Center also offers an

employment program.

Their excellent work has been recognized by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services responsible for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable, which has awarded the Center a \$300,000 grant for five years.

Bonn and Shannon answered our many questions, since this is an area of confusion and we wanted to learn from them. They recommended several resources to help us gain more understanding. Among them was research conducted by Jessica Xavier, Principal Investigator for the Washington Transgender Needs Assessment Survey. This is a project implemented by US Helping Us – People Into Living, Inc. and funded by the Administration for HIV/AIDS, Department of Health of the District of Columbia Government. They also recommended two books – *Redefining Realness* by Janet Mock, and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz, which won the Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature. If you are interested in learning more, all are readily available if you search the web.

Our March, 2014 guest will be Crispin Van Torres from Lamda Legal, who will talk about their legal services and case work for youth in Illinois.



Oak Park Chapter

By Nancy Johnson

Our January speaker was Katy Weseman, LGBTQA Student Services Coordinator at De Paul University. She told us all about her work at De Paul and how a Catholic University came to have a strong, visible support system for LGBTQA students.

She explained that St. Vincent De Paul was an advocate for those on the margins of society, so support for LGBTQ people flows from his precepts. It was faculty and students working together that got the office going.

Paid staff such as Katy are rare. Only about 200 colleges and universities in the U.S. have paid staff for LGBT support.

If you are interested in having Katy come to your chapter, her contact information is: kweseman@depaul.edu and 773-325-4607. She also sends a monthly newsletter about LGBTQA events at De Paul, which are generally open to the public. She'll put you on her email list, if you get in touch with her.

In February we had no speaker, but we had an excellent free-ranging discussion of many LGBT issues.

For March, we have Christopher Fox from Thrive (former Family Services of Oak Park.) We had to reschedule him as he was unable to be here before.

We are planning to have a Transgender Documentary Film Series in October. We're working on a location now. We'd be happy to include other PFLAG chapters in the planning. Contact me, Nancy Johnson at nij0907@gmail.com.

On July 5, we will be having our bake sale at the Oak Park Farmers Market. This is the earliest we've received a confirmed date from the Farmers Market.



Rockford Chapter

By Lynne Cole

PFLAG-Rockford is attempting to reestablish itself as a viable group. An older PFLAG group in Rockford fizzled, and for 2 or 3 years there was no PFLAG presence in Rockford. About 1 1/2 years ago, with help from Spring Creek United Church of Christ, we incorporated the current PFLAG-Rockford.

It has been a struggle. Weather has forced cancellation of several meetings. At no time have we had more than 5 attendees at our meetings. We have made some good contacts: Rockford PrideFest, a gay-men's group, many Facebook friends, and student groups at Rock Valley College. On March 6 Lynn Cole is scheduled to give a talk titled "Coming Out Transgender" at Rock Valley College.

At our February meeting we had 4 attendees who saw the video "Trans", the story of 6 transgender people. We have two more videos in reserve: "Love Free or Die", the story of Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, and "Normal", a fictional story of a man's transition to being female. We are looking for

someone who can take an active role in planning our meeting programs, inviting speakers, and showing videos. Having good programs will go a long way towards increasing our membership.



Chicago Metro Chapter

By Meg Valentini

We continue to have some wonderful speakers at our meetings, including Sun Times columnist Mark Brown. He has long championed LGBT issues and shared his perspective with us. Last month we had Tony Torres who is the outdoor training leader for The Ride For AIDS Chicago. Tony grew up in Mexico, his personal journey, as a gay, Hispanic man was a powerful reminder of how other cultures view the LGBT community.

In March our speaker will be Erschel De Leon, Links Youth Pride program director. The Links Pride youth program provides support and education for teens that identify as LGBT. Emphasis on assistance with the coming out process, discrimination and prevention of STD's and HIV.

For the fourth year, Meg and Fred Valentini will be participating in the The Ride For AIDS Chicago as Team PFLAG. We have added quite a few new team members including Keara Enoch, a new rider this year! In the first three years of riding, Meg and Fred alone have raised over \$15,000 for TPAN (Test Positive Aware Network), helping to provide education, counseling and financial assistance to those living with HIV/AIDS. Many of the chapters have joined in to support the face of PFLAG in this event and community, thank you! PFLAG's presence in this ride is powerful and poignant. As always the support of parents and allies is a needed and welcomed.

Meg and Fred will gladly accept any and all donations to this cause. The Ride For AIDS Chicago is a 200-mile/ 2 day cycling event in July. Leaving from Evanston, IL cycling north through the Wisconsin hills to Elkhorn (near Lake Geneva) and back to Evanston the next day!

To learn more or to donate please click on the following:

<http://rideforaids.kintera.org/megandfredride2014>

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF PFLAG? WHY NOT?

PFLAG is an all-volunteer run, non-profit organization that relies on your support to help provide the materials and services that we offer LGBTQ people and their families. Please consider becoming a paid member; it's easy.

Sign up online at <http://www.pflagillinois.org/membership-and-donations/> or fill out the form below and mail in your check. Make sure to indicate what chapter you are affiliated with. Part of your membership goes back to that chapter!

Membership Form

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 of the following year; 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 CHAPTER

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

Hinsdale Aurora/Fox Valley Entre Familia McHenry County McHenry Parents of Transgendered Individuals Deerfield Chicago/Metro Chicago Parents of Transgendered Individuals Joliet Kankakee Palatine Oak Park DeKalb DuPage

Check enclosed payable to PFLAG Please charge my credit card (Visa MasterCard Amex Discover)

_____ (Credit Card Number)
 _____ (Expiration DD/MM) (CVV - V/MC/D 3 digits
 on the back - AX 4 digits on the front)

_____ (Name on the Card) (Signature)

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

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



LAKE FOREST COLLEGE DRAG SHOW

Thank you to all of you who attended this SRO event in February. All monies collected went to the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. Over \$300 was collected!

HERE ARE A FEW FUN PICTURES FROM THE NIGHT.



LGBT Resources for you

LGBT Supportive Organizations:

- **Center on Halsted** - www.centeronhalsted.org
- **Illinois Safe Schools Alliance** – www.illinoissafeschools.org
- **Howard Brown Health Center** – www.howardbrown.org
- **Lambda Legal** – www.lambdalegal.org
- **Youth Outlook** – www.youth-outlook.org
- **Transparentcy** – www.transparentcy.org
- **Open Door Clinic** - www.opendoorclinic.org
- **Links** – www.linksyouth.org
- **Heartstrong** – www.heartstrong.org



- **What Does Gay Mean?** – How to talk to kids about sexual orientation and prejudice - <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/what-does-gay-mean>
- **Welcoming Schools Helps Make Classrooms Safe Spaces for All Students (HRC)** – <http://www.hrc.org/blog/entry/welcoming-schools-helps-make-classrooms-safe-spaces-for-all-students>
- **GLSEN** – www.glsen.org
- **LGBT friendly college campus search** – www.campusprideindex.org
- **Children of LGBT parents** – www.rainbowrumpus.org

What PFLAG Means to ME

Heroic Footsteps

How has PFLAG helped me? Let me count the ways. When my child requested a dress for her third birthday, it gave me pause, but I granted the request. I ventured to the girls' section at Target, spotted a red sleeveless dress with ruffles and pink polka dots and checked out. Pink had always been her favorite color. She never played with the trains that seemed to consume her big brother at her age. She never played with much of anything. It's because we owned all the wrong toys.

When my husband and I went to our first meeting of Parents of Transgender Individuals, it had been one year and two months since the purchase of the dress. Many more dresses had followed, as well as tutus, headbands, necklaces and sparkly shoes. Our daughter, who was still our son at that point, had the clothes (that part was easy), but was in deep distress internally. She started pulling out her hair and becoming quite emotional all of the time. I did not know what to do. I tried therapists and acupuncture and herbal medicine. I read books and sought information—all of this was a distraction—I was trying to solve a problem when what I needed to do was accept the reality of the situation. I can't speak for my husband, but I went into that initial meeting afraid, uncertain and alone, but I left feeling hopeful, enlightened and befriended. The room was full of lovely, smart, non-judgmental folks who were all wearing sweaters—that was one thing that stuck out to me most—the normalcy of a sweater. I listened as parents told their stories of their journey from denial and disapproval to acceptance.

We returned the next month and the months that followed. Upon each return, we were able to share more and settle in. The butterflies disappeared. I felt proud of my child and proud of myself for coming to these meetings and accepting my child's true self so early. We were able to make the transition from male to female pronouns after attending the meetings for 6 months. We began to call her our daughter. It felt right. This would have never happened for us without PFLAG and the safe haven these meetings provide. The meetings provide us with language and give us models to follow. Accept your child, love your child—this is what we have learned. Thank you for providing such heroic footsteps to follow in. We are forever grateful and may we do the same.

- Laura

DON'T MISS OUT
ON THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

Conference at McHenry County College

April 12, 2014 – 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. 8900 W Highway 14, Crystal Lake, IL, 60012

Pride, the LGBTQA club at McHenry County College, will host its first conference, Pride: The Changing Perception of the LGBTQ Community, on Saturday 12 April at MCC starting at 8:30A and ending at 4:15P. The conference will be held in conjunction with the annual drag show on Friday 11 April starting at 7:00P.

Pre-registration for the drag show and conference will be available starting in March: the drag show and conference \$25, conference only \$20. On-site registration will be \$25 for the conference and \$35 for the drag show and conference. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

There will be three sessions during the day with a variety of speakers discussing LGBTQ issues. The plenary speakers will be Chicken Lips, a gay couple from Denver who present motivational ideas in a humorous manner. They will also do two sessions during the day. Speaker will include MCC faculty and staff as well as speakers from Equality Illinois, PFLAG, and PTI.

Straight for Equality

PFLAG National -- through its Straight for Equality project -- is working on a new resource to invite, educate, and engage allies of people who are transgender and gender nonconforming and we need your help!



resource

One of the most important pieces of all the S4E publications is the input of real-world people who are willing to talk about their ally journeys as well as the role that allies have played in their lives. To get this information, we created three prompt questions that I'd love for you to share with your networks as well as answer yourself if you'd like. The further this goes, the more content we'll have to draw from, so your help in distributing is much appreciated.

The three questions, along with instructions as to where responses should be sent and length of responses are all on one neat little page: <https://www.straightforequality.org/questions>

Please share with e-mail contacts, through social media, through groups in which you're a participant, etc. This should not be limited to the PFLAG network -- please distribute widely. The more responses, the better pool of content we'll have to use for the project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Jean-Marie (jhenkel@pflag.org) or to Jamie H (jhenkel@pflag.org).

Thank you in advance for being willing to participate in this project and for everything that you're doing to move

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 Monday – 7 pm
 Northern Illinois University
 Montgomery 109 - DeKalb 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
 AT 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

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 pm
 Good Shepard Church & Preschool
 25 Alexander Circle, Romeoville
 pflagjoliet@pflagillinois.org

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

Meetings held 3rd Monday – 7 p.m.
 Countryside Unitarian Church
 1025 N Smith Rd, Palatine 60067

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
 flynnmb12@gmail.com
 marygenzler@hotmail.com