



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

Strengthening the Ties That Bind

"Parents of Gays, unite in support of our children," said PFLAG foundress Jeanne Manford on the sign she carried in New York City's Christopher Street Parade in 1973. Well, we do that whenever we gather in our PFLAG chapter meetings; we do it when chapter leaders come together in quarterly council meetings; we do it on the last Sunday in June when we come together for the Chicago Pride Parade. But I'm asking myself – can we do it at other times as well? Can we come together as members of disparate PFLAG chapters in Northern Illinois in a way that will strengthen the ties that bind us all together?

Some chapters are dynamic, active, and thriving; others are smaller, struggling, and tenuous. How can we work together to support each other so that all chapters in the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois can be dynamic, active, and thriving? Perhaps our model could be that of the Big Brother/Big Sister program. One chapter "adopts" another, providing resources, especially people resources. Wouldn't it be really cool for chapters to "exchange" members, to attend one another's meetings, to walk in each other's community parades? A parade contingent of 10 is paltry, sending the wrong message; a parade contingent of 50 packs a powerful punch, conveying the power found in numbers.

I have visited chapters in Palatine, Hinsdale, Wheaton (PFLAG DuPage), DeKalb, and obviously my home chapter of McHenry. It is my earnest desire to visit ALL of the chapters that comprise the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. Visiting other chapters is a learning experience for me, picking up ideas that I can use in McHenry. This practice of visiting chapters is one I strongly encourage all PFLAG members to do. Visiting each other's chapters and participating actively in each other's projects and activities should help us to forge strong bonds, the very ties that will bind us together.

On November 8, we'll have a special opportunity to come together for a day of workshops designed to foster relationships among all of our chapter members. We'll mix and mingle and participate in small group discussions on topics of particular interest to our members. In choosing a location for this workshop day, we took into consideration the building's facilities, proximity to an expressway, adequacy of parking, and availability. The Countryside Unitarian Church in Palatine met all the criteria.

So, mark November 8 on the calendar and be prepared to experience a day that will build relationships, deepen leadership, and ignite passion. The day will forge and strengthen the ties that bind us together, for we truly are ONE PFLAG!

By Toni Weaver

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

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

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www.pflagillinois.org
www.pflag.org

Meetup in Social Media

by Claire Buchanan

Have you heard about Meetup? "Meetup is the world's largest network of local groups. Meetup makes it easy for anyone to organize a local group or find one of the thousands already meeting up face-to-face. More than 9,000 groups get together in local communities each day, each one with the goal of improving themselves or their communities!."

Many people that move into a new community find Meetup very useful to build friendships and explore their new city. Some may be wary that Meetup is another dating site, but those rendezvous are not the goal. When you decide to join, the site filters your interests to help steer you to appealing groups. Groups include all kinds of demographics participating in ubiquitous activities. For instance, The *Lets Beat Cancer by Dancing* group encourages women to dance to fight breast cancer. "The concept "Let's Beat Cancer by Dancing" is initiated by Mission Green Light, a nonprofit organization committed in serving the underprivileged and uninsured women with free breast cancer screening and free breast health education!."

Most Meetup groups have demographics of who is participating and the activities they will enjoy. A calendar of events lets members know what's coming up! The *Chicago Culture and Arts Club* interests include going to concerts, trips to museums, and exploring local art shows. Members can find new groups and also create them. The *Fox Valley Dog Walking Club* delves into forest preserves and parks connecting dog lovers. *Chicago Active Lesbian Meetup-Hiking, Exploring, and Fun* includes outdoor activities in the Chicago land area.

Creating a profile will lead to new groups and trying new things. Meetup is a worldwide organization and thousands of people participate. The aim is to get people to socialize, whether it be a fun event, self improvement, or to impact their community in a positive way. Make new friends and enjoy experiences together because happiness is always shared.

¹ About Meetup. (n.d.). - *Meetup*. Retrieved May 25, 2014, from <http://www.meetup.com/about/>

¹ Let's Beat Cancer by Dancing. (n.d.). *Meetup*. Retrieved May 25, 2014, from <http://www.meetup.com/Lets-Beat-Cancer-by-Dancing/>



What's Happening in Our Chapters?

MCHENRY CHAPTER

By Claire Buchanan

McHenry PFLAG focused this month's meeting on the mothers of the group. We had a surprisingly small turn out, but many members trickled in a little late! Per usual, the laughter and smiles throughout the group were copious. The McHenry chapter is comprised of many fervent mothers.

We welcomed a few new participants at the meeting and hope they will grace us with their presence again! The youth are starting to take over! It is wonderful to see more young people join the group and share their own stories about what brought them.

Lastly, the McHenry chapter hopes to see everyone at the parade in Harvard on June 7th, 2014. The more people who participate, the bigger the statement will be!



HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Jackie Frett

The speaker for our May 5th meeting was Ali Hoefnagel, Education and Outreach Director for About Face Theatre (AFT).

ABT is a year round theatre arts program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their allies that was founded in 1995. The goal of ABT is to increase the safety, empowerment and leadership of LGBTQ youth

ABT has weekly workshops to develop a new play based on youth identified themes. This year's theme is "undocumented and queer".

The theme is chosen in August the workshops begin in the fall. During the workshops the theme will be looked at from many angles in order to give the fullest understanding of the topic. Knowledgeable speakers may be invited to explain the topic more fully as in the case if "undocumented and queer", Lambda Legal will be invited to speak to the topic. Other workshops may focus on storytelling and movement.

ABT also produces showcase performances of youth

work, leadership development and education outreach programs for schools.

About Face theatre is located at 1222 Wilson Ave. Chicago, IL 773-784-8565 www.aboutfactheatre.com. For more information or to have a play performed at your local school contact Ali Hoefnagel at 773-784-8586 x102 or ALI@ABOUTFACTHEATRE.ORG

Also at this month's meeting a new book was recommended to the group. *BEYOND MAGENTA- Transgender teens speak out*, by Susan Kuklin. "In Beyond Magenta, six teens tell what it is like for them to be members of the transgender community."



DEERFIELD CHAPTER

By Modesta Sailer

We had an unusually small group for our May 8th meeting, I think one of our first beautiful weather days had something to do with attendance.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Andy Thayer who co-founded the Gay Liberation Network in September 1998 after Matthew Shepard was murdered and 3 attacks in Boy's Town. The group's original name "Chicago Anti-Bashing Network" was changed to the Gay Liberation Network in 2004. The group is one of the largest and most-active LGBTQ direct- action groups in the area of Chicago. The group focus is not only on LGBTQ but stands up for all oppressed groups. For instance they are fighting for immigrant rights, gay rights in the work place and human rights in Honduras. Andy is a long-time gay rights and anti-war activist who has helped organize most of the city's large anti-war protests for the last several years, including the May 20th march on the NATO summit and a march of 15,000 on Lake Shore Drive when the U.S. invaded Iraq. He has been arrested numerous times in various protests, including twice in Moscow, Russia, for protesting against that government's ban on gay rights demonstrations. He continues to hold a full time job along with all his work with GLN, the website, cable TV program and organizing marches and protests.

On a personal note Andy is engaged and planning a wedding this year.

When asked what's next for the LGBTQ Movement in Illinois he replied: *"We need to work on a Social Equality Agenda and support every stripe of our Rainbow Community."*

Our June meeting is the presentation of the Jean Paul Ohadi scholarship for LGBTQ youth. Please join us on Thursday, June 12th for this very special, annual meeting.



OAK PARK CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

Our speaker in March was Richard Knight, Jr., author of *The Best of Knight at the Movies*, director of *Scrooge and Marley*, *Windy City Times* film critic, and very entertaining speaker! Richard told us some about the history of LGBT images in the cinema. Prior to the movie studios' enacting censorship controls, gay men and lesbians were portrayed quite explicitly, but afterwards filmmakers used innuendo and inside jokes to hint at something that wasn't explicit.

On May 22, I had a PFLAG table at DePaul in conjunction with their LGBTQA Month. Although only a few students dropped by, I met several people from Vida/SIDA, a project of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, who provide services to the Hispanic LGBTQ community. They have an Independent Latino Youth Living Program for homeless LGFBTQ youth age 18-24. If you're interested in having someone speak at your chapter, contact Gustavo Varela, Program Coordinator at Gustavov@prcc-chgo.org, 773-278-6737.

The TransLife Center, a project of Chicago House also had a table staffed by Owen Daniel-McCarter. Owen will be our June 22 speaker and is the staff attorney for the TransLife Center, as well as a graduate of OPRF High School. Contact him at odaniel-mccarter@chicagohouse.org.

Because our May meeting was on Memorial Day weekend, we didn't have a speaker, but we had a roomful of attendees anyway, including two that we hadn't seen for a long while. It was great seeing them again and catching up. PFLAG's interne, Matthew, attended as well since he lives in Oak Park. We mainly discussed up-coming events:

- June 1 - Day in Our Village
- June 22 - Monthly Meeting with Owen Daniel McCarter speaker.
- June 29 - Pride Parade

- July 4 - Oak Park Parade
- July 5 - Bake Sale at Oak Park Farmers Market



PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Chad Gaynier

Our May meeting was well attended, with four new members in attendance. There was no speaker this month; instead the members shared with each other a wide range of topics including challenges both themselves and their child faced, strategies for making the transition known to friends and relatives, and positive experiences with the school system. There was also discussion of the experiences of parents themselves in terms of both growth and grieving, and made for a very powerful meeting.

Also discussed at the meeting were the upcoming transgender conferences in Philadelphia, as well as the option to participate in the June Pride Parade. An upcoming opportunity to take a larger role in the chapter leadership was also announced, and while not yet finalized, members were asked to consider whether or not they were interested in taking on a larger role.

The meeting also included a moving exercise demonstrating the challenges that face transgendered children, which evoked a lot of emotions and some good discussion.

Our speaker for the June 12th meeting is Rev Rachelle Brown, the Provisional Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church (A Church 4 Me) in Chicago. Rev. Brown has a Masters Degree in both Divinity and Communications and is presently a PhD candidate in Theology, Ethics and Human Sciences at Chicago Theological Seminary. Join us for a very worthwhile and informative speaker.

Check out this link that features
 University of Notre Dame students
 showing support for their LGBT athletes:

[You-Can- Play UND](#)

Mother's Day *at* SIDETRACKS

Kisses from Mom at Sidetracks – A Fulfilling Mother's Day Experience by Jean Rumsfield

I was very fortunate to participate in the "Kisses from Mom" PFLAG fundraising event at Sidetracks this past Mother's Day. For those not familiar with this event, Sidetracks is a popular LGBT bar on Halsted St. that graciously allows PFLAG to solicit donations as customers enter in the afternoon/evening. PFLAG Mom's (and Dad's) offer chocolate Hershey's Kisses (tagged with PFLAG contact info) and REAL hugs in return for donations to PFLAG. Proceeds from the fundraiser are split with 50% going to Council, and the remaining 50% being split amongst the participating chapters.

I have difficulty describing how much fun and rewarding this experience was. I was deeply touched by the outpouring of generosity, and gratitude from the Sidetrack customers for the work of PFLAG and our efforts. Many were very open about how much they missed, or loved their Mother and were appreciative of the hugs. A few told stories about how PFLAG helped them or their friends. Lots of stories.... about their relationship with their Mother or what they did for her on Mother's Day. In general, the hugs were more accepted than the Hersey Kisses – we were repeatedly told that they avoid sweets.

I am a relatively new member of PFLAG. I joined because I admire the work the organization does. I also wanted to learn more about the gay community so I can better understand and support my son on his journey. Participating in "Kisses from Mom" fulfilled these goals and more. I was able to meet PFLAG members and hear their stories about their children's journeys as well as raise money for PFLAG. There were other personal needs this event fulfilled for me. My son now lives in Los Angeles and my Mother passed away late last year. I wanted to start a new Mother's Day tradition of giving back. The love and joy I felt during this event filled me up in ways I could not have imagined. I would like to thank all those who coordinated this event for their time and effort and allowing me to participate.



On Mother's Day (May 11), many PFLAG members stood outside Sidetracks (a bar in Boystown) to collect donations for PFLAG - in exchange for a Hershey kiss or a hug!

Thank you to all who participated AND donated!!

**THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN BY ONE OF THE HINSDALE CHAPTER MEMBERS.
THE AUTHOR WROTE TO HERSELF, 10 YEARS BACK FROM THE DAY HER SON TOLD HER HE
IDENTIFIED AS BI-SEXUAL.**

Dear Betsy,

Wow! Look at that dark hair, you young 49-year-old, you! Remember to enjoy what you see in the mirror today ~ it will be all white in just a few more years!

But that's not why I have written this letter to you, as you stand in the upstairs laundry room ten minutes after Alex has left for his plane to Atlanta. He has just told you he "identifies as bisexual" and you haven't even had time to run to the computer, to see what the heck that means.

Oh, what a mind-bending, heart-opening life journey you have just begun, Betsy!

So, after you read this, I give you permission to weep for five minutes. Then, you are going to go tell Mick, who is sitting down in the TV room, watching some meaningless sports event, and he will barely register a facial response to your news. Oh, he heard you, but it will take him the better part of six or seven years to REALLY respond fully, and it won't be easy for you or him, and I regret to have to tell you that. Oh, and don't look for any support from Mick's family ~ you need to focus on him, and let him worry about the rest of those jokers.

Even son #1, Matt, is going to take a circuitous path, kicking and grumbling, and it will be eight years, nine months and 14 days until he -- thanks to his loving wife (yep, Matt found a woman who can actually handle him) and time and Alex's patience and love all around him -- for him to toast his gay brother, and his brother's new husband, Pete, at their illegal but joyous wedding.

And, Mother and Daddy ~ they will be The Top for you. You will take them out to McDonald's in their walker and wheelchair to tell them, and they will hold your hand, and smile, and tell you how much they love you and Alex and all that he will become.

Oh, I know I should keep some of this good stuff for you to find out on your own, but I have never been good at keeping good secrets, and these milestones in your life of being a mother, and wife and daughter and LGBT activist, *will* be the best years of your life, and I want you to have some bright lights at the end of a few dark tunnels that you are going to have to trudge through.

These first ten minutes suck -- you are very scared and confused and this just doesn't seem fair. You still believe in what the world says is right and good and proper, and this just is so ... DIFFERENT than what you had imagined.

So, here's the best part, Betsy. You are SO MUCH more creative, more fulfilled and much more hip than you ever would have been, had it all been the fairytale. It is a societal myth that boys always love girls, and families never disappoint, and grandchildren turn out just the way they are supposed to.

BOOOORRRRING!

And false. And hurtful.

In ten years, you are going to have it all, Betsy, including friends who get it, and get you, and share the same love and laughter about their queer kids ... and nieces ... and co-workers ... and everyone, (or ALMOST everyone) is starting to understand that the whole world is facing it's next "ah-hah!" moment, when it realizes that nature has always been messy and queer and gorgeous!

Ok, so you won't have young hair, but you can always dye it rainbow colors, and march in the Pride Parade and know that your life as the mother, friend and ally of a whole lot of amazing people is the best thing that could have ever happened to you!

So get out of that laundry room, and start learning and growing and loving the new life you've just been given!

Love,
Betsy

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

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
- **Angles (formerly Links)** – www.angles.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

The **PORTLAND QUEER DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL** (<http://www.queerdocfest.org/>) is a 4-day, eleven film annual event in May. Every film I saw this year was good. There were a few that would be of special interest to PFLAG.

The Rugby Player (<http://www.therugbyplayerfilm.com/home/>) is about Mark Bingham, a gay man who died on Sept. 11 on UA Flight 93. The film is about his life, son of a single mother, rugby jock, and occasional party guy. It's also about his mother who has become involved in advocacy for LGLBT issues, and "mother" to gay rugby team members worldwide. The film seeks to make a case for Mark to be one of those on flight 93 that foiled the hijackers attempt to control the plane.

Kumu Hina (<http://kumuhina.com/>) is about a transgender Hawai'iian woman. In the native Hawai'iian tradition, Hina is considered "mahu", gender nonconforming, in the middle between male and female. Mahu are considered special well-respected people in that tradition. Hina teaches hula dance in an inner city charter school in Honolulu. A young girl student is also mahu and insists on learning dance with the senior boys. She ultimately leads the group at the end of year recital. The film also includes the difficulties faced by Hina and her much younger husband from Tonga.

My favorite film was **To Be Takei** (<http://tobetakei.com/>) about George Takei, gay actor who was in the original Star Trek TV series playing Lt. Sulu. The film is primarily about Takei's advocacy for LGBT rights, and his efforts on behalf of Japanese Americans who were interned by the United States during World War II. George spent the war years as a child in such a camp with his family. He has a dizzying array of events and speeches he goes to from Star Trek fan conventions, advocacy and informational speeches, to radio appearances on Howard Stern's show. His husband, Brad, functions as his manager to keep everything running smoothly. Many of the funniest moments of the film were their bickering interplay.



DID YOU KNOW??

Did you know that McDonald's has an LGBT network? Neither did Sandra Conti, who passed this information along. It is so great to see major corporations embracing the diversity of their work staff and supporting their employees.

McDonald's recently changed the name of their LGBT network from MGLAN to McDonald's Pride. This change was prompted by the inclusion of transgender individuals in the company's non-discrimination policy. They wanted a name that was inclusive of ALL persons who may work for their company.

Additionally, McDonald's has set goals for 2014 and beyond to increase visibility and awareness of their LGBT employees and customers:

- Talent Development – providing opportunities for and supporting the professional growth of its members
- External Marketing – leveraging the dollar potential of their LGBT consumer
- Strengthen their Community Involvement – building strong external relationships in the LGBT community with PFLAG, GLSEN and Out and Equal

This is so exciting!!



Mark your calendars!

**CHICAGO PRIDE PARADE IS COMING
SUNDAY, JUNE 29**

Details will be coming soon
from your chapter leaders.

We want YOU, to walk with us!



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

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

**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.**