



# OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

## President's Column

With Pride and community parades behind us, it's time to look ahead to November 8 for a daylong event designed to both build a spirit of camaraderie among all the NI PFLAG chapters and to provide learning opportunities that will help us build a stronger, better informed, more effective membership.

The workshop day will be held at the Countryside Unitarian Church (1025 N. Smith Rd, Palatine). Registration begins at 8:30AM with the program itself kicking off at 9. By 4PM everyone will be walking out the door. That's a promise!

Rabbi David Horowitz, president of PFLAG National, has accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker as well as a presenter in the workshop centering on issues of faith. Another workshop will test how well chapters are meeting the needs of parents of transgender individuals, a growing demographic at our meetings. A third workshop will focus on building strong chapters, one member at a time. Each session will consist of a presentation followed by round table discussion, all very hands on. This is a WORKshop day, with everyone fully involved and engaged.

Information on registration should be available by mid-August and will be handled through our [www.pflagillinois.org](http://www.pflagillinois.org) website. The fee is nominal, \$15 a person if registered in advance (\$20 at the door), and includes a continental breakfast and box lunch.

Mark your calendars now! Get ready to experience the fun of being together as we learn and grow and make PFLAG that much stronger in Northern Illinois!

By Toni Weaver



The nice thing about teamwork, is you always have others at your side.

-Margaret Carty

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

## THAT'S SO COOL!

The 2014 annual Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference (held in June) had members of both the DuPage PFLAG chapter and the PTI chapter in attendance for the 2nd year in a row! Here they are pictured with Janet Mock who was a phenomenal keynote speaker!

Janet Mock is a writer, speaker, founder of #Girlslikeus and the New York Times bestselling author of *Redefining Realness*. Learn more about her at [www.janetmock.com](http://www.janetmock.com).

The Conference boasted over 3,000 attendees this year. If any one has an interest in attending next year, please contact: [SandraConti@comcast.net](mailto:SandraConti@comcast.net)



Pictured are Vilai Siripun and her two children, Sandra Conti and her son, AJ and Janet Mock



# What's Happening in Our Chapters?

## HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Even though it was 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend, we had over 20 members attend our July meeting. During our business meeting, we learned that our monthly breakfast service at the Crib served 26 kids that morning, because another shelter burned down and the Crib took them in.

Our guest was Carolyn Wahlskog, Case Manager for 360 Youth Services. Carolyn also partners with Youth Outlook. Carolyn talked about the Transitional Housing Program focusing on LGBTQ youth, based in Naperville, helping homeless young adults ages 18-24. 360 Youth Services has been in operation for over 30 years, and runs a counseling program, a transitional housing program, and drug and alcohol prevention in schools. The transitional housing program is just getting started, with the help of a HUD grant for 5 years. This is 1 of 8 such grants awarded in the U.S. 8 apartments are available for residents to live in up to 18 months. In addition to offering housing, the program works to assist the young adults in gaining employment, continuing their education and working on interpersonal goals. If they don't yet have a high school diploma or GED, they receive support to reach that goal. One resident has just enrolled at College of DuPage. Employment is important so residents can eventually live independently. They work on life skills such as cooking and reading a lease. They are expected to pay a small stipend and utilities to get them accustomed to paying bills and meeting responsibilities. Straight residents in the program learn to be accepting. Since the apartments are in a large complex, they also learn to live with others in a neighborhood setting.

They are looking for volunteers to help mentor. Mentors receiving training and are expected to contact their mentees once a week and to do something together once or twice a month. They are also looking for donations of apartment furnishings, such as linens, kitchen supplies, cleaning supplies, etc. Carolyn can be contacted for more information at 331-213-7728, ext. 1168 or by email at [cwahlskog@360youthservices.org](mailto:cwahlskog@360youthservices.org). For those looking for an opportunity to volunteer or donate, this would be a great way to pay it forward.

Our August speakers will be Lorry Luscri and Mandi Evanson from the Veteran's Administration. They'll talk

about the many new and good things that have transpired at the V.A. since they last talked to our group. They may also show us a video entitled "Camouflage Closet."



Carolyn Wahlskog & Jackie Frett



## DEERFIELD CHAPTER

By Sue Ginsburg

We were honored to have Mike Feinerman, CPAIP, Co Executive Director of Center For Advancing Domestic Peace. He came to our meeting to address the topic of domestic violence amongst the LGBT community.

His organization does partner abuse intervention. They work with people who abuse and are referred to them by the Courts. Most of those referred are men. This is the ONLY non-profit organization that does this work. Their services are near the west side and Englewood. They have a "group curriculum": they hold 2 groups for women, but more for men. (gay and bisexual) In all groups, homophobia is addressed. Misogyny is often present, whereby men look down upon women as being "less than men." If one member of a gay couple is considered a "sissy" and talks about feelings, that is

looked at as not being masculine. Domination and control makes the abusive partner feel more like a man.

The gay and lesbian community is not even where the general population was 25 years ago in reporting abuse. Some don't want to report abuse to the police because of fear or because of their religion. Some partners have more resources to leave an abusive relationship. Many of those first responders to violence are not LGBT and don't understand the dynamics of gay couples. They may recognize the same expectations of dominance in men, but not women. They may not recognize what's going on and may not ask the right questions as to who is the aggressor.

First responders need to ask more and better questions of the LGBT population. Working with them and assessing the abusers is different. The court refers them, so they must be held accountable for their choices. Mike's work is helping to prevent them from moving from defense to retaliation. Fear is a key dynamic as to which is the perpetrator. It is usually the one who is not afraid.

His groups do get some voluntary referrals. He has 24 consecutive weekly groups, which must be completed as mandatory from the courts. The voluntary participants do not have to complete all 24. He helps participants recognize that this is not just anger management. They learn to understand what the beliefs of their partner are; instead of a power struggle, they learn to build a partnership.

Center for Advancing Domestic Peace, Inc.  
 813 S. Western Ave.  
 Chicago, Il. 60612  
 (312)265-0206  
[mikefeinerm@gmail.com](mailto:mikefeinerm@gmail.com)



**OAK PARK CHAPTER**

By Nancy Johnson

We had our bake sale on July 5 at the Oak Park Farmers Market. It was our most successful yet! We make over \$1000 with sales and donations! Donna and Sylvia made a lot of gluten-free bread, and Meg made gluten-free brownies. There was more interest in these than in previous years. We had a great variety of baked goods, including soda bread made by Kate's sister, Pat, and I

tried my hand at corn bread made with corn meal from one of the Farmers Market vendors. I used their recipe as well as my own. Bruce contributed his really, yummy oatmeal chocolate chippers. I bought some and put them in my freezer to nibble on. Sylvia also made her freshly baked multi-grain bread. And by "freshly baked" I mean Sylvia gets up at 4am to start baking so that we have warm loaves to sell at 7am! Her bread sells out by 10am.

Our other event was the Oak Park Fourth of July Parade. Only 3 of us marched: Phil, Gy and Sylvia. It was a great day to be in a parade since it was unseasonably cool that morning. It seems like half of Oak Park shows up to be in the parade and the other half sits outside on the curb, or lawn chairs to watch! As usual we marched behind Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association, who sponsored the Lakeside Pride Freedom Marching Band appearance and performance in the parade.

At our meeting on Sunday, we are looking forward to meeting our speaker, Gustavo Varela, who will be speaking about the programs for Hispanic LGBT youth.



**PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER**

By Arlene Collins

Our meeting in July went very well. It was decided that we would not have a speaker for July 10th in order for us to have more time to discuss some of the issues facing parents and their "Kids". We talked about topics of coming out to the family and friends of transgender sons and daughters. We read one letter that was written a couple of years ago by a family in our group and how they handled their "Holiday Newsletter" to their families and friends. They have been very gracious to give us the go ahead to share this with our group. We found it interesting that each member of the family (mother, father and sister) contributed their own acceptance, support and love for their son and brother. This was very helpful to families that have not come out yet.

The topic of transitioning and how sons and daughters feel till they are "there" and how courageous they are for taking the harassment and discrimination that goes with the process. Parents commented on how

frightened they are about their chi coming out and the safety issues involved. All in all the meeting was well attended and we welcomed four new families to our group.

We are delighted to welcome Owen Daniel-McCarter, the attorney for Chicago House/Trans Life, DOOR a social service agency. We are fortunate to have Owen speak to us on laws and rights of the transgender population and also to help clear up the confusion of the transgender identity umbrella that includes sometimes overlapping categories.

Please join us on August 8th at 7 pm at the Center on Halsted. All are invited.



## DUPAGE CHAPTER

By Gail Hanson

July is a special month for our chapter as this is when we participate in the Wheaton July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade. It has been estimated that as many as up to 60,000 people come to watch this parade. What a great opportunity this gives us to make people aware that support is available for LGBT persons, their families and friends right in their western DuPage community! This year marked the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of our parade participation and it has been encouraging to see and feel the increased level of recognition and appreciation of PFLAG DuPage during these past 11 years.

Our July meeting was well attended by regular members and we welcomed some new visitors. We were very pleased to have had Michael Kimpan from The Marin Foundation as our speaker. Many expressed just how much they enjoyed hearing him talk about The Marin Foundation's efforts to build bridges between the LGBTQ community and communities of faith as well as sharing his own inspiring story. Everyone became so interested and engaged in his program entitled *Standing in Solidarity with the Other* (Jesus always chose to stand on the side of the marginalized) that our meeting time ran longer than expected and most were reluctant to leave. If you are interested in learning more about this organization, check out their website at <http://www.themarinfoundation.org>.

Michael also made us aware of Living in the Tension Gatherings which take place at 5255 N. Ashland Ave. (Room 124) Chicago, at 7pm on the following dates: Aug 4, 18, Sept 8, 13, 22. Michael is hoping to soon publish his book, *Love Never Fails*.

We look forward to welcoming Carolyn Wahlskrog, MSW,

Transcend Program Assistant from Youth Outlook as speaker at our August meeting. She will update us on the current work of Youth Outlook, including a new program especially for LGBTQ youth.

We invite anyone to attend our meetings as we hope all find them to be inviting and comfortable places of confidential support and fellowship. We meet at 2:00pm on the third Sunday of each month at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 515 S. Wheaton Ave., Wheaton.



## MCHEMRY CHAPTER

By Claire Buchanan

The meeting in July was a full house! We had a discussion reviewing the past month and the many parades that PFLAG McHenry participated in. The Pride parade in Chicago was a huge success; the crowd went wild for the float and the volunteers that accompanied! A big thanks to the members that contributed their time and effort in making the float.

Pride, typically a great success for PFLAG, is where the members really get to feel elation and praise for all the advocacy and awareness they bring to the group. However, it is with the smaller parades, in Harvard for example, that the group makes an impact. Whatever the parade, there is a realization that you are making a difference to someone at some point, whether it is acknowledged or not. The member that was holding a sign in Spanish recalls clearly that a small boy was reading his prop. He then asked the boy if he read the sign and understood its meaning. The boy replied "yes." That was a moment of impact, not matter how small, a change occurred in that boy and his being forever.

The members that show up to the parade and ride the float or walk alongside it bring a presence, faces to put with the organization's name. The Pride parade is a source of recognition and praise; it's a happy time for the PFLAG members to feel dignified and respected. Pride is a party and the spotlight shines on us. The lesser parades, in the smaller towns, are where our members can create a bumpy ride on the smooth path of naivety. There may be glares and stares; recognition may not be given to our group's efforts, but it is in those moments where our presence silently makes a difference.

# PFLAG in our Communities!



*Oak Park*  
**BAKE SALE**



*Crystal Lake*  
**PARADE**

**3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL**

# OPERATION: DO ASK, DO TELL

**KEEPING VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS HEALTHY**

A symposium for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, families, friends and health care providers focusing on health needs and resources. Learn about VA services, LGBT health care, the impact of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” on Service Members, and benefits available to LGBT Veterans.

**Date:** Saturday, October 4, 2014  
**Time:** Registration 8:30am – 3:30pm  
*See schedule on other side*  
**Location:** Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital Auditorium (Bld. 9)  
 5000 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Hines, Illinois

**To register for this free event, contact  
 Lorry Luscri, 708-202-8387x21228 or lorry.luscri@va.gov or  
 Mandi Evanson, 708-202-7875 or mandi.evanson@va.gov**

**Organized by:**

**In partnership with:**



**Keynote Speaker:**  
**Kristin Beck**  
**First openly Transgender**  
**Navy SEAL**  
**Civil Rights Activist**

**4 CEs available for CRCC, Social Work\* and Psychology\*\*/4 Contact Hours available for Nursing\*\*\***

\*Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital Social Work Service is a registered Social Work Continuing Education Sponsor licensed by the State of Illinois, License No. 159-000278.  
 \*\*This program is sponsored by the Hines VA Psychology Service. The Hines VA Psychology Service is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Hines VA Psychology Service maintains responsibility for this program and its content.  
 \*\*\*Edward Hines Jr. VA (OH-439, 5/1/2017) is an approved provider of continuing nursing education by the Ohio Nurses Association (OBN-001-91), an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation. No conflict of interest has been identified by conference planners or presenters. Successful completion requires 100% attendance and completion of evaluation.

**PROGRAM**

8:30-9:00	Registration/Exhibit area open	
9:00-9:30	Colorguard National Anthem Opening Remarks/Welcome	American Veterans for Equal Rights Karandeep Sraon, MBBS, MBA, FACHE Assistant Director, Hines VA
9:30-10:45	Lady Valor speaks about life as a Navy SEAL and LGBTQ equality in America	Kristin Beck, transgender US Navy Seal
	Objectives: 1. Navy SEALs and my career as it relates to personal freedom and equality. 2. Lessons learned from combat and relations to my current life. 3. Motivation 4. Call to action for all of us to end prejudice and bigotry in the workplace and beyond.	
10:45-11:00	Break/Exhibit area open	
11:00 -12:00	DO Ask, DO Tell Coming Out to your health care team: How to do it, and why it is important	Grady Osten-Garner Jr., PhD, Adler School of Psychology Cecilia Hardacker, RN, Howard Brown Health Center Veronica Hernandez, US Air Force Veteran
	Objectives: 1. Describe why it is important to obtain accurate information about a patient’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual practices and history. 2. List some health risks and disparities associated with LGBT Veterans. 3. State some open-ended questions health care staff can ask of patients to obtain an accurate and inclusive sexual history. 4. Describe how patients benefit from disclosing sexual orientation and being open with sexual history. 5. Summarize how LGBT Veterans can advocate for their health and some tips for coming out to their health care team.	
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch/Exhibit area open	
1:00 – 2:00	Community Panel: Resources for LGBT persons	TransLife Center SAGE (Services & Advocacy for Gay for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders) Center on Halsted
	Objectives: 1. Describe some of the unique needs of LGBT persons. 2. Identify some of the community organizations, services, and programs available to LGBT persons and Veterans.	
2:00 – 2:15	Break/Exhibit area open	
2:15 – 3:15	LGBT Military Benefits and VA Services: Then and Now	Dr. Jack Bulmash, Chief of Staff, Hines VA
	Objectives: 1. Summarize the history of policies related to LGBT military service and benefits. 2. Describe how this history can impact LGBT Veterans’ perception of VA care. 3. List current services and programs available to Veterans in VA care.	
3:15 – 3:30	Closing Remarks	Jim Darby, AVER
3:30 – 4:30	Screening of the Camouflage Closet documentary	

**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**



**PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley**

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

**PFLAG Metro Chicago**

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

**PFLAG Deerfield**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – 7:15 pm  
 Congregation BJBE  
 1201 Lake Cook Rd, Deerfield 60015  
 pflagdeerfield@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG DeKalb County**

Meetings held LAST Monday – 7 pm  
 Northern Illinois University  
 Montgomery 109 - DeKalb 60115  
 pflagdekalbcounty@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG DuPage**

Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 2 pm  
 St Paul Lutheran Church  
 515 S Wheaton Ave, Wheaton 60187  
 pflagdupage@yahoo.com  
 www.pflagdupage.org

**Entre Familia: PFLAG En Espanol**

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

**PFLAG Hinsdale**

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

**PFLAG Joliet**

Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday – 7 pm  
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church  
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd  
 McHenry 60050  
 pflagwoodstockmchenry@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Oak Park**

Meetings held 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday – 3 pm  
 First United Church  
 848 Lake St, Oak Park 60304  
 pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Palatine**

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

**Parents of Transgender (Chicago)**

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

**Parents of Transgender (McHenry)**

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

**PLEASE JOIN US  
 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.**