I literally had goose bumps when the announcement about Ireland’s vote on marriage equality was made. The voters of Ireland overwhelmingly approved the referendum that would allow two men or two women to marry. 60% of eligible voters went to the polls. Could that happen here; probably not? While majority opinion favors marriage equality according to the latest polls, that majority is far less likely to go to the polls; however, the passionate religious right turns out to vote in record numbers. The key word is \textit{passion}. They have it; we need it. What will inspire passion in those who believe that same-sex marriage ought to be the law of the land but have no personal stake in the matter? We need a Martin Luther King of the LGBT rights movement, someone who can bring people together much as he did when he inspired clergy of every faith and idealistic young people looking for a better society to join him in the quest for voting rights for African Americans. Who will be our Dr. King? We have our leaders, but unless we each take personal responsibility to speak our truth to every ear, the job won’t get done.

So now we await the formal proclamation from the justices of the Supreme Court as they write their positions, both pro and con. The vote in Ireland came too late to sway their opinions, but perhaps those who voted against us are losing just a little bit of sleep as they come to understand that history will not judge them kindly.

As Pride month gets underway and we look for its joyous culmination on June 28 with the Chicago Pride Parade, let keep our fingers crossed that this year we have extra reason for celebration!

Toni Weaver
PFLAG in Action
Volunteers with Passion

Kudos for Lea Anne!

While there is no one right way to respond to an inquiry about PFLAG, some letters are so extraordinary that they just have to be shared. Here’s one by Lea Anne Stoughton, our PFLAG contact person for the Joliet area and former chapter leader, to a mom asking for help in accepting and supporting her gay son.

Hello! My name is Lea Anne, and I’m a PFLAG supporter. The email address you used is associated with a now-defunct chapter of PFLAG, but we maintain the account for situations just like yours.

I am glad that you took the chance in reaching out to us. You are not alone in your feelings. Grief and anger are VERY common. PFLAG meets people wherever they are on their journey without judgment.

You do not specify what issues you and your son are facing, but PFLAG and its dedicated volunteers, such as myself, are anxious to help anyone who is struggling with sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a related issue. We are here to offer support, resources, more support, education, and still more support.

There are many ways we can do this.

There are a number of PFLAG chapters in northern Illinois, many in the Chicago area, that meet regularly to talk, share stories, and learn from each other’s experiences. You can find a list of chapters and their meeting times/places at this link: http://www.pflagillinois.org/chapter-meetings/. Everyone is welcome at these meetings: parents, friends, allies, GLBT people themselves all seek support. Meetings are always free, confidential, non-denominational (some chapters may meet in places of worship, and faith issues are frequently discussed, but PFLAG has no association with any religion or faith tradition). We are not therapists or counselors, just normal everyday people who have been through or are dealing with the same issues. I’ll say it again--YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You may prefer to talk with someone one-on-one. This is fine too! It can be intimidating to walk into a room of strangers and talk about sensitive issues. Many PFLAG members (myself included) are willing to talk on the phone or meet for coffee. Just let me know and we can arrange a time that is mutually convenient. If you’d prefer to speak with someone besides me, no worries. I’m a straight divorced mom of two young kids, so I while I am very supportive of the PFLAG cause, you may prefer someone who is in a situation similar to your own. That’s ok! I can connect you with someone.

I know this is a lot to take in at once. I strongly encourage you to try out a chapter meeting, browsing the web site I listed above, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly at this address if you would like to talk personally, or if you need anything else. You’ve taken the first step in asking for help. Let PFLAG be that help.

Best regards,
Lea Anne Stoughton
HINSDALE CHAPTER
By Barb Medley

Our May speaker was Mike Feinerman, co-executive director of the Center for Advancing Domestic Peace. He talked with us about addressing domestic violence in LGBTQ relationships. Through his research in domestic violence, Mike identified these important issues – Only 5% of domestic violence cases are reported, and there are even less convictions. Also, some shelters refuse service to Lesbians, although this issue is improving. There are no “brick and mortar” shelters for gay men. He noted that a better job needs to be done training counselors, and trainers of counselors – not all domestic violence victims’ partners are members of the opposite sex; this should not be assumed.

Counseling and interventions need to address internalized homophobia, sometimes a factor for both partners. Transgender victims often are met with ridicule when they report, in focus groups and by law enforcement. All in all, Mike presented a complicated problem that needs intensive intervention and ongoing counseling and support, and we appreciated his thorough explanation of the issues. He identified many useful resources, including these: www.advancingdomesticpeace.org, www.survivorproject.org, and the National Coalition of Antiviolence Programs at www.ncavp.org.

Our June speaker will be Bonsai Bermudez, Executive Artistic Director of the Youth Empowerment Performance Project. The program seeks to make a safe environment for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

DUPAGE CHAPTER
By John Hickey

Summer is finally coming and so is Parade season. In addition to the Chicago Pride Parade celebration on June 28, it is important that we take advantage and show our support locally, too. PFLAG DuPage has marched in the Wheaton Independence Day parade every year since our creation over 11 years ago. Over the years, there has been a heart-warming change in the welcome we receive from the crowd. Our visibility as just families supporting families helps to facilitate cultural change. I would love to see this year be our biggest showing ever and I invite any of our PFLAG friends who want to participate. Just email me at jthickey1@gmail.com so we have a reasonable head count estimate to plan for water and snacks.

We have had a busy month... Recent activities for the chapter include visiting local high schools in both Cook and DuPage County; having fun at the Mother’s Day “Hugs and Kisses” fundraiser; hosting a PFLAG table at the Elmhurst College Big Gay Gathering; and expanding our support of the Northern Illinois Council with Don accepting a role as the Membership Chair and Bonnie taking on the role of web master. Check out her awesome work at http://www.pflagillinois.org/

Our May meeting included some powerful sharing and our program featured a viewing of the Sam Killerman TED talk on Understanding the Complexities of Gender. You can see on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRcPXTqKJcE

I also highly recommend you check out his website it’s pronounced metrosexual (http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/). He has lots of great information and resources including his:

- Comprehensive list of LGBTQ terminology http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/ ;
- Privilege Lists with insightful examples http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/category/privilege-lists/ and more...

Upcoming Events

Be sure to check out Citywide Pride events around the city in June.

Hope UCC will be showing the movie Pride on Friday, June 12th. Doors open at 7:00pm, movie starts at...
7:30pm. The event is free. Hope UCC will provide the popcorn and bottled water! Feel free to bring any other snacks and/or non-alcoholic beverages.

Hope UCC is located at 1701 Quincy Ave, Suite 27, Naperville. (Suite 27 faces Brookshire Court, off of Quincy Ave.)

PRIDE is inspired by an extraordinary true story. It’s the summer of 1984, Margaret Thatcher is in power and the National Union of Mineworkers is on strike, prompting a London-based group of gay and lesbian activists to raise money to support the strikers’ families.

The Out & Equal Workplace 2015 Summit is Oct 6-8 in Dallas, TX. Registration is open. http://www.outandequal.org/events/summit/

June 20 there will be another Plainfield Community Resource Fair. Don and Margaret will be hosting for PFLAG. Thanks!!

June 28 is the Chicago Pride Parade. Please, let Toni Weaver know if you plan to participate. (Toni Weaver twweaver@earthlink.net).

July 4 is the Wheaton Independence Day Parade. Please mark your calendars; more info to come. I hope you are able to join us for this important community event. Feel free to invite family and friends to participate too!

Upcoming Meetings:

- June 21- The program will feature a viewing a video short featuring a variety of LGBTQ families.
- July 19- Viewing of Silk Road Rising “The Imam and The Homosexual” with discussion by Jamil Khoury Founding Artistic Director. This is a great example of using the arts to facilitate discussion regarding social issues.
- Aug 16- Owen Daniel McCarter esquire from the Illinois Safe School Alliance (ISSA). ISSA is a great organization providing support to our youth through their work with school Gay Straight Alliance groups (GSA’s) throughout the state.

PTI Chicago CHAPTER
By Arlene Collins

Our meeting on May 14th was very well attended. Our speaker for the evening was Diane Chen, PhD, a Pediatric Psychologist in the Division of Adolescent Medicine at Lurie Children’s Hospital. Dr. Chen has been putting forth her efforts in obtaining grants from the National Institutes of Health on behalf of our transgender kids. The primary objective is to better understand knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about fertility preservation in transgender and DSD patients and their parents. The study she is presently working on is for a protocol plan for patients to receive pre-pubertal blockers. She was very informative and we spoke of the benefits, risks and controversy involved. Dr. Chen will keep us informed of the progress and Arlene Collins will send a letter, with the approval of the parents of PTI, stating our support for the grant to the NIH.

Some of our members in PTI are beginning an advocacy group in favor of a model for school policy which involves all grades K-12 guaranteeing our kids the rights they are now only sporadically receiving depending on the school and its administration. It is of utmost importance that a Policy be accepted and carried out in all Illinois Schools.

In addition to welcoming new members we also enjoyed the friendship and experiences that we share monthly in our PTI group. This is a safe space for parents, family and friends to meet where they are assured that whatever is said or questioned will stay with the group.

There are some conferences that are coming up. There is still time to register for the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference and Gender Odyssey. Please check them out online.

Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference-June 2-4 2015

Gender Odyssey Family Aug 20-23 Seattle
https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=gender%20odyssey%20family

On June 11th we will welcome Josie Paul to our PTI. Josie is the Director of the Trans/Life section of Chicago House. She will fill us in on what is happening at Chicago House we look forward to her visit. All are welcome.
DEERFIELD CHAPTER
By Sue Ginsburg

Unfortunately, our speaker May, Shannon LeMaster, Director of Ministries With Children and Youth at Northbrook Methodist Church, had to cancel for our meeting. She promised to reschedule for this summer, so we’ll keep you posted.

Our June meeting will be a celebration of LGBT youth, when Cynthia Drey, former Deerfield member who has moved out of state, returns to award her scholarships in memory of her son, to deserving LGBT youth from the area. Instead of holding a regular meeting, we will honor the winners with cake and conversation, learning about their lives and their hopes and dreams for the future. Cynthia has so generously awarded these scholarships for many years and we are so very grateful to her. So remember, this will be our June meeting, regular time and place.

As it happens at most of our meetings, we welcomed a new family in May. And since we had more discussion time, as Shannon couldn’t make it, we were able to devote more time to our new member and those just returning. Sometimes I think not having a speaker now and again, helps us all to focus on our children, repeating stories that will inevitably help others.

Announcements regarding the Pride Parade were made. There are only 16-18 seats available on our float. No protection from the sun. Priority will be given to PAID PFLAG members who are unable to walk the parade route. If there is space left over, other PFLAG people who are unable to walk may ride the float, with a donation of $5.00. If you are planning to ride the float, YOU MUST RESERVE your place. Please contact Toni Weaver (twweaver@earthlink.net). Reservations will be taken on a first come, first served basis. The lineup for the parade will be sent out to us a week before the parade, so watch your email!

News: Brad Schneider is running for Congress again. Some of you will remember that he sponsored a Sunday afternoon get together for LGBT youth at the home of Stevenson’s GSA director. He’s a strong supporter of our community.

750 Club - I hope you will all remember to donate! Here’s the link: https://secure2.convio.net/atoc/site/Donation2.jsessionid=4D500D3096256E422A307851558F41B7.app260a9df_id=2000&2000.donation=form1

Remember, where it asks for “Captain”, just write in "PFLAG!"

GENDERNAUTS is a summer group for trans and gender exploring high schoolers. They will be meeting on Fridays from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, June 19 to Aug. 7 at the Juniper Center; Park Ridge, IL. Facilitators are Bonn Wade, LCSW and Simon Weismantel, LSW. Cost is $35 per meeting. Contact information: Call Simon 312-799-9311

MCHENRY CHAPTER
By Toni Weaver

In April we welcomed PFLAG Chicago Metro leader Meg Valentini to speak about how she became involved with the annual AIDS ride. Long before her son came out, Meg, as a registered nurse, was involved in the care of HIV+ people and participated in TPAN, the Test Positive Awareness Network. She’s passionate about her involvement with the ride, which she and her spouse, Fred, do in the name of PFLAG – Team PFLAG. If you wish to sponsor the two of them, please e-mail her at megmop@yahoo.com. PS: Consider inviting Meg to speak at your PFLAG meeting; she’s great!

Dr. Bonnie Estensen will be speaking to our chapter on the topic of bisexuality at the May 12 meeting. Too often, bisexuality is seen as an intermediate step in the coming-out process rather than as the bona fide orientation that it is.

We continue to make inroads with local GSAs as we offer to purchase Pride flags for each club that wants one. So far we’ve placed flags at Crystal Lake Central, Prairie Ridge, Cary-Grove, and Grant High Schools. The flags are accompanied by copious resources: PFLAG booklets, Blue Books, NI council tri-folds, lists of good websites, and spools of rainbow ribbon for craft projects. In addition, we’ve offered to help fund GSA advisers so that they can attend LGBT-related trainings, and we’ll continue to do this until our funds run out.

Now for the really exciting news! While the McHenry PTI group is meeting, a youth group dubbed TAG (teens activity group) is also meeting. The PTI parents showed so much gratitude to have a place to bring their trans/gender fluid/gender questioning/gender queer children that we knew we were on to something special. Raina Hodgson who belongs to both McHenry PFLAG and McHenry PTI convened the first meeting on April 22. We have high hopes for its success!
WE ARE THE CHANGE
2015 PFLAG National Convention
October 16-18, 2015 · Nashville, TN
For more info, visit http://community.pflag.org/2015convention

To stay updated on what is going on with PFLAG National, check out these links...

Stay current with PFLAG National: PFLAG national

Follow PFLAG national on Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/pflag

See what PFLAG National is tweeting about: http://twitter.com/ #!/PFLAG

Check out recent posts on PFLAG National’s blog: http://blog.pflag.org/

Watch PFLAG national on their YouTube channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/pflagnational

ALSO

PTI Chicago has a new Facebook page. Please check it out and LIKE it: PTI Chicago Facebook

Support the PFLAG Council of Northern IL when you shop on Amazon:

Mother’s Day at SideTrack

“Kisses from Mom” grossed over $1700 in donations from patrons of Sidetrack on Mother’s Day. After expenses are deducted, the proceeds will be split between the NI Council and the five participating chapters with each chapter receiving approximately $163. Kudos to our coordinator Marcia Pritchason for organizing and executing this successful fun/fund raiser!

Gendernauts
Summer group for trans* & gender exploring high schoolers

Meets Fridays 5:30-7:00pm, June 19-Aug 7
@The Juniper Center, Park Ridge, IL

Gendernauts is a supportive group for high school students who are exploring a gender identity or expression that transcends traditional stereotypes, blends or breaks the gender binary, or otherwise pushes normative ideas about gender.

FACILITATORS: Bonn Wade, LCSW, & Simon Weismantel, LSW
COST: $15 per meeting (sliding scale considered on case by case basis)
LOCATION: The Juniper Center, 1440 Renaissance Dr., # 320, Park Ridge, IL, 60068
INFO: Contact Simon at 312-799-9311
simonweismantel@thejunipercenter.com

Gendernauts is a collaboration between The Juniper Center and Chicago Counseling Associates

OPEN DOORS – The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters
May 2015

Mother’s Day at SideTrack

“Kisses from Mom” grossed over $1700 in donations from patrons of Sidetrack on Mother’s Day. After expenses are deducted, the proceeds will be split between the NI Council and the five participating chapters with each chapter receiving approximately $163. Kudos to our coordinator Marcia Pritchason for organizing and executing this successful fun/fund raiser!

PFLAG Volunteers are Awesome!
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.org

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

PFLAG DeKalb County
Meetings held LAST Tuesday – 7 pm
158 N 4th St
DeKalb, IL 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
Contact Lea Anne Stoughton
lastoughton@gmail.com
815-793-5138

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
Contact Deirdre O’Connell
herself68@yahoo.com

Parents of Transgender (Chicago)
Meetings are held the 2nd Thursday – 7 pm
Center on Halsted
3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613
parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org

Parents of Transgender (McHenry)
Meetings are held the 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 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.