President’s Column

I had two marvelous PFLAG opportunities in October. The first was actually visiting the national offices of PFLAG while in Washington, DC. The second was attending PFLAG’s national convention in Nashville. On the former, it’s tempting to say that I visited the heart of our organization, but I know that’s not where the heart of PFLAG is – the heart of PFLAG resides in every person who is an active member (PS: Have you renewed your membership yet?) and advocates for equality and justice for all LGBTQ persons. However, the glue that holds us all together, the staff that provide us with training and materials and form important partnerships in corporate America, is located in a modest suite of offices in the Northwest sector of the city. What fun it was to meet many of the staff that I hadn’t met in person before but had communicated with via many an e-mail exchange. These were the very same people who were hard at work preparing for the Nashville convention... that leads me to the second great event of the month.

“We are the Change” was the theme, and the convention gave us the tools and inspiration to be that change. Michelangelo Signorile’s keynote address reminded us forcefully that “It’s NOT Over,” coincidentally the title of his latest book. We cannot afford to rest on our laurels just because marriage equality is the law of the land. We won by such a slim majority; it’s theoretically possible to lose those gains if the ultraconservatives come to power in the next election. IT’S NOT OVER, PFLAG!

We must support the Equality Act, a piece of legislation that is much more far-reaching than the Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA) which covers only what its name implies – employment. The Equality Act would protect LGBTQ persons in all areas of their lives as American citizens. One of the breakout sessions covered how to be a powerful advocate by lobbying our members of Congress. We were reminded of the importance of being polite and keeping a cool head, of being thoroughly prepared to discuss the issue that prompted the call or visit, and of being aware that it is our ZIP CODE that carries weight. A member of Congress needs to know that we are his/her constituents with the power to vote for or against him or her in the next election. So...remember the POWER OF THE ZIP CODE!

The experience of coming together with PFLAGers from all over the United States and other countries was so powerful and gave an incredible sense of belonging to something greater than our individual chapters and ourselves. The energy generated in Nashville will continue to empower us and our chapters so that we can truly BE THE CHANGE!

Together, let’s move equality forward!

Toni Weaver
President - PFLAG Council of NI

BECOME A PFLAG MEMBER!

Sign up today!
It’s not too late!
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; 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 A CHAPTER:

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

___ Hinsdale ____ Aurora/Fox Valley _____ McHenry County____ McHenry Parents of Transgendered
Indians___ Deerfield ___ Chicago/Metro ___ Chicago Parents of Transgendered Individuals
___ Joliet ___ Kankakee ___ Palatine ___ Oak Park ___ DeKalb ___ DuPage ___ Downers
Grove ___ Tinley Park

___ Check enclosed payable to PFLAG

Please charge my credit card (___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ Amex ___ Discover)

(Credit Card #)_________________________________________________________________________________

(Exp Date DD/MM)______________ (CVV – V/MC/D 3 digits on the back – AX 4 digits on the front) __________

(Name on Card)______________________________________________________________

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

PFLAG Membership P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126
PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered 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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October 2015 - NI COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

At the quarterly PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois’ meeting this month, THREE new groups were welcomed:

PFLAG Tinley Park • PFLAG Downers Grove • North Shore PTI

The PFLAG presence is growing, and we’re excited to have them on board. On behalf of all the NI chapters, WELCOME to the family!

Jim Levie (Treasurer) and Don Donahue (Membership Chair) noted that only 27 individuals/families throughout all of Northern Illinois have renewed their memberships as of 10/24. – 27 – that’s all. Please take a moment NOW to renew or begin a membership in PFLAG through the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. Any renewals made on the national website will not come back to us here in IL, whereas a membership through us will make you a member of National as well as of council and of your local chapter. A membership letter and form are included in this newsletter.

Please stand with us so that our unified voice in Northern Illinois may be stronger. When speaking with public officials, numbers are important. To say that we have 27 members in this entire geographical region is not very impressive…Numbers matter in politics. If PFLAG is important to you, please support it with your time and with your treasure.

As a council we congratulated Tony Dornacher (former Treasurer, Membership Chair, website master, and doer of all things techy) upon the occasion of his marriage to Michael Coy on the 3rd of October. We give him our heartiest congratulations and wishes for a long and loving life together.

The impasse between the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Rauner over the FY16 state budget has been ongoing for five months, which is unprecedented in Illinois history. Advocates, including Equality Illinois, continue to call upon the governor and legislature to protect the most vulnerable Illinoisans, ensure adequate revenue, and pass a fair budget as soon as possible. For many, a state budget is vital to receiving the services they find most valuable.

While about 80% of programs are being funded currently (thanks to court orders, consent decrees, and administrative actions), widespread harm to Illinoisans, especially children, homeless people, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS is pervasive. For example, 75,000 survivors of domestic violence are at risk of losing support services and 91% of domestic violence shelters aren’t being funded. For HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention services, approved federal funding only covers 70% of program needs. For sexual assault services and prevention, available federal funding only covers 60% of program costs. FY16 contracts were issued for homeless youth services, but no state payments are being made without a budget. The state’s nonprofit infrastructure is under immense pressure. Some service providers are at serious risk of laying off staff or closing, while several agencies have already gone beyond that point.

We urge everyone to call their legislator and Governor Rauner today and ask them to pass a budget that protects all Illinoisans!

(pdillon@eqil.org)
**HINSDALE CHAPTER**  
*By Barb Medley*

Our October guest speaker was Nat Brown, a youth organizer for the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. The Alliance works to make schools safer in several ways. The first is through education, training and professional development for teachers and school staff. Secondly, they focus their efforts on policy and advocacy. Requests are being received more frequently to help schools and school districts become more proactive in their efforts to be supportive of LGBTQ students. Requests have increased particularly for transgender youth. Effectively addressing bullying involves digging deeply into preconceived notions about gender/sexual identity. Many issues at school education sessions revolve around making bathroom use safe and distinguishing between students’ comfort, as opposed to safety.

We had a diverse discussion about identity issues, pronoun use, stereotyping and the evolution of students’ thinking in relation to differences and freedom to express sexual orientation and gender identity. If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more or scheduling a training, their email is training@illinoissafeschools.org or at (312) 533-2624.

Our November speaker will be Arlene Collins from PTI PFLAG. She will talk about what is happening in the transgender community.

**MCHELYRNE CHAPTER**  
*By Toni Weaver*

PFLAG McHenry’s October meeting focused on expressing our appreciation for the hard work and dedicated service given by GSA advisers in our area. They shared with us the activities of their clubs and the climates in their schools toward LGBTQ students, and we were amazed and heartened by the work that they do. We want to partner with them by providing opportunities for the advisers to attend conferences and workshops that will provide them with the tools they need to do their work with the students, and we support their clubs with printed resources and Pride flags. Nat Duran from Illinois Safe Schools spoke about the work of the organization and explained how it can support the work of the GSAs and their advisers as well. It was an evening of learning, sharing, and gratitude.

**OAK PARK CHAPTER**  
*By Nancy Johnson*

Our September bake sale went well. We had fun as usual, and sold all our baked goods; even with a competing bake sale by the High School wrestling team! Our 10th Anniversary potluck was also a lot of fun. Our screening of The Year We Thought About Love went well, but the attendance was a bit low. We were unable to afford to bring in any filmmakers or cast, which always draws more people. It is an excellent film, and the young people in the Boston LGBT Theater group are engaging and varied.

At our October meeting our speaker was Owen Daniel-McCarter (owen@illinoissafeschools.org) from the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. If you haven’t booked him yet, please do. He is an attorney, and his current job is trying to help Illinois schools create a policy for handling transgender students. He will be talking soon to Oak Park River Forest High School administrators about developing a policy here. He’s especially interested in this since he graduated from OPRFHS in 2000, and this will be his first visit to his old high school. He has asked our help if needed in educating, and advocating with the school administration.

The Oak Park Public Library and PFLAG are co-presenting an exciting event at the library on November 6. It is a screening of the documentary, *Mr. Angel*, about the life of Buck Angel. Buck is a trans-man and excellent activist and advocate for transgender people.

“This feature length documentary chronicles the extraordinary life of transgender activist, educator and porn pioneer, Buck Angel. His in-your-face style of activism has audiences outraged by his insistence that he is ‘a man... who happens to have a vagina.’ Buck faced relentless opposition his entire life yet managed to survive addiction, prostitution, and suicide. It is a moving story of one man’s search for self-love and acceptance from his...
family and the world. MR ANGEL is an inspirational story of rare perseverance and an unlikely hero.”

The library is bringing in Buck Angel for the screening, and I think this is his first public appearance in the Chicago area. The screening of Mr. Angel is the first public screening in the Chicago area. The film is unrated, and the library decided to make it adults only. It will be from 8-11 pm on Friday November 6. We will have a table there with some transgender literature.

November we will have one of the leaders of Oak Park’s Scouting for Equality. Our fifth Sunday potluck will be at Phil and Kate’s home. There will be a December meeting, but no speaker.

PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER
By Arlene Collins

Parents of Transgender Individuals (PTI) have much going on these days. The exposure to transgender/gender non-conforming issues is all around us, especially in the media. Our group members keep on growing and the love and support and yearning for education on the issues of TGNC issues is heartening. We were very fortunate to have as our guest in October, Dr. Karen Wicklund, a speech therapist, teacher, singer and author of “Singing Voice Rehabilitation: A Guide for the Voice Teacher and Speech Language Pathologist”. She encouraged our parents and kids and assured them that it is possible to alter their voice to more reflect their gender expression. It was a very informative meeting. We then shared with one another our concerns but also our gratitude for how amazing our children are doing in their journey. Our speaker for the Nov. 12th meeting will be Representative Jan Schakowsky, (IL- D) the U.S. Representative for Illinois’s 9th congressional district. We are hopeful to hear about legislation affecting the LGBTQ community in a positive manner. All are welcome to attend.

PTI Chicago is pleased to announce that some members of PTI with younger children have launched a new support group on the North Shore. We wish them the best and offer them any assistance with resources. When I started the first PTI Chicago group in 2009, my wish at that time was to see other PTI’s created for the benefit of parents, families and friends. Since then PTI McHenry was created and now PTI North Shore. North Shore will help meet the demand for parents and families of younger children and fill the void in that area.

Some other encouraging news is a request we received from the Ethics Committee at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove. Earlier this year two psychologists, a trans woman and myself presented a program to the Psyche Dept. staff to aid them in their interaction with trans patients in the psychiatric unit of the hospital. This program was so well received that we were invited to return to speak to the Ethics Committee. The goal of the Committee is provide education, deliver the best practice medical care and deal with any staff prejudices. Hopefully, we can enlighten them and open up opportunities for other hospitals and institutions to initiate education and training for their staffs.

DuPage CHAPTER
By John Hickey

Our October 18 meeting, featured a facilitated discussion of current events including Discussion primarily centered around the situation at Palatine-Schaumburg School District 211 where the district is refusing to allow a...
transgender student, who identifies as female, full access to the girls’ locker room. Instead the district has offered a separate room for changing and cited privacy concerns as the reason.

The ACLU is representing the student in a complaint saying the school violated Title IX gender equality law. District officials do not seem fazed by the controversy and are staying firm with their position that the student should not be allowed locker room access.

If you are not familiar with the story, here are some links to related news reports for reference.

**PALATINE TRANSGENDER STUDENT FILES FEDERAL COMPLAINT OVER LOCKER ROOMS:**


Feds reject school district’s plan for transgender student, locker room:

**Advocacy Starts with You…**

It is so important that all of our children are able to attend school as their true authentic self, free from bullying and harassment, and fully embraced and included as equals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. So, it is vital that we all continue to keep positive conversations going forward to promote understanding and respect and help create inclusive environments by sharing our stories and raising awareness and familiarity.

**Recognizing and Model Excellence….**

I applaud our friends at the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance for the work that they do and schools like Berwyn South SD 100. Check out this 6 minute video for an example of a school with the right intent, taking the right steps:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSr300zUWUk&feature=youtu.be

**Get Inspired….**

If you are inspired to learn more, here is a link to a 15 minute video featuring Jazz Jennings at the 2015 HRC Foundation’s Time to THRIVE Conference.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7i4zXdEoVl

**Familiarity Breeds Comfort…. Get Familiar, Get Comfortable….**

For your reference, and to better equip us all to be supportive allies, there are also many helpful resources for understanding how to create more inclusive schools. Here are a few links from a variety of organizations promoting equality:

**PFLAG**
Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for All
http://community.pflag.org/safeschoolsforall

Guide to Being a Trans Ally
http://community.pflag.org/document.doc?id=904

**National Center for Transgender Equality:**
52 Things You Can Do for Transgender Equality
http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/52-you-can-do-transgender-equality

**Welcoming Schools**
http://www.welcomingschools.org/

**Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):**
http://www.glsen.org/article/educators-support-trans-and-gnc-students

**MODEL DISTRICT POLICY ON TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS**


October has been host to a number of conferences and the PFLAG DuPage November 15 meeting will feature sharing of the experiences of folks who participated in recent conference events. We meet the 3rd Sunday of each month at St Paul Lutheran Church in Wheaton. Please consider joining us for a meeting and feel free to bring a friend or family member.

Speaking of conferences, if you know any college age students, you may want to look into MBLGTACC…. Registration is open for the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference (MBLGACC) is the largest student-led LGBTQIA college conference in the nation! MBLGTACC 2016 is hosted by Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana February 19th-21st, 2016.
Deerfield CHAPTER  
By Susan Ginsburg  

What a terrific meeting we had in October! We hosted the founders of “Silk Road Rising”, an award winning, Chicago based live theatre company which creates plays and online videos that tell stories through primarily Asian American and Middle Eastern American lenses. ‘In representing communities that intersect and overlap, they hope to advance a polycultural worldview.’  

Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani previewed a part of their play that will be premiering in March called “A Mosque Alert.”  

They showed a video called the “Imam and the Homosexual.” The Imam was meeting a young journalist who had written a piece supporting the Muslim community and they were meeting to discuss how to progress. Unfortunately, when the Imam realizes that the journalist is gay, the discomfort on the part of the Imam is palpable and the conversation breaks down as the journalist talks about the concept of God evolving over time, while the Imam supports an archaic, literal and rigid interpretation of God’s word.  

I urge you to go to silkroadrising.org to learn more about this wonderful theatre and the productions that are in progress. We were all so impressed with the writing, acting and direction of this short film. We are hoping to go to the premiere of this performance in March as a group!!! We hope other chapters will do the same!  

We welcomed three new families in October as well!!!  

We have made it our goal to reach out to the high schools and middle schools that make up our northern Illinois suburbs near Deerfield. I handed out a list of schools to those members who volunteered. With the help of our interns last year, we were able to compile a list of schools and GSA advisors to contact. We plan to phone them, tell them about PFLAG and offer our services to come visit if desired. The important part is that they know we exist and we can be of support if needed.  

We reminded everyone, once again, to send in our membership dues to PFLAG for the New Year!
**Siblings of Trans* Individuals Support Group**

Facilitated by Joelle Spiegel, LSW  
Tuesday Evenings 7-8pm  
Location: 3139 N. Lincoln, Chicago IL  
$300 for 10 weeks

This 10-week support group is aimed at children and teens who are adapting to the news that a sibling is Trans*. Resulting feelings may include fear, confusion, anger and isolation around the change in family dynamics and the sibling’s identity. This program will help children and teens cope with changes in relationships and examine feelings that they may not understand or know how to deal with.

At group sessions we will create a safe and welcoming space to meet others who share similar feelings, build community and relationships, and provide support for one another.

TO REGISTER: Contact Joelle Spiegel, LSW  
Joelle227@gmail.com  
312-919-9932
Visiting PFLAG NATIONAL, Washington D.C.

Diego Sanchez, Jamie Henkel, Brooke Senter, Joellen Shifmann, Toni Weaver, Jamie Curtis, Elizabeth Kohm, Jody Huckaby (in front)

Jean Hodges – National Prez.

Keynote speaker – Michaelangelo Signorile

NASHVILLE CONVENTION
We Are The Change

Mary Beth Hickey and Betty DeGeneres

Representatives of PFLAG DuPage, McHenry, Oak Park and Sauk Valley
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


LGBTQ BOOKS YOU NEED TO READ

Thank you for Jackie Frett for recommending these publications. These books are some new finds and cover broad range of LGBT topics.

George is the coming out story of a transgender child and is appropriate for middle school age children but it will also be helpful for their parents. Fairyland took me back to the 1970’s and 80’s when LGBT issues were not even on my radar. Two books tackle being gay and Christian. No House takes us into the complex and frightening world of homeless gay youth. On the Couch and Trans Bodies, Trans Selves give us a wealth of reader friendly information on transgender issues.

So see if you have room on your PFLAG book shelves for …

George by Alex Gino ; “When people look at George ,they think they see a boy. But she knows she’s a girl. George thinks she will have to keep this secret forever.” Her middle school play is going to be Charlotte’s Web. George really wants to play Charlotte but the teacher says no because she is a boy. Her best friend Kelly helps with a plan so everyone gets to know the real George.

On The Couch With Dr. Angello- A Guide to Raising & Supporting Transgender Youth by Dr. Michele Angello ; ” When a single child comes out, their entire family will transition, along with the community.”

Fairyland- A Memoir of My Father by Alysia Abbott ; “ A vibrant memoir recounts growing up in the 1970’s in San Francisco with Steve Abbott , a gay, single father during an era when that was rare.”

Walking the Bridgeless Canyon-Repairing the Breach Between the Church and the LGBT Community By Kathy Baldock.; “ In 2001, Kathy Baldock, a straight conservative evangelical Christian, met Netto Montoya, a lesbian Native American, on the local hiking trails near her home in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Their friendship challenged Beldock’s cultural and religious beliefs about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.”


No House To Call My Home by Ryan Berg ; “Ryan Berg immerses readers in the gritty, dangerous, and shockingly underreported world of homeless LGBTQ teens in New York. As a caseworker in a group home for disowned LGBTQ teenagers, Berg witnessed the struggles, fears, and ambitions of these disconnected youth as they resisted the pull of the street tottering between destruction and survival.”

Trans Bodies, Trans Selves –A Resource for the Transgender Community. Edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth; “There is no one way to be transgender. While trans people share many common experiences, there is immense diversity within trans communities. Trans Bodies, Trans Selves is a revolutionary resource—a comprehensive, reader-friendly guide for transgender people, with each chapter written by transgender or genderqueer authors.”
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.