The horrors of Orlando are quickly being swallowed up by other horrific atrocities: Dallas, Nice, Baton Rouge. When will it end? As human beings we are grieving our dead – fellow citizens on this planet we call Earth.

Black lives matter; gay lives matter; transgender lives matter; the lives of all humankind matter.

As members of PFLAG we must continue to live our lives in such a way that we show not just tolerance, but acceptance and love.

In a contentious election year we must continue to educate and advocate so that the gains made by our loved ones will not be swallowed up.

As Michelangelo Signorile said in a keynote address to attendees at the PFLAG National Convention, “It’s Not Over”!

Peace ✿ Love ✿ Tolerance

This anonymous note was sent to the PFLAG of Northern IL Council and read at the July Council meeting.

Our work is never complete and touches lives that we may never see.

Thank you for all that each and every one of you do!
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.

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Ride for AIDS Chicago

It was about a year ago when Meg Valentini came to our McHenry PFLAG meeting and presented on the Ride for AIDS Chicago.

I was new to being a PFLAG parent. I was having nightmares in which my son Kyle was telling me, “Mom I have HIV.” I kept trying to remind myself that strides have been made within our community and AIDS is no longer the life-taker it was back in the 80’s, but my heart was heavy.

Meg’s presentation had me in awe. People ride their bikes for 200 miles and raise money to help stop the spread of HIV. I was amazed that Meg and Fred rode a tandem bike. Meg kept saying if I can do it, I know anyone can.

I signed up to do the Ride in January of 2016. Indoor training began later that same month. I was so nervous going into that gym for training. I had this feeling that I would not belong or I be accepted. Instead, I walked into one of the most positive classes I have ever been to. People were smiling and actually happy to meet me! Not only that, they were happy to do an hour and half long spin class. WOW!

Outdoor training started in mid-April, just before my 37th birthday. The weather was picture perfect that first ride weekend. Every week the mileage grew by 10 miles and I started to feel something that I have not felt in a very long time: pride and confidence in myself.

July 9th and 10th came quickly and the 200 miles started from Evanston. This was a tough ride for me. All my emotions were churning and I started to lose confidence biking up those hills in rural Wisconsin. I just kept reminding myself I was riding to bring love and light into the world after all the tragic events in the news recently. I could not stop because I was helping to make the world better not only for my son, Kyle, but for all our communities.

I made it into camp exhausted and barely able to pedal. Dinner and a decent nights sleep had me ready to go the next day and do it all over again. Day 2 I was able to ride most of the day with friends, Carl and Larry. I love these two. Carl is just a blessing of positivity and Larry is quick with wit and lighthearted jokes. I rode in on Day 2 with these amazing gentlemen at my side. Meg and Fred were there to “Medal Me”. I filled with joy of the accomplishment as Meg put that medal over my head.

There is light and love in the world and the amazing rider and crew of the Ride for AIDS are bringing a bit more of it in the world each year. In case you want to know I am already committed to Riding again for the 2017 Ride for AIDS Chicago. HIV doesn’t stop and right now I am able to keep going. So I will go for those who cannot and hope you join me as well.

Written by Beth Rosso (pictured below)
HINSDALE CHAPTER
By Barb Medley

Since our July meeting was the Sunday of the holiday weekend, we planned to view the movie, “The Year We Thought About Love.” However, a couple new to PFLAG attended and we discussed transgender issues. This is why PFLAG chapters offer a monthly meeting, regardless of whether or not it is a holiday. We’re there to support each other!

Our speaker on August 7th is Detective Lee Catavu, who works in law enforcement and will talk to us about his job-related experiences with the LGBTQ community. I hope you’re enjoying your summer!!

DEERFIELD CHAPTER
By Janet Svatos & Sue Ginsburg

We were honored to welcome Raina Hodgson from PFLAG McHenry and McHenry PTI as our speaker in July. Raina has a transgender son and gave us a lesson she entitled, “Transgender 101”.

So many of us at PFLAG really need more education and information on the trans community as we try to help new members who come to our meetings. It really helps to have a background in terms.

Raina, in her very engaging and forthright manner, gave us a half hour lesson on terms and their meanings. She explained that words and terminology are subject to change. What may be a definition today may change next month, as people search for ways to describe who they are.

**Sex:** how a person identifies at birth, such as male, female or ‘intersex’. This was a word we had never heard before, but it is a biological fact! An intersex baby may be trans, may not be, but it is as common as having a baby born with red hair.

**Sexual orientation:** set during early uterine development; how you align yourself; whom you are attracted to.

**Sexual preference:** who you actually prefer

**Gender:** a range of characteristics, social construct

**Gender identity:** personal experience of your own gender; how you see or define yourself; all about what YOU feel personally.

**Transgender:** differs from sex assigned at birth.

Raina also explained to look for these key words before medical intervention to transition:
- **Insistent:** “I’m a boy; I’m a boy”
- **Persistent:** this lasts and doesn’t change
- **Consistent:** not wavering

**Gender expression:** what you put out there for the world to see.

Raina asked us to call out how many different descriptors we know. These are what we came up with: male, female, ciss gender, gender neutral, gender fluid, transgender, a-gender, gender queer, gender questioning, non-binary, gender creative, gender expansive.

Raina pointed out that there are now functional MRI studies of transgender people. Male and female brains are, on average, slightly different in structure, with tremendous individual variability. But there have been several studies that have looked for signs that transgender people have brains more similar to their experienced gender.

It was a wonderful presentation and we were so lucky to have learned so much from Raina.

MCHENRY CHAPTER
By Toni Weaver

July 3 marked the tenth time that PFLAG McHenry has marched in the annual Crystal Lake Parade. 40+ marchers from the chapter, local GSA advisers, members of the First Congregational Church of Crystal Lake, and folks from Tree of Life UUC banded together carrying signs that read “We Remember Orlando.” Long time chapter member Cate Becker served as parade coordinator, taking over the responsibilities from Barbara Marian who first conceived the idea of marching in Crystal Lake the year
following the rowing events of the 2006 Gay Games that were held on Crystal Lake.

Detective Lee Catavu of the Aurora Police Department and LGBT liaison for the department was our featured speaker in July. His focus was on his work mediating relationships between primarily the gay and lesbian population and the police department in Aurora. His expertise in transgender relationships is less well established, he freely admitted, and we encouraged him to undertake this most important and timely endeavor since transgender people have a fear of contact with both police departments and emergency responders.

Brian Johnson, new CEO of Equality Illinois, will be visiting PFLAG McHenry in August as part of his statewide listening tour.

Tinley Park CHAPTER
By Deborah Medina

Several new people attended our July meeting. We were honored to have Owen Daniel McCarter from The Illinois Safe School Alliance speak to our group about the work they do and the current situations throughout Illinois. We ended our meeting, as we always do, with sharing our experiences and resources.

DuPage CHAPTER
By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

Our July meeting was well attended and included several new people. We were honored to have Jamie Black -- actor, comedian, and producer -- speak. Jamie, a transgender man, spoke eloquently and candidly about his journey that started Downstate and eventually brought him to Chicago. Jamie is a solo performance artist and his shows have played all across the country. His current show, It’s my penis and I’ll cry if I want to, will have its St. Louis premiere in August. He recently was an associate producer on the new talk show Transformative, which featured five transgender women as the panelists. He is cofounder of the sketch comedy troupe Soul Fools. He can be seen in many regional commercials and was most recently seen in 2 web series: Superfreaks and Toured. Have you heard of StoryCorps? Jamie recently posted an "interview" with his mom in which they discussed his transgender identity. You can listen to the interview at https://storycorps.me/interviews/jamie-black-and-his-mom/.

During our sharing circle, member Diane Johanning opened her heart and read to us a poem that she wrote about what it meant to her to have walked with us in Wheaton’s July 4th Parade:

My eyes shaded in black and white
Right or wrong
Good or bad
My focus, so sharp, so precise
In the mirror I saw
The blackness of the black
And the wrongness of the wrong
The badness of the bad
No light shined there.
There was dark. Just the dark.

Then one day
And I don’t know exactly how
Just a pinprick
A tiny revelation
Which really wasn’t so tiny
It only looked that way from the outside.

But inside it was
An Explosion of Light
The dark still there
But now... not Only...
As if it ever was.

Perhaps it’s the vision that was changed
Corrected
Unfocused, then refocused
The Dark Eye of my dreams unveiling the way

Until
It was Beauty I beheld
Crystalline and polished
All the colors of the rainbow...

Everyone could see.

And now
I take up my staff
And unfetter my feet
I march in the Parade
I have found my Main Street.

And in finding myself
I am no longer alone
It is not only me who marches
You march with me... We...
Side-by-side
Mothered... Sistered...
Witnessed now to witness
Found now to find.

Rainbow Soul
Diane L. Johanning
Announcements

a) We want to express a great big thank you to John Hickey for organizing the PFLAG table at the Family Pride event on Navy Pier. Many people talked with us and took literature. It’s a bit surprising that so many people have never heard of PFLAG. In addition to John, DuPage members who supported the event were Jo Ann Larson, Gail and Paul Hanson, Rita and Steve Rothmund, and us.

b) We also thank the Hanson and Hickey families for organizing another successful and eye-catching entry for Wheaton’s July 4th parade. We had about 50 marchers (members, friends, and family) and a warm reception by increased numbers of parade watchers.

c) The LGBTQ Youth and Family Picnic will be Saturday, August 27th at DuPage River Park in Naperville. Details will be provided when they become available.

d) For the first time, we will participate in Naperville’s labor day parade on Monday, September 5th, 2016, beginning at 10:00 a.m. We invite all of you and your ally friends to join us and make a big, bold statement to the Naperville community. Details will follow as they become available.

e) Saturday, July 16th, was the quarterly meeting of the Northern Illinois Council.

i) Don Donahue spoke passionately about membership and efforts of the membership committee to promote increased membership. Don offered to visit every chapter to share his passion.

ii) DuPage volunteered to host a program developed by PFLAG National entitled Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for All. PFLAG National will cover travel expenses for Brooke Smith, who will conduct the all day workshop. The date is Saturday, October 15th. Space has been reserved at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Wheaton. Help in setting up for the presentation is welcome!!

iii) Megan Ford spoke about the amazing accomplishments of the Rockford PFLAG chapter, which had its first meeting in February!

f) Our guest on August 21 will be Jerome Pohlen, author of Gay & Lesbian History for Kids, which was a finalist for the 2016 Lambda Literary Awards, as well as 20 other children’s and travel books. He is currently a senior editor at Chicago Review Press.

Rockford CHAPTER

By Megan Ford

July was a busy month for PFLAG Rockford!

We were proud to march in our local 4th of July parade. There were about a dozen of us carrying the rainbow, trans, and American flags along with signs with captions such as “One Pulse; One Family” and “Love is Love.” We also gave out about 50 handheld fans that featured information on how to contact us as well as our monthly meeting information. We were happy to see many citizens cheering for us and showing their support for our LGBTQ+ community.

July’s monthly meeting was our largest yet with about 40 people in attendance! Needless to say we were extremely happy with the turn out and looking forward to the coming months and input new members can provide!

I was able to attend the quarterly council meeting and was met with open arms. Our chapter looks forward to the wisdom, support, guidance and the other chapters can provide.

Our chapter took part in Bookerfest this month. Bookerfest is an African American community festival in Rockford. We had an informational booth and were able to reach out to a part of the community we previously had little contact with.

Additionally, we took part in the 2nd annual ROC Party. This was a neighborhood block party (ROC stands for Rural Oaks Corner) in which we volunteered to run the kids activity booth. We were able to use the games and some prizes we had left over from our Summer Reading Kickoff party with the Rockford Public Library and did face painting as well.

With thousands of people in attendance at these events combined we were certainly able to make our presence known in the Rockford community!

Although we are still not officially able to raise funds for our chapter, we are proud of the work we have been able to do so far and are eager to start planning fundraising events!
PTI Chicago CHAPTER
By Arlene Collins

PTI was happy to welcome State Representative Greg Harris of the 13th District of Illinois to our July 14th PTI Meeting. Rep. Harris was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 2006. He serves as Illinois State Representative for the 13th District, which includes parts of Uptown, Ravenswood, Lincoln Square, North Center, West Ridge and Bowmanville. He has long been a friend and advocate for the LGBTQ community, and was the Chief Sponsor of the Illinois Marriage Equality Law.

Our members engaged with Rep. Harris on different concerns, including the ability to change the gender marker on Illinois Birth Certificates without having to undergo the risk of gender alignment surgery. It should be legal and acceptable for a doctor to write on behalf of their trans patient that they are in the process of transitioning to their affirmed gender. That should be sufficient. Many transgender people do not wish to undergo surgery at all. Every transgender person should have the right to procure a birth certificate that matches their affirmed gender.

We also discussed the current school policy in Illinois re LGBT students. It was pointed out that under the present law, federal statutory protections address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability. Unfortunately, federal civil rights do not expressly protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Our members voiced their concern that unfortunately the rights of all children are not enforced in all schools, and some administrators and staff are indifferent to the law, causing parents to sell their homes, uproot their family and leave their school district in search of one that will be compatible with their child’s needs.

It was a very spirited and informational evening and we thank Rep. Harris for taking the time from his very busy schedule to join us and answer many of our questions as well as listening and offering us hope. He remarked that he would be willing to sit down and engage further with parents pertaining to rights and laws concerning transgender people and inform us how we can more effectively advocate for our sons and daughters.

Our next PTI meeting will be held on Thursday, Aug. 11th. Please join us and bring your families and friends.

Oak Park CHAPTER
By Nancy Johnson

It’s been quite a summer so far!

On Saturday May 28 (Memorial Day weekend) we helped OPALGA make and sell donuts at the Oak Park Farmers Market. We asked Harbor 57 (drop in center for homeless youth) if they wanted to help and share the money we would get from OPALGA. So Willis Morris from Harbor 57 and Katie Thomas and I from Oak Park made, dusted, and sold donuts that day. One of the perks is that we get to eat the misshapen donuts!

July 2 was our annual bake sale at the Oak Park Farmers Market. We made about $900 including donations. We didn’t have quite as many products as previous years, but we sold out early, and didn’t have to cut our prices to clear the table. Sylvia’s gluten-free banana bread (4 loaves) sold before we were quite open.

Kate’s sister, Pat, baked her soda bread, and it sold out pretty fast too. One man bought one with a $20 bill, and told us to keep the change. After a bit he came back, and a little hesitantly asked if he could have another one with the money he donated. Yes, of course he could!

Next up was the July 4th parade. Gy, Sylvia and Phil marched. OPALGA always invites us to march with them, and it’s great fun especially as the Lakeshore Pride Marching Band is always with us too!

Yesterday was our July meeting. Our guest was Kate Readling who is with Scouts for Equality. For the last two years the Oak Park troop has been the color guard for the Pride Parade. She is working with others to identify BSA troops that are open and affirming of diversity. They have a special badge with both rainbow and blue and silver knot, for both LGBT diversity and religious diversity.

Rather than have our Fifth Sunday Potluck on July 31, we are planning to have our potluck on August 5 with Harbor 57 volunteers and whoever else wants to come. It will be at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church at 5700 West Midway in Chicago (just 3 blocks from Oak Park.)
PFLAG Rockford participating at Rockford’s 4th of July parade!

McHenry’s 4th of July Parade

Fred & Meg Valentini with Beth Rosso
IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO BECOME A MEMBER... SUPPORT PFLAG

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)_________________________________________________________________________

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(Notes or In Memory of ___ In Honor of) __________________________________________________________________

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SELECT A CHAPTER:

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

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____ Joliet ___ Kankakee/Will/Iroquois____ Palatine ____ Oak Park ____DeKalb County ____ DuPage

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

PFLAG Membership P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126
OPEN DOORS – The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

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/PTI Sycamore
Meetings held LAST Tuesday – 7 pm
Federated Church of Sycamore
612 W State St
Sycamore, IL 60178
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

PFLAG Tinley Park
Meetings held 2nd Sunday – 2-4 pm
Zion Lutheran Church
17100 69th Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477

PFLAG Downers Grove
Meetings held 2nd Wednesday – 7 p.m.
First Congregational UCC
1047 Curtis
Downers Grove, IL 60515

PFLAG Hinsdale
Meetings held 1st Sunday – 2 pm
Unitarian Church Hinsdale
11 W Maple, Hinsdale 60521
pflaghinsdale@pflagillinois

PFLAG Joliet
Contact Maria Prekop
maria.prekop@navigant.com

PFLAG Will, Kankakee, Iroquois
Meetings held 3rd Sunday, 2-4 pm
1045 W River St
Kankakee, IL
pflagkankakee@pflagillinois.org

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

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) – NEW DAY
Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday – 7 p.m.
Tree of Life Unitarian Church
5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
flynmb12@gmail.com
marygenzler@hotmail.com

Parents of Transgender (North Shore)
Meetings are held the 3rd Sunday – 6 p.m.
Winnetka Presbyterian Church
1255 Winnetka Rd, Winnetka, IL

PFLAG Rockford - NEW
Meetings are held the 1st Monday – 6:30 pm
Rockford Public Library
215 N Wyman St, Rockford, IL
(use entrance off Mulberry St.)

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.