This is a bittersweet moment as I realize that it’s my final column as leader of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. I think back to when our chapter leader, Joan Coleman, and I attended our first council meeting. We were a small enough group that we used to meet in each other’s homes. John Larson was president and Char Cepek, whose husband, John, later became national president, was VP. I think of the special people like Marilyn Keller and Barbara Schon-Lundberg who were integral members of the group, setting an example of dedication and passion for us to emulate. John, Marilyn, and Barbara are no longer with us, and we keenly feel their loss, but the council continues because of the foundational work they did.

Each person who leads the council carries a particular vision of what they want it to be. My vision of council is that it is a place where chapters are supported and growth fostered. It’s only with strong chapters that we have the outreach that has made us such a powerful voice in Northern Illinois. We come together in council to forge a closer working relationship, to share ideas, and to work through issues that confront us. We learn how to work together so as to have one voice and one vision – the vision of a world where our loved ones – friends and family - are treated equally and respectfully. To encourage participation in council, monthly meetings were changed to quarterly, and the speaker phone was eliminated. We need that face time for building those relationships.

Another change I brought to the table for discussion was returning a portion of the dues to the chapter. Up until then, not a penny of the annual membership came back to the local chapter. However, something very important had to be sacrificed – the print edition of Open Doors. $15 of every membership went to support the printing and distribution of our newsletter, and only paid members received it. Did we lose readership? I’m sure we did. Folks my age are simply too accustomed to holding hard copies in their hands, but good has come out of it, too. The advantage of having Open Doors on line is that it is now widely available to people beyond our doors, advertising what our chapters and members do to fulfill our three-fold mission of support, education, and advocacy.

PFLAG is, most of all, about people, and I have had the honor of working with some incredible people during my five years at the helm, people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for making my role easier and my tasks lighter. But now it’s time to say goodbye to my leadership role on council and to welcome John Hickey as the new leader of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. John and his board (Don Donahue, VP; Jim Levie, Treasurer; Sue Ginsburg, Secretary) will make us proud as all of us together strive to

MOVE EQUALITY FORWARD

With gratefulness and love,
Toni

NI Councils Leaders to date...

John Larsen – Char Cepak – Jeff Wedig - Peter Ji – Barbara Shon Lundberg - Toni Weaver – John Hickey

Tremendous Leaders
BECOME A PFLAG MEMBER!

Sign up today!
It’s not too late!

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) ______________________________________________

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

____ PFLAG Superhero $500+  ____ PFLAG Hero $250

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____ Household/Individual Membership $45  ____ Donation $_______

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____ Downers Grove  ____ Palatine  ____ Tinley Park

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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
Thank you, Toni Weaver and Welcome, John Hickey!

Hello PFLAG Members and Friends!

I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve the PFLAG Chapters of Northern Illinois in our mission to provide Support, Education and Advocacy. I know that the power of PFLAG is magnified by our members and bringing together the power of all of the chapters in Northern Illinois to collaborate together can have positive impactful beyond our imaginations. Thank you for your contributions to PFLAG. Whether you are a chapter leader, a volunteer, a participant at meetings or donor, we all make a difference by supporting our common mission.

It is my hope that whatever your engagement, visitor, member, volunteer or leader, please continue your journey with us. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to join as a member and/or donate.

I will be reaching out to each chapter lead regarding our mission and goals. However, if you have an idea or suggestion you would like to be involved with, please feel free to contact me at info@pflag.org

Last, but certainly not least, I have to give a huge shout out and sincere thank you to Toni Weaver for her tireless dedication and commitment to our mission. Toni served as leader of this Council for the past five years and had spent countless hours advancing our mission providing support to our chapter leaders, supporting inclusion and equality in our places of worship, where we work, in our homes, our schools and communities in general. Thank you Toni for your energy and passion and commitment to making a difference- because you do make a difference!

John Hickey
HINSDALE CHAPTER
By Barb Medley

At our October meeting, we viewed the movie, “The Year We Thought About Love,” a behind-the-scenes, compassionate look at the teen actors and creators of True Colors, a theater troupe for LGBTQ youth between the ages of 14-22. The movie gives an honest, funny, intimate and positive view of lives that are too often hidden or negatively stereotyped. Find out more at www.newday.com.

Our November speaker is Christopher Nolan, co-founder and lead of Rush University Health System’s LGBTQ+ Health Committee and a member of the system’s Diversity Leadership Council. We’re continuing our annual charitable drive, collecting toiletries, candies and warm socks, gloves and hats for The Crib shelter run by the Night Ministry. We’ll fill Christmas stockings with these donations during our December potluck celebration.

MCHENRY CHAPTER
By Toni Weaver

In October we welcomed bisexual activist Michael Oboza to our chapter meeting. He provided much needed insight into bisexuality since frequently the bi orientation is seen as only an intermediate step in the coming out process and not as an orientation in its own right. This article by Ross Forman from a 2013 Windy City Times article provides good insight into his life and work.

Br. Michael C. Oboza has admitted he waged a long internal battle to figure out ‘how straight or gay’ he assumed he had to be.

Instead, he’s bisexual—and he works daily with others identified by the “B” in the LGBT community.

“I knew I had butterflies for two classmates from kindergarten to seventh-grade at the same time. That’s eight years. [Being bisexual is] not a phase. And it took exploring being gay and straight for over 30 years to accept my butterflies; my bisexual birthright is real and exists,” he said.

Oboza said the best part of his job is “meeting other out and closeted bisexuals” on a daily basis. The worst part is, “knowing bisexuals who have attempted or committed suicide from biphobia.”

Oboza is an Orthodox Catholic Eastern Rite monastic. He has received accolades from The Love Foundation, Inc., and the Southern Poverty Law Center for his dedication to confronting biphobia while organizing bisexual programming at the Center on Halsted in Lakeview. He also was a key member of the community working to organize and host “Celebrate Bisexuality Day” at the Center in 2010 and 2011.

Oboza secured the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations Advisory Council on LGBT Issues’ endorsement of San Francisco’s “Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations” report, receiving 2011 the Michael Page Award from the Marin Foundation for his efforts.

He founded the Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago (BQAC) in 2010, and has been integral confronting homophobia in churches regarding same-sex blessings, and was the first open bisexual selection and host committee for the Legacy Project Chicago.

He also is the senior editor for Our Fence, a Chicago-based bisexual newsletter.

Michael may be reached at twospiritmonk@gmail.com.

Once again, PFLAG McHenry is supporting a workshop for school support staff (school psychologists, guidance counselors, and school social workers) on Oct. 31. After a
wildly successful workshop last February at which over 200 people were trained in Trans 101, the focus this time is to provide more detailed support for those folks who work most directly with LGBTQ youth in our area schools.

In November we’ll center our program on the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

We also welcomed a new member to our meeting who was on her journey of acceptance and support as well as her concern for her child. We listened and cried, as we often do, but as usual our members were so caring with their words of encouragement and hugs of love. I am grateful for our members and their willingness to be open to each other. I am proud to be a member of PTI.

November 10th is our next meeting and our speakers will be Danielle Tipping, a postdoctoral fellow along with Dr. Erin Liebich, Clinical Psychologist at the Center for Personal Growth in Carol Stream, IL. They will talk about the Transgender Umbrella and the terms that fall under it, as well as issues concerning our children. This should be a very informative meeting open to all.

OAK PARK CHAPTER
By Nancy Johnson

On September 10 we had a table at Barrie Fest. As usual it was a lot of fun. The rain stopped in time for the Fest to go on as scheduled. This year the food vendor showed up, with several tasty items on the menu. We had sticker to give out which were quite popular with the kids.

We haven’t had speakers at our last two meetings, nor have we had any newcomers. We usually have plenty to discuss however! Due to my eye surgeries in September I didn’t get the information about elections out to people in time, so our nominations still have a couple of weeks to run. We will have our election for a new Board at our November meeting.

Our December meeting falls on Christmas Day. Sandy and Owen have volunteered to be at the meeting room for an hour or so in case any one drops in.

DuPage CHAPTER
By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

It was a busy and very fulfilling weekend in October for PFLAG DuPage!

On Friday October 14th we worked at St. Paul to prepare for the workshop on Saturday, which was followed by our monthly meeting on Sunday.

PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER
By Arlene Collins

Our speaker for October was Liz Higgins, Director of the Transgender Hormonal Therapy Program at Planned Parenthood Illinois. Liz was very helpful and described the benefits of this program to our group. This necessary service will improve the availability and convenience for our transgender community. We are very grateful to PPIL for adding this service to the list of already existing ones. For more information about PPIL’s locations and other healthcare services go online to https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-illinois/patient-resources/transgender-healthcare
For the 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students who experience some form of mistreatment in school, education can be a frightening experience. It’s incumbent upon parents, families, friends, and allies to make schools safer for ALL students.

Copies of presentation materials will be available in our chapter library. Additional resources related to this topic are also available at [https://www.pflag.org/safeschools101](https://www.pflag.org/safeschools101).

At Sunday’s meeting we viewed the video “A Day in the Life of LGBT Teens” and presented a brief summary of the workshop. The video is powerful and it served as a good segue to the summary and discussion. You can view it at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ly8rijlt9M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ly8rijlt9M).

At our November meeting (3rd Sunday) we will be pleased and honored to welcome Mike Bauer and his husband Roger Simon! Mike is an attorney and a long-time supporter/activist in the LGBTQ community with political connections that include the White House, Springfield, and the Chicago mayor’s office. It will be interesting to hear Mike’s comments in the wake of the presidential election cycle.

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**Tinley Park CHAPTER**  
*By Diane Kaffka*

Greetings! At our October meeting, we were joined by Don Donahue who enlightened us on the importance of PFLAG membership. We also celebrated the one-year anniversary of PFLAG Tinley Park with a potluck luncheon as part of our regular meeting. New folks, as well as old, join us each month in sharing our stories, challenges, and successes. We definitely feel a connection with one another through our experiences. We look forward to many more years of being a support in the southwest suburbs.

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**Deerfield CHAPTER**  
*By Susan Ginsburg*

10/13/16 PFLAG MEETING  
A reminder at the beginning of the meeting suggested members “be there” for support of other members and guests, but, at the same time keep in mind that as non-professionals, we are able to give others the benefit of our experiences, but to always be mindful that it’s not professional ‘advice.’

Don Donahue, Membership Chairperson of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Council (the Council represents all Chapters in Northern Illinois) and a PFLAG Dad, spoke to the Deerfield chapter about the need to support PFLAG for the coming fiscal year. Member’s individual dues of $45/year go to educate, influence change and support PFLAG’s Washington staff, insurance, brochures, lobbying, and consolidate the ongoing efforts of individual chapters. Pre-addressed envelopes were distributed with membership and mailing options. Subscribers can also go online to [www.pflagillinois.org](http://www.pflagillinois.org) and click GIVE to enroll.

Our speaker this month was Julie Witczak, a teacher Caruso Middle School. Julie spoke about the Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) she initiated in her school, where Ann’s daughter attends. She was motivated by a hate crime: the death in 1998 of Matthew Shepard who was beaten, tortured, and left to die by classmates because of his sexual orientation. The teacher responded to general interest in the student body about gay issues and specific interest in students who recognize they are or may be gay. 8 of the 9 students in the group she formed have come out.

The school administration is supporting the effort:  
- the library has bought books kids and videos to support the effort  
- stickers identify ‘safe sites’  
- a ‘Day of Silence’ was held to honor those who remain silent because of their fear of being outted  
- the school included a booth dealing with gay issues in an activities fair  
- Human Rights Campaign project provides tools to educate teachers, other adults and students

It was very exciting to see this kind of progress on the Middle School Level. Coincidentally, before our meeting, we held an executive board gathering and decided that our goal for this year was to try to get in to more Middle Schools. So Julie provided a kind of template for us to follow!

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**Downers Grove CHAPTER**  
*By Gloria Walsh-Rock*

In October we welcomed John and Mary Ann Hickey,
active members from the PFLAG DuPage chapter. John and Mary Ann shared their story as parents of two children, on gay and one straight, and talked about the importance of PFLAG on their journey to becoming the strong advocates they are today.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, November 9 at 7 p.m. at First Congregational UCC, 1047 Curtiss St. in Downers Grove. Join us!

McHenry PTI CHAPTER
By Marya Flynn

We are a group of parents from Northern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin. We meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month in McHenry, Illinois.

As one of the co-leaders of our group, I have been privileged to meet many kind, loving and awe inspiring parents. Parents who often are surprised to find themselves in new and uncomfortable situations.

Surprised because our kids can hide a lot from us! They are often terrified of not being accepted and possibly being kicked out of their homes and their families.

Sometimes folks wonder why the parents of transgender children are forming their own groups. The LGBTQ community has seen an upsurge in acceptance in recent years, and we are a better society because of it. But the transgender, queer and gender fluid or questioning are lagging behind in that equation. AND there are very many levels of change that need attending to.

The name they want to be called: at home, at school........legal changes to their drivers licenses, birth certificates...social security, travel documents...etc.

Extreme changes in appearance, (what will the neighbors think, let alone crazy uncle Bob and my elderly parents! )...Hair, clothing, make-up. Learning how to walk and talk differently.

Permanent medical issues: hormones, surgeries.....high incidence of severe depression and suicidal tendencies...

I do not intend to paint a bleak picture. These kids are the most courageous and determined individuals you could ever wish to meet. AND when given enough time and space as well as the proper support, can often grow into some the most honest, creative and dependable members of society.

Over the years we have also had tremendous guest speakers who have shared their knowledge and experiences with us. You know who are, THANK YOU!!

UPCOMING DATES!!!

The past couple of Holiday Seasons we took a break during November and December. This year we are changing that!!!!!! We will be meeting during the Holiday Season!!

In November we will meet on the FIFTH Wednesday of the month.

The dates are: November 30th. December 28th.

We meet at: Tree Of Life Unitarian Congregation
5603 Bull Valley Road
McHenry, Illinois 60050

From: 7:00pm - 9:00pm.

Rockford CHAPTER
By Maggie Slankard

PFLAG Rockford was able to attend Cultivating Respect on 10/15/16. PFLAG DuPage and Brooke put on the event. The seminar was focused on ways that we can create inclusive policies that represent all people to make our communities a safe place for everyone. We talked about ways to combat bullying through compassion, understanding, and education. We left the seminar with specific goals about how we can come back to our community and educate the public and act as allies for our LGBTQIA friends and family members. The seminar came at a perfect time since we have been talking about how to get inclusive policies into other schools similar to the one created for Harlem in our area. We will also be helping with Parent/Teacher conferences at the end of this month. We look forward to reaching out to schools in the Rockford region and making our community a safer, more inclusive place for all people.
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 Curtiss
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
flynnmb12@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.