Open Doors

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President’s Column

United in Solidarity for a Bright Future

As I interact with young people today, I am encouraged and impressed by their energy, authenticity, empathy and commitment. They hold tight to their core values of social justice and equality. It is the youth of today who are leading us into tomorrow with unstoppable persistence. Remember, a river cuts through rock not because of its power, but because of its persistence.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the 25th annual Midwestern Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Ally College Conference- “MBLGTACC” for short... The 2017 conference was hosted at Navy Pier in Chicago by DePaul, Loyola Chicago, and Northeastern Illinois University, and ran from Friday 2/17-Sun 2/19. The conference was themed “United in Solidarity” and had in excess of 2,200 registrants from all around the country. The PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois hosted an information table in the exhibition hall on Friday and Saturday to raise awareness of PFLAG as a resource. I am grateful to Mary Ann Hickey, Ron and Bernadette Whitfield, and Paul and Gail Hanson for joining me and engaging students, advisors and workshop presenters as they visited our table. We provided the students with the opportunity to decorate a safety pin with beads. While we originally thought that we would simply be making rainbow patterns with the beads, we quickly realized that the students were far more creative and expressive than that. We made a quick run to the craft store for more pins and to expand our color palette to cover flags representing a multitude of identities. It was heartwarming to engage with the students as they gathered at our table, sometimes in rows two and three deep, to talk with us and create their pins. In the day and a half we were there, over 500 pins were created and proudly worn as the students left our table energized and affirmed.

It was an incredibly impactful and often moving experience for us, and those we connected with during that warm weekend in February. It was a perfect example of affirmation and empowerment, uniting us in solidarity for a brighter future.

by John Hickey
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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Look out for the new documentary film, *Kiki* that explores the lives of LGBTQ youth in New York City’s ballroom scene.

The film will be available On Demand and in select theaters in Los Angeles beginning February 24. It will open in select theaters in major markets in the following weeks. More information on the film follows below.

**SYNOPSIS**

25 years after *Paris Is Burning* introduced the art of voguing to the world, *Kiki* revisits New York City’s thriving underground ballroom scene. It’s a larger-than-life world in which LGBTQ youths of color are empowered by staging elaborate dance competitions that showcase their dynamic choreography, fabulous costumes, and fierce attitude. It’s also a safe haven for struggling, at-risk teens that find acceptance, support, and friendship within the Kiki community. Granted intimate access to the scene, filmmaker Sara Jordenö introduces viewers to some of Kiki culture’s most prominent personalities, going beyond the glamour of the balls to highlight the serious challenges facing queer black and Latino young people. Bringing together heartrending personal stories with incredible displays of creative expression, Kiki is “exhilarating...an indelible, must-see ode to gay New York” (Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*).

WEB: http://kikimovie.com
TRAILER: http://youtu.be/sobw_cJQ_ck
FACEBOOK: http://facebook.com/kikithefilm
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INSTAGRAM: http://instagram.com/kiki_movie
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HINSDALE CHAPTER
By Barb Medley

At our February meeting, we met youth leaders from Youth Outlook’s Transcend Drop-In Center. They discussed their experiences being trans and non-binary youth in 2017, what their current school climates are like, and what their hopes are for the future. They were open and personable, and they were very generous sharing their experiences and feelings with us. They explained that the term non-binary is an umbrella term for not falling within traditional gender identification boundaries.

Our guests were frank about difficulties faced by trans youth, including relationships with parents and friends and homelessness. They don’t want to bear the burden of hearing how confusing it is for others and wish their loved ones would attend a PFLAG meeting instead of making them responsible for supporting their uncomfortable feelings. We asked what message they would like to send others. They want to be validated without being labeled. They want respect. We received ours, and also our admiration.

Our guest speaker for March will be Rachael Schwabe, who will tell us about her thesis highlighting the AIDS quilt, its background and interesting information she discovered during her research.

Deerfield CHAPTER
By Sue Ginsburg

Unfortunately our speaker had a family emergency and was unable to attend our meeting this month. Fortunately, we are looking forward to her booking again very soon in the future! We in Deerfield are so very lucky that not having a speaker often gives us more time to connect with one another. We were so lucky to welcome 8 new people to our meeting, a total of 30 people altogether! We had more time to break up into smaller discussion groups, which were at times loud, funny and serious, but always helpful and supportive!

There is so much going on right now, that I had many ‘announcements’ and was asked by my group to write them all down and email them out. We are at a time in our history that sitting back and watching what takes place is unacceptable. We have to have our voices be heard!

So I thought I’d add these announcements here as well, hoping that those of you who read Open Doors might find some of them of interest to you as well.

1. National Geographic Channel: Gender Revolution, documentary by Katy Couric. (By the time this gets to you, the re-broadcasting will probably be over (Friday, 2-10; Monday, 2-13, both at 8:00 pm) But I’m sure you can get it on demand. DON’T MISS IT!

2. Legislation: Call your Congressmen!!!

   State House:

   a) Urge your State Rep. to vote YES on HB40! This bill would get rid of the “trigger” that is in the law that states if Roe v. Wade gets overturned, abortion will become illegal in Illinois. If passed, the trigger would be removed and even if we lose Roe v. Wade, we can still get safe, legal abortions in Illinois.

   b) Urge your State Rep. to vote NO on HB664!! This bill would force trans kids to use separate bathrooms and locker rooms.

(Coalition of 25 organizations have signed statement opposing this bill)

   State Senate:

   c) Urge your State Senator to say NO to SB64!! This bill states that if you have religious or moral convictions against same sex marriage, it’s OK to discriminate…and not just bakeries, but also hospitals, housing, etc.
For those of you who are already PFLAG members, when you get an email from PFLAG National, you can sign up for RAPID RESPONSE.

They will use your email to give you notice of important, time related advocacy opportunities.

Call Dick Durbin regarding the new Supreme Court nominee….word has it that he’s wavering in casting a no vote. He MUST vote with the Democratic caucus, which would be NO to Judge Gorsuch.

MARCH 15 - Post card mailing around the country. We are asking everyone to write a post card to:

Donald Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Tell him what you think; tell him he’s fired; tell him whatever you’d like. We want MILLIONS of postcards flooding the White House.

If you are interested in participating in some marches, here’s a list of some:

Feb. 20: Not My Presidents’ Day March; Trump Tower, Chicago, 12:00 pm

April 15: Trump Tax March, Chicago; 10:00 am; Millenium Pk, 201 E. Randolph

April 22: 9:00 am; March For Science, place TBA

May 14: Kisses from PFLAG event at Sidetracks. Details for sign up soon!

McHenry CHAPTER
By Toni Weaver

On February 5 fifteen PFLAG McHenry members and one PFLAG DuPage member (Ron Whitfield) participated in a demonstration/rally in Crystal Lake in anticipation of Donald Trump signing an executive order that would promote so-called “religious” liberty that would result in discrimination against LGBTQ people. Although the newspaper reported that only 50 people came out for the rally, a person in the crowd took a head count that added up to 100 people. Participating in rallies like this will be a most important part of our PFLAG advocacy work in the days, months, and years ahead.

Speaking of advocacy, the latest PFLAG Academy Online featured an excellent training on advocacy with information that needs to be broadly shared among PFLAG members everywhere.

We purposely kept our February 14 (Valentine’s Day) meeting low key, anticipating a lower number of attendees. However, we opened with a 1 minute, 33 second video out of Australia called #HoldTight to set the mood for the evening. In it, a series of couples initially were holding hands, but sensing disapproval, released their hands. The very end of the vignette sent the message “When you feel like letting go, #HoldTight.” One can find this video on YouTube.

Four new folks came to the meeting: a gay man and his mom and a mom and dad of a transgender child. Because we have several chapter members who attend both PFLAG and McHenry PTI, we are able to team up “new” parents immediately with experienced parents at our PFLAG meetings.

In March we’ll welcome Katie Thomas, a transgender woman who has been engaged in social and political activism for years on behalf of the transgender community. Katie brings a warmth and passion that makes her such an engaging speaker.

DuPage CHAPTER
By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

We had another wonderful meeting in February. We welcomed four new people, and our guest speaker was Fran Zucco of Linden Oaks Hospital (LOH) in Naperville.

Fran told us about efforts at LOH to accommodate transgender patients in treatment. She began with background information about transgender individuals: they experience higher rates of drug use and abuse, suicide, depression, anxiety, homelessness, sex work, HIV/AIDS, physical assault, poor access to competent care for physical and mental health, and family rejection.

Transgender individuals present challenges to hospital staff such as use of preferred name versus legal name, preferred pronouns, safety checks (which must be performed by hospital staff), room assignment, affirming
gender identity upon admission, and the need for education/awareness/acceptance of staff regarding diversity and inclusion. To address those challenges, LOH formed a multidisciplinary transgender task force whose goals include developing procedures for providing safe and affirming treatment for transgender individuals, and providing an education campaign for staff. The taskforce meets monthly to promote continuing progress toward achieving their goals and identify new challenges.

Fran presented ways to be allies (e.g., add gender identity to an organization’s non-discrimination policy, hire transgender people; make restrooms gender neutral); listed a number of resource guides; and identified about 24 professional organizations that have affirming transgender policy statements. You can find out more about LOH at https://www.eehealth.org/locations/naperville/linden-oaks-behavioral-health.

John and Gail met with Kristen Massey, a regional representative for the Illinois PTA. She invited them to make a presentation at the Illinois PTA Annual Convention to be held at the Hilton-Naperville on April 7-8, 2017. The conference focus is “Soaring to New Heights”. We are excited to have this opportunity to partner with the Illinois PTA as we explore ways to foster our shared mission to insure a safe and inclusive learning environment for every child and thereby enable all children to reach their full potential. This takes our school outreach initiative to a new height!

We still are hoping to have help from anyone who knows school board members, teachers, administrators, and/or superintendents in DuPage school districts, particularly at the junior high/middle school level. It helps a lot when contacting school and district personnel if we can drop a name. If you are willing to go one step farther and make a call, we have information that will be helpful for discussion.

Oak Park CHAPTER
By Nancy Johnson

Our February meeting drew a new couple who we had a good discussion with. Sometimes it's hard to know what to say. So maybe just listening is what is needed.

The Holmes Elementary School (Oak Park) PTO had a screening of the National Geographic documentary, Gender Revolution narrated by Katie Couric at the school on February 23. We put out PFLAG literature. Katie Thomas staffed the table. She reported that she talked to several people, the film was quite good with about 50 in attendance many of whom had transgender children. There will be another screening at the Main Library in Oak Park on Thursday March 30 probably starting at 6pm. I'll send out details when I know them.

We do not have a screening of anything scheduled ourselves, since some of us have been ill, or out of town, or both. Our Kate Kroker was able to come to the potluck on Jan 31, and she was doing quite well, and getting around like a champ with her walker. She has more recently had a bit of minor surgery on her leg, and is recovering from that, so wasn't able to attend our meeting Sunday.

The assault on transgender rights is much on our minds these days.

RALLY TO SUPPORT TRANSGENDER YOUTH

March 8, 2017
Walter R Sundling Jr High School
1100 N Smith St, Palatine

The rally is in response to the horrid Parents for Privacy group (http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20151130/news/15139913/)

This is the same group that has been showing up at school boards around Illinois to bully boards into adopting the Alliance Defending Freedom’s discriminatory policy. Please consider coming out to show your support for transgender youth. We will be rallying outside the board meeting, as we do not want to disrupt it. We will have trans flags and “separate is not equal” signs for folks to hold.
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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/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 – 7p.m.
First Congregational UCC
1047 Curtiss
Downers Grove, IL 60515
www.pflag.wixsite.com/pflagdg
pflagdg@gmail.com

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

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
plagkankakee@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)
Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday – 7 p.m.
Tree of Life Unitarian Church
5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
flynnmb12@gmail.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
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.