YOU are the Key to an Outstanding PFLAG Chapter

Every month I marvel at the impact of our PFLAG chapters as I witness members: helping new and returning visitors navigating new waters; volunteering in the community; and fostering constructive dialogue at work, at school or in their church... With PFLAG, people create profound moments of impact.

Sometimes those moments are obvious; they are absorbed silently by the recipient unnoticed by others. It’s these profound moments of impact that create the bonds that build our chapters and communities.

I like to tell people that PFLAG helps build inclusive and affirming environments. Moments that help open hearts and minds is the best way I know to inspire people to: maintain loving and affirming families on a foundation of pride, create engaging places of work, worship and community where people can bring their whole self without hesitation or fear.

Creating and reinforcing inclusive and affirming environments is not only a good thing to do to improve the quality of life for everyone, it is a necessary thing to do because it saves lives.

Whether you came to your first PFLAG meeting looking for support, trying to learn more, or just wanting to help out, I hope you keep coming back. It is the diversity of our chapters and our network that is so powerful. Sharing your story, your insights, your sorrows and joys can make a lasting difference, even when it is not always visible or obvious. Often it’s the little things we say that will click with someone and make an impact in their outlook and make a difference in their life. Many times we will not even know it happened. But, it does. That breadth of experience that comes with a diverse group helps to create a space rich in insights and comfort. Everyone’s participation is impactful and valued. As it says in our opening statement: “We earnestly welcome new members and encourage everyone to attend as many meetings as possible for the benefit of each individual as well as that of the group, because it is when we no longer feel the need for PFLAG, that PFLAG needs us the most.”

If you’ve been to a PFLAG meeting or event recently, pat yourself on the back. If you haven’t, please think about going soon. It can make a difference in your life and in the life of someone else.... Engage in PFLAG and create moments of profound impact. Believe it, YOU are the key to an outstanding PFLAG chapter!

In Love and Solidarity,

john
PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender 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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McHenry CHAPTER
By Toni Weaver

I think the highlight of our Chapter’s year is the Crystal Lake Independence Day Parade, which we have participated in every year since 2007; the year following the Gay Games which saw the rowing events being held on Crystal Lake. Under the guidance of parade coordinator Cate Becker, and with the amazing assistance of Michele and Bob Disselhorst and Allison and Marc Ponce de Leon, our PFLAG contingent “bubbled” its way through the streets of Crystal Lake. Our signature presence is marked by bubbles, millions of bubbles, filling the air to the delight of the children along the way. Thanks also go to Joe Copley who provided sandwiches, chips, and water to our contingent before the parade. The piece de resistance is our post-parade visit to Colonial Café for ice cream and conversation as we continue the celebration.

Several of the PFLAG/PTI moms are involved in making scarves (crochet, knit, loomed, etc.) in both the pride rainbow colors and in the tri-color that represents transgender to be donated to the Sex and Gender Development Program at Lurie’s. This was the brain child of a member of the Crystal Lake HS GSA and promoted by the club’s adviser, Tamara Jazwinski who, in turn, contacted me about bringing PFLAG McHenry on board. The project kicked off with a crocheting party to learn the basics and share the camaraderie. Tamara’s initial goal is to send in 20 scarves. I wonder if other chapters would be interested in this as well?

Our July chapter meeting featured a panel of mental health providers, all chapter members, discussing their work with LGBTQ+ clients of all ages but with a focus on young people in particular. Each brought a wealth of experience to the table, and they were available to answer the many questions posed by the group. Two are, themselves, mothers of LGBT kids, and the third is a lesbian woman, so all three brought personal stories and experiences to the table.

Carol Fetzner LCPC (Carol@wntacounseling.com)
Karen Graham LCSW (Karen.k.graham@gmail.com)
Brianna Sorensen LCSW - currently working on her doctorate - (blsorensen@yahoo.com)

We’re fortunate to have these three professional women in the chapter.

Deerfield CHAPTER
By Sue Ginsburg

I think we set a new attendance record! We hosted 40 people at this month’s meeting, including 4 new families!

We were honored to welcome Michael Halberstam, artistic director of Writers Theatre in Glencoe. He brought with him a surprise guest: the Director of the new play premiering at Writers Theatre on August 9, “Trevor, The Musical”, Marc Bruni. If that name is familiar to you, your memory serves you well. Marc Bruni directed the Tony Award winning production of “Beautiful: The Carole King Musical.

Trevor is based upon a 1994 Academy Award winning film and the national charity, The Trevor Project, which grew out of the making of this film. Michael and Marc explained how “Trevor, The Musical” was conceived and talked about its production. Trevor is a 13-year-old boy who has been bullied. We follow him on his road to self-discovery and the influences he explores along the way. “Trevor” will begin its run August 9 and continue to September 17 at Writers Theatre in Glencoe, IL (http://www.writerstheatre.org). If it follows in the footsteps of “Beautiful”, then it will be Broadway bound for sure! PFLAG Deerfield was asked to meet with Writers Theatre staff, along with several other civic organizations, to discuss content of plays that might be most meaningful to our community. We have our first meeting the end of July and I’ll share our findings next month.

Hinsdale CHAPTER
By Barb Medley

Happy Summer to everyone! We did not have a speaker in July because our meeting fell during the 4th of July holiday weekend. We did have a good group meeting, however, with two newcomers and lots of lively discussion.

We want to thank and congratulate, Marcia Prichason, for coordinating the Mother’s Day fundraiser at Sidetrack. Over $3000 was raised, which may be a record for that fundraiser. She put a lot of work into the event and had a wonderful group distributing kisses, hugs and well wishes.

Our August speaker will be Kim Hunt, the executive director of the Pride Action Tank. This organization addresses challenges facing the LGBTQIA community through inquiry, advocacy and action. It focuses on...
housing, health, safety, financial security, youth and aging. We will not have a speaker in September because our meeting falls on the Labor Day holiday. We will, of course, have a meeting and be available for support and discussion.

DuPage CHAPTER
By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

Our guest speaker in July was Rachael Schwabe. The title of her presentation is "Decoding the AIDS Memorial Quilt." Rachael's presentation is based on her senior thesis at Loyola University Chicago. Rachael's talk was very informative. The text of her presentation and her slides are attached. (or refer people to us who are interested in receiving these documents) Thank you, Rachael for making the time to visit us and sharing your knowledge of this important chapter of our country's recent history and the associated struggles of the LGBTQ+ community.

Thank You's

- Thank you to Renee and Judy for providing the treats, and Bonnie for scheduling every month
- Thank you to John and Mary Ann Hickey for their wonderful work on the Chicago Pride Parade
- Thank you to Gail, Paul, and Brittany Hanson for their wonderful work on the July 4th Parade
- Thank you to Lisa Garber for her creativity in designing the logo for our new T-shirts, and producing the T-shirts in time for the Wheaton parade on July 4th
- Thank you to Pastor Jay Moses and members of his congregation at Hope Presbyterian Church for their strong participation in marching with us at Wheaton’s July 4th parade
- Attendees at July’s chapter meeting were able to use the button maker to make a button or two. Among others, we had printouts for commemorative Pride Parade and July 4th Parade buttons.
- Thanks to the Hinsdale chapter for informing via Open Doors us about Rachael!

Announcements

- We received our first check from California Pizza Kitchen for the fundraiser in June. It was for $328.84. This is the amount donated by our anonymous benefactor. The balance, $671.16, from CPK will bring our total to $1,000. Amazing.
- Thursday, June 22, 2017 — Family Pride Night at the Morton Arboretum. We entertained several dozen children with our “take a pin, make a pin” craft and made buttons for them. We provided a variety of designs for them to choose. We met and talked with several families who were grateful to learn more about PFLAG. People generously donated about $30.
- Saturday, June 24, 2017 — PFLAG northern Illinois Council hosted a booth on Navy Pier and PFLAG DuPage was well represented. We again had safety pins and beads for visitors and the very popular button maker. People very generously donated more than $100 to pay it forward for our community outreach activities. We also hosted a table in the Chicago Children’s Museum. The pin decorating activity was very popular with the children.
- Sunday, June 25, 2017 — Chicago Pride Parade — PFLAG northern Illinois Council sponsored entry and provided a trolley, snacks, and water. We had a strong turnout of about 100 marchers — including about 24 members from PFLAG Rockford — and, as usual, a very warm reception by spectators.
- Tuesday, July 4th, 2017 — Wheaton’s Parade — We were pleased to have about 50 marchers this year. Especially welcome were a dozen members of Hope Presbyterian Church in Wheaton led by Pastor Jay Moses. Acceptance and warmth seem to increase each year and this year was no exception.
- Links to videos and pictures about the Pride Parade and the July 4th Parade are:
  - Mary Ann’s Wheaton Photos: https://www.snapfish.com/photos/gift/share?via=link&token=dkOlPvVuxb2JnrVRAeElEg/AUS/2794s6415343070/SNAPFISH
  - Ron’s Pride Photos: https://www.snapfish.com/photos/gift/share?via=link&token=dkOlPvVuxb2JnrVRAeElEg/AUS/2794s564571070/SNAPFISH
  - Mary Ann’s Pride photos: https://www.snapfish.com/photo -
A friend, neighbor, and teaching colleague of Bernadette’s for 20+ years wrote a check for $200 to PFLAG DuPage. She wants us to buy $100 worth of pride flags to distribute to children at our events. The July 4th parade and the Chicago Children’s Museum would have been good opportunities to have them.

In the future:

- Saturday, August 19, 2017, 3-7 PM, DuPage River Park, 808 Royce Road, Naperville — LGBTQ Youth + Family Picnic — Last year’s event was well attended and very successful. For more information see https://picniclgbtq.eventbrite.com or contact Carolyn Wahlskog at wahlskog@youth-outlook.org.

- Saturday, August 26, 2017, noon-3 PM — Hope Presbyterian Church in Wheaton celebrates its 27 year relationship with an African-American church in Englewood with their now-annual Diversity Picnic. PFLAG is invited to participate in welcoming 50-80 folks from the Church. Last year, friends from Sikh, Muslim, Mormon, and other communities participated. If you can participate, please consider donating bingo prizes for the children and senior citizens. For example, markers can be purchased for $1 at Walmart. Other ideas include coloring books, kids’ books; liquid hand soap, and hand cream (Bed Bath & Beyond; Joann Fabrics). Please contact us if you would like more information about this wonderful event.

- There is very interesting information from PFLAG National in a Policy Matters e-mail message. Media, policy, state, national, and global issues are covered. Attached is a PDF copy of that message. (optional)

Chicago PTI CHAPTER
By Ariene Collins

The following news was inadvertently omitted from last month’s edition. The author of this piece is Molly Malone of the Chicago PTI chapter.

We welcomed Mike Ziri, Director of Public Policy at Equality Illinois, to our June meeting. Mike shared with us the hard work that Equality Illinois has been doing on behalf of everyone in Illinois. Their legislative agenda for 2017 includes support for several Illinois House and Senate bills. SB 1761 prohibits the use of LGBTQ panic defenses in murder cases and was passed by both the House and Senate undefeated and is waiting for Governor Rauner’s signature! HB 1785 Modernize State Vital Records Act updates the law regarding changing the gender marker on a birth certificate. Thanks to the hard work of Illinois families like those in PFLAG, the ACLU, Equality Illinois, and many others (especially those who shared their personal stories with legislators), it also passed and is awaiting the governor’s signature! SB 1670 LGBTQ Public Service Bill allows individuals to self-identify as LGBTQ when applying for a seat on a State board or commission. This will allow the State to collect data regarding the diversity of applicants (for those volunteering to self-identify). This bill was also passed and is awaiting the governor’s signature! As many of you know, it’s important for LGBTQ folks to be counted in all areas of life.

Mike’s political expertise was informative and encouraging. He helped demystify some of the processes involved with political advocacy. Importantly, he said that it is very powerful when State legislators hear from their constituents—10 messages is enough to listen; 20 is an “emergency.” Our main take-away was OUR VOICES MATTER and we felt encouraged to speak
up. Right now, everyone is encouraged to contact Governor Rauner regarding signing the 3 above mentioned bills that were passed. You can contact the governor by sending paper letters to Governor Bruce Rauner, 207 State House, Springfield, IL 62706. All correspondence is kept with the bill for historical purposes. Every letter is read. Mike and I encourage you to be part of this historic moment in Illinois LGBTQ history by having your voice heard: write a letter! You can also contact the governor online at https://www.illinois.gov/gov/contactus/Pages/VoiceAnOpinion.aspx, by calling 217-782-0244, or by Tweeting @GovRauner.

We really appreciated Mike’s time. The rest of our time was spent welcoming new members and discussing the upcoming PRIDE Parade. A few of us will be marching and we are looking forward to meeting members of the other chapters.

Downers Grove CHAPTER
By Gloria

In July we welcomed musical artist and speaker Riss Carter. Riss’s original music speaks to living authentically and breaking free of gender boundaries, and everyone enjoyed the great performance of acoustic guitar and vocals. Riss is also a speaker through NIU’s Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, and Riss spoke with us about being out as a gender expansive person, and the opportunities to connect and speak with others about gender and living an authentic life.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, August 9 at 7 p.m. at 1047 Curtiss St in Downers Grove. All are welcome.

OPEN DOORS encourages all members of the PFLAG community to share their stories, experiences and news in our newsletter. In doing so, it keeps us connected and informed and offers support in more ways than one!

If you would like to share something and have it published in an issue, please email to og4equality@gmail.com. If you prefer to remain anonymous, please indicate.
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 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
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

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
parentsotransgender@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
flynmb12@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.