It’s when you no longer feel the need for PFLAG, that PFLAG needs you the most.

Though I have heard it over a hundred times, I still listen closely each time the opening statement is read at a PFLAG Chapter meeting. It is a great reminder of our mission and the reason we gather together. One part that especially resonates with me is the reminder that “…it’s when you no longer feel the need for PFLAG, that PFLAG needs you the most…” Not only does this remind me of the day I realized that I had crossed that threshold, but, more so because I have witnessed over and over, that amazing transformation in others.

PFLAG is not just about getting the support we need and getting on our way. PFLAG is about being a part of something bigger. It’s about being a member of a nurturing group that provides us with opportunities for growth, friendship and the ability to make a difference in the lives of others and in our communities.

I know that many of us probably attended our first PFLAG meeting because we were trying to move from an uncomfortable place to a place of comfort, from a place of darkness to a place of light. But, in my experience, the common bond seems to be that we are all moved to action from a place of love and caring. Sometimes navigating the coming out process takes a while and is not easy. We know that emotions can run a broad spectrum including fear, despair, sadness, confusion and much more. But, there is light at the end of that tunnel. And it is amazing to experience and participate in the transformative power of PFLAG. It brings me great joy and hope seeing people progress to a place of unconditional acceptance, affirmation, hope and celebration.

That’s the power of PFLAG. Together we can create a welcoming space to come together and share our joys, sorrows, concerns and victories.

Whether you are a veteran PFLAG-er or just beginning your journey, stay active with your PFLAG chapter. You are making a difference not only in your life, but also in the lives of others.

In Love and Solidarity,

John

CHECK THIS OUT

For more on Positive Change, check out the 17 ½ minute, 2013 TED Talk by Rosabeth Moss Kanter - Six Keys to Leading Positive Change. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owUSaTNPJbs
New PFLAG Chapters Coming Soon!

I am happy to announce that we have two new chapters in the formative stages. Huge thanks to Chris Raap of Oak Lawn and Hal Sloan of Grayslake for their leadership and initiative! It is really great to see PFLAG chapters becoming accessible to more families.

PFLAG Oak Lawn plans to begin open meetings starting March 18th. They will hold meetings on the third Sunday of the month at 2 pm, at Pilgrim Faith UCC located at 9411 S 51st Ave, Oak Lawn, IL 60453.

PFLAG Grayslake / Round Lake plans to begin their meetings soon too! They will be meeting on Wednesday night (specific time and week of the month TBD - stay tuned). The planned location is the Grayslake Teen Center at 151 Hawley Street, Grayslake IL 60030.

DUPAGE CHAPTER
By Ron & Bernadette Whitfield

We had a wonderful, well-attended meeting on: PowerPoint presentation that summarized our activities in 2017. This was prepared for our December meeting and we wanted to share it with those present in January. If you missed it and would like to see it, let us know.

An unexpected visitor was Chris Bowlay-Williams, Dating Empowerment Coach. Chris will be our guest speaker in February. He spoke briefly about himself and his planned talk.

A historical note is that 2018 marks the 45th year for PFLAG! Follow highlights throughout the year at PFLAG Voice (https://www.pflag.org/tags/pflagvoice).

The educational portion of our meeting was a summary of the 2017 National PFLAG Convention in Portland, Oregon. Peter and Kristen Shulman attended and graciously prepared a PowerPoint presentation on what they saw, heard, and learned. Thank you, Kristen and Peter, for your excellent summary. A PDF version (2.0 MB) of their presentation is attached. It has links to interesting information and educational videos.

In the very near future, our previous chapter president, John Hickey, will be on a panel discussion entitled “Open Hearts, Open Doors” focused on the LGBTQ Community and the Church. John is the current President of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. The event is being hosted at Southminster Presbyterian Church (916 E Central Rd., Arlington Heights) on Sunday February 11th from 2:30 to 5:00. For more information visit http://spcah.org/openhearts/. Please RSVP to Jan Tossman (SilkPalette@gmail.com).

As a final note, our next chapter meeting is Sunday, February 18. We hope to see you there.
**DEERFIELD CHAPTER**
*By Sue Ginsburg & Janet Svatos*

Night Ministry provides housing and open doors for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual youth, and assembles Goodie Bags containing items including: socks, underwear, towels, gift cards from K-Mart, Target, McDonald’s, Subway, 1-way bus cards, and feminine hygiene products.

**National Mall AIDS Quilt – Public Fact/Private Grief**

A 24 year old woman, Rachel, from DuPage PFLAG, presented a paper she wrote 2 years ago for her senior thesis paper: *Aids Art – the Aids Quilt.*

Her presentation related that the Aids Quilt was constructed on the National Mall in 1987 by families, friends and lovers of Aids victims. She offered a comparison of it to the National Viet Nam War Memorial. The panels that comprised the quilt were 6’ x 3’ – the same size as graves. The quilt brought the Aids Epidemic to the forefront in the minds of American Public. 500,000 Americans visit the National Mall annually – and those that did that year viewed the quilt. Clive Jones was the spokesperson for the quilt.

Donald Trump has disbanded the HIV/AIDS Committee. It was urged that PFlag members contact their Congress People to protest and demand it be reinstated.

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance Summit for high school and middle school GSA leaders was held on Jan. 20 at DeKalb High School.

PFLAG Deerfield will begin to collect ‘goodie bags’ containing items needed for Night Ministry donations. They will include socks, underwear, towels, feminine hygiene needs, gift cards from Kmart, Target, McDonald’s and Subway. We’ll collect them, bag them and bring them to Night Ministry.

We were honored to welcome Rachael Schwabe to our January meeting. Rachael shared her research from her senior project before she graduated from Loyola University, the subject of which was the AIDS QUILT! Also called the Names Project, this massive mourning/friendship quilt was often compared to the Viet Nam Memorial; as to be named is to be remembered! The size of each quilt is the size of a grave. This amazing quilt began in the San Francisco Gay Community, which was terribly hit by the large number of deaths due to AIDS. It was the handiwork of the mourners there. There were locations all around the country that gathered these pieces, to be put together for its first showing. The Quilt itself was displayed level with the ground, simulating a cemetery, on the Mall in Washington, symbolizing the bodies which were ignored by those making policy in our government. It was a dark part of our country’s cultural history, that this disease, which was for so long ignored by our government and misunderstood, now brought attention and humanity to those lives that were lost through the attention and beauty of each part of the Quilt.

Rachel’s presentation was timely in that the Trump administration just dissolved the Advisory Board on HIV/AIDS. It is gone! This is a great chance for all of you to write to your Congress people and tell them how upset you are that this was done. AIDS is still a deadly disease. We need government oversight! I hope you’ll choose to write a letter.

**HINSDALE CHAPTER**
*By Marcia Prichason*

Our December meeting, as always, was our annual potluck, followed by assembling holiday stockings for young adults who stay at The Crib, the Night Ministry’s North Side shelter that welcomes homeless people 18 to 24 years old, most LGBT. It’s always a wonderful way to start the holiday season.

At our Sunday, January 8th meeting, PFLAG Hinsdale welcomed Rodrigo Anzures-Oyorzabal, Advocacy and Policy Manager with Illinois Safe Schools. Illinois Safe Schools addresses three major needs for LGBTQ+ youths. The first is statewide youth services for pre-K through 12th grade schools and park districts. They also organize youth programs. A recent example of this was the 5-day sleep-away “Action Camp” held annually for 8th – 12th graders. Additionally, ISS is involved in policy and advocacy for students, parents, teachers, and administrators to help improve inclusion in schools and establish school policies. Rodrigo then explained sex to the Hinsdale members. That is, that the term “gender” is referred to the sex assigned at birth (intersex refers to the internal factors that have to do with human sexuality including chromosomes, hormones, etc.), “gender identity” is the individual’s identity of self, and “gender expression” is the individual’s outward appearance. Our guest speaker also provided us with an update on the development of school districts affirming transgender students’ use of facilities, specifically

...
restrooms and locker rooms. The meeting then broke for refreshments and conversation.

Our speaker on February 4th is Katie Thomas, a member of PFLAG Oak Park, and she'll talk about her work towards removing the “one-size-fits-all” approach to being transgender. She'll also share her own personal story.

In January, our PTI group was back to hosting a guest speaker. Mayadet Patitucci-Cruz, in charge of the Peer Advocate Project at the Broadway Youth Center, gave a talk about the organization. The BYC is part of the Howard Brown Clinic, located in the Lakeview neighborhood, and is a drop-in center aimed at homeless LGBTQ teens and young adults. As Mayadet explained, this means street-based homeless people. The Center provides many much-needed services, from laundry to food GED completion to counseling. Medical assistance is even available, and no one is turned away for lack of funds. In addition, we continued to collect a few dozen socks, hats, and scarves, as well as a pair of boots and a jacket for the homeless youth “closet” at the Center on Halsted. This project will be ongoing throughout the year.

PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER
By Jo Peer-Haas

On December 14th PTI Chicago held its annual Holiday Potluck Dinner at Center on Halsted. It was a festive event with 31 members, family members and kids in attendance. The evening’s highlight was honoring Arlene Collins, the founder of PTI with a cake and flowers and a new project. Betty Guilfoile, the new president of PTI Chicago discussed the new project in honor of Arlene’s son Quinn who passed away in a tragic car crash in 2010:

We are starting a project called “A Mother’s Love: the Quinn Collins Project”. As parents we have all come here to find support for ourselves so we can support our child. We have a great capacity to love our child, and I believe, as we come to realize that our journey as a parent hasn’t been derailed, but has taken on new and important track, we have an ability to share that love with others.

There are countless homeless trans youth in
Chicago, many of them who have been turned away from their own families, who couch surf, who sleep on trains, who are living on the streets, enduring the cold. A number of them come here to Center on Halsted. We have been sharing goods with them, such as socks and gloves and hats, but I think that we could take on a bigger project. It could be by anonymously “adopting” a young person for the holidays – providing some items that they may need personally, some holiday trinkets, cosmetics, but mostly, a personal letter of love and support. Ultimately, down the road we could develop a fund for the trans youth community to help these young people with surgery or procedures that they need, just as our kids have had, but cannot afford.

To kick off this project, tonight we are asking you all to look inside, and channel your inner Arlene, and see if you might be able to adopt a young trans person for the holidays.

To learn more about “A Mother’s Love: the Quinn Collins Project”, contact Betty Guilfoile at ptichicago1@gmail.com.

**DOWNERS GROVE CHAPTER**

*By Gloria*

Our speaker in January was Chicago House CEO Scott Ammarell. An agency long known and respected for its HIV/AIDS services, Chicago House is focused on its next phase of providing housing and support services to the most vulnerable, ensuring that Chicago House continues to serve those most in need. As HIV/AIDS continues to disproportionately impact the LGBTQ community, Chicago House is dedicated to ensuring access to life saving care, housing stability, adequate jobs, and other necessary resources to thrive.

Scott’s depth of experience in housing services and development includes time as the Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel for the Chicago Housing Authority where he advised the development and strategic planning of the City of Chicago’s Public Housing. Scott’s passion for LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS services has led him to serve on many boards, including Chicago House’s partner agency, Test Positive Aware Network. Scott and Chicago House are committed to ensuring those in need thrive through sustainable housing, health and prevention services. Thank you Scott for an informative and inspirational presentation. Find more information about Chicago House at [www.chicagohouse.org](http://www.chicagohouse.org).

Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 14, Valentine’s Day! Please join us for our regular meeting at 7 p.m. and, if you are able, at Ballydoyle, 5157 Main St., at 5:45 before the meeting. Hope to see you there!

**MCHENRY CHAPTER**

*By Toni Weaver*

The December meeting was both conversation and holiday social. Initially we were going to discuss the issues faced by LGBTQ people and their families at holiday family gatherings but then decided to give a more positive focus to the discussion. People were invited to share the highlights of their year.

Because the January meeting fell one day after the 5th anniversary of Jeanne Manford’s death, we watched YouTube videos that showcased both Jeanne and PFLAG. One was the video of Rachel Maddow singing the praises of PFLAG in which she showed a clip of President Obama speaking about PFLAG at an HRC (Human Rights Campaign) gala. The other showed an aged Jeanne looking back on the now infamous Christopher Street Parade in 1972 when she marched with her son Morty and carried the sign that read “Parents of Gays, Unite in Support of our Children.” For many newcomers to PFLAG this was their introduction to how PFLAG began.

If you wish to view these videos, simply go to YouTube and type PFLAG in the search box.

We will be staffing an information table at the People in Need Forum at McHenry County College on Saturday, January 27, and we are again collaborating with the Regional Office of Education to present the third workshop of this academic year, one Julie Suter (w/ Coty), Rose Iverson & Toni Weaver at the People in Need Forum
focused on GSAs with the hope of getting GSAs into more middle schools and strengthening the GSAs at the high school level. Nat Duran from Illinois Safe Schools will be the lead presenter.

An evening social is being planned for all those folks who renewed/started a membership in PFLAG.

OAK PARK CHAPTER
By Nancy Johnson

In November we were delighted to have Tracy Baim (editor@windycitymediagroup.com) as our speaker. She has just edited and published a new book: Gay Press, Gay Power subtitled “The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America.” She gave us an informative and fascinating talk about the history of the LGBT press. She had interesting displays of covers and articles, many from sources that no long exist. We all enjoyed her talk so much. Her father, Hal, a photographer who used to work for the newspapers in Chicago, also accompanied her. Tracy is willing to go to any of our chapters to do her presentation. Do invite her! She’s a fountain of LGBT history (and gossip)!

On December 4, Longfellow School in Oak Park screened the documentary Gender Revolution. Phil and I set up a PFLAG information table there, and talked to a number of people. The film was well attended with parents, children and community members.

Next month, Don Donahue from the NI Council will speak to us about recruiting and maintaining our membership.
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
Contact Rev. Barbara Lohrbach
revlohrbach@gmail.com
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
pflagptimchenry@pflagillinois.org

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