



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

Happy Holidays!

As we enter the holiday season, I want to say how very grateful I am for the many blessings in my life- especially for my family and my extended PFLAG family. Thank you for being a part of our Family! This time of the year, I am reminded that the key to having everything you want in life is not in receiving everything you could ever want, but in wanting and appreciating the blessings that we do have in our lives. I try to remember to be deliberate in my choices. To choose to try and be strong when times are tough; to choose to fully enjoy life when things are good; and to choose to always be grateful. Because gratitude is what turns what we have into enough.

I hope you can take time to step back from the hustle and bustle of it all and truly enjoy this season of togetherness and giving. Remember giving can come in many forms. It doesn't have to have a monetary value. Often the most precious gifts are the random acts of kindness that cost us nothing, but, in truth, are priceless. I find my PFLAG friends are always a source of inspiration with their stories of kindness. Have fun spreading your holiday cheer. You might even find it to be contagious.

Another thing I like to do as we transition into the new year is find some quiet time for reflection and envisioning. I find it very useful to contemplate my past and future goals for myself personally and for my PFLAG engagement. Reflecting on the events of the year helps me to celebrate successes and formulate my thoughts for what I want to achieve in the year ahead and into the future. What do you envision for the future? What stepping stones might you lay out that can help along the path to help achieve your vision?

Remember to always be grateful, spread kindness every day and help forge a path for an even more beautiful future. I wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and a joyous and prosperous new year!

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:

OPEN DOORS Editor
og4equality@gmail.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief:
Maureen Goldin
Website Guru:
Bonnie Clemens

www.pflagillinois.org
www.pflag.org
www.pflagillinois.org/transgender

Be sure to like
PFLAG Council of Northern IL
on



LGBTQ+ youth to feel safe, supported, and celebrated.

Carolyn led the discussion by asking panelists a series of questions about their experiences at home, in school, and in the community. The students shared deeply personal aspects of their lives that got us thinking about the challenges that they face and what we can do to make our neighborhoods and communities more open and affirming.

We are very thankful for the number of chapter members who brought items to support the 360 Youth Services Transitional Housing Group. They will be used to create Welcome Hampers for new residents containing items listed in the email message that we sent before the meeting. We will also collect items at December's meeting and deliver them to Carolyn Wahlskog to help replenish their supplies. If the December meeting date doesn't fit your schedule and you would like to participate, let us know and we will make other arrangements. For anyone who wants to know more about 360 Youth Services, see <https://www.360youthservices.org/>.



Transcend youths observed the International Transgender Day of Remembrance 2017 with a banner that included the names of the 25 transgender

Our meeting began with an observation of the Transgender Day of Remembrance. A slide show included the video "Rise Up" by Andrea Day (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3VoenSM4c>); a listing of the names of the 25 murdered transgender individuals; and the names and pictures of the LGBTQIA+ individuals who had electoral success across the country in November: Danica Roem (VA); Phillippe Cunningham (MN); Andrea Jenkins (MN); Gerri Cannon (NH); Stephe Koontz (GA); Lisa Middleton (CA); Raven Matherne (CT); and Tyler Titus (PA). (<https://medium.com/@TransEquality/the-seven-trans-officials-who-made-history-last-night-53920bbbc5d1>)

These election results are nothing short of monumental, and are both reassuring and emboldening for the many transgender people out there who are potential candidates for elected office. For far too long, transgender people were not involved in the creation of policies or laws that affect all communities, including our own.

DEERFIELD CHAPTER

By Sue Ginsburg & Janet Svatos

We had a wonderful November meeting!

Before our speaker began, a series of announcements and information were shared. Sue was asked via helpline if PFLAG had a support group for people with transgender spouses? If anyone in Northern Illinois knows of one, please let us know so we can put it on our list of support groups.

If anyone is living in Illinois House District #54, please beware that Maggie Revor is running for office against (R) Tom Morrison author of the "bathroom bill." She'll need your support, as she supports all those in the LGBTQ community. You can find out more at trevor4154@gmail.com

We were able to give away two more tickets to Writers Theatre, this time for "The Importance of Being Earnest."

Don't forget to send in your PFLAG yearly dues!!!

We were honored to host our two guests, Theresa Volpe and Mercedes Santos, the first lesbian couple whose marriage was recognized as legal by the State of Illinois. They have 3 children, 2 girls and one boy. They call themselves "normalized accidental activists." They have been together for 26 years! Their motivation began when one of their children became ill and only one 'mother' was allowed in to see their child. They applied for a marriage license and after being turned down, joined Lambda Legal 16 other couples who filed suit in the State of Illinois. After much door slamming in their faces in Springfield, they never gave up. Their suit changed minds and hearts, persuading representatives to vote yes to sponsor marriage equality. A bill was passed by the 2012 – 2013 legislature with 61 yes votes and 52 no votes. A resulting law was created affirming the legality of their marriage and other Illinois marriages that fall outside binary norms. Lambda Legal Women's Council does ongoing work as advocates of the cause. Both Theresa and Mercedes continue their advocacy working with 'Family Equality Council,' recording family stories to archive experiences for educational purposes and also with 'Proud Youth,' teaching students how to work advocacy in their lives. We were all so very impressed by the untiring commitment these women gave to the cause of marriage equality!

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Our November speaker was Amy Jakubiak, a social worker from Hinsdale Middle School. After 5 years of advocacy, she succeeded in setting up a GSA at the school. (The GSA is known as the "Safe Space Club.") She

was accompanied by Lisa, her co-sponsor and a teacher at the middle school, and two students. She related several stories showing how important this group is for her students and the school. In one case before the GSA was formed, a parent came to her to share that her husband came out. Their child, a student, was struggling and the classmates were being unkind and not supportive. They did an intervention at the school with teachers and tackled discussion topics, with opinions both supportive and not supportive. Many of the teachers had little understanding of what students coming out face and what issues arise when this happens. The intervention emphasized that whatever a person's personal beliefs are, harassment and violence must be prevented and support for the student must be encouraged. As a result, the student felt more supported and understood.



A couple years before the GSA began, some students approached Amy, and a group began to meet at lunch. Advocates continued to ask the school leadership, and their response was that the "school was not ready." They kept advocating and teamed up with the other district middle school. After five years, last winter they received the superintendent's approval to form the Safe Space Club. They gather all the district social workers and consulted with the school's attorney, who advised this couldn't be treated differently than any other school club or group. Fellow teachers have been very supportive, and this year there are 8 members. They make announcements like every other school club. They've created large rainbow flags with skittles, and distributed bracelets for the National Day Against Gay Discrimination. They've visited the high school GSA and have hosted guest speakers, including a former student. They provide fellow teachers with resources to support students.

Our December meeting is our annual pot luck, 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. We fill the stockings with socks, travel size shampoo and other toiletries, and small-denomination gift cards for places such as Subway and Dunkin Donuts. It's always a wonderful way to start the holiday season.

PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Jo Peer-Haas

The PTI November meeting was unusual in that although our original speaker canceled just the day before, another stepped in to take their place on very short notice. We were enlightened about the need for a clothes closet to outfit young trans folks, many of whom are homeless. Forrest Marie Linsell, youth coordinator at the Center on Halsted, made everyone aware of the importance of an object we take for granted: socks. An informal sock drive was launched, and Christine Peters even had some on display. Forrest also told about the soup kitchen that provides meals; the COH is a welcoming hang-out spot for those with no place to go.

Following this was our usual discussion: of worries, questions and an open forum about our trans children and friends. There was an Argosy University intern present. Last but not least, the new PTI Board officers were announced and introduced. Founder Arlene Collins has stepped down as president after almost nine years of hard work and dedication. Taking her place are President, Betty Guilfoile, Vice President, Molly Malone, Programming/Treasurer, Vice President, Membership, Christine Peters and Secretary/Historian, Jo Peer-Haas.



It was announced that our annual holiday potluck and open meeting will take place on Dec. 14th at the COH in December.

DOWNERS GROVE CHAPTER

By Gloria

In November we welcomed Deborah Brozewski, clinical therapist at Edgewood Clinical Services in Naperville. Deb led an open discussion about issues faced by LGBT folk as well as their families. She discussed topics including stress and deep breathing techniques, isolation, depression, and signs to be aware of in LGBT loved ones who are struggling. Everyone got a lot out of her presentation, thank you Deb!

Our next meeting is Wednesday, December 13 at 7 p.m. Our own member, Eli Bryant, will speak about his experience as a transgender person and a person of faith. We are excited to welcome Eli's mom as well, visiting all the way from Kansas, to be a part of Eli's presentation! If time

allows, we may make LGBT beaded pins or ornaments to share with families as holiday gifts of love and awareness. Join us!

MCHEMRY CHAPTER

By Toni Weaver

In November we watched a thirty-minute video which helps to explain non-binary gender identity. So often we think of PFLAG's mission as educating others; however, before we can do that, we must first educate ourselves. This video does just that. The link to the video is at the bottom of this article.

One of our newest attendees came to us with questions about their own identity, which this video helped to clarify. There's a real feeling of satisfaction that we were able to help them and help them answer some of their own identity questions!

For the past two years I've had a marvelous working relationship with the McHenry County Regional Office of Education in the person of Laura Crain. I can't speak highly enough of her and the assistance and support she's provided in bringing quality education about the needs of transgender students to our county school personnel.

On November 7 we sponsored a workshop geared to superintendents and principals and were very pleased that 17 people attended. These are the movers and shakers. Get them on board, and progress is truly possible.

When asked why they were attending the workshop, one superintendent responded by saying that he didn't want his school district to be at the top of one of AJ Jennings' (IL Safe Schools Alliance) power point slides! AJ had just finished discussing several Illinois school districts that had had "issues" with providing equal access to facilities for transgender students. His response brought knowing nods and chuckles from the others in the room.

Our December meeting will be themed "Coming Home for the Holidays" and will center on a discussion of issues faced by LGBTQ+ people and their loved ones when having to deal with less than accepting relatives at holiday gatherings.

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 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

**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.

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

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
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
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.)