



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

Happy 45th Anniversary PFLAG!



Join PFLAG in celebrating our 45th anniversary!

March 11th marks 45 years since *Jeanne Manford* held that first support group meeting that grew to become the organization now known as PFLAG. She ignited a movement uniting LGBTQ people with their parents, families and friends building bonds and saving lives.

While there is still more work to be done, we have much to celebrate! We have come a long way from those early days! PFLAG has expanded to support families across the country, now standing 400 chapters strong. I am thrilled to announce that we have **two new Chapters starting** in Northern Illinois, PFLAG Oak Lawn and PFLAG Grayslake / Round Lake.

I hope that all of our chapters will take time to reflect on and celebrate this occasion in some way. For inspiration and ideas, check out the 2018 Winter PFLAG Pole and the PFLAG National site for recommendations:

https://www.pflag.org/sites/default/files/PFLAGPole_Winter2018_Sp_FINAL.pdf ; <https://www.pflag.org/celebrating-pflags-45th-anniversary-chapter-events-and-ideas> .

For more information on the PFLAG story, please check out "Our Story" on the PFLAG National Website and this video clip from the Rachel Maddow show from 2013 honoring Jeanne Manford.

PFLAG: Our Story: <https://www.pflag.org/our-story> ; Rachel Maddow Remembers PFLAG Founder Jeanne Manford: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmJGYXljExo>

If you are planning to be in the Washington DC area on May 9th, PFLAG is hosting a 45th Anniversary Celebration and fundraiser at the Mayflower Hotel. For more information and to purchase tickets visit:

<https://www.pflag.org/event/pflag-45th-anniversary-celebration>

In Love and Solidarity,

John

Find your PFLAG home. Locate a chapter near you.

<https://www.pflag.org/find-a-chapter> or

<http://www.pflagillinois.org/chapters/>



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.

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Be sure to like
PFLAG Council of Northern IL
on



Congratulations to our newest chapter – OAK LAWN!

PFLAG Oak Lawn will hold open meetings at 2 pm, on the third Sunday of the month starting March 18th, at Pilgrim Faith UCC located at [9411 S 51st Ave, Oak Lawn, IL 60453](#).

Our March 18th program is:

"My School-Age Child Says She's Gay – Now What?"

Please join Jacqui Cook, an Oak Lawn mom of four, for a discussion about what to say (and not to say) when your child first tells you he or she is gay. Jacqui has been on this journey with her daughter Grace (now 18) since middle school, and she will share some of the things that worked for their family and some of the things she would do differently now with a little hindsight. All viewpoints and questions are welcome and will be held in confidence by those at the meeting. Please join us for this open and honest conversation."

PFLAG Grayslake / Round Lake is in final stages of forming and plans to begin their meetings soon too! They will be meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7 pm. The planned location is the Grayslake Teen Center at [151 Hawley Street, Grayslake IL 60030](#).

Huge thanks to Chris Raap at Oak Lawn and Hal Sloan at Grayslake for their leadership and initiative!

It is really great to see PFLAG chapters becoming accessible to more families. We would love to see PFLAG more accessible to all families. If there is not a PFLAG chapter near you, and you are interested in forming a chapter in your community, please contact John Hickey at info@PFLAGillinois.com

DUPAGE CHAPTER

By Ron & Bernadette Whitfield



We had a welcome visit at our February meeting by Christopher Bowlay-Williams — a dating empowerment coach. Chris shared the story of his amazing life. He's been homeless twice and gone on to successfully create a business that makes a difference in the world. He empowers others to never give up on their relationships and themselves, and that anything is possible when you have the right people around you telling you can do it. (<https://bradfinkeldei.com/inspire-me-events/>)

We began the meeting with a solemn memorial of the victims of the tragic shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. We have had far too many events like this.

After Chris' presentation, we announced plans for 2 new chapter leadership positions: Meeting Host (many sought) and Meeting Host Coordinator (one needed). Leadership is developing instructions and guidance for meeting hosts, who will arrive early, help with setting up the room, clean and store meeting

materials and items after the meeting, and — most importantly — take an active role in greeting and mentoring new visitors. As time passes, our vision is that many more of us will become comfortable with the important task of greeting and mentoring new visitors. The Meeting Host Coordinator will send a friendly reminder to those who have signed up. This is not a commitment to be “the official” meeting host each month. Many hands make light the work! We passed a signup sheet for those who are interested in contributing in this way. Please let us know if this is something that might be of interest to you.

A week before our meeting, John Hickey was a panelist at “Open Hearts, Open Doors” sponsored by the welcoming and affirming Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights. It was an excellent event. A video will soon be available on the church’s Website. We will keep you informed.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

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Thursday, March 22 —Dominican University Pride Week Resource Fair (Thursday), 2pm-4pm. Supporters are welcome! Contact Bernadette and Ron Whitfield or John Hickey if you can help out.

DEERFIELD CHAPTER

By Sue Ginsburg & Janet Svatos

First, I want to thank all of our members and friends who ventured out on Thursday, Feb. 8, in the midst of a huge snowstorm! Since our speakers chose to visit us, I didn't want to cancel, knowing that as late as it was, many people might not read their emails and I didn't want them to go to the trouble to come to a meeting and have no one there. Remarkably, we had at least 20 people show up!!! I do believe it was due to Todd Arkenberg, our speaker and author of “Two Towers.” While Todd has written several books, this is his latest and it chronicles the story of his coming out to his parents....a different point of view from what we, as parents on the receiving end of this news have experienced. Todd read from his book and I don't exaggerate, we were all so moved by his prose and struck by the realization that yes, perhaps our own children experienced some of the same feelings as he did. Todd talked about growing up in the 60's, where

there were really no gay roles models in literature or the movies. He explains that he is not a gay writer, but a writer who happens to be gay, choosing to make some of his main characters gay, but not all of them. Hopefully, this will fill some of the void, although today there are more role models with whom gay youth can identify.

Todd's book, “Two Towers”, tells the story of his coming out, first to a men's group, called Horizons, in 1998, where he met Jim who was a facilitator in the group. He explains that everyone's process of coming out is different. His was slow, as first he had to accept himself, then 1 1/2 years later, he came out to his parents, then even later, his friends. Todd was named the chief scheduling facilitator for flight attendants at United Airlines, when a week later, 9/11 happened. Soon after that, his father dies of cancer and five weeks later, his mom dies of pneumonia. But this is a love story at its core. The story of how Jim helped him through this time; it's a story of survival. We asked Todd why he didn't bring any of his books with him and Jim said Todd leaves them in the car. Well, he got them out of the car and nearly everyone at the meeting bought a copy!

This was one of our first meetings where we didn't welcome a new family, so I told everyone to go home early due to the weather, yet many stayed to continue the conversation with Todd and Jim. What a wonderful meeting it was! I suggest you all go to the library and take out one of TD Arkenberg's books.

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Suellen Cook

At PFLAG Hinsdale's February meeting, Katie Thomas shared about removing the “one-size-fits-all” approach to being transgender and described her life journey for the past 70+ years. In a discussion about gender identity, she stated, “gender should be the least remarkable thing about anyone.” She explained that in her Trans 101 presentation, she uses the following illustration to help explain, “What is transgender?” Her example begins with, “A boy looks in a mirror, and sees he is smiling. A girl looks in the mirror, and sees she is smiling. A boy, who is trans, looks in the mirror, and sees she is crying.”

Katie explained that she has seen positive changes toward the transgender community over the past twenty years, and she never dreamed she would experience the current level of acceptance for the transgender community in the United States. Katie recommended PFLAG can support trans youth by accepting them and

loving them for who they are.

On March 4, our speaker will be Anthony Galloway from Equality Illinois.

MCHENRY CHAPTER

By Toni Weaver

Unraveling the Alphabet: LGBTQQIAAP2S+

PFLAG McHenry's February meeting tried to solve the mysteries of the LGBT+ alphabet through the use of several good YouTube videos followed by discussion. In a nutshell, the LGBTQ+ acronym stands for this:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, pansexual, and two spirit.

There's a wealth of information available on YouTube - many entertaining, informative, and educational videos available to help us make sense of this ever-expanding string of letters. Begin, perhaps, with LGBTAlphabet for an artsy introduction to the expansiveness of human sexuality and gender identity. Move to LGBT 101: An intro to the Queer Community for basic information. Next check out the video series by Ashley Mardell, but be prepared to be overwhelmed with information at a very quick pace.

These are but several of the many videos available on YouTube that address this multiplicity of terms. Our chapter found the information to be helpful in answering the many questions that people ask us about this ever-growing list of terms, most of which are new, even to us.

In terms of outreach to local GSAs, we now give out 3'x5' flags in the tri-colors representing the transgender community in addition to the traditional 6-color rainbow pride flags. A workshop jointly sponsored by the McHenry County Regional Office of Education and PFLAG McHenry was held at the end of January and attracted many school support staff from middle schools as well as high schools interested in establishing or strengthening clubs in their schools. Many of those folks requested flags for their schools! We are so fortunate to have a passionate ally in the regional office, Laura Crain, to make this outreach possible.

In Loving Memory – *John Small*

In the summer of 2012, John Small visited our PFLAG McHenry chapter for a very particular reason: to apologize to the entire LGBT community.

John had been a Roman Catholic priest and a teacher at Carmel High School in Mundelein in the 60's and 70's. John was extremely popular with the students; he was a good listener and had a passion for all his students. During that time, many young men came out to him, and being a Catholic priest, he would give the standard advice: pray, date girls, repent, try to avoid homosexual behavior, and go to confession often.



Through tears he conveyed the anguish of these young men and the wish that he could turn back the clock and tell each and every one of them to stand tall, to be proud of who they were, and to go out and live their truth.

He left Carmel to pursue a PhD in clinical psychology at the U. of Missouri (Columbia). John had his own practice and also taught at the university and area community colleges. His last and perhaps greatest endeavor was to open a free clinic in Columbia, a clinic that would provide mental health services to people who could not afford to pay. With the help of his wife Jeanette, the clinic thrived and grew. Many clinical psychology students at the university received their clinical direction under the tutelage of John and Jeanette.

For his 80th birthday last year, I gave him a large Pride flag which he and Jeanette displayed in their great room. When John was confined to a hospital bed and the bed was brought out into the great room, it stood directly in front of the flag. I couldn't have been prouder.

John died yesterday at the age of eighty. He is survived by his beloved Jeanette.

Rest in peace, John. Our PFLAG community is so proud of you.

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 – 7p.m.
 First Congregational UCC
 1047 Curtiss
 Downers Grove, IL 60515
 www.pflag.wixsite.com/pflagdg
 pflagdg@gmail.com

PFLAG Oak Lawn (NEW)

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 p.m.
 Pilgrim Faith UCC
 9411 S 52st Ave
 Oak Lawn, IL 60453
 shoehouses@yahoo.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
 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.)