



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG

President's Column

The Supreme Court Ruled on Marriage Equality.... So we're good now... right?

Wrong... Don't misunderstand... I will forever be grateful for the bravery and determination of Edie Windsor ([US v Windsor](#)) and Jim Obergefell ([Obergefell v Hodges](#)) whose landmark Supreme Court cases served to make Marriage Equality a reality in this country. Because of them, same sex marriages can be performed and properly recognized in every state in the US. I was fortunate enough to attend a talk by Jim Obergefell recently at North Central College. Jim does an amazing job of telling his story and has published a book entitled [Love Wins](#). During the Q&A part of the talk, I was reminded that there is still much work to be done...



While same sex couples can marry in any state, they can also be legally *denied housing* and even legally get *fired* from their job in most states. We are fortunate to have protections in Illinois. However, these and many other issues merit understanding and action. [HRC](#), [EqIL](#), [ACLU](#) and other great organizations are leading the fight for equality along with [PFLAG](#)! Below is a list of issues highlighted on the HRC website at <http://www.hrc.org/state-maps>. Check the site to see all of the maps- these graphics are powerful.

- [Marriage Equality and Other Relationship Recognition](#)- All 50 States and DC issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Yes!!
- [Employment](#)- 20 states and DC prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- [Education](#)- 14 states and DC address discrimination against students based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- [Housing](#)- 20 states and DC prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- [Conversion Therapy](#)- Only 11 states protect children from so-called "Conversion" therapy.
- [Gender Marker Change on IDs](#)- 14 states and DC facilitate gender marker change on both birth certificates and driver's licenses. 16 more states facilitate changes on driver's licenses only.
- [Hate Crimes](#)- Only 18 states address hate or bias crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity. 12 other states address this based on sexual orientation only.
- [Public Accommodations](#)- 19 states and DC prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- [School Anti-Bullying](#)- 20 states and DC address harassment and/or bullying of students based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Sadly, 7 states actually restrict the inclusion of LGBT topics in schools and 2 other states actually prevent school districts from specifically protecting LGBT students.
- [Transgender Healthcare](#)- 13 states and DC have both, bans on insurance exclusions for transgender healthcare and provide transgender inclusive health benefits for state employees. Plus, 4 states (including Illinois) ban insurance exclusions only.

It should also be noted that there are other initiatives to prohibit transgender people from serving in the military, and to allow businesses to discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity (veiling their bigotry under the guise of religious freedom). On a more positive note, there are initiatives to require states to have inclusive school curriculum, so that all children will learn about LGBTQI history.

I share this information, not to make you angry, but to help inform you of issues that leave LGBTQI people at risk, and hopefully motivate you to share your story and speak out for equality wherever you can.

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.

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www.pflagillinois.org
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Be sure to like
PFLAG Council of Northern IL
on



New PFLAG Chapters!

PFLAG Ottawa is in the process of forming as the *newest* PFLAG Chapter in the area. Stay tuned for details!

PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley is looking for folks who want to help strengthen the chapter and build on their proud legacy of support for the LGBTQ community and allies in Aurora / Fox Valley. If you are interested in helping make a difference please contact John Hickey at info@pflagillinois.org or Carmi Frankovich at regionaldival@yahoo.com.

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.



Advocacy Matters

Equality Illinois and the Illinois Safe School Alliance is working hard to support the Inclusive Curriculum Bill

Inclusion is essential.

As Adrienne Rich said...

*"When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you...**when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.** It takes some strength of soul--and not just individual strength, but collective understanding--to resist this void, this non-being, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard."*

All of our children deserve to be educated in an environment in which they are seen, affirmed and valued so that they may see a world in which they can thrive.

Let your legislators know how you feel. Follow this link to send them a note:
<https://www.equalityillinois.us/category/get-involved/find-your-legislator/>

Check the Equality Illinois website for other calls to action:
<https://www.equalityillinois.us/category/get-involved/take-action/>

DUPAGE CHAPTER

By Ron & Bernadette Whitfield

We had a great turnout (including 7 new people) to welcome Laura Jaramillo and Katie Kokopelli! Laura, a therapist, specializes in working with people who have



WHAT'S GOING ON

Katie struggled for years with eating disorders. Their personal stories, before and after they met, are captivating. Several of our PFLAG members have relatives who have struggled or are struggling

with eating disorders, so this presentation was very relevant. We learned that LGBT individuals are disproportionately prone to eating disorders and other addictions.

Please make plans to attend our May meeting. Scott Ammaral, CEO of Chicago House, will present. As HIV/AIDS continues to disproportionately impact the LGBTQ community, Scott is dedicated to ensuring access to life saving care, housing stability, adequate jobs, and other necessary resources to thrive. Scott brings a depth of experience in housing services and development. As President and General Counsel for Benson Development Corporation/Provident Home Builders he led the strategic development of new housing for over a decade. And, more recently, Scott served 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.

On Friday, April 6, we attended Reclaim & Reform: A Night of LGBTQ Inclusive Worship. It was a very moving gathering filled with music and an inspiring talk by Erica Bauer. Erica is a dynamic presenter who has conducted workshops on race, LGBTQ inclusion, and equity for nonprofit organizations. She also is an artist who writes, speaks and performs pieces about justice and equity for organizations. Her current passion project is writing multicultural children's songs.

On Tuesday, April 17, we attended the Northwest Suburban Community Network: Professionals Serving LGBTQ+ Youth for their Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth & Intersectionality Training. We met teachers, students, and parents and distributed PFLAG information.



DEERFIELD CHAPTER

By Sue Ginsburg & Janet Svatos

We were honored to welcome Reverend Michael D. Jones, Pastor of St. John United Church of Christ (UCC) in Arlington Hts. (www.stjah.org). His husband and six-month-old foster daughter, Paige, accompanied him. In telling his own amazing story of growing up in a small town in Ohio, in a strictly Evangelical home, where church was a huge part of his life, Michael took us on his journey of self-discovery, with his Evangelical Church calling him at every turn of his life. He was willing to ignore his true self until meeting another Pastor who told him there were churches that were welcoming and affirming and he could continue on his life's path as a man of God. Michael's story took us through high school, College at the University of Indiana, where he was on the swimming team (no easy feat), to Harvard Divinity School, and back to his hometown as the Pastor of his home church. He then went back to school for 3 more years to change the denomination that he is now. Michael talked about his parish, his perspective on how to create a welcoming space for the LGBTQ community within a faith-based organization, and, most importantly, how to reconcile with friends and family members who may express religious objections. It was a wonderful evening!

St. John UCC embraces the United Church of Christ practice of an "extravagant welcome" to all who enter our doors. No matter where you are on life's journey, we believe you can find a church home with us. At the same time, we also believe that there are some segments of our society that may still need a special invitation to feel welcomed since their past experiences have not always

been positive. The United Church of Christ has a designation of "Open and Affirming" for churches that have studied, prayed, and publicly voted to openly and unequivocally include all persons, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and queer, within their congregational life."

Members from McHenry and Deerfield attended two performances of "The Laramie Project" at Libertyville High School. In their efforts to end hate speech and promote awareness, PFLAG was asked to provide information before the performance, at intermission and after the performance. "The Laramie Project" was a play written by the real interviews of residents of Laramie, Wyoming, after the murder of Matthew Shepard. The students did an outstanding job and we were able to introduce PFLAG to quite a few people.

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By *Suellen Cook*

Our April 1st meeting fell on Easter, so rather than having a guest speaker we watched the PBS series, *We'll Meet Again*, produced and reported by Ann Curry. The episode was titled, "Coming Out" and was about Tom, who wanted to find his childhood friend who urged him to come out. The episode also followed Paul, who was seeking to find a fellow student who inspired him to stand up for his beliefs for the first time, to come out and live authentically.

Our May 6th speaker is Jim Kelly, who will speak about LGBTQ Peace Corps volunteers and the strides that have been made in helping them to successfully complete their terms of service.

MCHENRY CHAPTER

By *Toni Weaver*

During the current 2017/2018 academic year PFLAG McHenry, working closely with the McHenry County Regional Office of Education (R.O.E.), co-sponsored four workshops for school personnel on best practices for working with transgender students. The first was aimed at school support staff (guidance counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists). The second was for superintendents and principals. The third was directed at GSA advisers with a special outreach to middle schools. The fourth and final one of the year was for athletic directors and coaches. Our chapter provided funds for refreshments, PFLAG resource materials, parents for

panels, members for set-up and take-down, and hosting duties. The R.O.E., in the person of Laurie Crain, used the R.O.E.'s resources and school connections to draw up and distribute via email the flyers to all appropriate school personnel, handle reservations, the granting of CEUs, and most importantly, provide the funding for the presenters, most of whom came from Illinois Safe Schools. It was a partnership without which we never could have had the outreach.

Laurie was our special guest speaker in April, and she spoke about the success of the workshops, the positive feedback she's received, and the impact the workshops have made in our schools. In addition, she discussed her primary role in the R.O.E. as the Drug Free Program Coordinator (McHenry County Substance Abuse Coalition). Years ago when she was the coordinator of the Community Partnership Coalition for the Woodstock School District, she invited PFLAG to have a seat at the table with other community organizations because she recognized that LGBTQ+ young people are at higher risk for substance abuse. It was fascinating as well as horrifying to hear about the drugs that are being used by our young people today. Not only are the drugs themselves horrifying, but so is the manner in which they are being ingested. For example, Laurie told us about smoking alcohol, something about which none of us had ever heard. This method of ingesting alcohol sends the intoxicants directly to the brain, bypassing the digestive system, and thus making them deadlier faster...Sadly, information on how to do this is available on YouTube.

We have been so fortunate to have as fierce an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community as Laurie on our team! Thanks, Laurie!!!



On a side note, one of our members Bob Chikos and his son, Marty, participated in Lobby Day in Springfield, advocating for LGBT inclusion in history lessons. Bob and Marty are pictured with their representative in the Illinois General Assembly, David McSweeney, who isn't necessarily a supporter of the legislation. However, he respectfully listened and asked clarifying questions.

DOWNERS GROVE CHAPTER

By Gloria

This month we watched some short videos that led to interesting and thoughtful discussions. The first video was from TedX Reno. Dad Skip Pardee shared his family's story in "Proud to Call You My Transgender Son." Here's the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GW8Pif_IXGs

We also watched a short clip from the recent Ellen Degeneres Show in which she talks with the first gay "Navy Spouse of the Year." Watch it here: <http://102tube.net/video/DTH9lGTxVdU>

PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Jo-Peer Haas

In April the PTI* group welcomed three speakers: Ruth Blatt, PTI parent; Mona Noriega, City of Chicago Commissioner for Human Relations, and NU professor/associate director of the school's Institute of Sexual & Gender Minority Health, Francesca Gaiba. They spoke about CRAP. CRAP stands for the Chicago Restroom Access Project, an organization that's a working group of the Pride Action Tank. For trans and gender-nonconforming people, using the restroom can be extremely stressful and can cause anxiety due to very real psychological and physical safety concerns. CRAP is dedicated to alleviating this problem by changing city and state ordinances to allow for all-gender bathrooms. They encourage businesses to adopt these restrooms; and they aim to change public opinion on the issue. (CRAP held a fundraiser on April 21st that raised over \$4000 to assist with the cost of producing educational videos.) The main theme of the discussion was that there's no need to mark bathrooms for a certain gender, especially the private one-toilet kind, since all people want is to "do their business" and leave.



PTI also took in more donations for the ongoing collection

of socks, hats, gloves and scarves for homeless youth via the Center on Halsted.

[*Parents of Trans Individuals]

OAK PARK CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

In the early months of the year we had a number of new people attending our meetings. We've had good discussions at our meetings with the new attendees, so it was odd to have only 7 of us "old-timers" at our April meeting! But, our busy summer months are starting, so we punched out paper disks and made buttons for our first summer event on June 3. On next Sunday, our potluck will feature not only delicious food, but another round or 2 of button making! And Phil tells us that our Kate is planning to attend!

Our summer lineup so far:

June 3 - Day in Our Village, annual event in Oak Park for non-profits and food vendors and live music in Scoville Park. We'll have a booth next to the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association (OPALGA) and give away all those buttons we've been making! And pins too!

June 16 - Donut Days for OPALGA, donut sale at the Oak Park Farmers Market each Saturday. We help OPALGA in exchange for some of the profits. It's also fun and you get to eat all the broken and ugly donuts you want.

July 4 - Oak Park Fourth of July Parade, and we'll march with OPALGA as usual.

July 8 - Bake Sale at the Farmers Market, our annual big fundraiser. We'll start baking a week or so before the event. We always have the most gayly decorated booth at the Farmers Market!

For our May meeting, we're inviting pastors at First United where we meet to come to our meeting.



Upcoming events

- **May 4-5:** Help host a table at the Illinois PTA Convention in Naperville. Email John Hickey to volunteer JHickey1@gmail.com

- **May 6:** Help host a table at Chicago Children's

Museum - International Family Equality Day. Contact Ron and Bernie at BandR.PFLAG@gmail.com to volunteer.

- **Sunday May 13:** Join in the fun and participate in the Mother's Day "Kisses from Mom" fundraiser at Sidetrack Bar in Chicago.
- **Sunday June 17:** Aurora Pride Parade- (Father's Day)- Mark your calendar to show Aurora what Family Pride is about. Plan to walk with The Aurora / Fox Valley Chapter. More info to come!
- **Thursday June 21:** evening event, Family Pride Night at Morton Arboretum, (Ron and Bernadette Whitfield- bandr.pflag@gmail.com)
- **Saturday June 23:** Navy Pier hosts Pier Pride. Help host our tent and interact with visitors. Contact John Hickey at info@pflagillinois.org to sign up.
- **Saturday June 23:** Chicago Children's Museum – Navy Pier – est. 11-5
<http://www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org/index.php/about/lgbtq-pride-events>
- **Saturday June 23:** 12-4 Elmhurst Presbyterian first annual Pride Block Party, invited to host a PFLAG booth. To volunteer, email John Hickey at info@pflagillinois.org)
- Join the festivities as PFLAG marches in the 49th Chicago PRIDE Parade Sunday June 24th. This is your day to feel like a rock-star!
- **Saturday August 18:** LGBTQ+ Youth and Family Picnic
- Mark your calendar to participate in our PFLAG Workshop Day currently planned for Saturday November 10th. I am very excited. This is going to be a great day with amazing speakers, workshops and networking. Get engaged, inspired and empowered! Details will be out in the coming months.



Tips for an Effective Meeting with Your Public Official

Equality Illinois – Civic Engagement – November 2017

Effective meetings with your public official:

- Are conducted in-district, where an elected official is less distracted and can offer you more time
- Involve personal stories and data
- Consist of 3-4 people. Don't get too big or the meeting could become unwieldy and unmanageable.

Before your meeting:

- Write down what you want to say and practice.
- You don't have to be the issue expert, but identify key data to share with the elected official
- Sketch a compelling personal story about why you support or oppose a particular policy or position.

Your personal story should:

- Connect with values
- Share something personal about your life or someone close to you
- Have a connection to the elected official or their district or community
- Make a case for the elected official to share your position on the policy item

During the Visit	After the Visit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself. • Try to start on a positive note by finding common ground. For example, if your legislator recently voted in support of a pro-LGBTQ issue, thank them. • Tell a compelling personal story and support it with data. Explain how the legislation affects you, your family, or your friends; make sure legislators understand the personal ramifications or benefits resulting from their actions. • Ask them to take a specific action, like sponsoring a bill or voting for or against a pending measure. • Thank the legislator as you leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a thank you letter to the legislator for meeting with you and to remind them of the conversation and your ask. • Maintain ongoing communication with legislators and their staff through letters, calls, and visits.

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do feel like the expert of your own story and experiences. • Do learn the legislators' position and ask why they take that position. • Do show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them. • Do admit when you don't know. Offer to try to find the answer and send information to their office. • Do spend time with legislators whose position is opposite ours. You can decrease the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it. • Do spend time in developing relationships with the legislative staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't feel like you have to be the policy expert on an issue. • Don't overload a legislative visit with too many issues. • Don't confront, threaten, pressure, or beg. • Don't be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put the legislator on the defensive. • Don't expect members to be specialists. • Don't make promises you can't deliver. • Don't be afraid to take a stand on the issues. • Don't shy away from meetings with legislators with known views opposite your own. • Don't be offended if a legislator is unable to meet and requests that you meet with their staff.

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.pflagdg.wix.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.)