



Cover art: Primary Colors
by Marlon Lyles
for more works by this
artist see pages 14-16

February 2019 | PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois Newsletter

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Monthly Open Doors



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President's Column

Happy New Year! Living Your Best Life for 2019

I have never really been one for New Year's resolutions. But, I am a big believer in the power of self-help, self-improvement and goal setting. So, I do like to take time to reflect on the things I want to do to be sure that I am living my life consistent with my goals, values and desired destiny.

As I sit to write this on January 21st, a day of remembrance honoring the late, great Martin Luther King Jr., I am reminded of one of his famous quotes: *"Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'"*. Personally, I find that when I am more externally focused, doing things for others or for organizations I belong to, my life seems to be more fulfilled, joyful and rewarding.

It strikes me that today, there is an absolute need for all of us to be more focused on what we are doing for others. In a world where common courtesy is often in short supply, and people seem to feel empowered to be openly bigoted, divisive and rude, there is a growing need for empathy, understanding and kindness.



Often, it is the little things that mean the most. Greeting people warmly, smiling to a stranger, random acts of kindness and support all make a difference. Making a difference in the world does not need to be part of a grand plan to be impactful. Sometimes the best start is just showing up. Things like: Going to more PFLAG meetings, or attending some school board meetings; volunteering to support an event or help another group; increasing visibility as an ally by using your voice to speak up, or by displaying symbols of acceptance and support, like clever t-shirts, safety pins, coffee mugs and buttons; calling a representative to speak out against discriminatory bills or to support inclusive bills. These are just a few ideas that all make a difference!

I look forward to the many opportunities that will help me *live my best life for 2019*. Following my son's coming out I learned an important lesson. I always believed I was an open and affirming person. However, I quickly came to understand that those were only my thoughts. While thoughts are the right first step, I did not embody that in my actions. As the old saying goes: *"Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words. Be careful of your words, for your words become your actions. Be careful of your actions, for your actions become your habits. Be careful of your habits, for your habits become your character. Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny."* These days, I try to be more intentional about my thoughts, actions and habits...

I invite you to take a moment to reflect on how you might *live your best life for 2019 and shape your destiny*.

I wish you and your loved ones a joyous, fulfilling and prosperous 2019!

In Love and Solidarity,

John



Get Involved / Upcoming Events

MBLGTACC 2019 "[Beyond the Rainbow and to the Stars](#)" conference is being hosted at Wichita State University February 15-17. College age students should [check it out](#).

From PFLAG National

Court Matters

[The Supreme Court of the United States \(SCOTUS\), in a 5-4 ruling, reinstated the Trump Administration's ban on transgender service members in the military](#), granting a stay of two lower-court injunctions that had blocked the president's policy. [PFLAG National spoke out on the ban](#).

[Federal judge rules Fair Housing Act does not cover LGBT discrimination](#), U.S. District Judge Jean Hamilton in Missouri dismissed a lawsuit brought by a lesbian couple turned away by a retirement home. Read the 10-page order [here](#).

Federal Matters

[Trump Administration grants HHS waiver to South Carolina foster care agency that receives federal funding](#), allowing Miracle Hill to discriminate against, Jewish, LGBTQ, and other families, couples, and individuals. PFLAG National opposes this waiver, will work to ensure that this is addressed immediately, and ask that you reach your federal legislators and urge them to take specific action (see TAKE ACTION above).

[The Department of Justice said it will ask SCOTUS to immediately review a proposed 2020 census question which would ask respondents whether they are a U.S. citizen, according to a legal filing](#). The question has already been [struck down by a federal judge in New York](#), barring inclusion of the citizenship question. PFLAG National opposes including a citizenship-identifying question in the Census.

[An Opinion Piece from David J. Johns, Executive Director of one of PFLAG National's trusted partners, the National Black Justice Coalition](#): "For the Civil Rights Act to do its job, Congress must pass the Equality Act." The Equality Act, which has been introduced many times, would update the language in the Civil Rights Act and other laws to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.

[The New England Journal of Medicine reports that found one in five non-binary people are denied proper healthcare access](#). The study found 19 percent of non-binary people were refused medical care because of their gender identity, while 22 percent avoided seeking medical attention out of fear of discrimination.

PFLAG Chapter Opportunities!

We start 2019 with some positive initiatives for growth in Northern Illinois. If you or someone you know is interested in getting more involved, please reach out to one of the folks listed below.

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 Carmi Frankovich at PFLAGaurorafoxvalley@pflagillinois.org. Special thanks to Carmi for leading the charge with her positive energy.

PFLAG Chicago Español- There are preliminary discussions about interest in starting a PFLAG Chapter to primarily support Spanish speaking members. If you have interest in helping form this chapter in Chicago, please contact John Hickey at info@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Chicago / Hyde Park- There are preliminary discussions about interest in starting a PFLAG Chapter in the Hyde Park area. If you have interest in helping form this chapter, please contact John Hickey at info@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Romeoville- Kris and Peter Shulman are looking for interested parties to help start a new in Romeoville to help serve Will County. They are currently in search of a facility for their meetings. If you are interested in helping out please send an email to PFLAGromeoville@pflagillinois.org.

PFLAG West Dundee- There is a small core of folks looking to add volunteers to help start a PFLAG chapter to meet at St James' Episcopal Church, located at 516 Washington St, West Dundee, IL 60118. Thank you Sharon for leading this initiative. If you have interest in helping form this chapter, please contact Sharon Fu at PFLAGwestdundee@pflagillinois.org

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

Look for opportunities to join in a community outreach activity.



From Equality Illinois

by Mike Ziri, Director of Public Policy

The Inclusive Curriculum Bill has been re-introduced by State Rep. Anna Moeller and State Sen. Heather Steans. The new bill number is HB 246.

We appreciate your support of the legislation in 2018 and look forward to working with you in 2019.

We are determined to pass this significant legislation in 2019, and we will ensure the contributions of LGBTQ people and events are shared in the history taught in public schools across Illinois. Why is this important? According to the recently released 2017 School Climate Survey by GLSEN, only 24% of LGBTQ students in Illinois ever learn in schools about a positive representation of people like them. Furthermore, 88% of LGBTQ students hear the word "gay" as a pejorative. We must do better for our youth, and this bill will help!

We have prepared a link for stakeholders to contact their state representative about the bill:

tinyurl.com/IllinoisInclusiveCurriculum. If you tweet about the bill, please use #LGBTQhistoryIllinois. Please share with your networks.

News from PFLAG DuPage

by Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

Happy New Year again! Sunday marked the 15th "birthday" of PFLAG DuPage! Our first meeting was Sunday, January 18, 2004. So, we are in our 16th year!! We hope it will be a good one for all of us and everyone that we hold dear.

EDUCATION

We were honored to have as our guest speaker Sandra Wagner. Sandra (who is not now, nor ever has been, an aardvark) hails from Chicago, Illinois. While some claim that Chicago is a hotbed of aardvark activity, she has seen none of it.

Having spent her entire career in the software industry, she finds creative outlet in writing fiction, art, theatre, and music. In 2007, in her mid-50's, she successfully made the transition from male to female on the job at a large financial institution and helped them write guidelines for transition for transsexuals and gender variant individuals. She is married to her husband, June, and lives with her extended family. She helps raise her two granddaughters

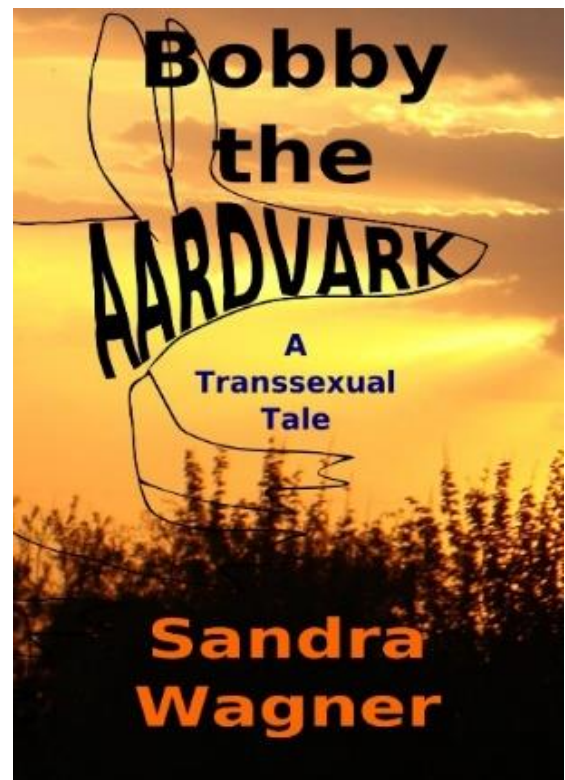
who do not find it odd at all that Grandma Sandy used to be a boy, and actually think it's kind of special.



Sandra has created and presented a workshop called "Transgender 101 - Trans Information for the Non-Trans Community." That is where she originally came up with the aardvark metaphor. Sandra educated us with an abbreviated version of her workshop. Sandra entertained questions during and after her presentation.

More information about Sandra and a free download of her book, Bobby the Aardvark, is available at

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/406670>



ADVOCACY

We are **looking for folks interested in helping support an important change** to the **School District 87 Administrative Procedure 7:10**, that would help create more inclusive environments for our trans and gender-expansive youth.

Supportive people needed at the school board meeting on February 11th

The vote will be **February 11th at 7:00 pm at the District Office in Glen Ellyn** which is right next to Glenbard West.

Glenbard Voices of Equity presented to the District 87 Policy committee on January 14th. The goal was to add language reflecting best practices into the Administrative Procedure 7:10. So that D87 can address the needs of transgender students, gender nonconforming students, and students questioning their gender to ensure a safe, affirming, and healthy school environment where every child can learn. If the language is adopted, then the procedure that follows, and we hope to help create would guide school staff through the common needs in which these students may request accommodations and support at school. These supports would identify the expressed wishes of the student regarding accommodations for affirming the name and pronouns that correspond with the student's gender identity, disclosure or lack of disclosure of the student's gender identity to teachers and other relevant school staff, use of restrooms and locker rooms, overnight school trip accommodations, confidentiality of gender transition in student records and information systems, and other supports as necessary. The meeting went pretty well but there is still push back in regarding locker rooms.

There are some supporting board members, but **it would be helpful to have some supportive people at the board meeting on February 11th who may be willing to talk in support of 7:10 giving equal opportunities to transgender and gender non-conforming students or just be there to go against anyone who may be protesting against us.** This is intended to be a peaceful, respectful representation of the community. If anyone from PFLAG would like to be there we would be thrilled for the support. It would be nice to have some people representatives from Glenbard Voices of Equality, willing to speak in favor of this change. It could make a nice precedent for other school districts in our area.


News from PTI Chicago

by Bill Guilfoile

PTI Chicago had election of officers in November and the following were unanimously elected:

- Bill Guilfoile, President
- Molly Malone, VP Programming/Treasurer
- Christine Peters, VP Membership
- Jo Peer-Haas, Secretary (Historian/Reporter)

We want to thank Betty Guilfoile for serving as President in 2018. Her new work commitments at Live Oak Group Counseling Practice did not allow her to continue in the role as President.



The T in LGBTQ – Being a Trans Ally

During the late fall the Guilfoile family, members of PTI Chicago, were invited by two different Lutheran Churches to provide a presentation to their congregations. The presentation entitled “The T in LGBTQ – Being a Trans Ally” was given at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on W Addison, Chicago and United in Faith Lutheran Church on W Irving Park Road Chicago, both members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bill Guilfoile, Dad and current President of PTI Chicago, acted as moderator while family members, Mom Betty and twins John and Tess, age 27, provided education on allyship for trans people while sharing their personal story of John’s transition. The Guilfoiles were delighted by the extremely positive reception from each church and are looking forward to educating other congregations that are interested in their story.

Both churches have the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) designation from the ELCA, which indicates a dedication and support for the LGBTQ community.



News from PFLAG Ottawa

by Ken Brown

Over the past few months, an average of 15 people have been in attendance at each of our PFLAG Ottawa meetings. In October, Pastor Kim Wood of Open Table Church in Ottawa presented a program on the “Clobber Passages.” She addressed the Biblical passages that are misused by conservative Christians to condemn homosexuality.

In November, we borrowed an idea from PFLAG McHenry and, in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Matthew Shepard’s death, we watched the video entitled “Matthew Shepard’s Story.” During the discussion that followed, it was noted that, in October of 2018, Matthew’s ashes were interred at the Washington National Cathedral in D.C., as an enduring symbol of the gay rights movement. Bishop Gene Robinson spoke at a moving memorial service in the Cathedral.

In December, our discussion addressed the question, “What can we do to be an ally of LGBTQ+ persons?” We had a stimulating discussion. Each of the 15 participants contributed with suggestions such as: do not judge; speak up when you hear anti-gay slurs or jokes; respect another person’s use of pronouns; and advocate by contacting local newspapers and policy makers.

News from PFLAG Deerfield

by Sue Ginsburg

As winter finally said ‘hello’, unfortunately, our speaker couldn’t make it this month. Happily, as is the habit, sometimes, when we have no speaker, the meeting’s conversations lead to many laughs, some tears and lots of support and comfort. While we didn’t welcome any new families this month, a few of the ‘newer’ families who were there were treated to longer introductions of our regulars, which led to lots of questions, comments and information exchanged. Usually, when we have a speaker, our round the circle introductions are limited to a minute, as we only have our room for 2 hours. But this month, our introductions lasted almost an hour and a half!!!

There were some important announcements made as well. PFLAG Deerfield was invited to the 10th Congressional District Democrats’ Community Expo in Vernon Hills on the 12th. Kathy and I went and met some amazing people from community

organizations around the 10th District. Of course, both adults and children enjoyed beading our safety pins. It was a great way to get our name out there.

Mark you calendars for Youth Services Pride Youth Program: Trans Youth and Family Summit, 2019. It takes place on Sunday, March 3, 9:00 am to 1:30 pm, 3080 West Lake Ave. in Glenview. It is for trans and gender expansive youth and family members. It includes workshops for youth and adults, activities, and lunch. Registration Opens January 15.

News from PFLAG Hinsdale

by Suellen Cook

We had a wonderful celebration at our December annual potluck holiday celebration. After sharing a wonderful meal, we filled stockings with toiletries, cold weather accessories and gift cards for the young adults at The Crib.

PFLAG Hinsdale wishes to thank our January 2019 speakers - Laura Jaramillo and Amy Pniewski. Laura's a therapist who specializes in working with people who have eating disorders, and Amy shared her personal experience with an eating disorder. Laura and Amy explained the LGBTQIA+ community is at higher risk for eating disorders and other addictions. Eating disorders can begin with both body image issues and be complicated by not being able to live authentically. Certain behaviors involving anorexia, bulimia, and bingeing/purging can become unmanageable, and Laura explained that by helping patients focus on radical acceptance of self and of others, treatment of eating disorders can be managed.

Laura and Amy shared an open and honest message about coming to terms with your sexuality. They stressed that by living authentically when identifying as LGBTQIA+, it can be a driving force for recovery from an eating disorder. If you know someone who is struggling with an eating disorder, Laura suggested you ask instead about the person and what they are doing rather than focusing on body image or food issues. For additional information about eating disorders, you can refer to the National Eating Disorders Association at [National Eating Disorders Association \(NEDA\)](#).

Our speaker for Feb 3rd is Tracy Baim. She'll talk about her book, *Gay Press: Gay Power: the Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*.



News from PFLAG McHenry

by Toni Weaver

Party time in McHenry! We celebrated the holidays with our annual hors d'oeuvre/dessert pot luck while sharing good conversation in one room and a showing of Scrooge and Marley in another. (Tracy Baim was co-producer of this campy, delightful, modern retelling of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol.)

The January program, led by Bob Chikos, brought a Toastmaster idea to the meeting. Each member of our leadership team prepared LGBTQ-related questions to be posed to those in attendance. The conversation was so good that we only got through two questions in an hour's time! We find that these in-house conversations are well received, that we don't have to bring in outside speakers all the time in order to have productive meetings.

The McHenry County Suicide Prevention Task Force invited PFLAG McHenry to have a seat at the table as the task force begins to explore the connection between increased suicide/attempted suicide and being LGBTQ.

One of the members of the task force shared with us a poem he had found – "Blessing for one who has taken their own life," a link to which is on our FB page as well as on the FB page for PFLAG Northern Illinois.

Our local newspaper, the Northwest Herald, published a story on January 20 about one of our middle schools in Crystal Lake, Hannah Beardsley, having a very active club, Prism, which creates "an accepting and diverse school climate regardless of age, sex, gender, race, religion, social class, political views or appearance." Both of the advisers had attended one of the trainings we (Regional Office of Education and PFLAG) organized last year, and it was so nice to see PFLAG credited in the paper!

News from PTI North Shore

Lizzie Appelby who heads up the PRIDE portion of Youth Services in Glenview will be the featured speaker for the 2/17 meeting.



On January 26th, Carol Fetzner and Toni Weaver staffed a PFLAG resource table at the People in Need Forum that was held at McHenry County College.



Calendar at the Center on 3656 N. Halsted, Chicago

(click on any image to follow a link to the event)



A NIGHT WITH OSCAR
ACADEMY AWARDS VIEWING PARTY
CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

FEBRUARY 24, 2019
PARK WEST
322 WEST ARMITAGE • CHICAGO



NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY
FEBRUARY 7
GET EDUCATED. GET TESTED. GET INVOLVED. GET TREATED.

ACT AGAINST AIDS



An LGBTQ+ Family Show
Saturday, February 16 • 2:30 - 4:30 pm

Center on Halsted is thrilled to bring MORE magic to our community with the much enjoyed Chicago Magic Lounge. This show will be geared towards LGBTQ+ families. Ages 5 to 105 are encouraged to join us for a magically filled afternoon!

Please RSVP below to ensure entry.

[RSVP HERE](#)

\$10 Tickets. Children under 12 are free.



New for 2019!
CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED
CYBER CENTER YOUTH
VR WORLD BUILDING CLASSES
A Tech-Meets-Art Development Series

Free computer courses for any youth between the ages of 13-19 who are interested in learning coding with Unity, audio production with Audacity, and 3D design with Sketchup.

To sign up or learn more >>>

Article on WBEZ News:

80 Percent Of Illinois LGBTQ Teens Report Hearing Homophobic Comments At School

The article reports disturbing statistics about LGBTQ students in Illinois:

- 80% regularly hear **homophobic comments**
- 72% have been **harassed**
- 28% were **disciplined** for public displays of affection
- 11% **weren't allowed** to wear LGBTQ-supportive clothing
- Only 16% say their school has a comprehensive anti-bullying policy
- Only 1 in 4 say they have been exposed to an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum



Letter to PFLAG Deerfield by the creators of the movie

You Should Meet My Son 2!

Dear Deerfield PFLAG,

*Back in 2010, PFLAG generously helped get the word out about our film **You Should Meet My Son!** The movie was a comedy about a conservative southern mom who is horrified to discover that her son is gay. But determined that he won't go through life alone, she sets out to find him the perfect husband.*

The film was intended to be both an engaging piece of entertainment, and a useful tool for parents who are struggling to understand their gay children. It won "Best Picture" at nine film festivals.

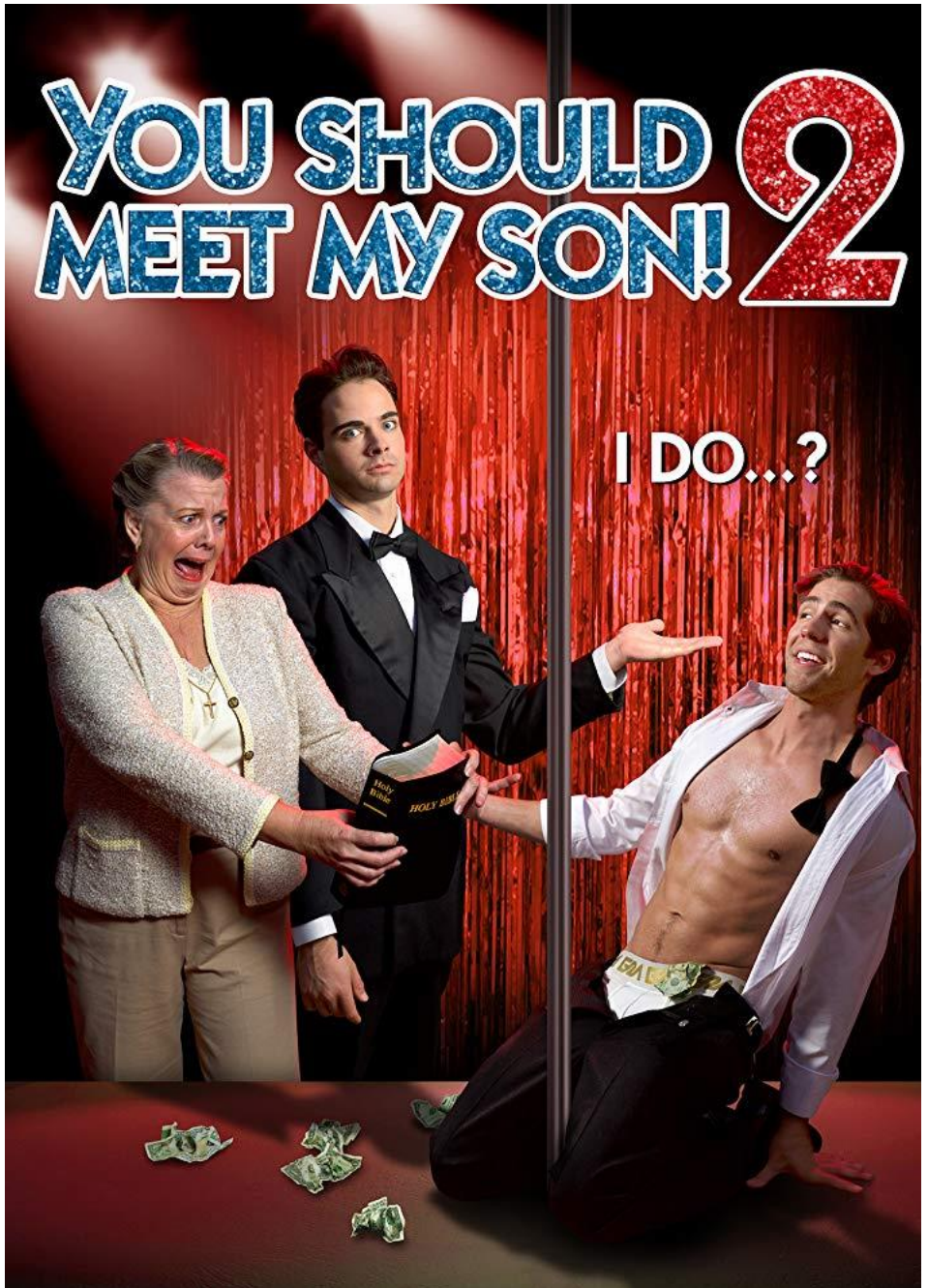
*We've just released the sequel, **You Should Meet My Son 2!** This one introduces a new character, a fundamentalist mother who is determined to stop her gay son's wedding. However, her plans go awry when she accidentally befriends his fiancé and finds herself giving relationship advice. Will mom wind up being the one who destroys their marriage? Or the one who saves it?*

We believe the new film will be of interest to PFLAG members, and we'd appreciate anything that you can to make them aware of it. A mention of the film in your chapter's newsletter or at your next meeting would be very helpful. I've attached a short information sheet with links where your members can watch the trailer or the full film.

Thanks for your support! Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Keith Hartman
Writer/Director
310-927-6006

Kevin Isom
Executive Producer
678-592-3994



Movie and Theatre News

from [Pride Film & Plays](#)

I Know My Own Heart

Love stories continue at Pride Arts Center. **I KNOW MY OWN HEART** is Jeff Recommended, and is getting great reviews. If you have not seen a show in our smaller theater, which we call The Buena, choose this one. The four women performers are terrific, and you are inches away from the very intense and emotional action. It was wonderful to have esteemed author Emma Donoghue here last weekend for opening night.

Tickets can be purchased [here](#).

David Zak,
Executive Director

[Pride Films and Plays](#)

[Pride Arts Center](#)

4139 N Broadway,
Chicago, IL 60613



360 Youth Services

by Sam Nelson

The month of January kicked off **#MentoringMonth** at 360 Youth Services.

360 Youth Services is an organization that began in 1971 when a group of concerned parents, community, and religious leaders recognized the need for professional, youth-centered services in the Naperville community. They formed a council that eventually became a non-profit organization referred to as Naperville Community Outreach. In 2011, the organization changed its name to 360 Youth Services to better reflect its mission and vision. Today, 360 Youth Services offers substance abuse prevention education, counseling, and housing.

When housing is uncertain, everything in a young person's life seems to fall apart. 360 Youth Services is committed to supporting youth from experiencing homelessness to independence, and offering the supportive and compassionate services needed to get them back on their feet and headed in the right direction.

Transitional Housing

360 Youth Services is proud to offer Men's, Women's and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning) Transitional Housing Programs serving youth experiencing homelessness. The men's program serves male-identified individuals, ages 18-24, the women's program serves female-identified individuals, ages 18-21, and the LGBTQ+ program serves individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, ages 18-21. Individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities or expressions are welcome in all programs.

In addition to housing, residents participate in a structured program that focuses on improving education, employment and life skills with the ultimate goal of securing permanent housing and achieving independence.

Apartments for the program are located in Naperville and Lisle and support services are offered to residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Programs range from 18-24 months.

Residents of the Transitional Housing Program are generally referred to the program by homeless service providers in DuPage and Kane Counties, but all are welcome to inquire.

Structure



Residents of Transitional Housing work a structured program with the goal of achieving permanent housing and independence. Upon entering the program, each resident's needs are carefully assessed and an individualized contract is created and agreed upon by the resident and staff. Contracts typically address issues including curfew and expectations for apartment maintenance, schooling, budgeting, use of support services such as counseling, and giving back to the community through monthly volunteering experiences.

Many residents of the program struggle with substance abuse issues and as such abstinence from all mood-altering substances is strictly enforced.



Personalized Support



Each resident of the program works with a professionally trained staff member who provides them with personalized support and intervention in order to help them achieve their goals. The following services are offered to each resident:

- Housing in a fully furnished apartment for up to 24 months
- Assistance and support in developing a personalized case plan that identifies goals and steps to achieve them
- Staff availability and support available 24/7
- Life skills training addressing such topics as budgeting, grocery shopping on a budget, and maintaining a clean home
- Assistance in completion of a high school diploma, GED program or similar educational program
- Support in searching for and securing employment
- Assistance in securing affordable housing and accessing community resources including other service agencies and educational institutions
- Participation in the Seven Challenges Program, an evidence-based, award winning initiative developed to support young adults who struggle with substance abuse and mental health issues.

Resident's Profile

Participants in the program must be homeless young adults, ages 18-24 years old (Men's THP) or 18 – 21 years old (Women's & LGBTQ+ THPs), who are:

- residents of DuPage or Kane Counties
- willing to complete high school or a GED program
- free of serious substance abuse problems and willing to abstain from drug and alcohol use
- free of outstanding warrants for arrest
- willing to participate in a background check
- testing with an IQ above 70
- willing to obtain and maintain employment
- willing and able to sign a program contract indicating their commitment to program rules, expectations and personal goals

Mentoring

The adolescents and young adults in the Transitional Housing Program are coping with far more personal and social pressures than any other previous generation. By matching them with a volunteer mentor, young people can find the support they need and better develop skills effectively deal with these pressures.

Who Needs a Mentor?



Young adults ages 18-24 years old, live in our Men's, Women's and LGBTQ Transitional Housing Programs in Lisle and Naperville and were previously homeless. While living at 360, our residents focus on education, improving life skills and securing employment with the goals of being self-sufficient and living on their own.

Boys ages 13-18 years old currently reside in our Cornerstone Group Home in Lisle, are energetic, and sometimes struggle with issues related to trust and authority. These children are often involved with 360 Youth Services as a way to prevent them from becoming involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

Open your heart to someone who needs you!

We are looking for volunteer mentors who are ...

- Mature, kind, accountable, compassionate, supportive, open-minded and a good listener
- Able to make a one-year commitment including weekly contact with the person you are mentoring
- Able to pass a background check and TB test, and to participate in training
- A minimum of 21 years old

Open your heart to someone who needs you, I did! I began the process of applying to be a mentor at 360 Youth in early 2018, nearly five months after my own daughter began her transition. I've watched my child face adversity at many points during her transition and I wanted to find a way to help other youth that didn't have the same supportive foundation.

According to a 2015 study conducted by the Williams Institute, 40% of the homeless youth served by agencies identify as LGBT. A huge factor in the rate of homelessness in LGBT youth is familial rejection. When I heard that number I knew I had to do something to help.

The application process was easy as was the screening and training. I then officially became a volunteer/employee of 360 Youth Services. A few months later I was matched with a young man in the LGBTQ Transitional Housing program. Without going

into too much detail (for privacy's sake) the young man I was matched with faced the situation I previously described, homelessness due to lack of familial support. I wanted so much for this young man to know he was supported, loved and accepted.

Over the next few months, we set goals and discussed how I could best support him. We talked at least once a week (sometimes more) and coordinated monthly outings in the Naperville area.

After some time passed and we became close I began integrating my daughter into our visits. An now, we have spent many nights hanging out watching movies, playing board games, trying new foods and we have spent several holidays (coordinated by 360 Youth staff) and birthdays together as a family. As a result of this wonderful experience I will continue to mentor at 360 Youth for years to come. I have learned so much about my own child though this experience but more than that I have learned about myself. I have found so much purpose in helping others. That reward alone is huge and this is why I ask you to consider mentoring at 360 Youth Services.

Carolyn Wahlskog, 360 Youth's Senior Program Director of the Transitional Housing Program says "Research shows that youth who have a mentor are more successful as they navigate life's challenges. We call ourselves 360 Youth Services, because we are trying to surround the whole person with support. I appreciate so much the mentors who work with our residents because they now have a person who is authentically there in their corner. Mentors expand the network of support that we know our youth need - whether it's just to process the day or to ask for advice. But most importantly, mentors are possibility models. They are queer adults and allies showing our residents that there are adults who want to invest in them and that they have an opportunity to have a future with loving families and communities."

We need you! Please [Click here](#) to apply to be a mentor today! If you have additional questions, please contact Hali Aldridge, Mentor Program Specialist, at haldridge@360youthservices.org

If you can't mentor now consider donating to 360 Youth at: <https://www.360youthservices.org/donations/#online>

If you are unable to contribute financially consider donating gently used items such as clothing or any of the household items on [this list](#).



Artist of the month:

Marlon Lyles

From the artist:

As a native Chicagoan I found a passion for art later in life. A former teacher now a perpetual student, I explore the seen and unseen, the beauty of geometry, the infinite number of patterns as well as movement and emotion in my work. What is underneath, behind, partially seen or hides in plain sight are subjects of my work. Circles, lines and their infinite combinations comprise the geometric approach to my art. My love of dance, whether an observer or participant, appears in my work through its fluid strength, power, and fragility.

At times all of these influences come together to create a piece that makes you smile, laugh, invoke humor, conflict, drama or another emotion. Basic drafting tools help me create clean lines, intricate designs, delicate patterns and bold images by hand. I love the ease and tidiness of using ink on various types of paper. The sound as the pen or marker glides along the paper, stipples or makes marks is a call to be present. Creating this work is a meditative process. I hope my work moves and inspires its viewers.



Marlon Lyles (right) with his husband Jeff Cote

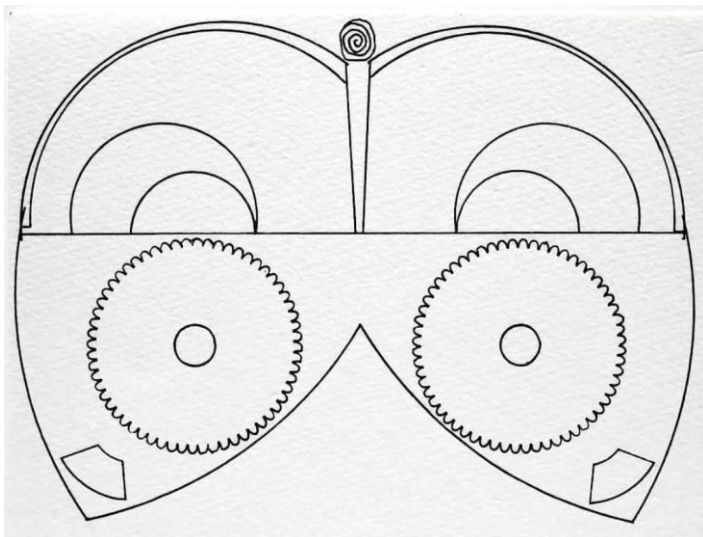
[Greenleaf Art Center](#)

[Zhou B Art Center](#)

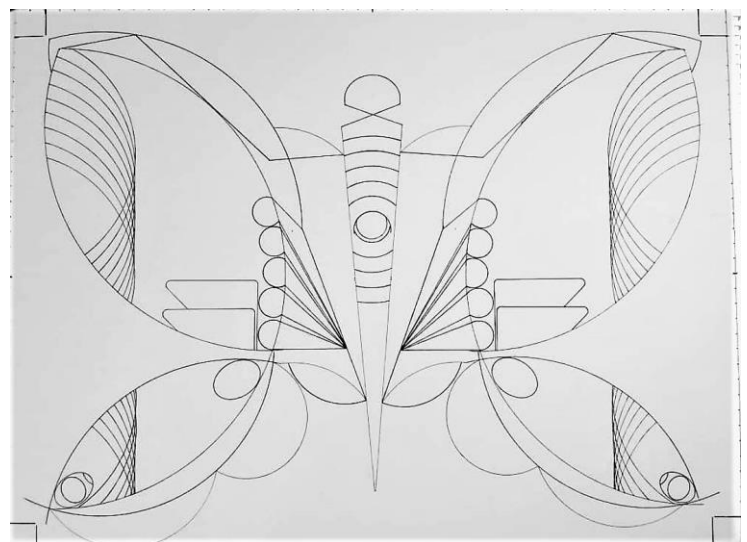
mr_marlon64@yahoo.com

Facebook: [Marlon Lyles Art](#)

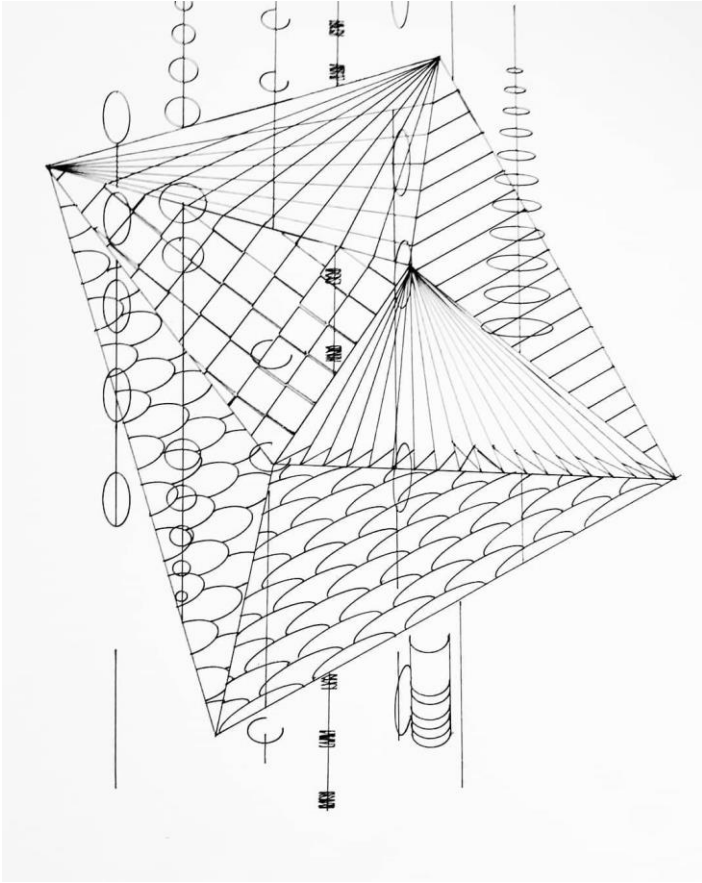
[Instagram@marlonlyles](#)



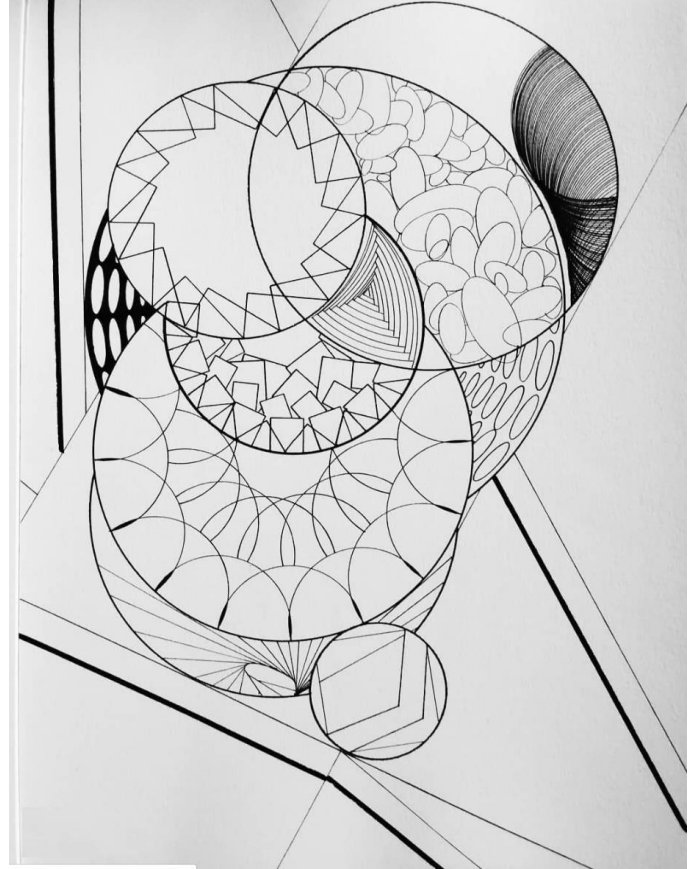
Butterfly series



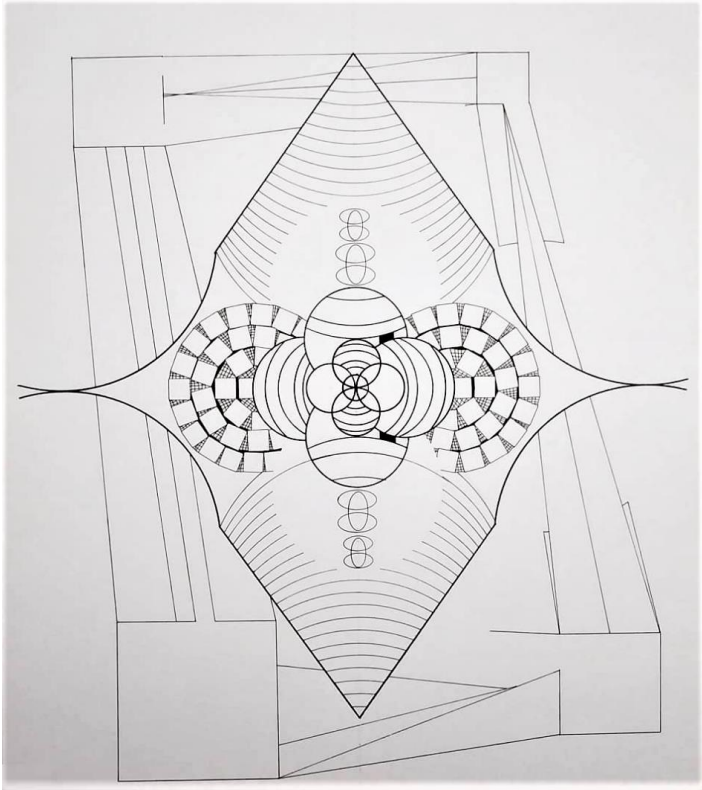
Butterfly series



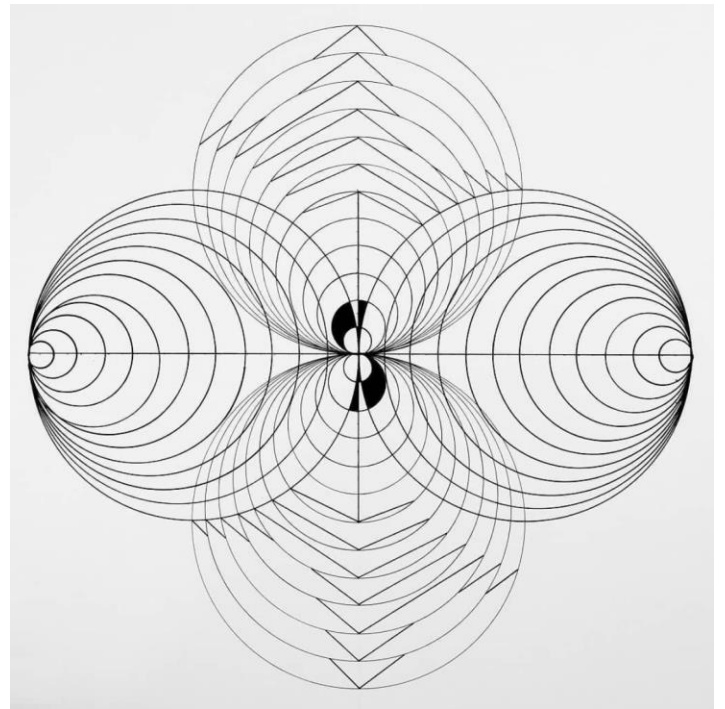
Invisible support



Make yourself happy

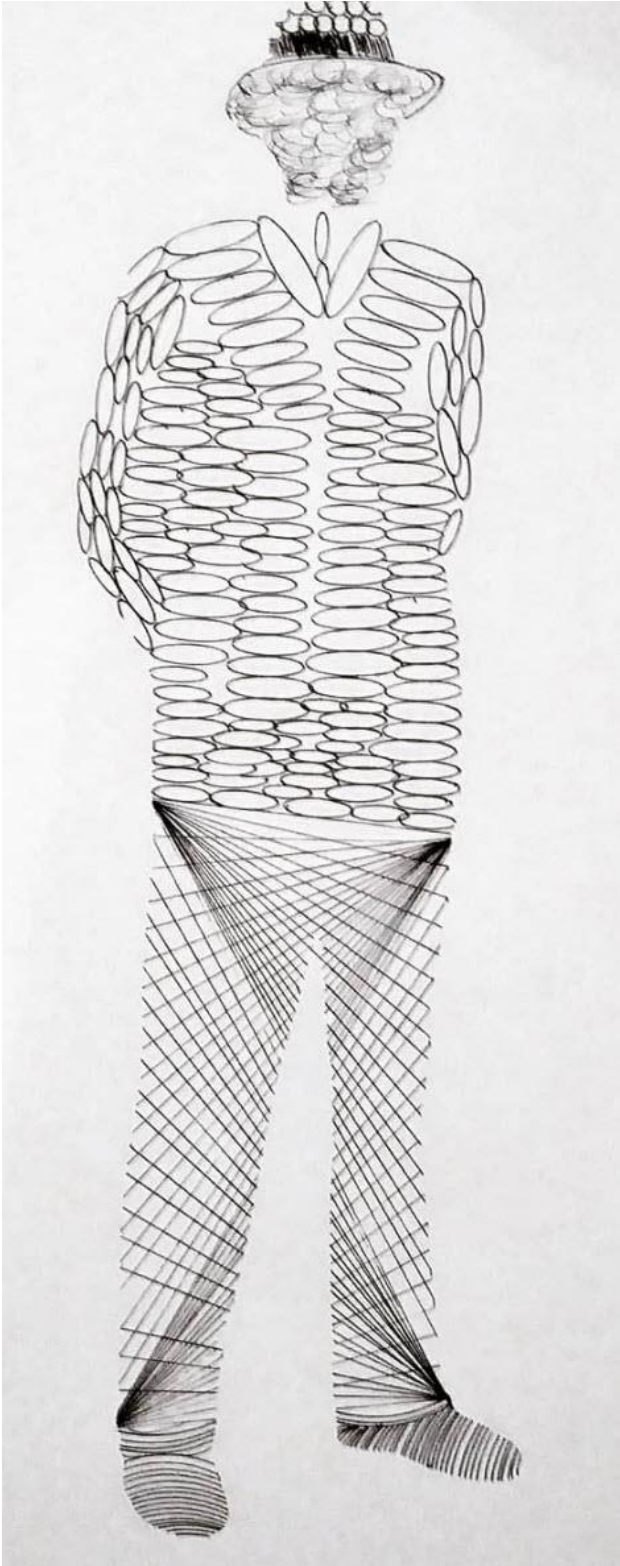


A wonderful world



Conical dimension

Marlon Lyles



G man - Sticks and stones



Rainy Chicago day



Collage- Feeling fancy today



Collage- The Monster Within



Collage- It's Fancy pants Monday. Strut your stuff.

Helga and the advent of cabbage

by Bambi Bellows
IT Guru, Geek, Philosopher, Writer, Humorist

Editor: I've been told by the author that this is one of many stories about Helga – a lesbian superhero who flies around in just a cape (apparently, she's a nudist) and with a pet penguin on her shoulder. I haven't asked about the aerodynamics of this arrangement, and the penguin doesn't make an appearance in this chapter, but we will hopefully get introduced in the coming months.

And so it was that I had dinner with a friend or two, and we spoke of many things. Of shoes and ships and sealing wax. Of cabbages and kings.

Well, no, actually.

We didn't speak of any of those things.

Not one.

What we *did* speak of was far more important than any of that, and requires me to get my big story book full of pictures and large print. So, why don't you jump into your PJs and I will try to locate my book.

It's here somewhere.

Hang on.

Are you in your PJs yet?

Good, hop into bed, and, yes, here it is.

Once upon a time, there was a superhero named Helga. She was a superhero because her parents told her that she could be anything she wanted to be when she grew up. And she wanted to be a superhero. The way, I think, we all do. But Helga was empowered. As all superheroes must be.



The author and one of her co-conspirators

Her story begins, as all of ours do, when the Great Cat Herbert coughed up the Cosmic Furball that spun and spun and spun until all the galaxies and planets and parking spaces were created. What's that? Your science teacher says that's not how the Universe was created? Well, hmph. Who are you gonna listen to? Your dumb science teacher? Or me?

I'm waiting.

Ok, fine. You get a note from your science teacher and you can be excused.

The rest of you, sit back, and listen to our story, because it started a long time ago on a planet that we now call Earth, but which, originally, had no name whatsoever.

Earth was a medium sized planet. Not too big. Not too small. But just right. And it was a medium temperatured planet. Not too hot. Not too cold. But just right. And had an irritating number of porridge

recipes, many of which included cabbage. But that, as they say, is a topic for another day.

You see, somehow we were going to get to cabbages.

We always get to cabbages.

Okay. Cabbages were not always cabbages, you see. Originally they looked like a cross between badgers and ferrets, and they were wily as coyotes. But rounder, actually. And a little leafy. Which stood them in good stead, as they were able to sneak up on the cats better.

The cats, in this case, were Beatrice and Clovis. They were lovely cats, active in their local communities, always first in line at the charity bake sales, where, it is said, they liked catnip brownies. Beatrice and Clovis lived with a nice human, whose name they never bothered to learn, but who would work the fields, night and day, come home, pay their bills for them, give them tuna, and then, conveniently, leave the story so we don't need to come up with a back story for him. Or her. Who cares? The tuna was name brand, and really, that's all that matters. Oh yes, and the air conditioning bill was always paid on time.

Anyway, the day came when the human who paid the bills decided to sell the house, and the cabbages were always on the prowl for houses which went on sale. They called it "house hunting", and, they would camouflage themselves, as green leafy things, so as to creep up on houses unawares, and pounce on them when they weren't looking. Houses, being notoriously nearsighted, often didn't look, which made them easy prey for the cabbages, who, then, captured the houses, ate the house cats. And the tuna. And moved on. Always looking for more nearsighted houses upon which to pounce.

As it happened, Beatrice and Clovis were out, probably running the banking system for the Western District, when the house, which they owned and allowed the human to live in, hit the market. Unfortunately, the market didn't hit back, as it had a crappy left hook. But markets are lousy with left hooks, as their hands are invisible. Which, you might think, would make for *better* left hooks, but you can't put a hook on an invisible hand: no one can see where to sew them; and the seams aren't straight; and, well, it's an unseemly CATastrophe. As you could imagine. What's that? Left hooks aren't really hooks? Of course they are! Why do

you think they call them hooks? They aren't called left cans-of-tuna, are they? Well. ARE THEY? No. No, they are not.

That's how it was that, when Beatrice and Clovis came home, they were bombarded with cabbages from every direction. Oh, they clawed this way, and that, and there was much cole claw, but, the cabbages were too many, and too clever, and what were poor Beatrice and Clovis to do but cry out for Helga?

"HELGA!!," cried they.

Many planetoids away, on a planet which was a little smaller and a little warmer than Earth, the cries of Beatrice and Clovis reached the ears of Helga, who grabbed her cape, and her Marlboro[tm] cigarettes, and hopped her favorite Great Blue Heron, IwerIwero, and flew to Earth. Oh, you again? What? Great Blue Herons can't fly in outer space? Well, maybe YOURS can't; but, is YOUR Great Blue Heron IwerIwero? No? Then, please, stop interrupting me. And, pass the bok choy.

Anyway, as IwerIwero crossed the Great Earth Barrier, which keeps the Earth from falling into the Sea, there was a great explosion in the sky, and, a very high frequency pitch went out, which muddled the minds of ALL the beings, which, up until this time, had been masquerading as low-calorie leafy vegetables which taste good with corned beef, and they simply lost the ability to metamorphose out of their tasty green shells. And, having lost said same ability, were unable to reproduce more of the badger/ferret mammally creatures which was their original form, as we know, because that's how the story started.

And Beatrice and Clovis invited Helga in for a nice Irish supper of corned beef and cabbage and boiled potatoes, and they all lived happily ever after.

The End.

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