Art by Ricky McEachern pages 8-12

May 2020 | PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois Newsletter

opendoors@pflagillinois.org

Monthly Open Doors SUBSCRIBE



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Stay Healthy & Stay Connected!

Hi PFLAG Friends

I hope this edition of Open Doors finds you healthy and able to find ways to cope with the myriad of challenges you are sure to be facing. As you likely know, we have had to cancel all face to face meetings and our Mother's Day fundraiser, and the Chicago Pride Parade is being deferred. However, in our last edition we talked about some activities to help keep you active, healthy, and connected. Today, I want to talk a little more about staying connected.

While it is vital that we all practice good social distancing guidelines, it is also important, for lots of reasons, that we stay connected.

Last month we mentioned video chatting on FaceTime if you have Apple devices or trying some more universal video chat applications like: <u>FaceBook</u> messenger, Google <u>Duo</u> or Google <u>Hangouts.</u> This month, I want to encourage you to also explore a free account with Zoom. Zoom is the video conferencing platform we are using to host PFLAG meetings with the PFLAG Connects initiative. So, please stay connected with your home chapter and see if they are offering online meetings in place of their monthly face to face meetings. We have had good turn out and valuable connections on the Zoom meetings hosted so far.

Look for details in this edition of Open Doors on our <u>PFLAG</u> Illinois FB site or at our website <u>www.PFLAGIL.org</u>. Be sure to download Zoom and create your free account. You can participate in Zoom meetings in multiple ways:

- Phone Call- call into the phone number provided and enter the meeting code and password to join audio only.
- Smart Phone- Join using the Zoom app on your smart phone and participate with audio, or audio and video.



• Computer- Join using the Zoom website and app and participate with audio or audio and video. This is my favorite way because I can use a larger screen and better see all the participants connecting with video.

Sign up for free at: <u>https://zoom.us/freesignup/</u>

Download Zoom at: https://zoom.us/download

Find Zoom training information and videos at: <u>https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/sections/201740096-Training</u>

If you need assistance, Andrew Zanevsky, our Secretary and Open Doors editor has volunteered to help. Andrew can be reached at <u>OpenDoors@PFLAGillinois.org</u>.

Stay connected!

In love and solidarity,

John

PFLAG CONNECTS

meeting where you are



LGBTQ+

Awareness Days

Stay informed of Awareness days at:

https://www.bhocpartners.org/appowners/lgbtq-holidays/#toggle-id-5

May dates of note:

- May 3 International Family Equality Day
- **May 17** International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia
- May 18 HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
- May 19 Hepatitis Testing Day
- May 19 National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- May 22 Harvey Milk Day
- **May 24** Pansexual and Panromantic Visibility Day

Online Meetings

While face-to-face PFLAG chapter meetings have been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several of our chapters have moved online and are now conducting monthly meetings over Zoom. Look for announcements from your chapter leaders about Zoom meeting dates and times (they are usually the same as regular meetings, but please confirm that with your chapter) and for instructions on how to join.

If your chapter is not conducting online meetings and you need support of other PFLAG members, please contact <u>OpenDoors@PFLAGillinois.org</u>. Several chapters have agreed to admit members of other chapters to their online meetings. We will make introductions and help you find an online meeting.

Please note that we are taking precautions to verify identity of online meeting attendees to protect privacy of all participants.



Climbing Every Mountain: a New Docuseries

\leftarrow Click on the image to access

This new series by *Transilient*, was made in partnership with PFLAG National. Learn more about the crucial need for medical and behavioral healthcare for transgender and nonbinary people across the Appalachia region of the United States. All five episodes now available!



From PFLAG National

COURT MATTERS

U.S. Department of Justice files statement of interest in lawsuit over transgender athletes.

The Department of Justice is getting involved in a federal civil rights lawsuit in Connecticut that seeks to block transgender female students from competing as girls in interscholastic sports. Attorney General William Barr signed the statement of interest which argues that allowing trans girls to compete with other girls 'deprives' cisgender girls of 'the single-sex athletic competitions that are one of the marquee accomplishments of Title IX.'

MEDIA MATTERS

Something to Talk About Live--a weekly live broadcast from PFLAG National--continues to bring in new viewers. Broadcast simultaneously via Facebook and YouTube, we offer content addressing LGBTQ+ concerns, focused primarily on diversity and inclusion, led by our Learning and Inclusion team. Join us live next Thursday, April 23rd, for a conversation with Metropolitan Community Church founder Reverend Troy Perry and Revolution church founder Rev. Jim Bakker.

Study shows that gender-affirming IDs help lower suicidal thoughts. A recent study published in the medical journal The Lancet has found that transgender people who have IDs that match their gender identity are 25% less likely to experience psychological distress or consider suicide.

<u>PFLAG National launches #TransKids</u> <u>#SoFierce campaign on Transgender Day of</u>

<u>Visibility</u>. This new campaign--which was covered by a variety of LGBTQ+ and other news outlets--will be ongoing, emphasizing the fierceness of trans kids, particularly in the face of over 200+ anti-LGBTQ+ state-level bills, many of which target trans and nonbinary youth. <u>Learn more, and participate, at</u> <u>pflag.org/transkidssofierce</u>.

LGBTQ+ homeless fear illness and violence as

COVID-19 shuts shelters. Advocates are concerned that the closure of homeless centers due to COVID-19 will put LGBTQ+ individuals without housing at increased risk for health complications, hate crimes, and suicide.

<u>Gender affirming surgeries for transgender</u> <u>individuals are among necessary medical</u> <u>interventions postponed amid COVID-19</u>

pandemic. As hospitals are trying to deal with the influx of COVID-19 patients, surgeries deemed 'nonessential' or 'elective' have been cancelled or postponed indefinitely. This includes gender-affirming procedures, which has caused trans individuals to face increased anxiety and dysphoria.

LGBTQ+ and out of work: Devastating financial toll of COVID-19. A disproportionate number of LGBTQ+ Americans are being affected by the economic toll of coronavirus. According to a report from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), more than five million LGBTQ+ Americans work in jobs that are likely to be impacted by COVID-19.

Over 120 LGBTQ+ individual events affected by COVID-19 cancellations. However, stay tuned to PFLAG social media and other channels as plans evolve for a <u>Global Online Pride</u> to occur on June 27th that is being shaped now. It will be celebrated around the world, and PFLAG National will help you be part of it all. While it's true that more than 120 LGBTQ+ events and pride festivals throughout the world have been cancelled, postponed, or moved online due to concerns about COVID-19, pride preparations around the world will be underway shortly.

Anti-LGBTQ+ hate groups on the rise in the

<u>United States</u>. The Southern Poverty Law Center has reported that the number of anti-LGBTQ+ hate groups in the U.S. increased 43% in the last year, from 49 groups to 70. Anti-LGBTQ+ groups were the fastestgrowing sector among hate groups in 2019.

<u>Stopping the Blitz: Coordinated Response to</u> <u>Christian Nationalist State Campaigns</u>

Project Blitz is a concerted campaign designed to shape state law using a distorted concept of religious freedom to push back on LGBTQ equality as well as gender and reproductive justice issues. The campaign pushes a false historical narrative in order to implement radical policies and elect officials willing to support them. In this webinar, we will discuss the activities and tactics of Project Blitz and provide tools to help effectively oppose them.



News from PFLAG Hinsdale

by Marcia Prichason

"Who is going to share our history if we don't know it ourselves . . ." says Victor Salvo, Executive Director of the Chicago based Legacy Project. Speaking to Hinsdale PFLAG members on Sunday, March 1st, Mr. Salvo presented a fascinating history of the origins, history, and development of the Legacy Project as well as insight into who is recognized through the highly visible and now "National Landmark" recognized plaques that stretch for over a mile along Halsted Street in Chicago.

Born out of the 1963 march on Washington demanding equal rights for LGBTQ Americans, the Legacy Project is designed to provide history and context about LGBTQ individuals in society; a community largely overlooked, ignored, and historically disregarded, therefore making it easy to diminish and discount. Since its inception in 1987, the Legacy Project and its extension, the Legacy Wall, a traveling indoor exhibit, include notable LGBTQ people such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Sally Ride, Eleanor Roosevelt, Frida Kahlo, Michelangelo, and George Washington Carver as well as perhaps more obscure, but equally important, contributors to society. These memorials provide a "living history" of LGBTQ people who have benefited everyone's lives.

The most recent accomplishment of the Legacy Project has been the curriculum inclusion bill recently passed in Illinois. Beginning with the Fall 2020 term, all public schools in Illinois are required to include history and information about everyone (and specifically the LGBTQ community) covered by the Illinois Human Rights Act. The Legacy Project was instrumental in promoting the passage of that bill, developing lesson plans, and is actively involved in training teachers so they are prepared to incorporate the requirements of the curriculum in their lessons.

As Salvo states, "contributions . . . of LGBTQ people . . . need to be put back in our narrative so people know that LGBTQ people have always been there and

always will. That is the best way to stop marginalizing members of our community."

His presentation clearly demonstrated how important knowledge and recognition of LGBTQ contributions to society really are; they have made and continue to make our world a better place in which to live.

News from PTI Chicago by Bill Guilfoile

PTI Chicago held their April monthly meeting for the first time using Zoom because of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The meeting went well and everyone who participated appreciated the support and contact that we had during the meeting. We had participation from several people who normally are not able to attend because of the distance of travel to Center on Halsted in Chicago.

We will continue to hold our meetings by Zoom until the situation with the pandemic changes.

Members will receive an e-mail the week before the Zoom meeting with the Zoom link and password to enter the meeting.

If anyone who is not a member and is the parent or family member of transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals wishes to participate, they should contact Bill Guilfoile at <u>bill.guilfoile@gmail.com</u>.



News from PFLAG McHenry

by Toni Weaver

I have a confession to make. (Oh, oh...my Roman Catholic roots are showing...along with lots of "other" roots – gotta flatten that curve, make this virus history, and get back to our hair salons!) But I digress. Let's get back to the confession. I enjoyed the break – not having to plan a meeting for April. We did due diligence, though, making it known that we were available for phone conversations, posting contact info on the door of the church in which we meet, and using Facebook to get out the word. Now, however, it's time to get back to work. There's a May meeting to plan.

Sue Ginsburg (PFLAG Deerfield) gave me an idea when she told me about their April meeting at which a member who had moved away was able to join the virtual meeting. Wouldn't it be fantastic to have a meeting where all of our "old-timers" could once again be "present"? It would be like a family reunion! No, it WOULD BE a family reunion! A party! I like that! Another of Sue's ideas included inviting our kids to participate so that they can share what it means to them to have their parents involved in PFLAG.

There must be lots of good ideas out there. Please share them with all of us so that we can all make the best of this difficult time. For amusement we can all hunker down and watch Randy Rainbow on YouTube. Not familiar with Randy Rainbow? Check him out!

So, let's wash our hands, cover our faces, stay at home, and get on with the business of PFLAG.

Cheers!

Links recommended by Toni:

- This website has a <u>section devoted to</u> <u>transgender spirituality</u>.
- <u>What Does the Biblical Legend of Jonathan</u> and David's Same-Sex Relationship Say About <u>Homophobia?</u>
- A <u>song about the coronavirus</u> by Randy Rainbow who raises "gayness" to an art form on YouTube!

News from PFLAG DuPage

by Margaret Donahue and Kristin Shulman

Greetings to everyone in these unprecedented times!

PFLAG DuPage was missing our community after the canceled March meeting. We decided to try a Zoom meeting even though there would be some missing components. Overall, we think it was a success and will go forward with this platform until it is safe to resume our meetings in person. When that time comes, though, the initial gatherings will certainly look different than what we are used to depending on vaccine and virus tracking developments.

About 32 members and guests joined for the April 19 session. As the boxes opened up, we could see the familiar faces breathe a sigh of relief and recognition to be together again. Kristin opened with slides with announcements and a poem. I read the opening statement regarding our meeting guidelines describing our mission and confidentiality expectations. I was sure to add a disclaimer that with the Zoom recording options there was only so much we could guarantee about privacy.

For this first run we did not have a speaker. We did the circle time virtually with Kristin keeping track of who was going to speak by ordering participants about three people ahead. We had a guest from the San Ramon, CA chapter and officers from the Bolingbrook and Oak Lawn Chapters who were looking for ideas for future Zoom meetings. Next month we will try a speaker presentation for the first time.

Our meeting lasted about 90 minutes with no snack breaks and our snack game is pretty good when in person! The tone was upbeat. Though we are physically separated, we are still together in this community where everyone's family members are accepted, and people advocate for expanded human rights.

PFLAG DuPage has members and family who are First Responders that are protecting us and treating Covid-19 patients; we applaud and appreciate their efforts.



News from PFLAG Deerfield

by Jodi Zavos

PFLAG Deerfield held our first Zoom meeting in April. It was well attended by members near and far. We even got to connect with a longtime member who had moved to Colorado! We shared positivity and support to help us through these trying times. Unfortunately, we learned that this year's Buffalo Grove Pride Parade has been canceled because of the pandemic; but will return in June 2021. We will continue with virtual meetings until we can meet in person again. We have chosen to invite our children to take part in next month's meeting, if they so choose.

14 movies featuring LGBTQ stories you can watch on Netflix, selected by Insider

- A Single Man (2009)
- Alex Strangelove (2018)
- Below Her Mouth (2016)
- Blue Is the Warmest Colour (2013)
- Chasing Amy (1997)
- The Danish Girl (2015)
- Dear Ex (2018)
- Gods Own Country (2017)
- I Am Jonas (2018)
- I Am Michael (2015)
- Moonlight (2016)
- The Perfection (2018)
- Philadelphia (1993)
- The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)

Full article: <u>https://www.insider.com/best-lgbtq-</u> movies-you-can-watch-netflix-2020-3

Decide to Trust

by Nancy Johnson, PFLAG Oak Park

The current pandemic makes me think of other widespread diseases that have occurred during my lifetime: polio, flu, AIDS. There was no cure for polio, and my parents were scared for my safety, but by the early 60s, came the vaccine! I did get the flu in the 50s and I was the sickest I'd ever been as a teenager. Now there's a vaccine! AIDS was happening at the same time as our son David was coming out. At the time, it was a death sentence. I was scared he was going to die. There's still no vaccine, just better management of HIV.

David was 18 and a freshman at college in 1985 when he called us and said he had something to tell us at Thanksgiving. He said we could ask him any questions, and we could give him a "parental inquisition!" And it turned out that he did let us ask questions, and was patient with my tears when I cried, "I'll never be a grandmother." With arms akimbo, he replied, "MOM! I'm too young to be a parent!"

I was okay with having a gay son, with him having boyfriends, being out at college, BUT I was terrified about AIDS. After he returned to school after Thanksgiving, I mailed him newspaper clippings about AIDS, about how to protect yourself, about anything related to AIDS. When we talked on the phone, he would tell me about the speakers they had at the LGB organization at school, about wearing a safety pin to show that you practiced safer sex. All this should have reassured me, but I was obsessed!

So obsessed that on one call I kept after him asking over and over again about safe sex and keeping safe. He finally brought me to my senses when he asked me, "Mom! Do you want the details of my sex life?" I realized that I DID want to know those details, but that they were NOT ANY of my business. At that point, I decided to trust him. That's when I realized that you can just decide to trust, and then you do trust. Amazing. I've trusted him ever since. And my trust has been well-placed.





Interview with the Artist

Open Doors: How did you start your career as a painter?

Ricky McEachern: I was a very confident artistic child, but I halted visual arts to explore science when I was about 11. The artistic part of me was awakened about 12 years ago through discovering photography.

OD: What emotions do you experience when you paint?

RM: Usually not many. I try to be in bit of a meditative state. It is just static like an old black&white TV late at night.

OD: In your interview on the show MOMENT on March 13th you said that you "have an affinity for old and abandoned things". Is it a feeling of regret and loss, or celebration of their past glory, or something else?

RM: It is a lot of things - a bit of sadness, longing for the past. But often when I see old abandoned things, I think of the people that once were experiencing these things when they were fresh and new. And how they had no insight into the fact that their present moment would someday be looked upon by others as "the past"

Art by Ricky McEachern

<u>rickyartist.com</u> <u>PODCAST: Eager to Know</u>

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

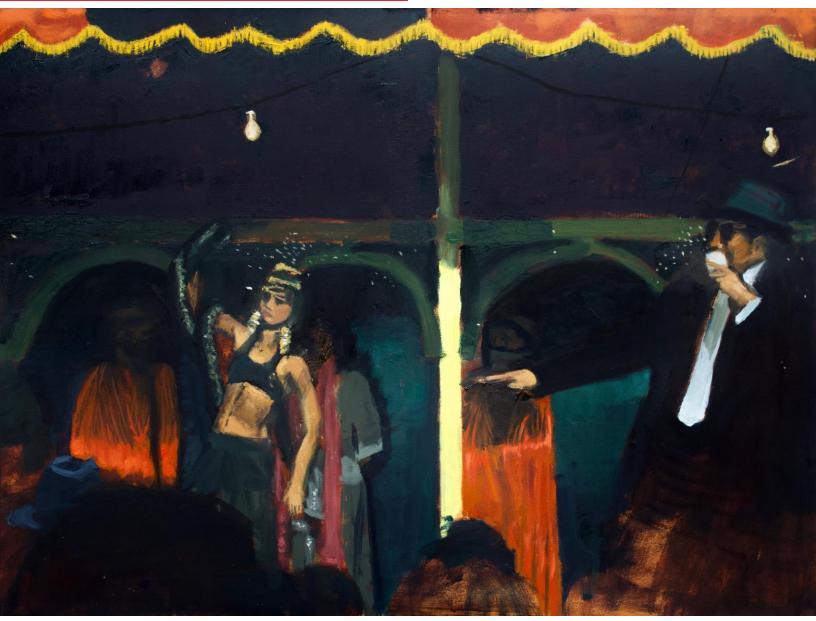
Newsletter

Online Shop



Ripples / 12" x 16"/ oil on canvas





Charmer / 18" X 24" / wood panel

Interview (continued)

OD: Three years ago, you traveled to Italy, found exact spots where your father took photographs as a young man, and recreated these photos. This is a beautiful tribute to your dad's memory and an amazing experiment that has not only artistic, but also historic value, showing what has changed in 64 years. What gave you the idea? What did you feel during this "time-travel" experience? **RM:** When we pulled out the slides, I immediately told my family that I wanted to visit all of the spots - my dad was alive then. It wasn't until years later when my trip to Italy was planned, I thought that my idea could actually be realized. It was a very emotional moment when I took the photos. As I mentioned in other interviews, I felt a connection to my dad.

"It was a very emotional moment when I took the photos... I felt a connection to my dad."



Interview (continued)

OD: How does the lockdown due to the coronavirus affect your work?

RM: I am doing a lot of video interviews with other artists "Checking In With..." series. I love talking and connecting with people so this is an opportunity for that and to help artists share their work with others.

https://www.rickymceachernartist.com/chec kingin-with

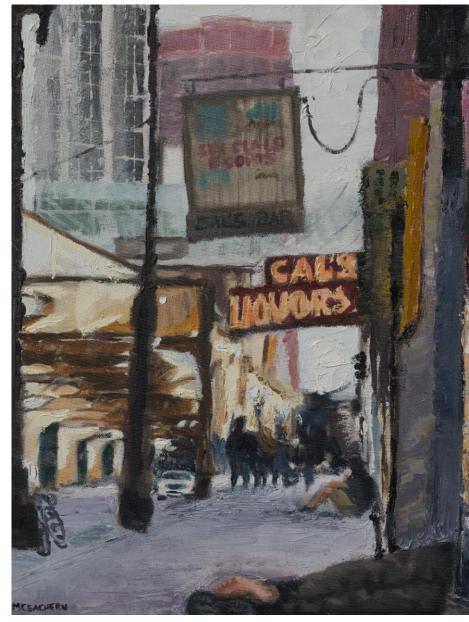
OD: Will your expo at the Center on Halsted be extended after the Center reopens?

RM: Yes, but I do not have details of the reopen or the duration at the time.

"I love talking and connecting with people"

Cal's / 12" X 18" / oil on canvas, framed \rightarrow

Daltons 2 / 28" X 22" / oil on canvas, framed \downarrow / Marathon 8" x 10" / oil on دanvas, framed ⊔









Interview (continued)

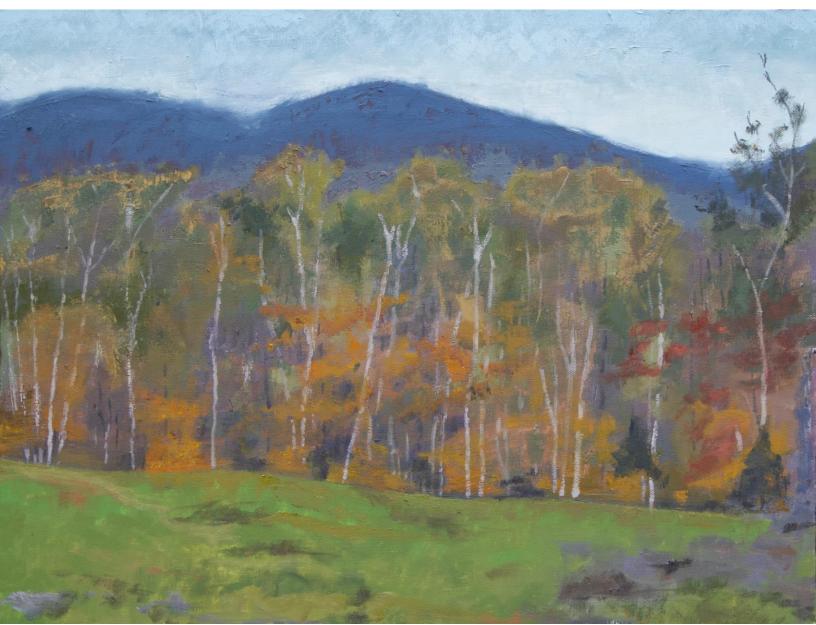
OD: Tell us about your podcast: How did you get involved in doing it? How does it relate to your painting? How can our readers subscribe to it?

RM: Being new to the Chicago art scene, I needed a way for people to get to know me as a person as well as an artist. Conversation is something I am very comfortable with and I am very curious about people - all types. The podcast seemed like a way solve a problem with a natural strength. It has been amazing - an incredible experience being able to engage with people in a very intimate format. I am shocked how

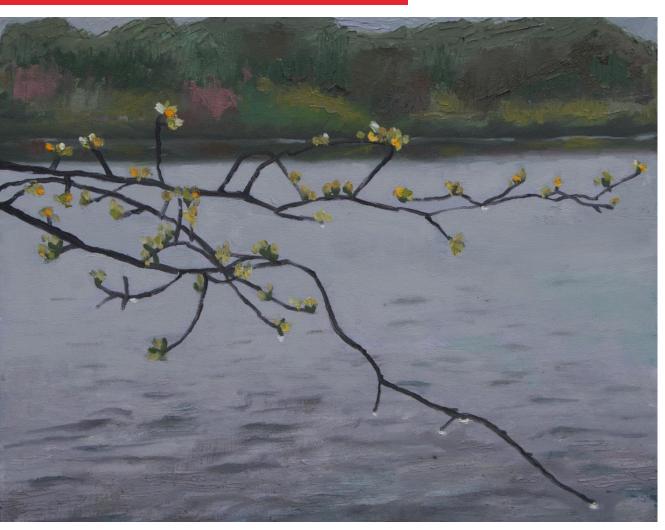
much I have learned about humans in such a short bit of time. There are so many commonalties across people that I was not aware of. This new insight has made all of my communications with others simpler and more enjoyable. The podcast is "Eager To Know" and it can be found on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify and <u>www.eager2know.com</u>

"It has been amazing - an incredible experience being able to engage with people in a very intimate format."

Carrabassett / 18" x 24" / oil on canvas, framed









 \leftarrow left:

Spring Pond / 14" X 18" / oil on canvas, framed

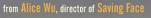
bottom left: Fourth / 16" x 20" / oil on canvas, framed

bottom right: Drip / 6" X 8" / acrylic on canvas









a different kind of love story



THE HALF OF IT - www.netflix.com/TheHalfOfIt

Written and Directed by: Alice Wu

Bookish introvert Ellie Chu is perfectly content with her life: watching old movies with her widowed father and ghostwriting papers for her high school classmates to help pay the bills. But her side gig turns personal when lovelorn jock Paul Munsky (Daniel Diemer) hires her to craft love notes to Aster Flores (Alexxis Lemire) — a smart, popular girl out of both their leagues... and Ellie's own secret crush. Just as the duo's plan begins to work, a new wrinkle emerges: Ellie and Paul have fallen into a deep friendship neither could have anticipated, giving rise to a surprising love triangle. Written and directed by Alice Wu, THE HALF OF IT is a heartfelt comedy-of-errors about searching for perfect love—and finding yourself in the process.



Are you a person with a LGBT or related identity who has ever served in the US Armed Forces?

We invite you to participate in a study focusing on your health behaviors and life experiences as a Veteran with a LGBT or related identity.

The goal of the Health for Every Veteran Study is to better understand the experiences of Veterans from all backgrounds and promote their health and well-being, including those with LGBT or related identities. We are especially interested in hearing the diverse voices within our communities. Participants will be helping advance LGBT research, without leaving their homes!

The study is being conducted by researchers at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. It consists of completing a confidential, web-based questionnaire every 9 months for approximately 2 years (for a total of 4 questionnaires). All research activities are completed online, with no in-person visits required. For more information, please go to:

https://healthforeveryvet-lgbt.questionpro.com

GET PUBLISHED IN OPEN DOORS

Send us your personal story, book or movie reviews, links, information about local events or online events relevant to our community.

OpenDoors@pflagillinois.org





Gear Up for Pride

Open Doors calls all PFLAG families to create an online photo collage in celebration of the Pride Month June 2020.

Pride Parades may be canceled around the world, but we still have our Pride gear, and our creativity, and our Pride spirit!

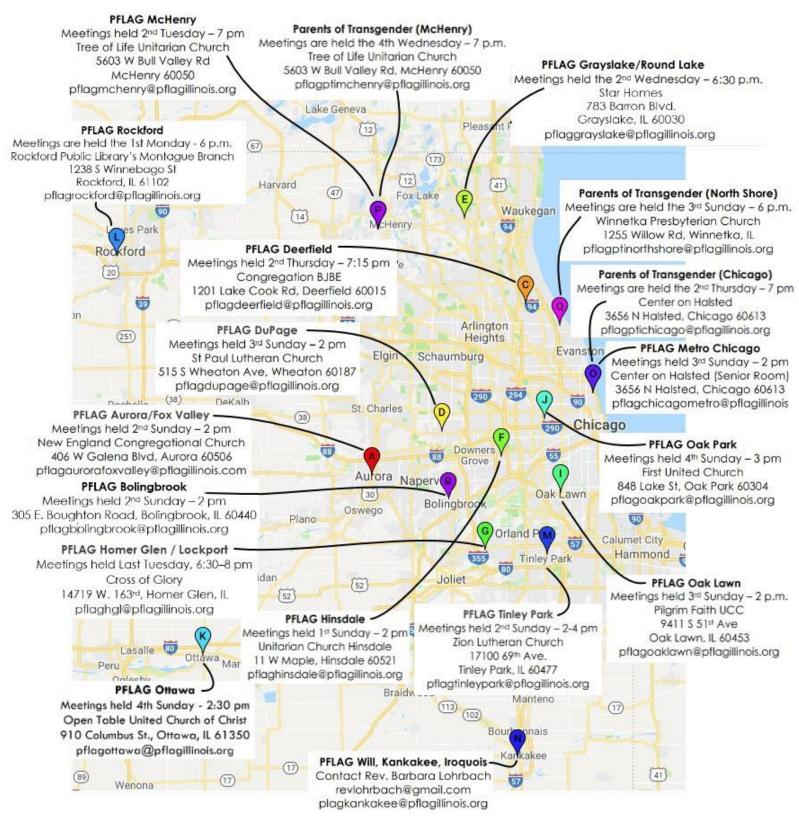
So, dress up, put on Pride makeup, take out your flags, make posters, invite your family members to participate, have fun, and take your Pride photos! Email them to <u>OpenDoors@pflagillinois.org</u> for publication in the June 2020 issue of Open Doors and on the <u>www.pflagil.org</u> web site.

Sending multiple photos is okay. Dressing up your pets in Pride colors is encouraged, as long as pets don't mind. Be as creative as you like, but please use common sense and keep your photos appropriate for viewing by children. Please do not use copyrighted material. We are looking for your own original photos.

Please list the names of everyone who deserves and wishes to be credited for creating each photo (do not forget those pets!). Please list your location and/or your PFLAG chapter, so that we could celebrate most creative and active chapters.



PFLAG Northern Illinois Chapters



NORTHERN ILLINOIS COUNCIL

Click anywhere on the map to open it online