



November 2022 | PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois Newsletter

opendoors@pflagillinois.org

Monthly Open Doors

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LOVE is the foundation of PFLAG values – an incredible force of change and growth. It’s stronger than fear, guilt, political or military power. It inspires us to devote our time and resources to helping other people. It makes the world safer and kinder.

There are plenty of reasons to be afraid or angry today: cynical politicians, retrograde judges, ruthless military aggressors, and many misinformed people in this country and beyond. Should we **CREATE** a better future based on Love and Compassion or should we **FIGHT** for it? It’s not a trivial question. It’s easy to blame people who disagree with us, but can we change the society by fighting, ridiculing, or ignoring them? We may succeed in antagonizing them, we may even score some debate points, but it only makes them angrier and more motivated to attack our positions back at the next opportunity. It’s impossible to achieve a victory in an ideological war, if you treat it as a **WAR**, because at the end of every battle your “enemy” is still alive and planning to take revenge. I advocate for **LOVE**.

I think that the way to reliably build a better and kinder society is to **PERSUADE** – not pressure or force – more and more people to shift towards our position. Once they embrace new ideas as their own, they will defend them from other influences. Granted, some of those who need persuasion are intractable and won’t change no matter what we do. But most people are reasonable, even if they are grossly misinformed. They don’t have a pathological desire to hurt others or narcissistic inability to feel empathy. I want to appeal to these people and shift them towards allyship.

Let’s share our story (if it’s safe for us and our LGBTQ+ loved ones), set an example of support and compassion in big ways and small – with Love.

When someone in our social circle insults the LGBTQ+ community, the knee-jerk reaction is to insult them back or cut them off. Sometimes, it may be the only solution. But very often we have the power to move their position. I’ve tried. I’ve often

succeeded. I’ve also failed. This experience of advocacy by trial and error has taught me that the most effective way to do it is through Love. Don’t guilt and shame them. Don’t mock them. Tell them how much you love someone who is LGBTQ. How this Love has made you an advocate for LGBTQ rights. How LGBTQ people deserve to be loved and accepted for who they are, don’t want to hurt anyone, just want to live their own life, study, work, have relationships, have fun, be happy, make others happy.

Many people are persuaded by expert opinions, statistics, and serious research, so we must always be ready to provide reliable information from reputable sources. And yet, Love persuades faster and more effectively than scientific references. Show that you are an ally out of Love, not anger or fear. Appeal to empathy, and people who have hearts will listen.

They may not join us at the next Pride Parade, but even if we shift them a little bit towards better acceptance, it will make a difference. Persuade an outspoken transphobic zealot to keep his harmful opinion to himself, shift someone from anger to indifference, inspire an indifferent person to be supportive, and motivate a generally supportive person to do more and be an activist (and maybe they will join us at the next Pride Parade). Every step on this path helps. Little by little, we improve societal understanding, acceptance, and support of the LGBTQ+ community. Cutting someone off for reposting a stupid article may feel more satisfying and it’s faster (I’ve done it myself), but it also removes our ability to influence that person in the future. Do it when it’s necessary to protect you and someone you love, but not out of vengeance. Misunderstandings and even ignorance may be fixed. Opinions change. People learn. Let’s talk to those who are willing to listen, with Love and patience, and it will make a difference!

Andrew Zanevsky (he/him/his)

President
PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois





PFLAG Speaks:

Recap on Fall Conference 2022: the Power of Advocacy

by Ann McAuliffe, VP, PCNI & PFLAG Deerfield

We have successfully completed the Fall Conference 2022: the **Power of Advocacy**. A special thank you to all ~122 people who attended in person and to all others who cheered us on in spirit! I would like to share a summary of the meeting and communicate a decision the PCNI made at its Saturday, October 15th quarterly meeting

Our co-sponsors were fabulous – Howard Brown Health and FashionBar Chicago. HBH provided a main session speaker, 2 panelists, models, an exhibitor table and arrived with a team of 10 enthusiastic employees. FashionBar Chicago – donated their space, the Fashion show, mannequins, shared their networking contacts for tables, chairs, AV support, etc. to add an urban sensibility to the day.

Center on Halsted had an exhibitor’s table as well as our very own PFLAG table colorfully manned by Ray & Kathy of Tinley Park.

It would not be a day without recognizing all our devoted PFLAG Volunteers who give so generously of their time and talents – without you, the day would not have run so smoothly, our guests would not have felt our warm PFLAG welcome or experienced a typical PFLAG event – we are all about the love.

There was so much enthusiasm for the Fall Conference at the October 15th quarterly PCNI meeting, we decided to form an exploratory Committee to begin work on the future Fall Conference 2024.

Reach out to Andrew, Jodi, or Ann if you would like to join the Planning Committee.



PFLAG Speaks (continued)

Here are suggestions for future meetings from the online, post meeting survey:

Potential Topics

- Medical aspects of transitioning, invite scientists to speak on the latest research about receiving gender correction hormones and gender-affirming care.
- Trans affirming care
- Legal issues
- The narrative of people who regret transitioning — is this a real thing?
- Transgender is becoming the main focus of all events. Gay and lesbian population still have issues and should be better represented
- PFLAG Goals: 1 year - 3 and 5 years out; hear more stories about lives that have been impacted by PFLAG. Perhaps a narrated video of clips that highlight the stories.
- A panel on what chapters do: meeting routines, outreach, community involvement, partnering with other groups, etc.
- Breakouts for application to our lives. Meeting in small groups with intentionally one person per group from each area of the region, so we could share with each other in small groups what our local PFLAG is up to.
- I always enjoy presentations from the Center on Halsted, Howard Brown, Broadway Youth Services, and Youth Outlook. Please continue to invite Mike Ziri/Equality Illinois. I'd like to learn more about Brave Space Alliance.
- A more concrete program outlining effective **ADVOCACY** strategies
- Efforts in schools - model schools locally, acknowledge problems and progress for students/schools. Invite students to be keynotes/speakers, inspire us with the next generation how much more normalized they make trans and queerness.
- Successfully integrating GSA type clubs/support into schools that are in districts/communities where support for the LGBTQ community is lacking.



Our volunteers used their creativity to dress up and accessorize mannequins at FashionBar – we called them **Mannequins on Parade!**

The fashion show by transgender and nonbinary models presented by FashionBar in partnership with Howard Brown Health included a 79-years-old model, Stefanie Clark, who was also one of our discussion panelists. Another model – Alex Prochaska is a member of PFLAG McHenry. See pages 17-20 for an interview with Alex and her modelling photos.



PFLAG Speaks (continued)

- Perhaps a segment on LGBTQ history -- it feels like much is being forgotten.
- Author speakers
- How Allies are supporting black and brown people within the LGTBQIA + community. Allyship
- Religious/spiritual support for LGBTQ+ persons.
- At future conferences, we need to make space for talking about the cultural context of PFLAG and how religions of all flavors have been used by homophobic folks to justify their fears rather than reveal the truth.
- The positive mental health benefits of using preferred pronouns.
- Identify, combat & intervene to stop the cycle physical and psychological / emotional violence against LGBTQIA community – especially kids. More awareness and more reaching out to churches, schools, employers, healthcare providers, etc. - all the social structures that come in contact with kids outside the family, could be great points of entry.
- More ideas and practical ways to engage our chapters in being part of the solution but aware of the dangers. Our area (rural) has become quite hostile, but I would love to know what we can actually DO (besides vote) to handle these situations. Ex., how to handle protestors, ways to address & how we protect ourselves starting with online all the way to physically. What to say and not say to de-escalate etc. How to keep our groups and events safe but respect that not everyone feels safe with the police.



PFLAG McHenry at the Conference (left-to-right):
Cate Becker (chapter President), Toni Weaver
(Discussion Panel Moderator at the Conference), Julie
Schoen (chapter Secretary), Skye Schoen, Leanna
Floreani, Marco Floreani (one of the panelists at the
Conference)

*Photos accompanying this article
(including the next page)
were provided by Christine Peters,
Andrew Zanevsky, and Toni Weaver*



Conference
Speakers:
Shui Sherard,
Julio Flores,
and Mike Ziri →

The diverse
Discussion Panel
included
prominent local
activists and
advocates for
LGBTQ+ rights ↓



Howard Brown Health's We Care Campaign

From a one-room STI testing program to a citywide network of community health centers, Howard Brown Health has been committed to serving

Chicago's LGBTQ+ community for 47 years. Welcoming everyone regardless of identity or ability to pay, Howard Brown's clinics are a departure from traditional medical environments.

Our work takes an asset-based approach, centering whole-person care, and has led to dramatic growth. By expanding our facilities, we will better meet the needs of Chicagoans seeking affirming healthcare that they can afford. Following intensive planning by staff and Board leadership,

Howard Brown boldly envisions a significant expansion of our citywide network to accommodate increased medical services and programs.

Howard Brown Health's public initiative, We Care, supports the construction of three new facilities on the North and South sides of Chicago.

By joining us in this campaign, you will help us provide affordable or free healthcare to 50% more people in the next five years.

We invite you to help make our vision and plans possible. With your gift, you will sustain our unique system of care now and in the years to come.

At Howard Brown, we care for our patients with openness and honesty, warmth, and affirmation, regardless of their identity or ability to pay.

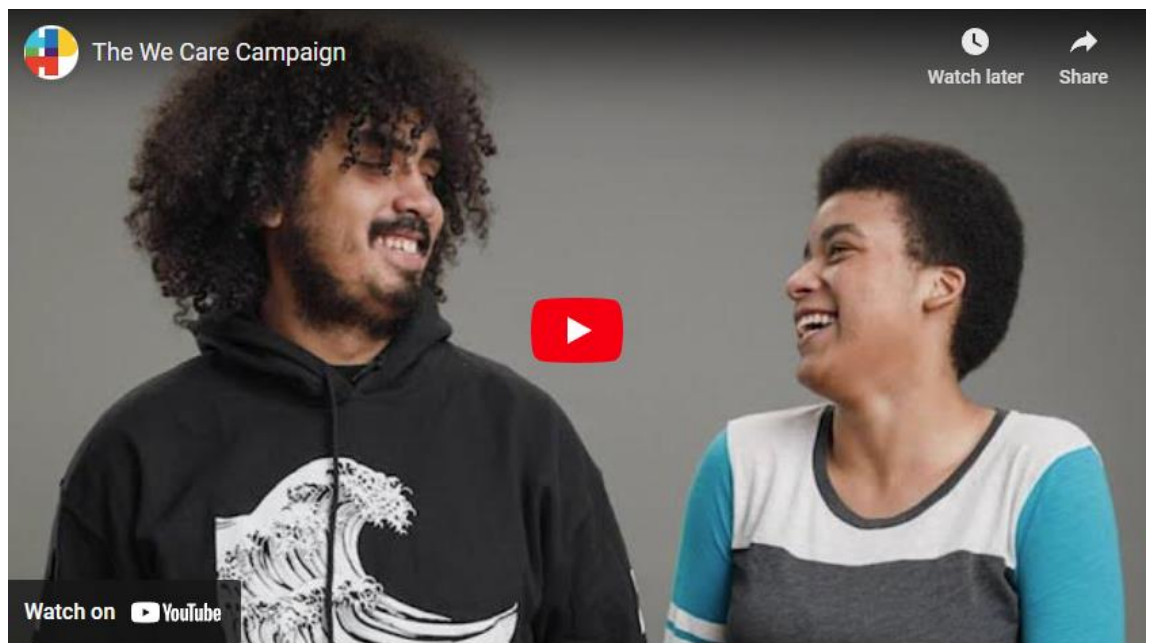
Your gift will sustain our unique system of care now and in the years to come.

Join with us in caring for our community.

Below, you can find more information about our campaign. Questions? Contact Katie Metos at KatieM@howardbrown.org to learn more.

Sydney Monegan
Howard Brown Health

[The We Care Campaign - Howard Brown Health](#)



From PFLAG National

TAKE ACTION

Election Day is fast approaching. Do you know what's on your ballot this year? Check out [PFLAG.org/Vote/Education](https://pflag.org/Vote/Education) for voter resources to help prepare you to cast your ballot- and make sure you can make an educated vote all the way down the ballot! The upcoming election is critical, and your vote matters to your LGBTQ+ loved ones.

In the last year, we've seen a marked rise in anti-LGBTQ+ action in state and local governments. Many states are introducing legislation targeting trans youth, and local schools and libraries are being pressured into censoring LGBTQ+ history and stories. Visit pflag.org/protecttranskids to take action against anti-trans bills in your state today. Visit pflag.org/fightingcensorship to take action in support of accurate, honest, and inclusive education and reading.

COURT

Supreme Court to take up religious freedom case involving anti-LGBTQ+ web designer. Lorie Smith, a Colorado-based web-designer, refuses to work on websites for same-sex couples in contravention of Colorado's anti-discrimination law. The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals rejected Smith's argument; SCOTUS will hear the case on appeal on December 5th.

STATE

Montana - State Health Department restores right for trans people to update gender marker on their birth certificates. A state judge blocked enforcement of a recent law which would have required gender affirming surgery prior to any change in gender marker on a birth certificate and, since this decision, gender designation forms are available on the state Health Department's website.

Virginia - Over 1,000 students walk out in protest of proposed anti-trans education policies. The school walkouts were organized by the Pride Liberation Project, a youth-led LGBTQ advocacy nonprofit. Over 1,000 students from about 100 different Virginia schools participated in the walkouts on September 27th.

Florida - Board of Medicine votes to ban gender affirming care. On October 28th, the State Board of Medicine voted to change standards of care in Florida to bar physicians from providing hormone therapy or any gender affirming surgeries to trans Floridians under 18. PFLAGers testified before the Board urging them not to take this harmful action.

GLOBAL

Mexico - Final Mexican state legalizes same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage is legal nationwide in Mexico following a vote in Tamaulipas to approve the practice. Three other Mexican states also voted to legalize same-sex marriage in October.

Cuba - Referendum legalizes same-sex marriage and grants adoption rights to same-sex couples. The referendum was approved 67%-33%, and the "Yes" campaign was endorsed by the Cuban government.

Slovenia - Slovenia legalizes same-sex marriage & adoptions. In a 48-29 vote, Slovenia is the first Eastern European country to legalize same-sex marriage and adoption.

US Trans Survey is OPEN through November 21st: Encourage all trans people to be counted.

USTS is the largest survey for the trans community in the country, and the 2022 survey can be completed in Spanish or English. PFLAG National is an official partner for the National Center for Transgender Equality's USTS survey.

These articles are excerpted from *Policy Matters*, an email publication of PFLAG National. Become a PFLAG member to receive the full newsletter:

<https://pflagil.org/membership-and-donation/>



News from PTI Chicago

by Francey Oscherwitz (she/her/hers)

“There is no magic dust,” said one experienced mom at our PTI Chicago October Zoom meeting. She was commiserating with a first-time member—an aggrieved parent who loved their child but hadn’t yet accepted their transition because it violated their faith. Heads nodded in their little Zoom boxes; the magic dust analogy felt profound, pointing to a hard-won truth: it takes time to bring about (and to accept) change.

The struggle for change was also key to our guest speaker Mike Ziri’s survey of recent efforts to pass LGBTQ+ friendly laws in Illinois—while over 300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in other states aim to deny trans youth accessible health care, school sports participation, and the loving support of their parents.

Illinois’ legislative firsts have made our state the “anchor of equality” in the Midwest, said Ziri, policy director at Equality Illinois. But he urged us to be vigilant, noting an alarming spike in bullying and intimidation both online & in-person—and harassment of local school boards over hot-button issues like trans-friendly bathrooms and books. Even long-established rights like marriage equality can come under threat when

disinformation is dressed up and disseminated as “news.”

Ziri, who has spent countless weekends attending Pride events, rallied us to help keep Illinois moving forward—not only for our residents but for health-care refugees from surrounding states. One way to change a legislator’s mind—and their vote—is to show up and tell your story.

Telling our stories —and listening with open, nonjudgemental ears—is what we Chicago PTI parents (and grandparents) do on the second Thursday of every month--and we always sign off with virtual hugs and Big Love. That’s our magic dust!

Please join us next month, November 10th, at 7-9 pm, in-person at the Center on Halsted OR from anywhere via Zoom). PTI Chicago is going HYBRID (fingers crossed)! Participants will receive an email with the link and password to enter the Zoom meeting. Parent/s, guardians, or family members of transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals who would like to join us for the first time should e-mail PTI Chicago President Bill Guilfoile at bill.guilfoile@gmail.com

Illinois’ legislative firsts have made our state the “anchor of equality” in the Midwest

Mike Ziri, Equality Illinois



News from PFLAG Oak Park

by Tara Chavez (she/her/hers)

Hello from Oak Park! Our monthly meetings are HYBRID so members have the choice to join remotely or in person.

This month, many members from our chapter attended the 2022 OPALGA+ Scholarship Gala held on Saturday, October 22nd at the Nineteenth Century Club in Oak Park. This is the major fundraising event of the year for the OPALGA+ Scholarship Fund, which has provided over \$155,000 to students entering colleges and universities since the inaugural academic year of 2015-16. It was a fantastic evening working for a very good cause.

During this month's meeting, we had our largest turnout in years! Nearly every chair in the room was occupied by chapter members, allies, and supporters! We are welcoming more parents of trans individuals than ever, and there is a major need to EXPAND our chapter!

Discussions were had on what are some ways we can spread our existence to the parents of lesbians, gays, and trans individuals to all members of the Oak Park area communities. Our chapter president, Phil Kroker, is working on ways to reach out to the counselor of the local area high school on a possible collaboration to promote our events and spread awareness.

Ready to become a member? Or Ready to RENEW your membership? Membership dues are open for renewal as the fiscal year is from October to October. Check out this link here to join: <https://pflagillinois.org/product/pflag-oak-park/>

Looking to the future, November 20, 2022, marks the **Transgender Day of Remembrance**. The Transgender Day of Remembrance raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people and publicly mourns and honors the lives of transgender people who might otherwise be forgotten. Through vigil, we express love and respect

Photos from the 2022 OPALGA+ Scholarship Gala:



News from PFLAG Oak Park , continued

in the face of national indifference and hatred. Day of Remembrance gives transgender people and their allies a chance to step forward and stand in vigil, memorializing those who've died by anti-transgender violence. Want to know more? Visit the links to learn more: <https://www.glaad.org/tdor> or <https://nationaltoday.com/transgender-day-of-remembrance/>.

We will once again offer the hybrid option at our next meeting, held every fourth Sunday at First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60301.

We meet every fourth Sunday. Our next Hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting will be on **November 27th from 3 - 5 pm. Mark your calendars!**



News from PFLAG DuPage

by Bonnie Clemens (she/her/hers)

For our **October Chapter Meeting** we heard from Danita Vicente Mayoral who is the head of Culture, DEI and Talent Management at KONE Americas. KONE is an elevator engineering company employing over 60,000 personnel across 60 countries worldwide. It was founded in 1910 and is now headquartered in Espoo near Helsinki, Finland. Kone also builds and services moving walkways, automatic doors and gates, escalators and lifts.

I would characterize KONE as somewhat new to a formal LBGTIQ+ program. A couple of years ago they began a partnership with a third party company, Workplace Pride, <https://workplacepride.org/> to leverage Workplace Pride's International Platform for LBGTIQ+ Inclusion at Work. Workplace Pride provides education, benchmarking and assessments for their

clients, and it is through partnership with them that KONE has accelerated their work in becoming world class for welcoming and inclusion. In 2022 KONE was recognized by Forbes Magazine World's Best Employers list for their 6th consecutive year. In addition, KONE endorses the UN Standards of Conduct <https://www.unfe.org/standards/> to publicly show commitment to promoting LBGTIQ+ inclusion. Danita is the driving force behind diversity and inclusion in the Americas and she just recently launched their first Employee Resource Groups, a Pride Group and a Women's Group. It was interesting to get her perspective on what is working well and what could apply to other corporations here in the States.

The highlight of the month for those of us who could attend was the **PCNI Power of Advocacy Conference in Chicago!** Several members from PFLAG DuPage attended and all agreed that it was an amazing event. We're looking forward to future events sponsored by the Council.



Members of PFLAG DuPage at the Power of Advocacy Conference, Oct 8, 2022



News from PFLAG Hinsdale

by Barb Medley (she/her/hers)

The PFLAG Hinsdale chapter met via hybrid meeting on October 2nd. Our speaker was Kelly Mannion. Kelly works for 360 Youth Services, and she came to share the important work this organization is doing for homeless youth in our area, many of whom are LGBTQ. 360 Youth Services is based in Naperville and has been providing valuable services for around 50 years. Their support services include counseling youth ages 12-25 and providing educational services for middle and high schoolers in Naperville, including talking about making healthy choices.

They have a 16-17 bed emergency shelter. Kelly works in the transitional housing program, which has 38 beds for youth ages 18-24. Those who need this program have a place to stay for 18-24 months, and all have roommates. The goal is to make sure those served can “land on their own two feet when they leave the program.” 65 youth were served in the last year, 25 of whom were LGBTQ. 360 Youth provides help with “soft skills” such as job hunting, resume building and interview skills, and conflict resolution

They have a primary care provider who works with LGBT youth once every week. She accepts Medicaid. They work with Planned Parenthood as well. They have

a connection with College of DuPage. Once a participant finishes the program, 360 Youth helps them financially with start up costs, such as rental assistance in the beginning of their independent living. 360 Youth stays in contact a minimum of once over three months. If they need assistance, they can reach out. They all become part of the “360 family.”

90% of participants find 360 Youth Services through the internet. They have an intake manager and work with school social workers. They work with Youth Outlook as well. In many cases, parents will ask these young adults to move out after high school graduation, which is a time when it’s difficult to live independently and work toward becoming successful and happy without support. 360 Youth Services depends on private funding and a bit of grant funding.

360 Youth Services provides the majority of support to Kane and DuPage counties (75%), about 15% in Cook County and the remainder in the northernmost counties of Illinois. They do necessary, important work and are deserving of our support.

Our November 6, 2022 monthly meeting will be a hybrid session. Our speaker for Sunday, November 6 is Mike Ziri. Mike is the Director of Public Policy with Equality Illinois. He will update us on pending legislation and share how each one of us can be part of this important process.

Rainbow Sprouts



Youth Outlook has launched a new group, Rainbow Sprouts, serving LGBTQ+ youth in grades K-6 and their families. The group meets in person in the Naperville/Aurora area on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 1-3pm. Starting January 2023, the group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays.

To register for more information, visit this form:

<https://bit.ly/3BNdeYW> or email carolyn.wahlskog@youth-outlook.org

Youth Outlook Drop-In Centers provide a place for LGBTQ+ youth to feel safe, supported, and celebrated. To find in-person and virtual groups for youth ages 12 to 20, young adults, and parents/caregivers visit <https://youth-outlook.org/services/youth>



NIX ECKMAYER

(they/them)

Clay Artist

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

In the early years of my ceramic career, my main focus was on my wheel thrown form to make the ideal tableware. I was fascinated by the steps in the process of making ceramics. You can make a piece, and by implementing slight changes in that process, you can create an entirely different composition. I tried to master the different processes you could use to make functional tableware.

While I still enjoy making tableware, my mind wandered into the realm of sculpting. I began doing an art challenge which I called Mugtober. I wanted to make a "one of a kind mug" everyday in October. So, I began sculpting on wheel thrown mugs, creating the monster faces which were full of character, personalities and life. I love watching everyone's





reaction when they see them. The monsters were also a way to be able to experiment with painted underglaze and color. I could explore different textures left behind by the various colorants and chemicals.

I started thinking of myself as a mad wizard, testing various materials to make magic happen in the kiln. I began implementing alchemical symbols into my work. Alchemy is the precursor to medicine and chemistry. Alchemy uses cryptic symbols. I could use them as the magic letters that bring my creations to life. Also, in this type of science, there was an attempt to make artificial people from different elements. The process was called homunculus, and that was absolutely perfect for my work, so I began calling them little homunculi.

I take inspiration from everywhere; animals, mustaches, eyeballs, cartoons, piercings, assorted cryptids, poor oral health, and of course, infamous monsters.

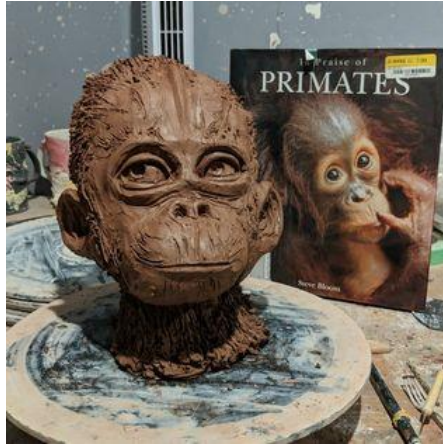


Eckmayer Pottery

(815) 954-2743

nseckmayer13@gmail.com





Nix Eckmayer's clay art

INTERVIEW WITH Alex Prochaska (she/they)

Alex is a fashion model, a veteran, and a member of PFLAG McHenry, who loves to dance, sing, and do biochemical research. Open Doors asked Alex for an interview after she walked the runway at the Fashion Show presented during our **Power of Advocacy** Conference on October 8th.

Instagram: [@lexiprochaska](https://www.instagram.com/lexiprochaska)

Photographer: Lamyra @
lamyar7@gmail.com

Dress: Tony Long [@iamtonylong](https://www.instagram.com/iamtonylong) &
[fashionbarchicago.com](https://www.fashionbarchicago.com)

Runway: FashionBar Chicago
[@fashionbarchicago](https://www.fashionbarchicago.com)

Makeup: Valeria Villicana
[@makeupby.vv22](https://www.instagram.com/makeupby.vv22)

Hair: Morgan [@jadebeautyco](https://www.instagram.com/jadebeautyco) &
[jadebeautyco.com](https://www.jadebeautyco.com)



Interview:

Open Doors: What does fashion modeling mean to you? Do you want it to become your career, a hobby, or was it a one-time event?

Alex Prochaska: Fashion modeling means that I get to be my true self. I vividly remember as a child putting on a dress to play "house" with one of my friends, and the look of shock and terror from the adult caregiver there was incredibly traumatizing to the point that I never tried dressing that way again until at least 19 years later. The religious persecution was systemic from Bible verses such as Deuteronomy 22:5; stating that me as an assigned male at birth person is an abomination to God, though despite that and with my family given name "Alex" meaning helper of mankind and legally chosen name "Lexis" meaning defender of the people, I've concluded that that verse is simply wrong, and regardless of what body parts people have or what hormones they're on, they should be and are allowed to dress as they choose. When I went to the VA for military sexual trauma treatment from serving in the Army Infantry to survive my gender identity and to honor my family and country during the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I didn't get the post-traumatic stress

treatment that I needed, but was provided hormones which really had a religious basis that my doctors and myself had programmed mentality that the only way I could dress like myself is if I'm a cisgender female or transgender female. I've gotten off of my hormones to work through my traumas, and reassess hormones from there, and I feel confident that the suffering that I went through in and for America is coming to a beautiful end for the freedom and safety of not just children, but closeted adults as well. Fashion modeling is absolutely a career for me; I might be a late bloomer, but as stated in Mulan from the 90's, the late bloomer that I am just may be "the most beautiful of all" not just from my physical appearance, but by my mind and soul as well.

OD: What is the most difficult part of modeling for you?

AP: The most difficult part of modeling for me is the religious trauma syndrome (religious post-traumatic stress); it has taken decades to deprogram what was programmed into me, and I still am coming out as a bisexual person. I'm going through another brave "puberty" of sorts by dressing as I choose to despite what hormones are in my body, but having a foundation like FashionBar Chicago is exactly what I needed to feel safe enough to be myself and have fun loving life again.

Photographer:
Darrell White from
darephoto.com

Designer:
[@silversarkofficial](https://www.instagram.com/silversarkofficial)

Runway:
FashionBar Chicago
[@fashionbarchicago](https://www.instagram.com/fashionbarchicago)

Makeup:
[@Thequeenof_hair_color](https://www.instagram.com/Thequeenof_hair_color)
& [@makeup_by_ember](https://www.instagram.com/makeup_by_ember)



FashionBar may not always be there for me as I travel modeling, but I will always remember that place and Tony Long for creating that space for people like myself. I also walked with a cane for a few years after the military, so working my hips is a challenge, but I expect full recovery with the many years of physical therapy and acupuncture that I've been working on.

OD: Who in your life has supported you the most since you came out?

AP: This is a tough question; generally, my faith has been in individual people, but I've needed and gotten support from so many people and organizations such as PFLAG, McHenry County Pride, Aligned Modern Health Lincoln Square, Aquatic Therapy and Wellness, Grayslake Rehabilitation Physical Therapy & Wellness, Illinois Department of Veteran's Affairs, Wounded Warrior Project, About Face, Jin Sei Ryu Chicago/Culture of Safety, and Skokie Body & Brain Yoga. Collectively my faith in humanity and the hope for the planet is continually restored as I get back into my mission to live up to my name as defender of the people.

OD: What role has PFLAG played in your life?

AP: PFLAG McHenry was the first LGBT organization that I went to when I was in the beginning of my transition where I met Toni Weaver, the previous president of that chapter. The love & support from them meant the world to me as a newly out queer person coming from the religious & military framework that I was into the open wilds of the queer civilian world. PFLAG was the familial structure that I needed when I felt completely lost and broken, but on my journey to finding my true self.

OD: What do you like to do for fun?

AP: I absolutely love to dance; when I first moved to Chicago, I felt like I had started living, and I took my first ballet classes at Visceral Dance Center and met such amazing people there who accepted me as I am and where I first started expressing myself in the arts. It's really been a beautiful journey becoming myself without fear and pain, and getting to live my

childhood as I should have been able to. I also love biochemical research and singing. Going on nature walks is also a must for my heart & soul.

OD: In your opinion, what will be the state of LGBTQ+ rights in 20 years?



Photographer: Darrell White from darephoto.com

Runway: FashionBar Chicago [@fashionbarchicago](https://www.instagram.com/fashionbarchicago)

Makeup: [@Thequeenof_hair_color](https://www.instagram.com/Thequeenof_hair_color) & [@makeup_by_ember](https://www.instagram.com/makeup_by_ember)

Designer: [@xclusivehabit](https://www.instagram.com/xclusivehabit)



AP: Regarding the United States of America, I see LGBTQ+ rights as a thing of the past in the way that there will be equal rights for every Homo sapiens. The barriers from toxic masculinity, toxic femininity, the military industrial complex (MIC), and religious control over humanity is where there needs work to be done. It baffles me that parents are so concerned with what their child is wearing when American schools are literally biochemically poisoning children with the food that's been normalized in the standard American diet (aka. SAD) and then given pharmaceutical compounds to adjust to that poisoning; I encourage everyone to read *The Plant Paradox* by Steven Gundry M.D. and *The Mood Cure* by Julia Ross M.A. as a basic understanding of this terrifying reality. I theorize and maintain that had my birth-family not eaten the societally normalized Standard American Diet (SAD) and had eaten organic lectin-free foods, that I would have been born a cisgender female. With glucose being an added factor in the SAD, especially artificial glucose which is biochemically nine times more addictive than cocaine, I, the rest of humanity, and the world would have been much more at peace a long time ago. I left my university studies focusing on biochemistry so I could stay away from working in the pharmaceutical industries that for the most part make simply construct synthetic compounds to make the modern-day slavery of humanity in corporations more bearable for the people, but I would go so far as to state that much of those compounds and the forced labor of much of humanity for basic needs are crimes against the species. It will take work as a species to resolve that nightmare, and LGBTQ+ liberation is a beautiful foundation to do it. In this Age of Aquarius, all these situations are summing up to freedom and boundaries. The reality is that it's incredibly embarrassing and primitive to have a culture/country and planet that requires everyone to work in order to have a safe home, clean water, and organic lectin-free food when we as a species need to get along as such and protect that planet that provides us with these necessities instead of making a mess for the younger generation to clean as my generation has been working on.



Photographer Lamya @ lamyar7@gmail.com

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Runway: FashionBar Chicago @[fashionbarchicago](https://www.instagram.com/fashionbarchicago)

Makeup: Valeria Villicana @[makeupby.vv22](https://www.instagram.com/makeupby.vv22)

Hair: Morgan @[jadebeautyco](https://www.instagram.com/jadebeautyco) & [jadebeautyco.com](https://www.jadebeautyco.com)

“PFLAG was the familial structure that I needed when I felt completely lost and broken”





Open Space Arts *OpenSpaceArts.com*

Open Space Arts is a new nonprofit organization that will explore the most important issues of our time in works for the stage and screen.

OSA produced THE KRAMER PROJECT as a benefit for Center on Halsted this summer. As OSA works on the next steps for that project, it is soliciting scripts and screenplays for staged readings to be held early in 2023.

OSA is excited to sponsor the **Pride Film Fest**, a streaming program featuring adventurous new films from around the world that can't be seen anywhere else. The full schedule is at pridefilm.org



PRIDE FILM FEST



PANAH (Iran, 14:49). Directed by Fatemeh Ghadirinezhadian, Written by Masoumeh Bayat.

Panah, a Middle-aged transgender mom, is trying to leave Iran, to have sex reassignment procedures. They receive a phone call that their visa and medical docs have been rejected. Now, their only hope and motivation is to once more see the only true love of their life, and be accepted for their authentic true self.

Streaming through November 7



CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED
15 YEARS OF PRIDE

Howard Brown Health

The Signal Boost Project!

"I Don't Even Know Who I Am": Somatic Considerations for LGBTQIA+ Clients

Benji Marton, LCSW & Joanna Taubeneck, LCPC,

November 11th 10am-1pm • Registration \$60 General \$30 Students • Virtual Training

CENTERONHALSTED.ORG/SIGNAL-BOOST.HTML

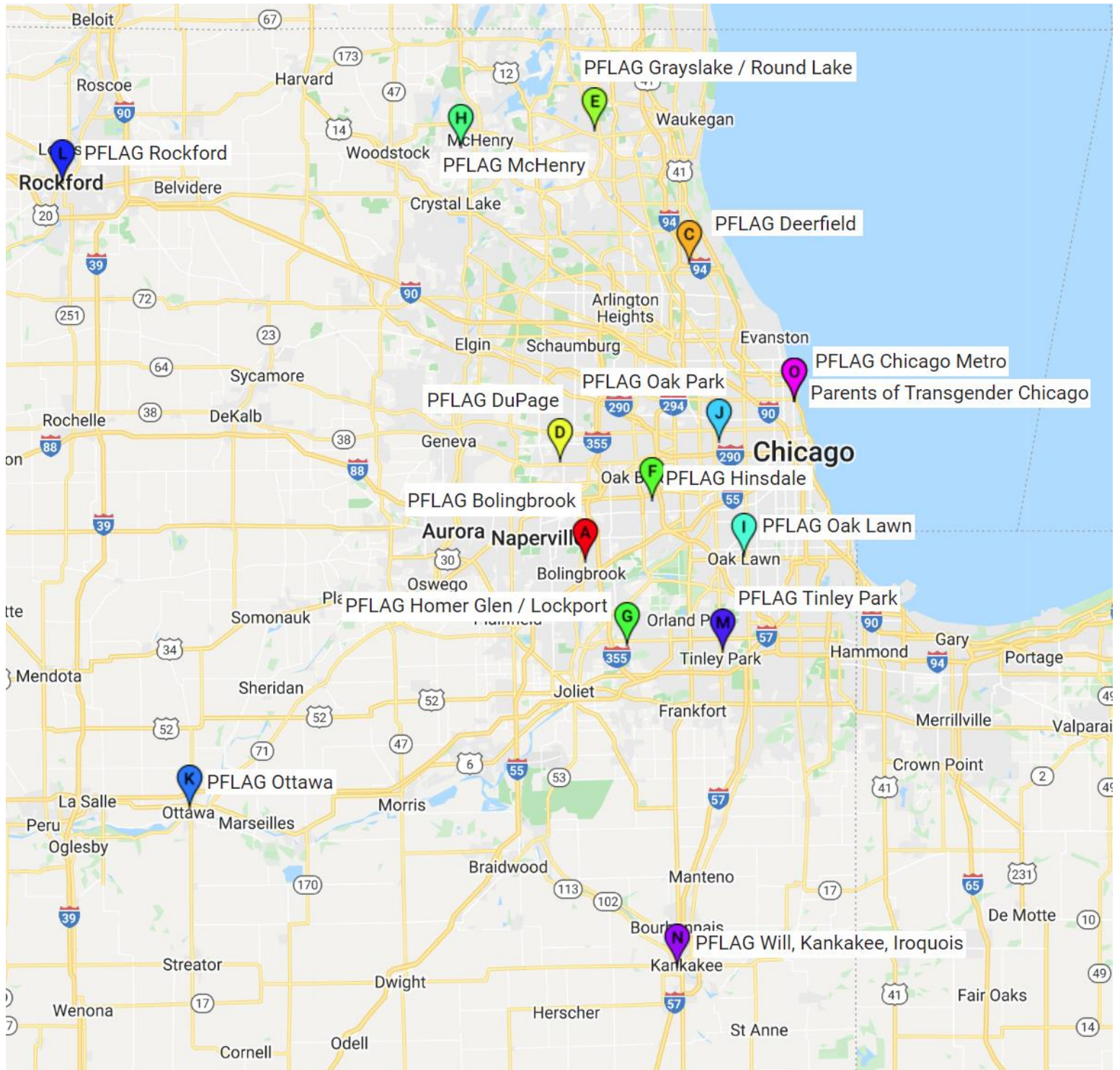
Q Chat Space Continues to Help LGBTQ+ Teens Thrive



Q Chat Space, a program of PFLAG National, Planned Parenthood, and CenterLink, provides online discussion groups for LGBTQ+ and questioning teens ages 13 to 19. It is not a forum. It is live and chat based; there is no video or audio. Everyone is chatting during the same pre-scheduled time.

Conversations are facilitated by experienced staff who work at LGBTQ+ centers around the United States. (Please note: Q Chat Space facilitators are NOT mental health professionals. If you are in crisis or need help immediately, please use the resources available at pflag.org/hotlines.)

PFLAG Northern Illinois Chapters



Click/tap anywhere on the map to open it online and find meeting dates/times/locations. Some chapters are meeting online on Zoom, and some are returning to in-person meetings. Contact the chapter for details before your very first meeting and watch for chapter announcements if you are a member.

