



San Jose ♦ Peninsula Newsletter

January 2008

www.pflagsanjose.org

P.O. Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087

♥ NEED HELP? ♥ Call the Help/Info Lines:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm OK - You're OK

Do you remember this book from the '70s? The phrase has become part of our language, and was something I thought of when reading an article recently in the New York Times. It reminded me that one of PFLAG's goals, part of our mission, is to ensure that this statement is more than a cliché. That GLBT kids can feel "I'm OK" and that their classmates can agree "You're OK."

The NYT article was heartwarming. Earlier this fall, the Hudson Valley (NY) chapter of GLSEN put on a conference called Pride Works, where 200 adults and 300 kids gathered, many of the kids accompanied by their parents, others with their GSAs. Much of the day was filled with hour long seminars: Coming Out — How, When, Where?; Gay Straight Alliance in Middle School; Hip-Hop and Homophobia; What is Transgender?; and Healthy Relationships for Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender Youth.

But the heart of things for these teenagers was just being with and talking to and seeing so many others like themselves. "When I first walked in, I felt like crying," said Brian Lindley, 14. For Michael, whose school doesn't have a GSA, his experience opened up new doors. Michael Moreno, a 15-year-old 10th grader from Brewster, could not believe what he was seeing as he walked into the big hall at the Westchester County Center, and he grew quiet. There, for as far as the eye could see, were hundreds of boys and girls who belonged to gay-straight clubs at area middle schools and high schools. "Every time I looked at Michael," said his mom, "all I could see was a big, cheesy smile." Experiences like these, where kids are able to hear "You're OK, you're normal, there are lots of other kids like you," can be world-changing, and in many cases, life-saving.

At PFLAG we make a difference, too. When parents whose kids have recently come out attend their first support/education meeting and find other families with GLBT members, they discover that maybe it will be OK after all. We share our stories with them, hug them, and say that we know how difficult it can be, but we're here to help. And we have the good fortune to have many GLBT people attending the group — out and OK — good role models for these new parents.

I'd love to encourage you to attend one of our monthly meetings if you haven't been. It's a good way to start the new year. Whether you're a parent, a friend or a GLBT person, you can make a difference to another individual or another family. As a bonus, besides feeling good, you will get to experience one of the very interesting speakers that Dave McClure has been arranging for each meeting. I hope to see you in Redwood City or San Jose!

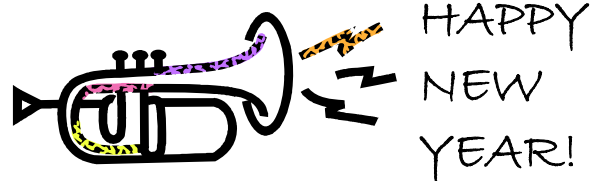
As always, thanks for all you do.
Laurie Carter

CALENDAR OF EVENTS JANUARY

- Jan. 9 San Jose Meeting - 7:30 PM
First Congregational Church
1980 Hamilton Ave. (at Leigh)
(2nd Wednesday of the month)
- Jan. 10 Straight Spouse Support - 7:30 PM
Call San Jose Helpline for info.
(2nd Thursday of the month)
- Jan. 14 Redwood City Meeting - 7:30 PM
Sequoia Union H.S. District Offices
480 James Ave., Redwood City
(2nd Monday of the month)
- Gilroy — Call the Helpline for
support and information:
(408) 846-9105
- Jan. 31 — Newsletter Stuffing
2008 Schedule
1st Thursday of Jan, Apr, May, Oct;
Last Thursday of Jan, Feb, May, July, Aug, Oct.
Jan. 8, 2009



→ February Newsletter Deadline:
Thursday, Jan. 24



EX-GAY MINISTRY EXPERIENCE?

The Communications team at PFLAG National is doing some research on those of you who may have had some experiences with "ex-gay" ministries. Your experiences may prove useful in helping PFLAG National find solutions for media programs that want to run specials on "ex-gay" issues by helping get our side of the story out there.

If you or another PFLAGer you know has had experience in an "ex-gay" program, feel free to contact Adam Ratliff at (202) 467-8180 or aratliff@pflag.org. You can be assured all discussions will be confidential. We are simply looking for those with background that might be interested in talking about their story.



A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

If you've never been to a PFLAG meeting, here is the perfect New Year's Resolution for you!

You may wonder what actually happens at our chapter support meetings. Do you have to talk? Do you have to announce that you are gay, lesbian, or transgendered — or that your son or daughter or sibling or parent is gay? Do you have to become a member, sign up for a committee, or march in the next Gay Pride Parade? Will we ask you for money?

In fact, there is no pressure to speak up, or reveal anything beyond your own comfort level at our meetings. There is no pressure to become a PFLAG activist unless it's something that you really are ready for and want to do. You can receive the PFLAG newsletter free for three months — only if you ask to — before deciding if you want to join PFLAG. And Peninsula/San Jose PFLAG never shares its membership list with any other organization.

We are there to provide support for those in need. You'll find us a diverse, very friendly and sympathetic group with a variety of experiences. We were once in your shoes, and approached our first PFLAG meeting with trepidation. As parents, friends, and/or GLBT people, we now share our journeys and learn from each other. Some of our stories may be helpful to you in sorting out your own conflicting and painful feelings. Our programs may give you helpful information and new insights.

We are also there to celebrate your successes, and to help galvanize you into action when you are ready to take an active role in making our world a safer and healthier place for all our families. So don't be shy — please join us! You'll be glad you did, and we will be, too!



SJ/P PFLAG ANNUAL MEETING March 1

Hold the date of March 1st for our San Jose/Peninsula PFLAG annual dinner and meeting to be held at the Belmont Congregational Church. Time and details to be announced. This event is planned to be a fundraiser for our PFLAG Scholarships -- so mark your calendars now!

TIME TO RENEW!

Thanks to all of you who already have renewed your membership or joined PFLAG for 2008!

If you haven't yet renewed -- this is a reminder that we still need you!

Membership renewal letters and forms were mailed at the end of October. Please take a minute now to renew! Your membership dues support all the great work done by the San Jose/Peninsula Chapter.

And please consider an extra gift over and above your membership renewal. In particular, the Scholarship Fund and the Operating Fund can use some additional cash inflows to continue the good work.

You can save postage and paperwork by joining or renewing online. Just go to our website, www.pflagsanjose.org. Point your cursor to the "Pay Now" button under the header "Membership: Renew/Join." This will take you to a secure site where you can renew or donate via Visa, MasterCard or PayPal. It doesn't get any easier than that.

One more reminder - you can save money for PFLAG by signing up to receive this newsletter as an email attachment in PDF format. Get the newsletter faster and in color!

Whichever way you choose, please renew for 2008. Thank you for your support!



PROGRAMS

San Jose: Shannon Turk will be our speaker at the support meeting in San Jose at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, January 9th. She will describe the important work that Outlet does among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth living in the Bay Area. As the Peninsula and South Bay's only organization for LGBTQQ youth ages 13-20, thousands of teens have come to Outlet since 1997. Through its range of support services, leadership training, community education and advocacy, Outlet successfully increases youth confidence, builds personal assets, and creates healthier communities.

Shannon joined Outlet in September 2005 as the new director. She has been a part of Outlet in some way for the past five years, since working for the YWCA of Palo Alto, Outlet's former home. Shannon brings a fresh new energy to the program, including extensive experience with development and marketing. She is excited to continue building on the services Outlet provides.

Redwood City: Our speaker for the support meeting in Redwood City at 7:30 PM on Monday, January 14th will be one of the leaders of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network. Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources.

Through peer support, leadership development, and training, the GSA Network supports young people in starting, strengthening, and sustaining GSAs in order to:

- create safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia and other oppressions;
- educate the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues; fight discrimination, harassment, and violence in schools.



STRAIGHT FOR EQUALITY

Seven in ten people have a GLBT relative or friend. Find out how you can help support them and make your corner of the world just a little (or a lot) better.

Take the Pledge

Sign the pledge and make the first step in showing your support for equality today. It really is just that simple!

Across the country, thousands of allies - straight individuals who don't necessarily have a family member who is GLBT - are seeing big changes in the way that their GLBT friends and colleagues are treated.

While many of these changes are good, there's still a long way to go before equality is reached. Many allies want to help, but just don't know how, or if they're needed, or, for that matter, where to start. *Straight for Equality* can help!

Straight for Equality is a national outreach and education project to empower allies in supporting and advocating for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in three primary arenas: our homes, our workplaces, and our communities.

Basically, if there's a place where you can talk to someone else, there's an opportunity for you to put some of the things you can get from *Straight for Equality* into action.

We're not talking about major political protests (although that's certainly an option) but the tiny everyday changes - like not omitting the fact that your best friend is gay when you're telling grandma about him - raise awareness and challenge assumptions and stereotypes. Maybe it means objecting when someone at the office tells that really over-the-top gay joke...again. Or perhaps it is about paying attention to how a candidate stands on equality issues and making your opinion heard with your vote.

Really, the possibilities for what you can do are endless. Check out the *Straight for Equality* website today! www.straightforequality.org/



THE ENDA DEBATE

The recent ENDA debacle failed to pass an effective or transgender-inclusive bill, but it did one thing we can all be proud of - it united over 360 organizations in support of transgender inclusion!

Progress is being made. 230 companies now include gender identity in their anti-discrimination policies. Meanwhile, another state - Colorado - adds employment discrimination protection effective January, 2008. On November 7, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay launched a new resource at the U.N. regarding human rights legislation concerning GLBT issues.

Dave Parker, TNET President

We are all tied together in a single garment of destiny . . . I can never be what I ought to be until you are allowed to be what you ought to be.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

A MATTER OF DEGREES

by Jenn Burleton

Transgender and gender non-conforming identity are at the core of homophobia. Our GLBQ family members are not marginalized because employers, co-workers, authority figures or random homophobes have witnessed a same-sex physical act. In most cases, they only perceive that our child or loved one is GLBQ based upon their gender expression.

Does this mean that homophobia is a form of biased gaydar? Absolutely. So what exactly is gaydar?

It's shorthand for identifying someone who is gender non-conforming in their dress, body language, speech pattern, career choice or other aspect of personal expression. If someone does not appear on your gaydar screen, they are said to be straight-acting.

Straight-acting has nothing to do with sexual orientation. In reality, it means gender normative -- and that makes everyone a potential victim of gender identity discrimination.

Recently the House of Representatives passed a revised version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to protect GLB workers. Protections for trans people were stripped during the negotiation process. This means anyone can still be denied or terminated from employment for being "too feminine" for a man or "too masculine" for a woman. One need not be transgender to be victimized by this, though trans people (especially children) have long been the canaries in the coal mine of homophobia.

The decision by Congress and the Human Rights Campaign to "throw them under the bus" sends a signal that it's still OK to tease, abuse, isolate and terminate our trans children, youth and loved ones, along with those who are simply perceived as being transgender.

In my advocacy work I reassure parents that their child is going to be all right. I tell them we've progressed in the 42-years since I was an "out" transgender child. I also need to look these children in the eye and tell the truth - the truth that in 21st century America they may not be able to find work simply because of who they are.

For now I'm going to avoid telling that truth, because our children don't have the option of changing their gender identity. I must conceal it because, at present, some of our elected officials do not have the courage to include everyone in the American dream.

We must work together to give our children that dream. PFLAG has already changed the world - but there is more to be done.

Jenn Burleton is a PFLAG TNET Board member and West Coast Sector Coordinator. She is the Executive Director and Founder of TransActive Education & Advocacy.
www.pflag.org/PFLAG_s_Transgender_Network.tnet.0.html



The PFLAG NEWSLETTER

Published monthly by San Jose/Peninsula Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, P.O. Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, Phone: (408) 270-8182.

Peninsula Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is a tax- exempt, volunteer, community based nonprofit organization.

The San Jose/Peninsula chapter is a member of National PFLAG which is headquartered in Washington, D.C..

Your contribution is tax-deductible to the full extent provided by law.

**Would you like to volunteer?
Call the information lines.
We need your help — Call today!**



MEETING TOPICS ♥ 2008



Meetings are held from 7:30—9:00 PM
Small groups for support are held at all meetings.

Redwood City: GSA Network speaker
San Jose: Shannon Turk of Outlet



Please bring a food donation for AIDS services providers.

PFLAG'S MISSION

We provide love and support for all family members and friends. We work to create an environment of understanding so that our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender loved ones can live with dignity and respect. These are our goals:

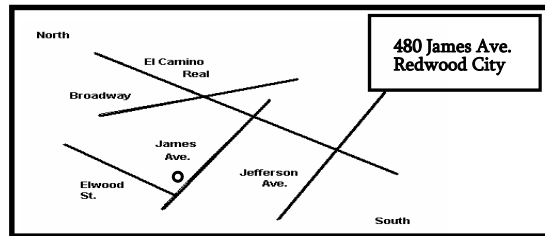
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY



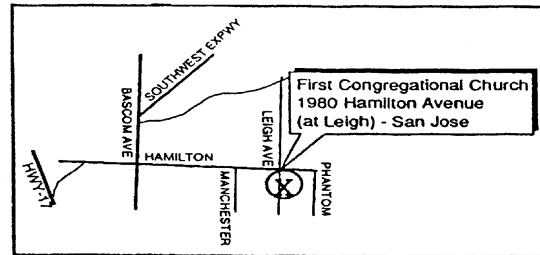
WHAT IS PFLAG?

"PFLAG" is Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays. We are a national support, education and advocacy organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people, their families, friends and allies. With 200,000 members and supporters, and local affiliates in more than 500 communities across the U.S. and abroad, PFLAG is the largest grassroots-based family organization of its kind. PFLAG is a non-profit organization and is not affiliated with any religious or political institutions.

Your financial support makes PFLAG's work possible. As a chapter member you can also become engaged in the vital work of providing support, education and advocacy in your community. Even if you're not sure that you need PFLAG, remember that PFLAG NEEDS YOU!



REDWOOD CITY



SAN JOSE



MEMBERSHIP IN SAN JOSE/PENINSULA PFLAG ~ 2008

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Make checks payable and mail to: PFLAG • PO Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087. Your donations & membership are tax deductible.