



San Jose ♦ Peninsula Newsletter

January/February 2012

www.pflagсанjose.org

P.O. Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087

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Address to the PFLAG National Convention

By Dr. Jill Biden

This is a selection of Dr. Jill Biden's remarks at the PFLAG National Convention Opening Ceremony on November 4, 2011. Full text at: www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/04/remarks-dr-jill-biden-opening-ceremony-pflag-national-convention

As an English teacher, I like to share some of my favorite quotations — and so I would like to start today with some inspiring words from Margaret Mead who famously said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.” Doesn't this quote embody the spirit of PFLAG — which started nearly 40 years ago with one voice — a mother's voice — who spoke out courageously in support of her gay son?

That simple act ignited a movement ...and today, because of the work that you do, there are hundreds of thousands of voices across this country raised in support of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

I recently read an open letter written from a PFLAG father to America's youth. He wrote, “My wife and I have two sons. We think that they are the best kids in the whole world. They're very different, with very diverse personalities, talents, and interests. One of the other things that makes them different is that one is straight and one is gay. But the important thing is this: we love them equally.”

At its core — it's such a simple message — “we love our sons” — both of them. But that acceptance and support can make all the difference. And as you all know well — acceptance by those you love is the greatest acceptance of all.

We have all heard painful stories of bullying and harassment. And we have read too many accounts of heartbreaking incidents where kids are driven to take their own lives rather than endure the taunting of their peers. No child should be subjected to that. And no parent should suffer that horrific loss.

We know the devastating price of the failure to confront a hostile school climate where bullying and harassment can be daily occurrences. Together, we all need to stand up and do our part to keep all of our kids safe, and give them the love, support and acceptance they need to learn and grow and fulfill their dreams.

I want to say to each of you here today: thank you for raising your voice and working together to open minds, shift attitudes and support all of our sons and daughters, students and neighbors.

Some of you come from places where yours is the only voice of support and acceptance — but when you speak, people listen. And we need you to keep speaking out, to keep shining a light on this important issue.

As parents, friends, and families, you have the power to change hearts and minds with your stories of success and failure, tragedy and triumph. I commend you and hope you will all keep up this important work.

Meeting Calendar

~ JANUARY/FEBRUARY ~

- Jan. 9** Redwood City Support - 7:30 PM
Feb. 13 Sequoia Union H.S. District Offices
480 James Ave., Redwood City
(2nd Monday of the month)
- Jan. 11** San Jose Support - 7:30 PM
Feb. 8 First Congregational Church
1980 Hamilton Ave. (at Leigh)
(2nd Wednesday of the month)
- Jan. 17** Board Meeting Teleconference
Feb. 21 (3rd Tuesday of the month)
ALL ARE WELCOME!
- Jan. 19** Straight Spouse Support - 7:30 PM
Feb. 16 Call San Jose Helpline for info.
(3rd Thursday of the month)



GILROY and other locations:
Call the Helpline
for support and information:
(408) 270-8182



*Newsletter Stuffing in San Mateo
Contact the editor for more info*

**March/April Newsletter
Deadline:
Sunday, February 19**

A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

On behalf of the President, Vice President, and all of us at the White House, thank you for your courage and commitment -- and for promoting the dignity of your sons and daughters.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PFLAG Support Meetings

San Jose, January 11
Redwood City, January 9

Back in the days before we had a speaker's bureau, Ron Schmidt, a gay San Jose teacher, had a group of PFLAG members participate with him on speaking panels. He retired after 33 years of teaching and wrote his memoirs about his life as an openly gay teacher.

At both January support meetings, Ron Schmidt will read from his just published memoir *Once-Removed...* described by one reviewer as: "a courageous, eloquently written reflection on coming out: overcoming guilt, shame and internalized homophobia, and becoming an advocate for LGBTQ youth. This book will save lives." Ron will bring copies for purchase and autographing.

Read more at: <http://ronsonceremoved.com/>

A co-founder of South Bay Chapter of the Bay Area Network of Gay and Lesbian Educators (BANGLE), Ron worked with PFLAG to create The Invisible Minority in Our Schools: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Youth Workshop, presented throughout Santa Clara County and the state. He has written extensively for the gay press and co-founded the Arts Council of Gay and Lesbian San Jose.

San Jose, February 8 — TBA
Redwood City, February 13

At our Redwood City meeting, children's book publisher Reach And Teach co-founders Craig Wiesner and Derrick Kikuchi will talk about how their latest book, *Operation Marriage*, went from idea to reality. The book is about two Bay Area children who convince their moms to get married during the months leading up to the 2008 election, when Proposition 8 put marriage equality on hold. The book was written by the Bay Area's own award-winning author Cynthia Chin-Lee and illustrator Lea Lyon. Hopefully the author and illustrator will join Craig and Derrick for a fun, dramatic reading of the book. You'll also learn a bit about Reach And Teach, which is dedicated to transforming the world through teachable moments with products that promote peacemaking, gender equality, and sustainable living. You can find them online at www.reachandteach.com and in their Dove and Olive Works/Reach And Teach shop at 178 South Blvd. near 16th Avenue in San Mateo.

Small group support will be offered at all meetings. ▼

Mass for LGBT Catholics

Every Saturday at 6:30 PM, Emmaus Community Catholic Mass for LGBT Catholics, and their families and friends, is held in the chapel at St. Martin of Tours Parish, 200 O'Connor Dr., San Jose. Sponsored by the Diocese of San Jose. For more information, phone: (408) 258-8416. ▼



PFLAG Finances

The 2012 membership drive is off to a great start with over 100 households and individuals responding. If you haven't done so, please send your contribution together with the form on the last page of this newsletter or go online at: www.pflagsanjose.org. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

We also encourage you to explore other ways of giving to PFLAG described on our web site under "The Gift of Giving." For example, you may contribute stock to PFLAG and receive a tax deduction for the value at the time of transfer. PFLAG can sell the stock without paying capital gains taxes and make use of the full proceeds. Other possibilities include use of life insurance policies, retirement funds and estate planning.

On behalf of our chapter, we thank you for your dedication and commitment to the mission of PFLAG.

Sincerely,
Your Finance Committee ▼

**Beginner's mind is the open mind —
the attitude that includes both doubt
and possibility, the ability to see things
always as fresh and new.**

Shunryu Suzuki

24th Annual Creating Change Conference January 25-29, 2012

Creating Change, the 24th National Conference on LGBT Equality, swings into America's Charm City, Baltimore, Maryland, from January 25 to 29. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the local Creating Change Host Committee have been hard at work, making sure lots of activist magic happens at *Creating Change 2012*.

Creating Change 2012 registration is now open.
Regular Rate: \$325, until January 20, 2012
→ Under 16 or over 65: **FREE!** — no date restrictions!

More information at www.creatingchange.org ▼



Mark Your Calendar

Jan 17 — Straightlaced Training — SF
Jan. 25-29 — Creating Change Conference
Feb. 12 — National Freedom to Marry Day

Thank You, PFLAG Speakers Bureau

Brian (speakersbureau@pflagsanjose.org) shared this letter. He said, "This is concrete and solid evidence that we are helping to make it better. It also shows us that even though we live in California, there are still a lot of people out there who need our help."

Dear PFLAG Speakers,

I wanted to write to say thank you for taking the time to come to speak to our class. I found what you all had to say very interesting. I think it's great that you can share your stories with other people. I'm sure they give people in the audience something to relate to, something to share with a friend, something to inspire them, or at the very least, something to think about. I know that I got a lot out of the experience.

One thing that really stood out to me was when one of you shared that you joined PFLAG because you feel very strongly about people not using the phrase "that's so gay," and it made me think about the times I've said that. I don't mean to say it, it just comes out, and I always feel really embarrassed immediately after. It's not that I use that phrase a lot, but after you came to speak to my class I felt like I really needed to be careful not to say it again. And I'm happy to say, I haven't caught myself accidentally saying "that's so gay" once since then.

I also wanted to tell you about a friend of mine, who is gay. I thought of him when we were discussing how coming out could cause you to lose some of the people in your life. Some of you shared stories of friends, sisters, or brothers that don't accept you because you are gay. My friend, who is still in high school, has that problem with his parents. He comes from a very religious, Hispanic family. He is every stereotype of the "fierce gay guy" that there is and his parents know he's gay but they will not acknowledge it at all. They even tried to arrange a marriage between him and their friend's daughter. He's told me how out of place he feels in his own home, and how he hides out in his room when his family comes over because his parents made him feel like it is not ok to be himself. ... So I shared some of your stories with him. I told him how some of you went through similar situations and how a lot of you felt that, although it affects you, ultimately it is the other person's problem and they need to deal with it because you can't change who you are for anyone.

We had a really good talk and he knows that he has an amazing support system of people that love him unconditionally and we will be there for him when he goes through the tough times. I really think your stories gave him something to relate to ... especially because he doesn't have very many other gay people to talk to. So I wanted to thank you for that and let you know that sharing your stories helped someone. If my friend can get his parents to allow him to go, I would love to bring him to a PFLAG meeting so he can hear some of the stories first-hand. Hopefully I'll be able to make that happen, but in the meantime, thanks again.

Sincerely,
Stephanie



Straightlaced Training

January 17, 2012, 4-8 pm

The SF Foundation

225 Bush St., Suite 500, San Francisco

Dinner Provided

Showcasing GroundSpark's film and curriculum: *Straightlaced — How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*, this interactive training will explore how popular pressures around gender and sexuality are shaping the lives of American teens — and how we can help create schools and communities that are safer, more equitable and more empowering for all.

This training is FREE! And all participants will receive copies of the *Straightlaced* film and comprehensive curriculum guide. Appropriate for High School and Middle School teachers, counselors, health and wellness coordinators, student leadership advisors, GSA advisors, administrators, and community partners.

Space is limited! — RSVP by January 6th to Cristy Chung: cchung@groundspark.org ▼

Prop 8 Repeal Ballot Measure

Love Honor Cherish's ballot initiative to repeal Prop 8 was cleared by the California Secretary of State to start gathering signatures. The deadline is May 14 to collect 807,615 valid signatures to qualify for the November 2012 ballot.

The title and summary prepared for the petition reads: **Reinstates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.** Repeals the current provision in California's Constitution that states only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Provides that marriage is between only two persons and shall not be restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. Clarifies that the initiative shall not be interpreted to require any priest, minister, pastor, rabbi, or other person to perform a marriage in violation of his or her religious beliefs. Read more:

www.lgbtpov.com/2011/12/prop-8-repeal-initiative-oked-for-signature-gathering/#more-35657 ▼

Lesson on Bullying

A teacher in New York was teaching her class about bullying. She gave them the following exercise to perform: She asked her students to take a piece of paper and crumple it up, stomp on it, and really mess it up. Then she had them unfold the paper, smooth it out and look at how scarred and dirty it was. She then asked them to tell it they're sorry. Although they said they were sorry and tried to fix the paper, she pointed out all the scars that they left behind, and that those scars will never go away no matter how hard they tried to fix it. That is what happens when someone bullies a child; they may say they're sorry, but the scars are there forever. The looks on the faces of the children in the classroom told her the message hit home. ▼

