



WE ARE THANKFUL FOR OUR PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY



The Voice of PFLAG Hartford *Caring*

Volume 16, No. 6

November/December 2007

IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:

BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED AT THE SEPTEMBER ANNUAL MEETING:

John & Becky; Gary G.; John F.; Jean C.; Joan J.; Karen P.; Rose & Larry; David O.; Donna S.; John C.

PFLAG is a welcoming place for parents and friends of lesbians & gays, but we are much more than that. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are also encouraged to attend our meetings. GLBTI people come with or without their family members, and parents and friends come with or without their GLBTI loved ones. PFLAG is for YOU!

PFLAG HARTFORD MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP MEETS: Third Wednesday of each month, 7:30 p.m., Immanuel Congregational Church House, 10 Woodland Street (Just North of Farmington Ave.), Hartford. For more information, please call Marie & Bob at (860) 633-7184 or Becky & John at (860) 633-5111.

REFRESHMENT REMINDER:

November 21 – Bob & Karen

December 19 – Maryann & Carol

January 16 - John B.

February 20 – Jerimarie L.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Student/Limited Income: \$10

Household Membership: \$40

Individual Membership: \$25



*Please make your check payable to **PFLAG Hartford** and Send it to:
PFLAG Treasurer, 12 Colchester Commons, Colchester, CT 06415
For any questions concerning dues, e-mail treasurer@pflaghartford.org*

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and their families and friends through:

SUPPORT: To cope with an adverse society

EDUCATION: To enlighten an ill-informed public

ADVOCACY: To end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

UPCOMING /ONGOING EVENTS

- **RAINBOW ROOM** (a program of the **Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective**) – a welcoming place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning “LGBTQ” teens and young adults (up to 21 years old). Sundays, 3-6 p.m., 1841 Broad Street (the Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective building). For more information please visit our website at www.hglhc.org or contact us at sensae@aol.com or call 860/278-4163.

- **Trans SOFFA Support Group in Connecticut:** This is a group specifically for Significant Others, Family, Friends and Allies of Transgendered, Transsexual and Gender Variant people (SOFFAs). Trans people who are SOFFAs are welcome. Meetings will be held on the second Sunday of each month and are facilitated by Kristal Barnes and Kasha Ho. Contact Kristal - u2kristal@yahoo.com (860) 878-5256 or Kasha - kho@afsc.org or call (860) 523-1534 for more information.

HGLHC Transgender Support Group: This professionally facilitated group offers an affirming non-judgmental environment for Transgender folk to explore issues and concerns that matter to them, and to give and take support. Each participant decides what to do with emotions and personal life-choices or body image, sexuality, relationships, HIV issues and anything else of concern. As with all other HGLHC Support groups, all participants must register in advance to determine whether this group is right for you. Location: Hartford. Contact HGLHC at (860) 278-4163 X21 or e-mail lizy@hglhc.org

- **WOMEN, WINE & CHOCOLATE** Saturday, November 3rd, 7pm to ? Benefit for Love Makes a Family, at the home of Donna Cordova & Alesia Mondello, 17 High Gate Lane, West Hartford. Join us for drinks (non-alcoholic beverages will be served, too!), hearty appetizers and decadent desserts. **HONORED GUESTS:** State Representative Bethy Bye, Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz, State Treasurer Denise Nappier, State Comptroller Nancy Wyman. Suggested Minimum Donation: \$40. Or you can sponsor WOMEN, WINE & CHOCOLATE: (Names of sponsors will appear in event program). Sponsor Levels: Chardonnay: \$100; Cabernet: \$200; Dom Perignon: \$300. **RSVP** to Carol Buckheit by November 1 at carol@lmfct.org or 860-525-7777, x 304.

- **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** A film New York Magazine says, “Confronts, with whimsy and hellfire, the clash between religion and homosexuality.” **November 2-15** at Cinema City, 235 Brainard Road, Hartford.

- **ONE BIG EVENT** to benefit the Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective. **Saturday, November 10**, at the Hartford Hilton, 6 pm to midnight. Dinner, Speakers, Music, Dancing, Silent Auction. Formal attire is encouraged. Tickets: \$100; \$150; \$200. More information at www.HGLHC.com.

- **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**, **Tuesday, November 20**, 6 pm. Gather at First Presbyterian Church, 136 Capitol Avenue and proceed to the Capitol for the vigil. 7:15 pm - Ceremony of Remembrance & Reception at the MCC, 155 Wyllys Street. Information: www.transadvocacy.com or www.mcchartford.com



THE LOVE THAT WILL FINALLY SPEAK ITS NAME

by Loraine Barr, Newsweek

“It took the death of my dear life partner for me to find the courage to come out of the closet.”

I was born at a time when to have romantic feelings for another woman was known as “the love that dare not speak its name.” I first read Radclyffe Hall’s “The Well of Loneliness” around 1938, in my impressionable teens. The book was a heartfelt cry for understanding and acceptance of the “invert.” Now we say “gay” and “lesbian,” and nobody faints, although we still lack the same rights as other citizens.

In how many ways have attitudes changed? And how have they not?

When I went to college in the 1940s, the sex books were kept under lock and key in the UCLA library. I was too embarrassed to ask for permission to borrow those books. Seeking enlightenment, I looked at young women walking around the campus engrossed in one another, and I thought, “Well, at least they have each other.”

I did not realize that even I was judging them, while perhaps envying them. I was dating men regularly and enjoyed being thought popular. Nevertheless, when I came home after each date, said “Goodnight” and closed the door, I usually breathed a sigh of relief. One eligible young man said, on leaving, “We’ll get together soon.” I said, “All right, but be sure to warn me.” “Warn you!” he exploded, slamming the door as he left.

And then I met a woman: a teacher on campus, who helped me see beauty in the whole world. At 28, for the first time, I was loved and knew love, for myself, for the person I really was. But while glorying in my never-before-experienced happiness, I knew it had to be hidden. She was married. Often, the only way to see her was with her husband. I was also dating her brother, and we all would sometimes go dancing.

That relationship ended after a few years, when my loved one's husband intervened. I didn't see her until years later, when I stood in line at her book signing at USC. She was alone, cordial; she asked about my mother. But no, she couldn't join me for coffee afterward.

Now I write this after living for 44 years with the most loved and loving, giving, understanding and delightful partner imaginable. For all our time together, we were "in the closet." For so long, if you were a known homosexual you could lose your job. We kept our relationship from our families—or at least we thought we did. After my partner died, her son told me that her family knew about us, but kept our secret because they believed our relationship was our own business. But our silence for all those years was also partially a self-induced caution. Looking back, I think it's possible that as the world changed, we didn't change fast enough. We knew a few other lesbian couples, and we were comfortable around them. But most of our friends were straight, so we had separate bedrooms to make it seem as though we were just roommates. On one occasion, when my partner and I were with cherished, straight friends, just the four of us after a satisfying dinner, sitting quietly in our living room, I thought how liberating it would be for us to tell our friends of our relationship. They must have seen it coming, for they quickly changed the subject. We four remained warmhearted friends, but we two never again tried to enlighten them or any others.

I never spoke about my sexual orientation with my mother, but she also must have known. When she died, the last thing she said to me was, "I never understood your way of life, but I do now." I didn't reply.

Finally, after almost nine years since my beloved partner's death, I am able to do what I could never have braved in earlier years: present myself herewith to the world as a lesbian, along with all the women who ask to be judged by the full facet of our characters. Why am I now able to speak the unspoken? A friend at the retirement community where I live recently came out in the local and national newspapers. When I saw her do that, I thought, for heaven's sake, nobody can fire me, I'm 88 years old, my parents are gone. Still, I was frightened. It took me several days to put this essay in the mailbox. I owe a lot of credit to people who are comfortable enough in their own skins to say, "This is who I am." Shall I be haunted for trying to tell my story now, when many might still not wish to address it, or shall I, perhaps, be congratulated?

"Normal is nothing more than a cycle on a washing machine" - Whoopi Goldberg

TRIALS OF A DOUBLE LIFE

by James E. McGreevey, The Hartford Courant, September 5, 2007

My gut wrenched when I read of Sen. Larry Craig's bathroom arrest. I remembered my own late-night encounter with the law at a Garden State Parkway rest stop following a political dinner in north Jersey.

I pulled into the rest stop, parked my car, flashed my headlights, which was "the signal," and waited. Glancing in my rearview mirror, I saw a state trooper approaching. I desperately tried to convince the trooper of my innocence, showing him my former prosecutor's badge, a gift from the office when I left. The trooper radioed his office and returned. "I never want to see you here again," he said. I survived for another day.

I was in my late 20s. It would be another 25 years before my parallel lives collided and I was coerced out of the "closet."

Why do grown men in their 20s, or their 60s, do such things? I can answer only for me.

As a child, recognizing my difference from other kids, I went to the local public library to try to better understand my reality. Back then, many library card catalogs didn't even list "homosexuality" as a topic. I had to go to "sexuality, deviant" to learn about myself, and the collected works were few and frightening: "Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases," "Homosexuality: Its Causes and Cure," "Sexual Deviance & Sexual Deviants."

No relief was forthcoming from my then-Catholic faith, which said the practice of homosexuality was a "mortal sin" subject to damnation.

In the way that teenagers do, I came to the conclusion that my only options were suicide, something for which I could never find the courage, or "closeting" my homosexuality. You decide: I'll change it, I'll fight it, I'll control it, but, simply put, I'll never accept it. You then attempt to place "it" in a metaphorical closet, keep it separate from open daily life and indulge it only in dark, secret places.

The danger of this decision is the implicit shame it carries. I was convinced I was worth less than my straight peers. I was at best inauthentic, and the longer I went without amending that dishonesty, the more ashamed I felt. And the third shame, for me, was my behavior. From the time in high school when I made up my mind to behave in public as though I were straight, I nonetheless carried on sexually with men.

How do you live with this shame? How do you accommodate your own disappointments, your own revulsion with whom you have become? You do it by splitting in two. You rescue part of yourself, the half that stands for

tradition, values and America, the part that looks like the family you came from, and you walk away from the other half the way you would abandon something spoiled, something disgusting.

But being in the closet uniquely assisted me in politics. From my first run for the state legislature until my election as governor, all too often I was not leading but following my best guess at public opinion. Despite being a moderately liberal governor, my stance on marriage was: "between a man and a woman." The position, in my mind, created a tension with the lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender community that affirmed my bona fides as a "straight." Only after the crisis that resulted in my resignation, when public opinion no longer mattered, did I realize the importance and legitimacy of same-sex marriage.

Ultimately, like Sen. Craig, I resigned for the perceived good of my family, state and political party. And in so doing, I at long last accepted a fundamental truth, namely, that I am a gay American. In my soul, I found peace. In my heart, I found love.

I can only pray that Larry Craig and his loving family come to peace with his truth, whatever that may be. To those who judge him harshly, I ask that they fill their hearts with compassion and equanimity. The senator did not have a lover on the payroll, as I did; nor did he engage in sexual relations for money or use his office for unethical professional or personal gain.

Is it possible that we hold him to a different standard because a same-sex entanglement is involved? If being gay is, as I believe, a natural gift of the creator, what choice does a gay person have in being gay? If we condemn sin in an equal manner, so be it. But what if our condemnation tells to members of the next generation that they are to be shamed, repudiated and vilified inequitably for being gay?

I pray that the tide of American history continues to sweep toward the inevitable expansion of freedom that recognizes the worth and dignity of every individual - and that mine is the last generation that is required to choose between affairs of the heart and elected office.

James E. McGreevey, a student at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York, resigned in 2004 after two years as governor of New Jersey. This first appeared in The Washington Post.



VICTORIES OVER INTOLERANCE, FEAR

September 18, 2007

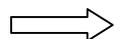
Dear Abby: I am writing to respond to "Grateful Mom," the widow who, in her time of need, was invited by her son Neil and his partner to live with them despite having rejected Neil in the past because he is gay. I have a gay son, too, and I would not trade him for anyone. He is the most loving and caring son any parent could ever have. I consider myself very lucky. When it was time for me to relocate, it was his partner who first approached me about moving across the state to be near them. My son helped me find a cute little house to buy. My two dogs and I are very happy. I will not have grandchildren, but I do have grand-dogs and another wonderful son. I am blessed. -- Another Grateful Mom in Florida

Dear Another Mom: I am pleased that things are going so well for you. The responses to "Grateful Mom's" letter were heartwarming. They serve as a reminder that acceptance, love and recognition of the importance of family can triumph over intolerance and fear. Read on:

Dear Abby: I am the father of three boys, one of whom is gay. "Grateful Mom" had forgotten the most basic of things -- that your child is a part of you, and we must love, support and participate in our children's lives. I love all my sons, and I am proud of them. I hope "Grateful" continues to enjoy her son and continues to share the lessons she is learning. -- Proud Dad in New Jersey

Dear Abby: My mom came out to me and my brother about five years ago. She had been with men her whole life, and while we were shocked, we understood we could react in one of two ways. We could either accept her and her girlfriend, "Daphne," or disown her and have to explain to our children why they couldn't see their "nana." We decided to accept my mother for who she is and welcome Daphne into the family. It was one of the best choices my brother and I ever made. Daphne loves my kids and can't wait to see them (she lives in Australia) later this year. My kids call her "Nana Daph." She is the best thing that ever happened to my mom, and I'm thankful she's in our lives. I'm happy that "Grateful Mom" learned to accept and appreciate her son and his partner exactly the way they are. -- Jennifer in Indianapolis

Dear Abby: Thank you for recommending P-FLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) to your readers. It is an organization that provides understanding and support to both gays and their families. I have a lesbian daughter who has brought me much joy and pride. Going to P-FLAG was the wisest thing I ever did. -- Benita in San Diego



Dear Abby: "Grateful" said her two daughters and one of her sons "married well." Sounds to me as if Neil is the one who married well. If only the world could be half as tolerant as Neil and his partner, Ron. Because of their good hearts and generous spirits, even that intolerant mother was able to change! -- Berkeley, Calif., Reader

MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT PASSED!!

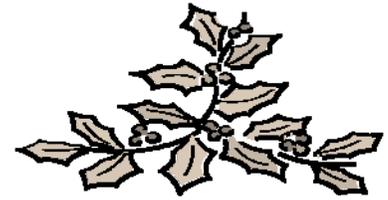
Thanks to those who made calls, and congratulations to all! This is a wonderful victory - and such a long time in the coming! - Becky & John

Congratulations to everyone for a fantastic victory! The Hate Crimes Bill was adopted on a voice vote after a successful cloture vote (a vote to end debate) of 60 to 39. Every Democratic Senator voted for cloture as well as Collins, Coleman, Gregg, Lugar, Smith, Snowe, Specter, Voinovich, and Warner.

Start calling in those thank you!!!

Elizabeth Hampton Brown
 Director of Policy and Programs
 Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
 1726 M St., NW Suite 400
 Washington, DC 20036
 phone- 202.467.8180 ext 211

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR MONTHS TO WRITE THIS *Joe Solmonese, President, The Human Rights Campaign*

With your help, the U.S. Senate has just passed the Matthew Shepard Act!

I want to thank you, personally, for everything you've done to help make this moment possible. HRC supporters sent 350,000 emails, made 30,000 calls to Congress, and wrote over 5,000 letters to local papers. Your commitment was inspiring. And even Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) acknowledged the work of the Human Rights Campaign during debate on the Senate floor.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your incredible support.

But even as we celebrate this victory— we know we face a tough road ahead. The bill has to survive final negotiations between the House & Senate before it gets to President Bush. Even then, he has threatened to veto it.

...

It's been nine years since Matthew Shepard was senselessly murdered because of who he was. HRC stands firmly committed to this being the year we finally make sure every American is protected from this kind of violence.

We just made history. Thank you for getting us this far. Now, let's see it through to the end.

I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT THE GOOD WORKS OF PFLAG HARTFORD WITH A TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF:

\$ _____ My name: _____

Please cut out this coupon and mail it with your check (made payable to PFLAG Hartford) to our PFLAG Treasurer, 12 Colchester Commons, Colchester, CT 06415.

PFLAG Hartford has been available as a resource for support to families and friends of GLBTI people in Greater Hartford, and beyond, for over 20 years. We are staffed solely by volunteers, and depend heavily on contributions to enable us to continue to educate and advocate for an end to discrimination and to make this a safer world for our GLBTI loved ones.

Your help is greatly appreciated.

I HUGGED YOUR CHILD TODAY*By Nancy Brown, a published poet and member of the Metro DC PFLAG**I hugged your child today**He ran to me and grabbed me and held me tight**His heart pounding as if it were about to burst.**He buried his head in my shoulder and smelled my hair.**He wanted the smell to be your smell.**He wanted the embrace to remind him of you.**His mommy who always made the hurt go away.**His mommy who once told him she would always be his best friend.**I hugged your child today**She walked up to me slowly and tears rolled down her face**As if she were in deep mourning.**She hung a colorful plastic lei around my neck.**She wanted the smile returned to her to be your smile.**She wanted to hug you and tell you about her day.**Instead, she hugged me because I was all that was there**To make her know that she was worthy of a parents love.**I hugged your child today**He held back for a moment but his eyes peered into my soul**And then he broke down and cried.**I gently rocked him in my arms and told him it was ok.**He needs to lay his head in your lap while you stroke his hair**And allow his tired, sick body to rest and sleep, safe in your care**He needs you to tell him it's ok.**I hugged your child today**She wrapped her arms around me and said thank you**For being a stand-in mom for those moms who are too afraid.**I told her that you love her still and always will**I told her that it's fear that keeps you at bay, not her**I told her that she's beautiful and has grown up just as you would like**I told her that you're proud of her and one day you'll tell her so yourself.**I hugged your child today**And it was the most beautiful feeling I've ever felt*

<p>"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."</p>

Connecticut PFLAG Meetings

PFLAG HARTFORD: Information on front page or at www.pflaghartford.org

PFLAG NORWALK/SOUTHWESTERN CT

When: First Wednesday of every month, 7:30 pm
Where: Triangle Cmnty. Center, 16 River St. Norwalk
Help Line: (203) 226-0257 or (203) 438-0530
Email: PFLAGSWCT@yahoo.com

PFLAG NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT:

Contact: Diane (860) 435-2738

PFLAG MADISON/SHORELINE

No Meetings
Email: davidwinthropknapp@yahoo.com
Help Line: (203) 453-1395

PFLAG GROTON (NOANK) /SOUTHEASTERN CT

When: Second Monday of every month
5:30-6:30 Potluck Dinner
6:30-8:00 Meeting
Where: Noank Baptist Church, 18 Cathedral Heights
 (Childcare is available)
For Information call Mike (860) 447-0884

PFLAG GREATER NEW HAVEN

When: Third Tuesday of every month, 7:30 pm
Where: Church of the Redeemer
 Corner: Whitney Ave./Cold Spring St., NH
Help Line: (203) 907-0518
Email: greaternewhavenpflag@yahoo.com

Central and Western Massachusetts

Williamstown Area:

When: Second Sunday of every month, 2 pm
Where: First Congregational Church, Williamstown
Contact: (413) 243-2382

Springfield Area:

Where: Agawam
Contact: (413) 732-3240 or (413) 783-7709

Greenfield, MA

Help Line: 413/625-6636
E-Mail: PFLAGPV@valinet.com

CARING IS THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG HARTFORD

Caring welcomes articles, letters and other submissions for publication.

Deadline: 15th of even numbered months. Send articles to PFLAG EDITOR, 156 Randal Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06110 or via e-mail editor@pflaghartford.org.

ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAYS!



PFLAG'S STRAIGHT SPOUSE SUPPORT NETWORK:

In Central Connecticut and Central Mass., Contact Jane Harris at (413) 625-6636 or janenrosie@hotmail.com

In Southern Connecticut, Call Joan Rolnick at (203) 438-0530

FOR OTHER PFLAG LOCATIONS

Contact a Hartford Chapter Board Member or call the National PFLAG office at (202)638-4200. You may also sign onto PFLAG's Home Page at www.pflag.org.