

Mark Your Calendar: *True Colors XV: A Global Perspective*

Friday, March 14, and Saturday, March 15, 2008
University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut



The Voice of PFLAG Hartford

Caring

Volume 17, No. 2

March/April 2008

IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:

THANK YOU to Becca Lazarus and her two dads for speaking to us at our January meeting. Please see the article beginning on page 2 to learn more about this amazing family.

THANK YOU ALSO to Chelsea Turner, our speaker at the February meeting. (See article on page 5.)

OUR PFLAG HARTFORD CHAPTER is a proud sponsor of the *True Colors Conference* for youth, to be held at the UConn Storrs campus on March 14 and 15. On those days, we will have a PFLAG Hartford booth where we will hand out PFLAG pamphlets and information. If you attend the conference, please stop by and perhaps volunteer to staff our booth for an hour or two.

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:

March 19 – Valerie P.

April 16 – Nina & Heather

May 21 – Gary G.

June 18 – Scholarship Presentations
& Reception

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*

**UPCOMING PFLAG
HARTFORD
BOARD MEETING
7:00 p.m., April 23, 2008
Hosted by the Glezens**

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
- **TRANSGENDER LIVES CONFERENCE 2008** The intersection of health and law 2008 conference, whose goal is to empower its participants with a deeper understanding of the issues facing trans and gender non-conforming individuals in the areas of health care, legal protections, employment and education, will be held on Saturday, April 19, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the UConn Health Center in Farmington. For information go to jerimarie@transadvocacy.com or call Jerimarie at (860) 983-8139.
- **CONNECTICUT GAY MEN'S CHORUS** presents ***IT'S RAINING MEN!***
8pm, 3/29, Bushnell, Hartford; 4pm, 3/30, Ridgefield Playhouse; 8pm, 4/5, Norwalk Concert Hall; 8pm, 4/19, Shubert Theater, New Haven. Tickets: \$30 & \$35. Order online at www.ctgmc.org or call 1-800-644-CGMC.

Mark Your Calendar: *True Colors XV: A Global Perspective*

Friday, March 14 and Saturday, March 15, 2008
Pre-Conference Professional Best Practices Institute Thursday, March 13, 2008
University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut

True Colors XV will be held at the University of Connecticut on Friday, March 14 and Saturday, March 15, 2008. Registration will begin at 8:00 AM each day with closing ceremonies ending about 5:30.

Student Registration: Friday Only - \$35; Saturday Only - \$35; Friday & Saturday - \$50 (Lunch Inc.)

Adult Registration: Friday Only - \$85; Saturday Only - \$85; Friday & Saturday - \$95 (No Lunch)

Please consider sponsoring youth to attend the True Colors Conference. Most youth rely on a partial or full scholarship to attend, and your generous gift will play an important role in the life of a LGBT youth or youth ally. One youth can attend the two-day conference for your gift of \$45. Sponsors will be recognized in the conference guide, and all donations are tax deductible.

For more information, go to www.ourtruecolors.org

LITTLE GIRL, BIG VOICE

By: Kristen J. Tsetsi, Journal Inquirer 12/24/2007

WINDSOR - Don't let her small voice fool you. Rebecca Lazarus - or "Becca" as she likes to be called - is a fighter, and she's already had more experience with activism at age 13 than most fifty-somethings managed to accrue during the Vietnam War era. An eighth-grader at Sage Park Middle School, she was presented with an award during a Board of Education meeting last month in recognition of her community service and focus on civil rights.

In her battle for the legalization of same-sex marriage, Rebecca has been interviewed on National Public Radio, has spoken in front of several support groups, created a Connecticut chapter of COLAGE, which stands for Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere, and spoke in February at a news conference at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. She told reporters at the news conference that she lives with two fathers, Eric Lazarus and

Jason Charette, who are in a committed relationship, but otherwise she's "like any other kid." Lazarus, 41, works in finance for an advertising company and Charette, 32, is a manager at a local business. "The only difference between my family and yours is my parents can't get married ... even though they've been together for eight years," Rebecca said. Her two fathers have since exchanged vows in a civil union ceremony this past June.

Co-parent adoption is key. As Rebecca sees it, what she's fighting for is not just about two people being able to use the word "marriage." Because Lazarus, who is her biological father, and Charette aren't legally married, if something were to happen to Lazarus, Rebecca could be taken away from Charette and put in foster care unless the couple has what's called a co-parent adoption in place. A co-parent adoption guarantees that the second parent's custody rights and responsibilities will be protected if the first parent were to die or become incapacitated.

Important to Rebecca to clarify is that she is not fighting to try to change the traditional religious view of marriage but, instead, to have same-sex marriages recognized in the political and legal sector. To explain the distinction, Lazarus said that if marriage were only a religious institution, marriages between men and women performed in a secular setting, such as in a court or by a notary, wouldn't be recognized.

Rebecca said she would most like to speak with the officials of opposing organizations. "I feel that some of these people just aren't educated in these types of families. Maybe they're getting the wrong information from the wrong people," she said. One such organization is The Family Institute of Connecticut, whose executive director, Peter Wolfgang, said in November that, "If marriage is redefined into something it has never been, it becomes destructive to women and children, in particular." "I have a good life," Rebecca said. "I just want peace. I know there will be fighting because there's freedom of speech, but I just want people to respect and tolerate other people even if they're different. We're all different, but we're all the same." Lazarus echoed that sentiment. "One thing we teach our children is freedom of speech and acceptance," he said.

As for what she plans to do for a career, Rebecca said she would like to be a journalist, a lobbyist, or a history teacher; all while continuing with her work as a human rights activist, of course.

SUBJECT: HAPPY NEW YEAR! CIVIL UNIONS IN NH

January 3, 2008

There were two wonderful and unique Civil Unions celebrations in New Hampshire - one in Concord at the Capitol steps on New Year's Eve and one in Portsmouth at the Unitarian Universalist Church... Speakers at each event reinforced that the work continues so that we can look forward to full "marriage" equality. Then, we shall be sure of the correct term. At the Portsmouth Unitarian Universalist Church on New Year's Day several of the legislators, senators, and supporters of the civil unions bill spoke in honor of the work done to pass the bill, and reminded us that the work is not over.

Senator Martha Fuller Clark from Portsmouth shared stories of her own family and honored those who came to the many hearings to share their own heartfelt stories about families and friends with gay members and how they want equality and respect for them. She acknowledged how painful it was to be subjected to the hateful and derogatory rhetoric of those who oppose marriage equality.

We are proud that New Hampshire is the first state to pass a civil unions law without a judicial order. As Mo Baxley, Executive Director of Freedom to Marry stated, "We did it by being truthful about our lives and by telling our personal stories".

Jim Splain, Representative from the Seacoast area reminded us that we still have work ahead of us because there are students returning to their schools after the holiday break who remain fearful of being themselves because schools are not totally open to and safe for GLBTQ students. This historic event with photos and stories will be powerful in making a difference in student lives.

As a PFLAGer who has spent many hours presenting to educational institutions around New Hampshire, I know how hard it remains for students to hear homophobic remarks in the hallways. I also know that the many Gay Straight Alliances in Schools are making a positive impact upon the academic and social culture of our schools.

This New Year's celebration of Civil Unions will be another powerful force in moving safety and equality forward for our GLBT families.

Speakers also warned us that the opposition is waiting for the next NH election, so we had better stay tuned into the political scene and continue our vigilance regarding candidate platforms.

I am proud to have been a part of this historical event in New Hampshire, and that we have joined the small number of states whose gay citizens can live with love and legal civil union rights and responsibilities. Thanks to all of you who have participated by testifying, writing letters, sharing your stories, and just being there saying, I support this bill. Congratulations and Happy New Year! - *Roberta Barry, PFLAG NE Regional Director*

WHEN COMING OUT MAKES OR BREAKS A FAMILY

*by Susan Donaldson James, Jan. 9, 2008
Stephanie Dahle contributed to this report.*

When the glamorous singer and actress Cher... found out her teenage daughter was a lesbian, she "went ballistic." Cher threw her daughter out of their New York City apartment and even sent her to a psychiatrist to try to change her orientation, according to two memoirs by Chastity Bono. The actress... eventually accepted her daughter's sexual identity.

London's Daily Mail and the gay press are reporting that the mother-daughter duo is pitching a reality show to help gays come out to their parents. Cher's agent, Liz Rosenberg, said the story is "not true," but the celebrity press is buzzing about the concept - "Coming Out With Cher and Chas"... Coming out is complicated, especially for teenagers, according to psychologists. While disclosure can strengthen the emotional ties between parent and child, it can also thrust the family into crisis. "This can be a dramatic and traumatic event, one that can bring them together or make them split," said Lisa Diamond, a psychologist at the University of Utah who has researched sexual orientation.

Mike Neubecker, a Catholic-born field engineer from Detroit, told ABCNEWS.com he felt "like I had been punched in the stomach" when he learned his only child was gay. In 1991, his son, Lee, was on a full military scholarship at Eastern Michigan University - before the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. One day during a discussion in class, students broke out into hateful chants, "No fags, no fags, no fags." Horrified by the military's attitude and afraid of his own urges, Lee tried to obtain a pill that would reputedly make him straight. Once in counseling, he realized he was gay and worked to learn self-acceptance. Lee, 19, dropped out, but that was only the beginning of his journey. Too afraid to tell his father, he confided in his mother, who encouraged him to leave a pamphlet on coming out in his father's sock drawer, hoping it would spark a conversation. It did, but not the one Lee expected. Neubecker immediately went out to a Christian bookstore to find guidance. "My son didn't fit the stereotypes," he said. "I needed to get some ammo to convince him he was not gay." "I kept saying to my son, 'Keep an open mind,'" Neubecker said. "But I didn't have an open mind. I didn't want him to become gay."

Neubecker found an organization that promised to make his son a heterosexual -- but that meant declaring his son was suffering from "severe mental depression." That's when the light went on. "Our hopes and aspirations included him marrying a nice woman and beautiful grand kids," said Neubecker. "What would my friends in Kiwanis and my golf buddies say? I was being selfish. Finally, it was the love of my son that broke through. I started to think about what he was going through."

When father and son finally talked, Neubecker told him, "You're my son and I love you. Just don't expect me to go on Oprah." Eventually, with the help of the organization Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Neubecker did go public. Today, he is the group's vice president. He also uses his experience in a part-time comedy act. "I tell them, I didn't expect to look for a pair and find a same-socks couple in the drawer," he said. "It's to let them know I am not afraid to talk, and I am proud of my son." Today at 35, Lee is married to his partner, with full blessing from his parents. ...

No one knows how sexual orientation and gender identity is determined, but experts agree it is driven by genetics, biology, psychological and social factors. While research has not determined a cause, homosexuality and gender variance are not the result of any one factor like parenting or past experiences, according to PFLAG.

Eventually Cher turned to PFLAG and accepted her daughter. PFLAG offers practical advice to gay children. Before coming out, children should evaluate their situation, taking into consideration the relationship with parents. Will they be supportive and how they will practically respond? Will they withdraw financial support? They also recommend having resources like brochures and support group contacts available -- as did Neubecker -- to smooth the conversation. Be patient, they say. Getting a parent to accept a child's sexual orientation may take six months to two years or more. When families are highly dysfunctional or have a history of abuse, secrecy can be a better option until the child is old enough to be independent, according to psychologist Lisa Diamond. Often, another family member can be a source of help. "The critical ingredient is to know parents can love and support you," said Diamond. "But it doesn't mean they have to resolve their own feelings. It's OK to say privately you are confused."

New research on sexual orientation shows that there are "no absolutes," she said. Parents are used to relying on developmental milestones, but with sexual identity, there are none. Children can come out at any age.

Psychologists also warn about so-called "reparative therapy" or "reorientation." These treatments... can be harmful and merely teach ways not to act on sexual urges. Both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have publicly discredited these therapies. Many gay youth struggle with their feelings, she said. Indeed, PFLAG cites higher rates of suicide and depression among gay and transgendered youth. But sometimes, coming out is liberating.

PFLAG NATIONAL & LOCAL SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

On December 1, PFLAG entered the fifth year of its National Scholarship Program. This year there will be up to three \$5000, three \$2500, and ten \$1000 scholarships awarded. The Scholarship Program is our chance to reward the great work students are doing across the country to make schools safer.

PFLAG's local and national scholarships are one of the many ways PFLAG supports GLBT and ally youth. In the last five years, PFLAG National has awarded over \$125,000 in scholarship money to more than 100 students. This year we have raised the dollar amounts for the awards (up from \$2500 to \$5000) and have made the application process simpler and easier, allowing students to apply online.

Support your local scholars by letting them know about PFLAG's Scholarship Program and by encouraging them to apply.

- The scholarships are open to gay, lesbian and bisexual students as well as straight ally students who have made an effort to further GLBT equality in their school or community.
- Students who are graduating seniors and will be entering a higher education institution are eligible to apply (students who graduated last year and took a year off are also eligible).
- Students use one general application form and do not need to specify which scholarship amount they are applying for. The general application qualifies you for all scholarship amounts.
- You may apply online, but you will have to send in a signed release form as well as a recommendation and transcript. PFLAG will not consider your application until it is complete. **(For more information, go to www.PFLAG.org and click on Education & Programs.)**
- All application materials should be postmarked by March 15, 2008.
- Please remember that the National PFLAG scholarship is not in competition with local PFLAG scholarships. Candidates are eligible to win both and we should encourage students to apply for both your local and national scholarship!

PFLAG HARTFORD & TRUE COLORS WILL AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS to GLBTI students or allies. Application forms for the Brill Scholarship will be available at the True Colors Conference, held at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, on March 14 & 15, and on our PFLAG Hartford website (www.PFLAGHartford.org). (Application deadline is April 15.)

**FORMER VICE PRESIDENT, AL GORE, ENDORSES SAME SEX MARRIAGE**

Late last week, [January 17] Al Gore posted a video on his new network, Current TV. In the video, Gore looks directly into the camera and unequivocally endorses marriage for same sex couples.

As a former Congressman, Senator, Vice President, and Presidential candidate, Al Gore is part of the political establishment that is slowly stepping out to support marriage equality.

We laud the former Vice President for his brave move to do the right thing, and we encourage other elected officials--Democrat and Republican--to follow the lead of this former Vice President and Nobel Laureate.

Email your Senator or Representative, and urge them to watch this video and come out in support of marriage equality for everyone.

Anne Stanback, Executive Director, Love Makes A Family

To view the video: http://current.com/items/88817757_gay_men_and_women_should_have_the_same_rights.

**CHELSEA TURNER - Director, Policy & Legislative Affairs - Office of Governor M. Jodi Rell**

Ms. Turner is currently in her second legislative session working for Governor Rell. She covers the Appropriations, Judiciary, Public Health, General Law, Veterans, Aging and Executive Nominations Committees on behalf of the Governor. Prior to working for Governor Rell, Ms. Turner was a lobbyist for eight years with Betty Gallo & Company. Some of the biggest legislative campaigns that Ms. Turner was a part of during this tenure included securing second parent adoption rights for same-sex couples and passing the civil union bill. Additionally her background includes running a state Senate Campaign, actively serving on two political action committees that helped elect dozens of pro-equality and pro-choice candidates, interning at the Office of Legislative Research and the National Committee on Pay Equity and teaching for two years for the Close Up Foundation in Washington, DC. Chelsea & her partner are expecting the birth of their first child in July. Congratulations and best wishes from PFLAG Hartford!

SENSITIVITY ON GAY ISSUES HAS MATURED

by John D. Anderson, New Haven Register

A couple of months ago, the Bridgeport newspaper had a lead story on the front page about the new mayor... A former Joseph Ganim staffer, Dennis Murphy, was mentioned. The story said, "Murphy is married through a civil union with John Stafstrom, the city's bond counsel." This is amazing for at least two reasons: first, that it appeared at all; second, that the paper so eloquently expressed the men's relationship as "married through a civil union."

There is an increasing sensibility on gay and lesbian issues that has matured from tentative to inclusive because of the increased visibility of gay and lesbian people. Acceptance is growing even in the most conservative states.

According to a new analysis of Census Bureau statistics, the gay population in Nebraska jumped 71 percent from 2000 to 2005. In Kansas and Iowa, it rose over 50 percent. Demographers say it's not that more people are gay or that there's a huge migration from San Francisco and New York to the Farm Belt. Gay people are simply coming out in places where they once hid or fled.

According to opinion polls, young people are more supportive of gay rights issues. In recent years, the number of gay-straight alliances in high schools has surpassed 3,600 since the first such organization was formed in 1988. There are even three in Mississippi and five in West Virginia. These groups provide a place where all students can feel safe and valued in the high school environment.

The three US Senators running for president – Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Barack Obama – voted against a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. This rosy picture of candidates is marred by candidate Mike Huckabee, who is appealing to the bottom feeders of religious bigotry. In fact, in his 1998 book "Kids Who Kill," he listed as aberrations homosexuality, pedophilia and necrophilia. He leads the verse pluckers in their narrow selection of only those biblical statements that support their prejudices. As my friend Ann said in an e-mail, Huckabee just doesn't get it: You don't have to be a Christian to have integrity, ethics, compassion, intelligence and a sense of history.

As of this year, New Hampshire has civil unions similar to ours in Connecticut. US District Judge Michael Mosman, a Bush appointee, just tossed out a challenge to Oregon's new civil union law, allowing it to take effect. A New York state appeals court recently ruled 5-0 that same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions are entitled to recognition in New York.

...

US Attorney General Michael Mukasey reversed a ban put in place by John Ashcroft and supported by Alberto Gonzales; now, gay and lesbian employees of the Department of Justice can form a group just like other minorities and join their colleagues in using public bulletin boards, meeting rooms and e-mail for their professional functions.

Even the military's policy of "don't ask, don't tell" is showing its age. A new study published in the journal, Armed Forces and Society, says the data show that in the eyes of the American people, the policy "casts the military as being on the wrong side of history and the wrong side of the culture, even among conservatives." Furthermore, heterosexual service members are comfortable interacting with gays and lesbians and would prefer that their gay peers reveal their sexual orientation rather than remain hidden.

...

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: 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.

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 r via e-mail editor@pflaghartford.org.

DON'T MISS THE TRUE COLORS CONFERENCE AT THE UCONN STORRS CAMPUS, MARCH 14 & 15

PFLAG'S STRAIGHT SPOUSE SUPPORT NETWORK:

In Central Connecticut and Central Mass.,
Contact Jane Harris at (413) 625-6636 or [janenosie@hotmail.com](mailto: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.