



HAPPY NEW YEAR 2010
HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



The Voice of PFLAG Hartford

Caring

Volume 19, No. 1

January/February 2010

IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:

THANK YOU to our November 18th meeting speaker, Alexandrina Sergio, a long-time PFLAG Hartford member. Read more about "Sandy" on page 5.

PFLAG HARTFORD & TRUE COLORS WILL AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS to LGBTI students or allies. Application forms for the Brill Scholarship will be available at the True Colors Conference, to be held at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, on March 12 & 13, as well as on our PFLAG Hartford website (www.PFLAGHartford.org). Just click on the True Colors link. Deadline to apply is April 15. Look for more information in the upcoming March/April issue of Caring.

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:

January 20 – Noreen W.
February 17 – Jean C.
March 17 – Scott F.
April 21 – Scott 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 Joan Jansen, 12 Colchester Commons, Colchester, CT 06415*

**UPCOMING PFLAG
 HARTFORD
 BOARD MEETING
 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 12
 Hosted by Becky & John**

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

- **RAINBOWROOM:** (a program of the **Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective**) - - A welcoming place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning "LGBTQ" teens (13-21 years old). RainbowRoom meets the third Sunday of every month, 3-6 p.m., 1841 Broad Street (Health Collective building), Hartford. For more information please visit our website at <http://www.hglhc.org/> or contact lizy@hglhc.org or call 860/278-4163.
- **HGLHC TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP:** Group is currently not meeting. Updated information will be posted as changes are made. More Info at: <http://www.hglhc.org/> or lizy@hglhc.org or call 860/278-4163.
- **TRANS SOFFA SUPPORT GROUP IN CONNECTICUT:** This is a group for Significant Others, Family, Friends and Allies of Transgendered, Transsexual and Gender Variant people (SOFFAs). Trans people who are SOFFAs are welcome. Meetings held on the 2nd 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.

PLAY WON'T AFFECT GENDER IDENTITY

by Rebecca Stewart, Fox 61, October 12, 2009

When I was a little girl, "Annie" was all the rage. I wanted to be Annie. My sister and I had the dress and the wig. We still know every word of the soundtrack, and the choreography. It was all great fun, until the one day we put that costume on my younger brother, red wig, freckles and all. We thought he looked great. He loved it.

"Take that dress off of your brother!" I vividly remember my usually playful Dad saying. We didn't understand. This was the age of "free to be you and me." It was supposed to be OK for boys to play with dolls, and girls to play with trucks.

Fast-forward to 2009, and things haven't changed that much: Gender roles and gender identity still make a lot of parents anxious. They shouldn't, says Laura Saunders, a child psychologist in Wethersfield. "Really, all that is exploratory play," she says. "It's fun to explore and do things that are different from what you typically do. "Children explore what their role models are doing."

That explains why — to my husband's chagrin — my son loves putting on my makeup as much as he loves pretending to use Daddy's razor.

Saunders is adamant that there is no need to be concerned that this has any impact on gender identity later in life. "If you discourage it, then you create shame ... and make the behavior secretive," she says. "That's far more damaging than just allowing your child to play."

If your child really does identify with another gender, Saunders points out, shaming him or her isn't going to change who the child is. It will force the behavior underground. Let it go, she says, and laugh.

So don't be surprised by my son's sometimes pink cheeks or bronzed forehead. He got into my makeup bag again, grabbed a brush and said, "I paint my face like Mommy!"

• *Rebecca Stewart, weekend anchor at WTIC, Fox 61, each week chronicles the challenges of work and motherhood. Read her blog at www.fox61.com/news/blogs.*

NEWS FROM LOVE MAKES A FAMILY:

September 15, 2009

Today, the Respect for Marriage Act of 2009 was raised in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Act calls for the full repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which singles out lawfully married same-sex couples for discriminatory treatment under federal law, denying them over 1,100 critical benefits and responsibilities that provide security and protections for couples and their families. The bill also provides certainty, in terms of Federal obligations and benefits, for all married couples.

As a result of DOMA, legally married same-sex couples still cannot:

- Take an unpaid leave to care for a sick or injured spouse
- Receive the same family health and retirement/pension benefits as fellow married employees
- File taxes jointly
- Receive spousal, mother's and father's, or surviving spouse benefits under Social Security
- Receive employer-provided family health benefits without paying an additional tax that different-sex couples do not pay

We are so proud that the entire Connecticut delegation in the House of Representatives, Congress people Joe Courtney, Rosa DeLauro, Jim Himes, John Larson & Chris Murphy, are original co-sponsors of this bill!

LOVE CONQUERED HATE

October 28, 2009

Dear PFLAG Family & Friends,

Thanks to you and thousands of other dedicated activists, today marks a historic event for our LGBT loved ones, as President Obama has signed into law the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. I was proud to represent you at the White House earlier today to mark the first federal law ever that includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories.

This law represents a victory more than ten years in the making, and would never have happened without the commitment, outreach, and support of PFLAG members and friends like you, who are at the heart of all that we do. Along with Judy, Dennis, and Logan Shepard, many other families were on hand at the signing to remember the LGBT loved ones who inspired this law and to stand together against violence motivated by hate.

We know that this expanded hate crimes law is a tremendous step forward, but it is only a single step and there are many more to take. We are not resting on this victory. In fact, PFLAG is already working hard to continue moving equality forward, focusing on upcoming legislative priorities such as passing ENDA and repealing DOMA and Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

I hope each of you will celebrate today's victory and then support PFLAG as we move onward, toward the next victory in our commitment to moving equality forward.

Sincerely,

Jody M. Huckaby, PFLAG National Executive Director

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA LIFTS BAN**

In a historic decision, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's (ELCA) 4.7 million member denomination has lifted its ban on noncelibate gay and lesbian pastors and has thus opened the door for lesbian and gay pastors who are in committed same-sex relationships to serve as ministers. Passing 559-451 at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis, Minn., this vote followed on the heels of a 2/3 majority vote on Wednesday, August 19, to approve a social statement on human sexuality to acknowledge without judgment the wide variety of views within the ELCA regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender inclusion. This document, which was 8 years in the making, recognizes and supports congregations which conduct blessings of same-sex relationships and same-sex marriages where such marriages are legal.

Joe Solmonese, HRC's President, stated: "By allowing for same-sex couples in committed relationships to serve their call to ministry and by creating policies that honor same-sex people in their congregations, ELCA is modeling for other religious communities what it means to be a faith community that honors all of God's children. This is a joyous day for the LGBT Lutherans who no longer have to choose between their spirituality and their sexuality.

Harry Knox, Director for HRC's Religion and Faith Program, declares: "The Holy Spirit has moved powerfully in the community called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, working through the courageous advocacy of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and our allies. Thanks be to God for our colleagues at Lutherans Concerned and all of the Goodsoil coalition! ... This decision reflects the best of Lutheran tradition."

Equal rights are not a "gay" issue. They are about our shared human rights: safety in our schools and jobs, equitable healthcare and housing, and protection for our families.

Very Happy Marriage Anniversary! Same-sex couples across Connecticut celebrate one year of marriage equality at Capitol event.*The Hartford Courant*

Hartford—Same-sex couples from across Connecticut converged on the Capitol today [November 12] for a ceremony marking the one-year anniversary of marriage equality in the state. After posing for a large group photo on the Capitol steps, they joined jubilant allies, supporters, and legislators in a packed Old Judiciary Room for a celebration with a wedding cake and a toast.

(Excerpts from a letter to John Glezen, from Joe Salmonese, President of the Human Rights Commission) Oct. 11, 2009

Just hours ago, President Obama took the podium at HRC's National Dinner to talk directly to the LGBT community and our many friends and allies...

Today, thousands of people are marching on Washington to demand LGBT equality. And last night, President Obama told LGBT Americans that his commitment to ending discrimination in the military, in the workplace and for loving couples and their families is "unwavering". He made it crystal clear that he is our strongest ally in this fight, that he understands and, in fact, encourages our activism and our voice even when we're impatient with the pace of change.

And we heard unequivocally about the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell: "I am working with the Pentagon, its leadership and members of the House and Senate to end this policy. I will end Don't Ask, Don't Tell. That is my commitment to you." Finally, we heard something quite remarkable from the President: "You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men and two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman."

It was an historic night when we felt the full embrace and commitment of the President of the United States. It's simply unprecedented. In the days and weeks ahead we'll move quickly to capitalize on this momentum... we're much closer to attaining real equality and protecting millions of Americans...

Joe Solmonese, President - Human Rights Campaign



“DEAR AMY” ENDORSES PFLAG

DEAR AMY: My husband and I suspect that my son is gay. We are wondering if we should say anything to him. My husband and I don't believe in this lifestyle for him. But one thing we know is that we love him now and always. I have noticed that since he has been home from college, he will have a drink in the evening. I don't want this to become a problem. I hope he is not using alcohol to deal with his sexuality. Should we approach him about this, and, if so, how? - **ANXIOUS**

DEAR ANXIOUS: Your son's sexuality isn't a lifestyle any more than your sexuality is. Nor is it something you and your husband need to "believe in" because it isn't a question of faith. It is what it is. Obviously, you are struggling with this issue, as many parents do. Your son might be unsure, conflicted, racked with guilt or just waiting for the right girl to come along. You and your husband should prepare yourselves to talk to him by talking with each other. When you do have this conversation with him, it's OK to say, "We're struggling with this, but we love you and always will." Don't combine the alcohol conversation with the sexuality conversation because one issue is a potential problem and the other should be addressed with an open-ended reminder of your love and support. For more information on how to talk about this, check the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays website at pflag.org.

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 Treasurer, Joan Jansen, 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.

THANK-YOU to our Wednesday, November 18th, meeting speaker, **Alexandrina Sergio**, a long-time member of PFLAG and a published poet. She has had careers as a high school English teacher, executive director of a community-based mental health agency, director of a philanthropic foundation and consultant in philanthropy, which encroached on writing time, but retirement has allowed her broader opportunities for poetry writing and performance. Her work has recently appeared in journals *Long River Run*, *Caduceus*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Encore* and anthologies *Wisdom of Our Mothers* (Familia Books); *Love After 70*, and *Double Lives, Reinvention and Those We Leave Behind* (Wising Up Press), as well as an online publication *Cold Shoulders & Evil Eyes, Steadying Gazes & Warm Embraces: Exclusion and Inclusion in Our Daily Lives* (Universal Table). Her work has twice been performed by a professional stage company. Awards include first place, 2007 Connecticut Senior Poetry Contest, and second place, 2008 National Federation of State Poetry Societies' Dorman John Grace Contest. A collection of her work, *My Daughter is Drummer in the Rock 'n Roll Band* was released by Antrim House in the fall of 2009. Sandy is a member of the Thread City Poets, a writers' collective sheltered by Curbstone Press. Sandy and David Sergio's daughter, Lauren, is a citizen of Canada, where she was married in 2003 to her beloved Margaret in one of the first legally sanctioned same-sex marriages to be performed in North America. Sandy has been a very effective advocate for marriage equality in Connecticut.

We all enjoyed Sandy's poetry and listening to what she had to say as a PFLAG activist mom.



PROMINENT UNITED METHODIST MINISTER ELECTED TO NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PFLAG

Influential civil rights activist and religious leader adds depth to PFLAG's outreach to faith communities and ethnically diverse groups

Washington, DC; October 26, 2009: PFLAG National—Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—is pleased to announce that the Reverend Gilbert H. Caldwell of Asbury Park, N.J., has been elected to its national Board of Directors. Caldwell, a straight, African-American minister (retired) in the United Methodist Church, will focus his work with PFLAG on outreach to faith communities and to LGBT people and their families in the African-American community.

"I have always been committed to the freedom struggles of all people," said Caldwell. "I hope that my experiences as a minister and as a person of color will help me serve as a bridge between PFLAG and the communities where I have done my life's work."

"Gil Caldwell is an exceptional straight ally and leader of change," said John R. Cepek, PFLAG National President. "PFLAG is very lucky to have the support and leadership of someone with Gil's history of activism and advocacy."

...

Caldwell's connection to PFLAG extends back to 1997, when he became the first African American Senior Pastor of multi-racial Park Hill United Methodist Church in Denver. Among his parishioners were PFLAG National President Elinor Lewallen and her husband Tom. Caldwell credits his understanding of LGBT issues to Elinor Lewallen, and says "I developed a deep appreciation and respect for the parents of lesbian and gay people who, in many instances, had to not only live with the prejudices of their families and friends, but also had to wrestle with and overcome their own prejudices."

Lewallen sent her congratulations to Caldwell upon his election to the PFLAG Board of Directors. "I am thrilled, both for Gil and for PFLAG," she said. "In the years since I have known him, Gil has expanded his concern for all kinds of discrimination and I can see him helping tremendously to inspire more people of color to realize that PFLAG is a healing place for families, saving lives over and over."



PFLAG NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

From: Elizabeth Fregiato, PFLAG National Office

To: PFLAG Parents & Students

As many of you know, the PFLAG National office gives out thousands of dollars in scholarship money each year to lesbian, gay, bi and transgender students as well as allies. Today [Dec. 17] we are launching the 2010 scholarship program. You may access the scholarship information and on-line application at: www.pflag.org./scholarships

We look forward to having applications from regions across the country, so please apply for the program today! Application deadline is March 12.

(You may apply for both the PFLAG National and our local PFLAG Hartford/True Colors' scholarships.)

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CATHOLIC PARENTS

Fortunate Families is an organization founded about five years ago to give support to Catholic families with gay loved ones, and to work within the church to increase acceptance of their LGBT children. It recently launched a program called the "Listening Parents Network," providing Catholic volunteer parents to take calls or emails from other Catholic parents in need of support.

There are now nearly 100 parents in the Listening Parents Network. They are in over 50 dioceses in 26 states and three Canadian provinces. Casey Lopata, president of Fortunate Families, reports that the callers seeking support are "in varying stages of fear, confusion and misunderstanding." One caller said she wished her daughter had cancer, instead of being a lesbian. "The need for compassionate support is real," said Lopata. "We hope to expand the Network, to make it easier for parents to find support from other parents who have walked a similar path.

If you would like to explore becoming part of the Listening Parents Network, you can visit their Web site: www.fortunatefamilies.com, or call 585-698-6100.

NEWS FROM GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network)

As my first full year as GLSEN's executive director draws to a close, I'm pleased to report that it brought many high points, including:

- The historic meeting between a GLSEN delegation and Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, that resulted in the U.S. Department of Education's unprecedented stance to underscore the importance of anti-bullying programs.
- Reaching millions with our message of respect through our groundbreaking Ad Council campaign, ThinkB4YouSpeak, which has had a measured effect in changing teenagers' attitudes that far surpassed the average effect measured in past Ad Council campaigns following their first year.
- And, registering hundreds more GSAs in schools across the country through our highly effective and hugely important in-school programs, while strengthening and providing existing GSAs with more focus than in previous years (which was accomplished through our Ad Council campaign, national days of action, providing high school level curriculum to *No Name-Calling Week* for the first time ever, and much more).

We have a lot to accomplish in 2010 – *our 20th anniversary year*. We must build on our many successes by redoubling our commitment to make schools safer for LGBT and all youth, and to bring an end to harmful anti-LGBT behavior.

While we had a lot to celebrate about in 2009, we also had some setbacks – particularly the tragic loss of at least four young lives due to anti-gay bullying. Our partnerships with schools and communities enabled us to respond effectively when these heartbreaking tragedies struck. We made sure each tragedy led to concrete actions to protect vulnerable students from the nightmare of daily bullying and harassment.

Eliza Byard, PhD

Executive Director

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORY: If you would like to advertise your business/service in *Caring* for one year (6 issues), send your business card and a check for \$40 (made payable to PFLAG Hartford) to: Jean Cormier, 156 Randal Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06110. Your Patronage of our advertisers, who help us pay the costs of sending the *Caring* newsletter to you, would be greatly appreciated by them and by us. Please mention that you saw their advertisement in *Caring*.

Healing begins within the heart...



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Connecticut PFLAG Meetings

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

Helpline: (860) 633-7184

Phone: (860) 633-5111

Transgender Issues: (860) 231-8582

PFLAG NORWALK/SOUTHWESTERN CT

When: 7:30 pm, 1st Wednesday (bi-monthly)
Jan./Mar./May/July/Sept./Nov.

Where: Triangle Community Center
16 River Street (lower level) Norwalk

Help Line: (203) 226-0257 - Sandy
or (203) 322-5380 - Lester

Email: PFLAGSWCT@yahoo.com

PFLAG NORTHWESTERN CT:

Contact: Diane (860) 435-2738

PFLAG GREATER NEW HAVEN

Meetings: Church of the Redeemer, 185 Cold Spring
(Corner of Whitney Avenue.), New Haven
3rd Tues of the Month @ 7:30 pm

Phone/Help Line (203) 458-0493

Email: greaternewhavenpflag@yahoo.com

PFLAG SECT (SOUTHEASTERN CT)

When: Second Monday of every month, 7:00 pm

Where: Noank Baptist Church,
18 Cathedral Heights, Noank (Groton)

Helpline: (860) 447-0884

Email: bjalthen@sbcglobal.net

Web site: www.pflagsect.org

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**

Editor/Circulation Manager: Jean Cormier

Caring welcomes articles, letters and other submissions for publication.

Deadline: 15th of even numbered months. Send articles to: *Jean Cormier*

*156 Randal Avenue,
West Hartford, CT 06110*

A VALENTINE FOR ALL PFLAGers



STRAIGHT SPOUSE SUPPORT NETWORK:

*In Connecticut and Western Massachusetts
Monthly Support Group, Third Sunday,
West Hartford, CT.*

Contact Jane Harris at (413) 625-6636 or
janenrosie48@yahoo.com or at
www.straightspouse.org

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.