



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!**



***The Voice of PFLAG Hartford***

***Caring***

**Volume 19, No. 6**

**November/December 2010**

**IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:**

Recent PFLAG Hartford Weddings: Congratulations to **David and Dennis**, who were married at First Church of Christ in Hartford on September 19 - Paul Goodman (PFLAG speaker) and Van Parker (PFLAG dad) officiating. Congratulations to **Mitchell and Alexis**, who were married in August, Carole MacKenzie, (PFLAG member), officiated.

**CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK-YOU TO ALL OF THE PFLAG HARTFORD BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED AT THE SEPTEMBER ANNUAL MEETING:**

John & Becky Glezen; Jean Cormier; Joan Jansen; Rose & Larry Pysh; David Owens; Donna Shubrooks, Connie Gallagher, Mike Renkawitz

**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 17 - Alexis & Mitch**  
**December 15 - Rose & Larry**  
**January 19 - Karen & Bob**  
**February 16 - Carole M.**

**MEMBERSHIP DUES:**

Student/Limited Income: \$10  
Household Membership: \$40  
Individual Membership: \$25

**UPCOMING PFLAG  
HARTFORD  
BOARD MEETING  
Tuesday, January 4  
Hosted by Rose & Larry**

*Please make your check payable to **PFLAG Hartford** and Send it to Joan Jansen, 12 Colchester Commons, Colchester, CT 06415*

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:u2kristal@yahoo.com) 860/878-5256 or Kasha- [kho@afsc.org](mailto:kho@afsc.org) or call 860/523-1534.
- **TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES, INC. CONFERENCE,** DCU Center, Worcester, MA, Nov.19-21. This conference provides lectures, workshops, panels and entertainment for the education, activism, research, & support for communities celebrating their gender, sex and sexuality. For more information and to register for the conference, go to <http://www.transcendingboundaries.org> or [info@transcendingboundaries.org](mailto:info@transcendingboundaries.org)

**BREAKING NEWS***September 16, 2010*

Today we released our 6th biennial study of the experiences of LGBT students, the 2009 National School Climate Survey.

As Robin Roberts, host of Good Morning America, said earlier: "You should know more about this study...it's an eye opener."

...As GLSEN's premier research project, the Survey is our strongest asset in leveraging change. ... Highlights of the Survey are included below.

**Key findings include:**

- 84.6% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically harassed and 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 72.4% heard homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often at school.
- Having a Gay-Straight Alliance in school was related to more positive experiences, fewer homophobic remarks and less victimization for LGBT students.
- Students attending schools with an anti-bullying policy that included protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression experienced lower levels of harassment and were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing homophobic remarks.

Despite the positive benefits of these interventions, less than a half of LGBT students reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance at school. Slightly more than half could identify six or more supportive educators and less than a fifth attended a school that had a comprehensive anti-bullying policy.

With nearly two-thirds of students reporting that they feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, it could not be clearer that there is an urgent need to create safe and affirming schools for everyone. As our nation seems to finally be taking bullying more seriously, it is crucial that LGBT students are no longer left out of efforts to address this public health crisis.

...

Eliza Byard, Ph.D  
Executive Director



**THE GAYING OF CT POLITICS***by Gregory B. Hladky, August 16, 2010*

*Does Kevin Lembo's primary victory signal a change in the prominence of gay and lesbian politicians in the state? Kevin Lembo could become the first openly gay politician to hold statewide office in Connecticut*

*Twenty years ago, a Connecticut state lawmaker made national headlines by coming out of the closet. Today, there are at least a half-dozen openly gay or lesbian legislators in the General Assembly, including some in key committee chairmanships. And last week, Connecticut got its first openly gay candidate for statewide office when Kevin Lembo won a smashing victory in the Democratic primary for state comptroller.*

The political distance Connecticut gays and lesbians have traveled in the past two decades was emphasized by an interesting feature of Lembo's Democratic primary win. His opponent, Waterbury Mayor Michael Jarjura, had the backing of a very conservative, anti-gay marriage group called the Family Institute of Connecticut. Jarjura is a member of the institute's advisory board and openly opposes gay marriage, though he insists he's not anti-gay.

Lembo crushed Jarjura by taking 70 percent of the primary vote. Some Connecticut politicians believe part of the reason for Jarjura's humiliating defeat was Democratic voter anger over what was viewed as the anti-gay attitudes of Jarjura and his supporters.

"The results were so skewed in that race," says Joe Grabarz, the former Bridgeport lawmaker who stunned Connecticut politics when he came out in 1990. "The only conclusion anyone could draw was that there was a backlash in part against Jarjura's homophobia." Jarjura denies he ever sought to make Lembo's sexuality a part of the campaign. "It wasn't like there was a concerted effort on my campaign's part to make this a wedge issue," he says. "We never even brought the issue up."

The head of the Family Institute, Peter Wolfgang, claims the vote against Jarjura was more a result of "anti-Catholic attitudes" among liberal Democratic primary voters than about gay marriage rights. "What you call a backlash I would call an anti-Catholic vote," he says, "and it could come back to haunt the Democratic Party in the future."

State Rep. Michael P. Lawlor, an openly gay lawmaker who is co-chair of the legislature's Judiciary Committee, argues the underlying message many Democrats got from Jarjura and the Family Institute was anti-gay. But he notes that "even they didn't have the guts to come out and say what they were really thinking: Oh, Lembo is gay." "What we've got in Connecticut now ... is that the risky political position to take is being opposed to marriage equality and gay rights," says Lawlor. "It's just not a smart move politically in Connecticut-you get marginalized."

Lembo himself is playing down the role that gay politics had in the primary. "I'm not sure there was any gay baiting," he says, adding that Jarjura's "endorsement by the Family Institute didn't sit well with a lot of Democratic voters." "I think we're lucky here in Connecticut," Lembo says. "People in Connecticut are more concerned about issues than about your sexual orientation or family situation."

Voters in Connecticut, and across the nation, have clearly come a long way in terms of attitudes about gay politicians since Grabarz came out. There are now two elected state Supreme Court justices in Oregon, an openly lesbian mayor of Houston, and gay representatives in Congress and in many state legislatures. Lawlor's judiciary committee co-chairman, state Sen. Andrew McDonald of Stamford, is gay; and state Rep. Jason Bartlett of Bethel has been called the highest-ranking openly gay African-American elected official in the nation. Hartford recently appointed Pedro Segarra as the city's first openly gay mayor.

Whether Lembo can become Connecticut's first openly gay politician elected to statewide office remains to be seen. "It's still very rare for an openly gay or lesbian candidate to win statewide office," says Denis Dison, a spokesman for the national Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund. "Not many even run." "There are still states where they've never had an openly gay or lesbian state legislator," Dison says, citing Florida and Pennsylvania as two examples. In Connecticut, where gay state lawmakers are now almost routine, Dison says "The electorate becomes more used to it; the media becomes more used to it. It just becomes less controversial and less interesting."

...

Lembo says the fact that he's gay and the first gay candidate for statewide office is significant, but warns the whole thing "can be overblown." "I've never been just a 'gay guy,'" he insists. "I've always been a policy guy who happens to be gay." "I really do not see it being an issue" in the general election, Lembo says of his homosexuality. "Overall, I don't see it being part of the discussion at all."

Which may be one more indication of how far gay Connecticut politicians have come.



**HOW CAN YOU ENDORSE BULLYING IN SCHOOL?**

Why Focus On The Family Is Against Safe Schools Improvement Act *By Teresa M. Pelham, The Current Parent, The Hartford Courant, September 17, 2010*

... I am generally able to see both sides to many divisive issues. I might not agree, but I can at least understand.

I truly cannot make sense of Focus on the Family's misguided opposition to the Safe Schools Improvement Act. The bill — supported by such wacky organizations as the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National PTA (among other law enforcement, health, civil rights, education and youth development groups) — aims to keep kids in our schools safe from bullying based on race, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion.

I just promoted homosexuality. Did you miss it? Just the mere mentioning of the existence of people with different sexual orientations is apparently the same as promoting homosexuality as a way of life, according to the Colorado-based conservative Christian organization. If I mention freckles to your first-grader, I'm encouraging him to become freckle-faced.

Candi Cushman, Focus on the Family's education analyst, has been the public face for this fight, being pitted against Eliza Byard, executive director of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN.) I wouldn't be surprised if you told me Byard was her high school's valedictorian and captain of the debate team. Watch one of the interviews in which the two square off: It's not really a fair fight. It somehow reminds me of the Sarah Palin/Katie Couric interview, except with less makeup.

After speaking with the media contact at Focus on the Family about my setting up a phone interview with Cushman, I received an e-mail stating that they would not be able to accommodate my request. I then provided two questions and asked if Cushman or anyone else with the organization would be able to answer them. Nope.

... Cushman did grant an interview with CNN's rugged Anderson Cooper...

In the CNN piece and in several other interviews, Cushman spreads the fear that teaching kids not to bully gay kids equals teaching "homosexuality lessons." "What we're concerned about are the parents we're getting phone calls from that don't want controversial sexual topics introduced to their kids without their permission, especially at the kindergarten level." That's what she's concerned about. I'm concerned about kids being bullied and living in fear.

Statistics have shown that rates of bullying for gay and lesbian students go down when schools' anti-bullying programs specifically teach that bullying these kids is unacceptable. "When you name the problem, people act," Byard told Cooper. "Teachers in schools that have these policies are more likely to stop this, and kids are less likely to be harassed and victimized."

Leif Mitchell, co-chair of GLSEN Connecticut, stresses that making teachers and students aware of what is and is not allowed is about behavior, not beliefs. "This is not about changing anyone's beliefs," he said. "There is a subtle but fundamental difference between changing someone's beliefs and changing someone's behavior."

Even the generally delusional Glenn Beck babbled something recently about gay marriage not being a threat to the country. ... *Teresa Pelham is a free-lance writer from Farmington and a regular contributor to*

*The Hartford Courant's parenting blog <http://www.ctnow.com/mommymminute>.*

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***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.***

**CALL FOR WORKSHOPS FOR THE 2011 TRANSGENDER LIVES CONFERENCE**

Our Fifth Annual Transgender Lives: The Intersection of Health and Law Conference will be held on April 30, 2011 at the UConn Health Center in Farmington, Ct. In preparation for this conference we are announcing our CALL FOR WORKSHOP PROPOSALS for the conference. You can submit your workshop electronically this year by clicking the link below titled: **Submit Proposal**. There will be an online form that explains all relevant details for submission and importantly will allow you to fill out your proposal online. There is a word document version of the form and pdf version online. We encourage you to submit your proposal online, though you can also print the documents, complete the information and mail to us (address on forms). If you have any questions, please contact us by email at [conference@transadvocacy.org](mailto:conference@transadvocacy.org)

We also encourage you to forward this Request for Workshop proposals to any colleagues, friends, family or distribution lists you feel would be interested in doing a workshop at the 2011 Transgender Lives: The Intersection of Health and Law Conference.

As this conference has dramatically grown over the years, we recognize that many of you have very important topics and experience which fold into our theme of The Intersection of Health and Law. Workshop space is *limited* and all proposals will be reviewed for applicability and relevance to the Conference theme and audience. If you feel you have a workshop that would benefit the conference then we encourage you to submit your proposal at your earliest convenience, and most definitely before the deadline date of December 11, 2010.

*Washington, D.C. – John R. Cepek, national president of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) issued the following open letter to youth in light of the mounting reports of bullying, harassment, and suicide among youth:*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I know it may seem strange that you're getting a letter from someone you've never met. To be honest with you, I feel a little odd writing this letter to people I've never met. But this is a difficult time, and I want to make sure that someone delivers an important message to you.

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.

That's why it is so painful to us to read the reports of the kids out there who have killed themselves because somehow they felt that their lives were not equal or worth living, either because they were mercilessly bullied and teased for being different, or tortured because they were gay.

That's why I'm writing to you today. There have been a lot of people out there sending some important messages your way. They've been telling you that there are people who can help, and that it is going to get better, and your job is to be strong and stick it out. You should listen to them, because they're right. But as a dad, I want to send you one more message. Here it is: there are people who love you and accept you for who you are right now. Whether you're gay or straight, it doesn't matter.

I hope that your parents are among these people. I hope that in the same way I'm proud of both my sons, someone is proud of you just because you're there and because you're alive. You deserve that, no matter who you are or how different you feel.

But if for some reason you don't feel like you've got that support, I want you to know that there are parents and families who love you. Maybe they're people you already know. Or maybe they are people like me who you haven't met yet, and the other parents who belong to a group that I'm a member of called PFLAG – Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

So if you're reading this and feel like no one loves you for who you are today and who you're becoming, I want you to do something for me. I want you to go online to [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) and find a PFLAG chapter near you. Contact them and tell them your story. Ask them for help. Tell them what you're experiencing, and tell them what you need. These are families who understand what is happening and who want to support you.

I can't imagine a world in which either of my kids felt like life wasn't worth living because people rejected them, and I have a hard time imagining what some of you might be going through right now. But please know that you're not alone. There are people to talk to, and families and friends nearby who will support you and your own family, too. All you need to do is ask.

I hope that one day we will meet and I'll know that you made it. You deserve to be happy, you deserve to be alive, and you deserve to be loved. Lots of people agree with me on that. Trust me.

Sincerely,

John R. Cepek, President, PFLAG National



**NEWS FROM KEN, A FORMER PFLAG HARTFORD MEMBER**

As part of Richmond, VA's observance of the 2010 Transgender Day of Remembrance, the local PFLAG chapter has underwritten the acquisition and planting of a Southern Magnolia on the south lawn of the Gay Community Center of Richmond. Intended as a memorial to all those lost to anti-transgender violence, organizers believe this to be the first time a tree-planting has been used to mark the Day of Remembrance.

A propagation program is in development to allow interested groups to purchase descendants of this historic tree at a nominal cost, provided those trees are likewise intended as memorials relative to the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

**EXCERPTS FROM A VERY IMPORTANT LETTER**

*Ally Week was held October 18-22 in schools across the county. Students led events and activities to encourage people to become allies against anti-LGBT name calling, bullying and harassment in schools. They also supported and celebrated those allies already involved!*

...

In February 2008 I learned about the in-school murder of Lawrence King, and, at the same time, learned about the existence of GLSEN and the horrific necessity for its work. Prior to that, I had no idea about the harassment and danger LGBT students face in school every single day, despite being the parent of children in both elementary and middle school. And, shockingly, neither did anyone else I told.

I immediately emailed GLSEN Connecticut - wanting to get involved, needing to *do* something, desperate to create change. I was welcomed with open arms, and was honored to learn that I was considered an Ally in the fight to create safe schools. How quickly I realized that allies are sorely needed!

There have been so many committed to this fight for decades, and so many students suffering - often in silence - for much longer than that. This fight for dignity and respect has been waged by a relative few facing unthinkable hostility, apathy, and lack of awareness. I joined this movement to show those who have been struggling for so long that they are not alone. We really are in this together. Greater change is yet to come.

It doesn't matter if you are a parent or not, part of a school community or not, an activist or not. What does matter is that we all get involved knowing that every contribution makes a difference. The unpredictable ripple effect of one tiny action can be remarkable! You can start, as I did, by talking. Talk to a friend or relative, colleague or neighbor, your children's friends or a complete stranger.

Speak up if you hear anti-LGBT language. Ask if they know about the awful reality facing too many students in our communities. ... ..if someone says that their faith prohibits them from taking a stand. Explain that the crisis in our schools has nothing to do with "kids being kids" and everything to do with students' humanity and fundamental rights being unconscionably ignored.

...

As a parent I have always been concerned about the well-being of my children. As an Ally I am concerned about the safety and well-being of all students across Connecticut. Our students cannot change things alone, nor should we expect them to.

I want to decrease the feelings of invisibility, loneliness and worthlessness experienced by LGBT students. Remember that our youth are NOT disposable! They deserve much better than the dangerous, hurtful school environments that thrive across this country. Although progress has been made it is absolutely imperative that much more be done.

I am committed to working as long as it takes to make our schools safe for *all* students, in memory of those who are tragically no longer with us, and in honor of those who are. I hope you will join me.

Liane Roseman, GLSEN Connecticut Co-Chair

**Our October Meeting Speaker** was activist Shawn Lang. Shawn is the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition ( CARC ). She coordinates CT's HIV/AIDS public policy and advocacy activities on state and federal levels. She co-chairs the AIDS LIFE (Legislative Initiative and Funding Effort) Campaign, Connecticut's statewide AIDS policy group. She is President of the Board of the National AIDS Housing Coalition; a member of the Communities Advocating for Emergency AIDS Response (CAEAR) Coalition; Co-chair of the CT HIV Planning Consortium; chair of the CT Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Leadership Council; and a member of the Executive Committee and Community Advisory Board of Yale's Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS. **Thank-you**, Shawn, for all you do for the LGBT community.

**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](http://www.pflaghartford.org)

Helpline: (860) 633-7184

Phone: (860) 633-5111

Transgender Issues: (860) 231-8582

### **PFLAG NORWALK/SOUTHWESTERN CT**

When: 7:30 pm, 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto:greaternewhavenpflag@yahoo.com)

### **PFLAG SECT (SOUTHEASTERN CT)**

When: Second Monday of every month,

Potluck at 6:00 p.m.; Meeting at 7:00 pm

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

Helpline: (860) 447-0884

Email: [kreymundi@allianceforliving.org](mailto:kreymundi@allianceforliving.org)

Web site: [www.pflagsect.org](http://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](mailto: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:** 15<sup>th</sup> of even numbered months. Send articles to: *Jean Cormier*

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## **STRAIGHT SPOUSE SUPPORT NETWORK:**

*In Connecticut and Western Massachusetts  
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## **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](http://www.pflag.org).