



HAPPY 2011 TO ALL PFLAGERS!
HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!



The Voice of PFLAG Hartford

Caring

Volume 20, No. 1

January/February 2011

IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:

FLAG HARTFORD & TRUE COLORS WILL AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS to LGBTI students and allies. Application forms for the Brill Scholarship will be available on our PFLAG Hartford website (www.PFLAGHartford.org) - just click on the True Colors' link. Application forms will also be available at the 18th Annual True Colors Conference, which will be held at the University of Connecticut in Storrs on March 11 & 12, 2011. As many as 3000 participants are expected to attend the conference. Once again, PFLAG Hartford will be a conference co-sponsor and will have forms available at our PFLAG information booth. Deadline to apply for a scholarship 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 19 - Karen & Bob
- February 16 - Carole M.
- March 16 - Connie & Mike
- April 20 - Laurie R.

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

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.
- **STONEWALL SPEAKERS** is an all volunteer speakers' bureau composed of LGBT people and allies dedicated to reducing violence and bias while promoting equality for all. We speak to thousands of Connecticut students and adults annually. Listeners will meet LGBT people and their allies in person; hear candid accounts of their lives; and receive honest, informed answers to any questions they have. Let your high school, college, business, religious group or community group know we are available. For more information please contact coordinator@stonewallspeakers.org.

FROM PFLAG'S NEW NATIONAL PRESIDENT, RABBI DAVID M. HOROWITZ

November 15, 2010

Dear PFLAG Family,

I can't begin to tell you how proud I am to have been elected as PFLAG's National President. You see, I'm a PFLAG dad. I can still recall vividly the day my wife and I walked into our first meeting at PFLAG Akron, Ohio. I was sure I was the only parent in the world who had a gay child (our daughter had come out about a month before). I don't know whom I thought birthed gay children. I believed I was the only clergy person to have a gay child. I was confused and knew almost nothing about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

PFLAG introduced me to people who were just like me; parents and even *clergy* parents. I began my education and moved forward with some fear. What would people think? What would the members of my congregation think? It was all so new.

But on the course of my personal journey, something incredible happened.

As I came out as the parent of a lesbian daughter, so did more than 200 families in my congregation who had a close connection to the LGBT community. As I learned more and found myself around this new and expanding family, I became comfortable with my daughter's sexual orientation and was able to reach out to others. That ability to connect with people – especially those in the very start of their own learning and acceptance process – keeps me an active part of my local chapter today.

PFLAG is much more than simply a support for LGBT people, their friends, and relatives. It is a powerful organization that is helping us shape and change our culture every single day, in hundreds of communities around the country.

Our work is led by PFLAG National's wonderful executive director, Jody Huckaby, and the talented and dedicated staff he has gathered in the PFLAG National Office based in Washington, D.C. The staff works to bring our message of education and advocacy to the world. With them, PFLAG members tirelessly reach out to make our LGBT children safer in schools and in society, and to help them achieve full civil rights in our nation. Our Straight for Equality program brings new allies – those who don't even have a traditional family connection to these issues – into our support network.

Together, PFLAG is the family voice of the LGBT community, and our voice is heard from our meeting rooms, to corporate boardrooms, and to the offices in the White House and on Capitol Hill. I am pleased to be a part of that effort.

You, the PFLAG members and supporters, are vital to our future and to the future of the celebration of our LGBT family. We need our members to become engaged in all facets of our work if we are going to be successful. We must expand our network of straight allies. We must actively and bravely engage our faith communities. We have chapters almost everywhere. We need those chapters to spread our message and champion our cause. It is to these ends that I dedicate my time as your national president. ...

David at pflagpresident@aol.com

A MUST SEE

Please go to the following site to view Vice President Biden's "It Gets Better" video:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/11/18/vice-president-biden-it-gets-better>

"The life that lies ahead is so much greater than the difficulties that lie behind you. It will get better," said Vice President Biden in a video message, joining thousands of Americans that have come together to share their messages of hope and encouragement for LGBT youth who are struggling as part of the **It Gets Better Project**.

Vice President Biden wanted to share his message of support following the tragic suicides of so many young people due to bullying and taunting. Like President Obama, he wanted to speak directly to youth out there that are experiencing pain and feelings of isolation because they may be or are perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.



TRANSGENER LIVES

The Intersection of Health and Law Conference

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2011 TRANSGENER LIVES CONFERENCE

April 30, 2011

University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, Connecticut.

To register via our new and improved online registration just click on the link below to register early for our Fifth Annual Conference. All conference details and updates are located on our website TransgenderLives.org

The fifth annual Transgender Lives: The Intersection of Health and Law Conference being held on Saturday, April 30, at the UConn Health Center from 8:00 AM till 5 PM. This all day conference is geared towards Service Providers, Medical and Legal Professionals, allies and all those interested in the Health and Law issues facing the Trans and gender non-conforming communities.

GOOD NEWS Just weeks after the 2010 election, we got a bit of good news: the people of Bowling Green, Ohio, voted to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The Task Force worked with local supporters to pass these measures — providing seed money, training, organizing, and staff support for our partner, One Bowling Green. It was a sweet victory — in part because there's no more mainstream town in America than Bowling Green. — *Rea Carey, Executive Director, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force*

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.



REMARKS MADE AT THE TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE, NOVEMBER 20, 2010

*The Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Society: East, Manchester
Chair, CT Clergy for Full Equality*

Friends:

It is an honor to share my thoughts with you this evening. I wish to thank the organizers of this event for the invitation to speak. I want to thank all of you who came out this evening for this very important observance.

We come together, with heavy hearts, to enact a solemn ritual. We come together to bear witness to lives lost, to honor the victims of a horrific kind of violence. We come together to say the names of transgender people who were murdered not for anything they did, but simply for being who they are. We come together, we enact this ritual, we say their names because their stories are our stories. Their deaths are our deaths. Their lives are our lives. They are our people and they shall not leave this life unnoticed. They shall not pass beyond this world without the sound of their names on our tongues and our lips and on the tongues and lips of people all over the nation and the world who gather this evening for this same purpose.

It is good and right to say these names. In the act of naming we grieve for these lost lives. In the act of naming we pray for the victims and the perpetrators . . . and ourselves and our communities, our country, our world.

We come together for more, though. Not only our grief unites us. We also come together to assert the integrity of transgender lives. We come together to assert the dignity of transgender lives. We come together to assert: *transgender lives matter*. Our lives matter. Transgender lives are sacred. Our lives are sacred. We will be heard. Our dead will not be forgotten. And in making these assertions we fortify ourselves, we strengthen ourselves, we find the courage and resilience to continue in the struggle for transgender civil rights; we renew our commitment to that struggle; we sustain ourselves in that struggle. That is also why we gather this evening.

On October 13th, 2008 Connecticut Clergy for Marriage Equality held a prayer service across the street at First Presbyterian Church to celebrate the Connecticut Supreme Court's decision to grant full marriage equality to gay and lesbian couples. At that time, as chair of CCME, I said we must not forget the transgender community. We must not forget our friends whose lives, whose jobs, whose homes, whose medical care, whose credit are constantly in jeopardy, constantly at risk because how they understand and express their gender is afforded no clear and indisputable protection under our state's non-discrimination statutes. That was a promise and tonight we make good on that promise. We are changing the name of Connecticut Clergy for Marriage Equality to Connecticut Clergy for Full Equality, and we intend to bring every resource at our disposal to pass the transgender civil rights bill in the coming legislative session. This is the year my friends. This year we win.

Finally, I am a person of faith. I am a Unitarian Universalist minister. And as a person of faith and a minister, I am not here alone, not by any stretch of the imagination. I am not alone. You are not alone. We are not alone. There are many people of faith around the state and the nation who understand and support our cause. There are many clergy around the state and the nation who understand and support our cause. In Connecticut there are Metropolitan Community Church pastors, United Church of Christ pastors, Episcopal priests, Methodist pastors, Presbyterian pastors, Reform Jewish rabbis; Conservative Jewish rabbis; Unitarian Universalist pastors; even some Pentecostal pastors. And we are tired of religious proclamations of a God who frowns upon people who cross traditional gender lines, who refuse to conform to unrealistic and rigid notions of gender, who live outside the societal boxes. We are tired of religious proclamations of a God whose love seems contingent, precarious, sparing, elusive and small. We are here to proclaim a God whose love is abundant, whose love is generous enough and big enough to embrace all people as they are and as they long to be—no exceptions. We are here to proclaim a God who, more than anything else, *wants* us to be who we are and who we long to be. We are here to proclaim a God who understands that when we live as who we are--when we are able to become the people we long to be—then our integrity shines through, then our gifts shine through, then our humanity shines through. Then we fulfill God's dreams for us and for the world.

Friends, the struggle is long; the struggle is hard. So tonight, let us grieve. Tonight let us renew ourselves.

Tonight let us know that our lives matter and that we are not alone. - Thank you.

Here are words from a man who has truly moved equality forward! It is an inspiring read!

11/25/2010

My Journey out of Homophobia

"In the struggle to emancipate gay and lesbian people from oppression, you have been what Martin Luther King, Jr. was in the struggle to emancipate people of color from oppression." These words, spoken by Dr. Lawrence Carter, Dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta, marked the unveiling of my portrait in their "Hall of Honor" of civil rights leaders. I now hang just below Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. It seemed inconceivable that words like these would ever be uttered about me. I have wrestled with the demon of homophobia and I find it astonishing that I am now seen by the community of formerly oppressed people of color, as well as by gay and lesbian people, as one who helped to bring emancipation. ...

When I was growing up I did not know what homosexuality was or that I was homophobic in my attitude. Apparently we did not have homosexual people in the Bible Belt of the South. The word "homosexual" did not enter my vocabulary until I was in my mid- to late-teens. When I finally grasped the concept, I accepted without question the cultural definition prevalent in my region. Homosexuality was either a mental sickness that needed to be cured or a depraved choice made by deviant and evil people who needed to be changed or converted.

I was comfortable with that attitude and it prevailed in my life until I was elected the Bishop of Newark in June of 1976. Up until that moment in my ministry, I was not aware that I knew any gay or lesbian people. This was still an era of family shame and of fearful hiding within the closeted confines of secrecy while acting in the life of both church and community. When I became in 1969 the rector of St. Paul's Church in Richmond, Virginia, a parish that I still deeply love, I met in my congregation a number of wonderful people and respected community leaders, who were known as "confirmed bachelors." These men lived in the upper echelons of Richmond society and frequently escorted socially prominent widows and divorcees to socially prominent events. People said of these men that they were "not the marrying kind," but it never occurred to me to think that any one of them might be gay. I am sure now that one of the reasons I did not know any homosexual persons was because they perceived in me an inability to know them. Nobody reveals himself or herself to one who cannot receive the revelation.

Homosexuality never arose in the long interview process that resulted in my being nominated for the Episcopal office in Newark. ...In retrospect, that omission seems strange given the way the debate on homosexuality grew in the Church from that day to this. It certainly never occurred to me that I would ever be engaged in or identified with this issue in any significant way.

I had not, however, been in my Newark office three months before I had an appointment with one of my priests. He was highly respected in the diocese, much loved by his congregation and a clear leader. I knew nothing about him personally except that he was not married. After the usual pleasantries, I asked, since he had scheduled the appointment, what was on his mind. "Bishop," he said, "I did not vote for you to be my bishop, but you got elected so I must deal with that. I have never been dishonest with my bishop and I do not plan to start now. I am a homosexual. I have been a gay man all my life. I perceive you are not comfortable with that. If I can help you to grow in your understanding, I want to offer you my services."

This man was neither embarrassed nor ashamed. He was the first self-accepting homosexual I had ever met. I am sure my response was not helpful or affirming. It was some version of what would later be called "don't ask, don't tell." I assured him that I had no intentions of leading a witch hunt, but that if he became an object of community debate or scandal, I could not defend him. As for his offer of assistance in growing my understanding, my experience was and is that new bishops feel little need for help from any source until the glamour of the office wears off. I suspect this man left my office in despair.

Shortly thereafter, I went to inform another priest serving a small urban congregation that the diocese had decided it could no longer support this church financially and that it would be closed in six months. I was prepared to offer him another position in the diocese and, since I was aware that he had no wife or children, this move would not cause a major disruption in his life. When I arrived at his home I became immediately aware that he shared this house with another person. We talked. I broke the news. We discussed alternative positions. I stayed about two hours. Before leaving I asked if I could use his restroom and he directed me down the hall. I entered the door and saw towels hanging that said "His" and "His." Above the towels were pictures of nude males. Only then did it dawn on me that I was in the home of a gay couple.

When I came out I said, "Paul, you have a very interesting bathroom." He responded, "I thought you might notice." I asked: "Will you tell me about it?" "Yes, he said, and this story poured out. "The man I live with is my life partner. I love him as much as you love your wife. If I ever have to choose between my partner and my priesthood I will choose my partner."

(contd.)

Trying to justify my prejudice, I said, "Paul, I could not allow an unmarried heterosexual couple to live in one of the church's rectories and I certainly cannot allow an unmarried homosexual couple to do so." I thought I sounded even handed. He responded, "The heterosexual couple can choose marriage. Neither my church nor my nation has given us that choice."

I grimaced at his logic and retreated into my defensive clichés. "Paul, if this partnership ever became public knowledge, I do not have the power to protect you." His response was: "Do not or will not?" He was right. I had no intention of protecting him. I left, but the conversation remained with me like a pebble in my shoe, constantly rubbing against my irrational and uninformed presuppositions. At least my homophobia had been raised to my consciousness.

Finally, unable to remove or to deny that irritant with my normal responses, I called a friend who was on the faculty of the Cornell School of Medicine in New York City and asked if he or others at Cornell would be willing to share with me their knowledge in regard to sexual orientation, for I was suddenly aware that I knew almost nothing about the subject. Perhaps the opportunity to educate a bishop was appealing to them for they took me on, shared with me their knowledge and their research papers and much conversation answering my questions.

Gradually a new understanding of sexual orientation was born in me. My conclusions were simple and straightforward. No one chooses his or her sexual orientation. It is a given like eye color or left handedness. No one can cause another to become homosexual. It is not catching. I began to realize for the first time that I had not made a conscious decision to be heterosexual; I had simply awakened to the reality when I was twelve or thirteen that girls were no longer obnoxious, so I began to do things like take baths more frequently, if that was what it took to attract female attention! I also began to see clearly that sexual orientation is not about one's behavior, but about one's being. That is why no one can change his or her sexual orientation any more than one can change one's eye color. This meant that all so-called "therapies" touted by right wing religious organizations and designed to cure a person of his or her homosexuality are therefore absolutely bogus and should be identified as such.

I also learned at Cornell that homosexuality is the norm for a steady percentage of the population at all times in all places. That percentage, a normal fact of nature, neither rises nor falls. I learned that homosexuality exists among the higher mammals and thus cannot be called "unnatural." I learned that homosexual persons are not born on the planet Krypton, but that they are our brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, sons and daughters and our friends. They are not abnormal. They are a minority. So is red hair!

When I became convinced of these truths, the basis on which my homophobia had been erected was destroyed. Now homophobia was no different from racism or sexism. It was and is a prejudice that needs to be banished from my church, my nation and the world. It took me months to live into these conclusions, but with my mind now convinced, my heart easily followed and I began to act out of this new understanding. In 1988 I published a book, Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality. It became a seminal book in the debate that has raged inside institutional Christianity from that day to this. In 1989 I ordained the first openly gay man who was living in a publicly acknowledged commitment with his partner. When I retired in 2000, the Diocese of Newark claimed 35 openly gay and lesbian clergy, 31 of whom had visible partners. Many of them were extraordinary clergy, indeed among the finest I have ever known.

Today, without compromise or apology, I favor full civil rights for homosexual people, including marriage for gay couples. I rejoice that my church has now chosen by a free democratic electoral process two openly gay, partnered priests to serve as bishops in New Hampshire and Los Angeles. When people complain that conflict over the full inclusion of gay people in the church has disturbed the unity of the church, I respond that a unity based on a shared homophobia ought to be destroyed. I grieve that the Christian Church is today the last major stronghold of homophobia. I am embarrassed by the fear, prejudice and sometimes actual hatred that still emanate from recognized Christian leaders. I treasure the place I have occupied in my own church's struggle and I am both touched and honored that my portrait hangs today in the Hall of Honor in the King Chapel of Morehouse College.

– John Shelby Spong



LATE BREAKING NEWS

We won! With 63 votes today (12/18) in the Senate, Don't Ask, Don't Tell is on the way to the dustbin of history. On December 22, President Obama signed the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" into law.

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,

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

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

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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.