



The Flagpole

The Newsletter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
of the Metropolitan Washington DC Area

July-August 2005

On the web at www.pflagdc.org and www.stayclose.org

Pride and Picnic for Metro DC PFLAG!

Pride 2005, Washington, DC

Pride 2005 was one of the most memorable for Metro DC PFLAG participants. The crowds cheered louder than ever, and we had the largest contingent of marchers to date. Immediate past-president Barbara Warner offers some memories and comments about Pride 2005.

Comment heard most at the Pride Parade: "How could we not be here tonight?"

Best line to get people to stop by the Metro DC PFLAG booth: "Hey, could I borrow some of your



sunscreen?"

Top requested literature: "Is Homosexuality a Sin?" and materials about sexual orientation and religion.

Most thoughtful gesture at the Pride Festival: Two members who brought iced water bottles to the booth for tired volunteers.

Proof of PFLAG's impact: We were asked about PFLAG chapters in other countries...do they exist? (They do! There are 40 chapters in Canada, four in Australia, two in the UK, and France, Mexico, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Jamaica, and Argentina each have a chapter.) As always, new PFLAG parents were blown away by the support and enthusiasm of the crowds. The smiles said it all.

Huge thanks to all who marched in the parade and

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PFLAG Picnic, Bethesda, MD

Metro DC PFLAGers once again proved that you can mix business and pleasure at their Annual Picnic on June 26. Combining a chance to spend time with family and friends, an opportunity to deal with issues facing the chapter, honoring service by members, and electing a new board all happened while enjoying

the setting at Cedar Lane Unitarian Church in Bethesda.

"We covered just about everything," said Rhonda Buckner, executive director of Metro DC PFLAG. "From providing much-deserved recognition to our volunteers to helping map a strategy for dealing with critical issues in the area, it got done."

Levi's Catering created a "down home" southern meal of pulled pork and chicken, sides, and peach cobbler, while folksinger, Brady Earnhart performed tunes from his CDs *Manalapan* and *After You* for the group, including, "Honey, Don't Think Your Mama Don't Know."

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Families of Value:

An Interview with Author (and PFLAG Dad) Bob Bernstein

In 1995, Bob Bernstein, author and PFLAG dad, wrote *Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together*, a veritable textbook that, according to famed author Armistead Maupin, “shows the parents of gay children how to stop merely tolerating their kids and start being their heroes.”

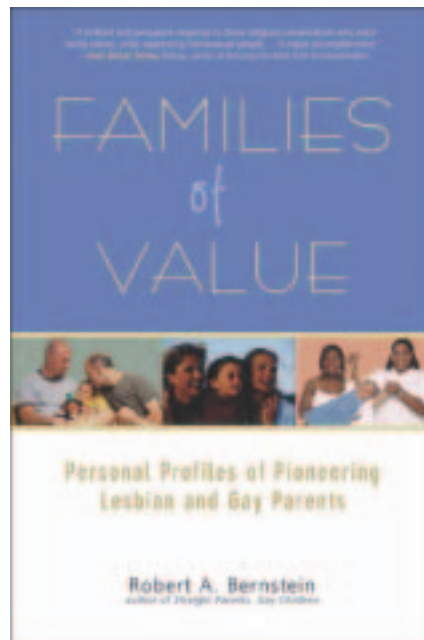
Driven by the success of that book, Bernstein revisited the text in 2003 with the intention of adding two chapters, one dealing with same-sex parents. In the process, he unintentionally encountered the material that would become the framework for his new project.

“Once again, I was moved by examples of the same sort of courage and integrity – of people facing down unfair social stigma and refusing to ignore the nurturing instinct that, for them, was a driving force to become parents,” said Bernstein of the same-sex couples with children he found while working on the new chapter.

And so *Families of Value: Personal Profiles of Pioneering Lesbian and Gay Parents* was born.

The new book shifts focus from the relationships between parents and their GLBT children to the families that are growing among the GLBT adult children themselves. Bernstein hit upon a subject that has received intense coverage from the media in the wake of court decisions and legislative changes around the U.S. that opened the door for same-sex marriage and a greater awareness of

the ever-increasing number of same-sex couples who have started their own nuclear families. (Bernstein notes, however, that his book was ahead of the trend; “we actually had a contract for *Families of Value* even before the Massachusetts court deci-



sion triggered the national gay marriage fuss.”)

The enormous focus on these “new” families and the backlash against same-sex marriage resulted in ire from the far right, and Bernstein questions what the effects of these comments have on the children of GLBT parents. In sheer numbers, a focus on these effects is unavoidable. According to Bernstein’s book, the actual statistics on the number of families with same-sex parents is difficult to determine at this time, but numbers range from one to 14 million in the U.S. alone.

“I was struck by the tragic irony inherent in the usual rationale set forth in support of withholding legal recognition from gay unions, namely, the need to ‘protect children.’ This is wrong on so many counts that it boggles the mind.” Bernstein mused.

“As a practical matter, millions of these children already exist and are in danger of serious harm from these very anti-gay messages. How would your kids like to be told by the Vatican that their ‘normal development’ is endangered by who you happen to be? That your family is ‘harmful to the common good?’ Or as a Focus on the Family researcher claims, that you are ‘more likely to...suffer abuse, perform poorly in schools, suffer lower levels of mental and physical and health and wind up in trouble with the law?’”

In reality, studies show that same-sex parents are a far cry from what their detractors claim, and Bernstein is quick to highlight this idea.

“Same-sex parents are far more likely to be *better* parents on the average than their hetero counterparts. Unlike them, they don’t have children by accident, or simply because their culture or their own parents expect it. They do so by choice – and because they are impelled by a nurturing instinct that is sufficiently powerful to enable them to take on formidable cultural barriers to do it,” he says.

Examples of these courageous families are never far away – nor are

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Riderwood Retirement Community Support Group

Milly Spector and Paulette Goodman have established a PFLAG support group for residents at their new community with the full support of the Riderwood staff.

They met for the first time at Milly's in mid-February with 17 people in attendance. Some were parents, grandmothers, and interested supporters. Since then, they have heard from several other family members and friends who would like to participate in the group. Meetings have been held regularly on the 4th Wednesday of each month in a private meeting room. Announcements are posted on the bulletin boards in each of the four Club House lobbies and also on the in-house television channel.

Paulette has given two interviews for Riderwood TV that have been an opportunity to dialogue with staff and residents on many of the issues that confront families and friends, so they are off to a good start!

"We are fortunate to live in a vibrant and supportive community where we hope we can help families and also educate to change hearts and minds," said Paulette. "That's our goal!" ▼

Protect your rights and freedoms!

Keep tabs on the impending Supreme Court nominations battle that's headed your way.

Make sure that your voice is heard on key judicial issues. Subscribe to PFLAG national's Weekly Alert and look for updates in future editions of *The Flagpole*. ▼

Headlines from Around the Globe

Sources: gay365.com and *The Associated Press*

Gay Marriage Throughout Canada to Be Law

Legislation extending same-sex marriage to all parts of Canada is expected to be passed in mid-July by the Senate and immediately be signed into law.

Brazil Court OKs Gay Adoption

A judge in Sao Paulo has ruled that there is no valid reason for denying a same-sex couple the right to adopt children. It is believed the case is the first in Brazil where a gay couple has been allowed to jointly adopt a child.

Spain's First Gay Wedding

Carlos Baturin German and Emilio Menendez Menendez exchanged vows as family, friends and a bevy of news photographers looked on in the council chamber in the Madrid suburb of Tres Cantos. They are Spain's first same-sex couple to legally marry.

CA Gay Marriage Bill to Get Senate Airing

Legislation to legalize same-sex marriage in California that died last month in the state assembly will get new life this month when it goes before a Senate committee.

CA Gay Couples Plead for State SC to Decide on Marriage

Twelve same-sex couples want the California Supreme Court to cut out a lengthy appeal process and immediately hear their case for gay marriage. Their petition follows a similar one filed last week by

Attorney General Bill Lockyer who is fighting same-sex marriage.

OR Senate Passes Civil Union Bill

The Oregon Senate on Friday passed an omnibus LGBT civil rights bill that includes civil unions and the inclusion of gays and lesbians in Oregon's nondiscrimination act. It would create a civil unions registry and grant same-sex couples many of the rights available to married couples including inheritance benefits, pensions, property rights, and the right to make medical decisions.

Eight Cities Challenge WI Gay Benefits Suit

Green Bay and seven other municipalities want to have their say in a lawsuit seeking benefits for the partners of gay and lesbian government workers. The lawsuit charges that the WI policy violates the state constitution's equal protection guarantees because it blocks lesbian and gay employees, who are barred from marrying, from access to the same coverage for their families.

South Africa May Become 5th Country to Legalize Gay Marriage

The Constitutional Court heard arguments for and against same-sex marriage and a decision could come at any time. Last year the Supreme Court of Appeal ruled that the definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman discriminated unfairly against gay couples, and that common law should be developed to take this into account. ▼

Snapshots from Pride 2005

All photos: Jean-Marie Navetta



Bernstein, continued from p. 2

they far removed from the local PFLAG family.

Included in the profiles is Andrew Warner, son of Metro DC PFLAGers Barbara and Tom Warner. Andrew, a theologically conservative Protestant minister and his partner, a decorated Navy submarine officer, adopted two Guatemalan-born boys. The two were joined in a Holy Union in Andrew's predominantly heterosexual Milwaukee (WI) United Church of Christ.

PFLAG still plays a formative role in both Bernstein's life (he is still active on local and national levels) as well as how he sees progress being made for GLBT families.

"It seems to me that as time goes on, more and more PFLAG parents will become grandparents – as many already have – via their GLBT kids. So not surprisingly, I think PFLAG will be putting more stress on the unfairness being done to these millions of innocent kids and their parents," he said.

Bernstein also has ideas for PFLAG's Stay Close campaign.

"Ideally, I would like to see a public relations campaign similar to that of Stay Close with emphasis on same-sex parents and some of their wonderful – and wonderfully-parented – kids."

Bernstein's work has given him a positive outlook on the future for same-sex marriage and GLBT families.

"Ideally, I would like to see a public relations campaign similar to that of Stay Close with emphasis on same-sex parents and some of their wonderful – and wonderfully-parented – kids."

"I say acceptance of gay marriage is inevitable, whatever temporary setbacks occur. The real barrier is not religious but

generational in nature," he suggests, pointing to the example of student newspaper editors at Baylor University (a bastion of Christian fundamentalism), who, in 2004 published an editorial strongly favoring gay marriage.

"All polls show that younger people have far less trouble with this," he said. "Many of them aren't even able to understand what the fuss is all about."

Time and trends will tell if his assessment is correct. And with a new book like *Families of Value* out there, we might just see changes come sooner rather than later. ▼

Picnic, continued from p. 1

PFLAG dad and author Bob Bernstein talked about his new book and some of the families he got to know while writing.

Those honored for their service to the chapter this year were:

- **Carolyn Lane** for her many years on the helpline and serving as the Helpline Coordinator for the last two and a half years. She is moving to Florida with her husband Ralph.
- **David Fishback**, chair of the Montgomery County Board of Education Family Life Education Committee that revised the sex ed curriculum, only to be stalled by Parents and Friends of Gays and Ex-Gays (PFOX), who sued the school board to halt implementation of the program. Fishback and supporters have not been deterred by this development and will continue to advocate to ensure that positive information about GLBT people will be in the curriculum.
- PFLAG members that served on the Family Life Education Committee including **Myrna Bernstein, Larry Jacobs, Jill Karpf, and Sheron Rosen**.

In looking forward, members also approved the new Metro DC PFLAG Officers and Board of Directors:

- President: **Allen Keiswetter**
- Vice-President: **Robby Gregg**
- Treasurer: **Mike Koch**
- Secretary: **Barbara Warner**

Board members also include **Sandra Butler Whyte, Kathy Braeman, Rob Morris, and Ike Leggett**.

Look for profiles of new board members in the upcoming issues of *The Flagpole*.

Help expand The Flagpole's readership!

Metro DC PFLAG's newsletter is now available in electronic format. Enjoy the same content in a full-color edition that is sent right to your e-mail inbox while you help save on paper, printing, and postage.

Use the new easy-to-share format to help reach larger audiences than ever before by simply forwarding the e-mail to others. (And take advantages of live, clickable links in the digital format!)

For more information and information on how to switch from paper to an e-subscription, visit www.pflagdc.org.

Development News

Thank You, Metro DC PFLAG Donors and Members!

\$200-300

Judith M. Bernardi, LCSW Ph.D.
Margaretha C. McGrail

\$100-200

A. Cornelius Baker

Up to \$100

Edward G. Grossman
Kevin & Brenda Housen
Rhea Kaplan
in memory of Arthur Leiverman
Mary Miers
Karen Gardiner
Matthew Hennesey

Carl Biagetti & Ellen Siskind
Jill Karpf
Carolyn & Ralph Lane
Barbara Warner
Timothy Burns
Tonda F. Rush
Laura & Jeffrey Berg
Middleton Family Trust
(Ray & Alberta Middleton)
in memory of Joan Van Stone
Cynthia Schwab Trust
Har Shalom

From the Mailbag

Attendees and participants of the first Sodexho PRIDE (People Respecting Individuality, Diversity and Equality) meeting were greeted with great materials for Gay Pride month, compliments of Metro DC PFLAG. Our first major event – held in conjunction with Washington, DC Pride – brought participants from Sodexho team members from across the country. It was wonderful to have PFLAG materials (especially the Stay Close campaign items) to share with them.

Thanks for helping make our event memorable.

Jude Medeiros
Activities Chair, Sodexho PRIDE

*Be sure to support sponsors of
Metro DC PFLAG!*



Coming next month...

Back to School Issue! Safe Schools Updates, Resources for GLBT Students, and Local Education Issues • Meet the New Metro DC PFLAG Board • World, National, and Local News You Can Use...and much more!



Metro DC PFLAG Support Groups

Everyone is welcome! Trained facilitators lead our support groups and confidentiality is maintained. Our goal is to help families heal and stay together. For additional information about any Metro DC PFLAG Support Group, call (301) 439-FLAG (3524) or (202) 638-3852.

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA:
August 9 at 8:00 p.m. at the Beverly Hills Community United Methodist Church, 3512 Old Dominion Blvd., near the corner of West Glebe Road. (Meeting is on the second Tues. of each month.)

MANASSAS, VIRGINIA: August 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Bull Run Unitarian Universalist Church, 9350 Main Street. (Meeting is on the fourth Mon. of each month.)

RESTON, VIRGINIA: August 2 at 7:30 p.m. at the Washington Plaza Baptist Church, Lake Anne Village Center. (Meeting is on the first Tues. of each month.)

BETHESDA, MARYLAND:
August 21 at 2:00 p.m. at the Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 9601 Cedar Lane. (Meeting is on the third Sun. of each month.)

TRANS-PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES: August 21 at 2:00 p.m., concurrent with the Bethesda support group. (Meetings are on the third Sun. of each month.)

**REMEMBER:
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

