



# The Flagpole

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

*On the web at [www.pflagdc.org](http://www.pflagdc.org)*

Sept./Oct. 2007

## Montgomery County Board of Education Votes to Implement New Health Curriculum

by David Fishback

In June, the Montgomery County Board of Education voted to fully implement new lessons for its 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade health curriculum entitled "Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality." Earlier versions of the lessons were field tested in several schools in March. We encouraged people to write to the Board of Education urging that additional recommendations from the board's Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development, which includes PFLAGer Emily Wurtz, be included in the final version. On June 12, at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the board added a key recommendation: teachers, in response to questions, will inform students that homosexuality is not an illness. While we are working to secure additional improvements next year, these lessons represent great progress.

At the time the board voted, a challenge to its initiative brought by PFOX and Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) was pending before the Maryland State Board of Education. Metro DC PFLAG wrote to the State Board urging dismissal of the petition, noting that every mainstream American medical and mental health professional association has concluded that being gay is neither a choice nor a disorder. On July 3, the State Board, without a single dissent, dismissed the CRC/PFOX petition.

Several weeks later, however, the Thomas More Law Center of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on behalf of CRC/PFOX, brought a lawsuit in Montgomery County Circuit Court, seeking to have the decision of the State Board overturned. Metro DC PFLAG, along with other local community groups, including Teachthefacts.org and Rainbow Families DC, is working with Lambda Legal and volunteer attorneys from WilmerHale to support the Montgomery County Board of Education.

In the meantime, the new curriculum will be fully implemented this autumn.

For more information on our efforts in Montgomery County, please contact Metro DC Board Member David Fishback at [fishbackds@aol.com](mailto:fishbackds@aol.com).

### Metro DC PFLAG Board Welcomes New Members

Metro DC PFLAG welcomed three new board members at its annual retreat, held at the Arlington home of board vice-president David Barkley.

New board members Nancy Brown, Akil Kennedy and Darlene Nipper join members elected at the PFLAG annual meeting last June.

Brown is a PFLAG mom and the author of "I Hugged Your Child Today," a poem featured in the last edition of the Flagpole. She is joined on the board by Kennedy, a DC public school teacher, and Nipper, former Director of the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Affairs for Mayor Anthony Williams.

At the retreat, board members set the goals for the coming year. Plans include initiating an outreach program in each of the counties in the Metro DC PFLAG area.

The board also decided to diversify funding to include other sources of income. Metro DC PFLAG will continue its work in the community through our support groups, Stay Close Campaign and Safe Schools program.



Pictured from left to right are: Valli Swerdlow, elected to the board at the annual meeting in June; new board member Nancy Brown; board president Allen Keiswetter, and new board members Darlene Nipper and Akil Kennedy.

### Cheryl Spector

Local lesbian activist Cheryl Ann Spector died on Tuesday, Sept. 4, at the George Washington University Hospital, after a 10-week-long fight with leukemia. Metro DC PFLAG would like to let her family and friends know how much she will be missed. Cheryl was known by so many. She was always seen, camera in hand, at just about every GLBT event in the city. A celebration of Spector's life, which will be open to the general public, is currently being planned for Sept. 30 at a location to be announced at a later date. Look for more information in either the *Washington Blade* or *Metro Weekly*.

# Creating a Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth DC Public Schools Peaceable Schools Conference

By Patricia Corbett

Since 2001, Metro DC PFLAG has organized and produced the DCPS Peaceable Schools workshop, Creating a Safe Space for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth. This year's two-day event sought to provide teachers, social workers, counselors, psychologists, hospital administrators and organizations access to experts and materials for GLBTQ youth.

Opening remarks from guest speakers Christopher Lane of Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, and Angel Brown of Advocates for Youth, were interrupted by a teacher, who stood up and proclaimed that her faith warns that gay people would go to hell. The interruption came as quite a shock, but it was actually the type of thinking that we need to respond to as organization. If our mission is to change hearts and minds this was a wonderful teaching moment. Lane and Brown handled the interruption well. Those who disagreed with the teacher responded in a respectful manner. It also was pointed out that personal beliefs should not be brought into the classroom. To her credit, this teacher stayed and even returned the next day.

Chancellor Michelle Rhee addressed some of the problems that have plagued the District school system. The Chancellor admitted that it is a system that is broken and that it will require an overhaul, but she seemed to be confident that the problems are solvable. She met with Metro DC PFLAG Executive Director Lindy Garnette and me and offered to support our training programs to help eliminate bullying and harassment. She will consider making this training mandatory in DCPS.

Jacqueline Davis, a PFLAG parent, moved the audience with her support of her gay son and lesbian daughter. Mrs. Davis worked for Metro DC PFLAG and national PFLAG for more than 15 years. She not only agreed to speak at the conference, but will assist me in revitalizing PFLAG's support group, For Those We Love.

In addition to audiovisual aids that allowed the participants to hear from GLBTQ youth, the topics covered included: Understanding Marginalized Youth; What are the Needs of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students; Gay Youth and Gay Parents: The Impact of Personal Bias; and Student Safety: DCPS Policies and Procedures.

Other participants included Harriett Stonehill and Bernice Sandler, authors of "Student to Student Sexual Harassment K-12;" former Board President and PFLAG member Catherine Tuerk of Children's Hospital; Taneka Taylor, Gender Policy Advocacy Coalition (GPAC); Brain Watson and Monet Dupree from Transgender Health Empowerment; Michelle Sewell of Hearts and Homes for Youth; Anne Wiseman of MetroTeen AIDS; Dr. Ruti Kadish, of Creating Welcoming Families; Christopher Dyer, Office of GLBT Affairs; Terra Moore, of Different Avenues and parent Cindy Garnette.

## Choose Metro DC PFLAG as Your SunTrust Cause

Planning to open a new checking account or apply for a new credit card? If you open a new SunTrust Personal or Business Checking account, or accept a new SunTrust Visa® Check Card, SunTrust will donate \$100 to your favorite nonprofit organization or send you a \$50 gift card.

If you plan to open a checking account before October 12, 2007, we encourage you to consider having SunTrust donate \$100, in your name, to Metro DC PFLAG. To designate Metro DC PFLAG as your charity of choice, please include our tax ID number, 52-1348642, on the form.

Spread the word about the SunTrust's My Cause program to your friends and family.

For more details about the program, please visit [suntrust.com/mycause](http://suntrust.com/mycause).

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## September and October Support Group Schedule

**Annandale, VA:** September 16 and October 21, 4:30 p.m.

Little River UCC  
8410 Little River Turnpike  
(Third Sunday of the month)

**Bethesda, MD:** September 16 and October 21, 2:00 p.m.

Cedar Lane Unitarian Church  
9601 Cedar Lane  
(Third Sunday of the month)

**Falls Church, VA:** September 12 and October 11, 7:30 p.m.

Temple Rodef Shalom  
2100 Westmoreland Street  
(Second Thursday of the month)

**Reston, VA:** September 4 and October 2, 7:00 p.m.

Washington Plaza Baptist Church  
1615 Washington Plaza  
Lake Anne Village Center

(First Tuesday of the month)

**Washington, DC:** October 1, 7:30 p.m.

Gallaudet University,  
800 Florida Ave., NE  
Hall Memorial Building  
(First Monday of the month)

### Trans-people and their families:

September 16 and October 21  
Cedar Lane Unitarian Church  
9601 Cedar Lane  
(Third Sunday of the month --  
concurrent with the Bethesda support  
group.)

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

Remember  
You Are  
Not  
Alone

### Please Donate

Make Metro DC PFLAG your charity of choice. Our United Way, # is 8154 and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) # is 12944.

## A Veterans Day Memorial

Please join AVER and the Arlington Gay and Lesbian Alliance at Washington's historic Congressional Cemetery for a Veterans Day Memorial Service, honoring the GLBT men and women who fought and died in all our nation's wars.

This year's memorial service will be held on November 11 at 3:00 p.m. at the gravesite of Leonard Matlovich, one of the first to challenge the military's policy of excluding gays and lesbians from military service.

For more information, please contact Mike Rankin at navydocdc@aol.com.



## Celebrate at the "Venetian Carnevale" Metro DC PFLAG's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Honors Gala

Plans are well underway for Metro DC PFLAG's 11th Annual Honors Gala and Silent Auction. This year's theme, Carnevale, will celebrate the removal of our proverbial masks, embracing and applauding all that we are as a community.

The Gala will be held March 8, 2008 at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill. Festivities will begin at 6 p.m.

To volunteer your time and talents or to add your company to the list of potential corporate sponsors, please contact Gala co-chairs Brett West at [bwestindc@msn.com](mailto:bwestindc@msn.com) or Matt Cloninger at [cloninger\\_mathew@bah.com](mailto:cloninger_mathew@bah.com). If you would like to donate an item for the auction, please contact Tracy Hemel at 202-638-3852. All donations are tax deductible.

## A Summer at PFLAG

by Zach Popkin-Hall, Metro DC PFLAG's summer intern

Growing up in a very accepting house, being gay was never really an issue. My mother always mentioned the possibility that I might find myself interested in men, rather than women. So, despite my worries about it at the time, coming out when I was 13 was really no big deal. There was never any question of my parents' love, support, and understanding. I realize, though, that not everyone is quite as lucky as I have been, and as part of a family that believes in helping others, my parents and I have always supported PFLAG.

This summer, it has been my delight to be the Metro DC PFLAG summer intern.

While making photocopies or stuffing envelopes isn't the most exciting work, it does enable a great organization to keep running smoothly and continue to do all the great work that they do.

By far, the most interesting experience that I've had here at PFLAG was tagging along to the DCPS Peaceable Schools Summer Institute to help with the PFLAG session, "Creating A Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth."

It really feels like giving back to the community, and serves as a good reminder that not everyone had the easy time I did. It also has provided me with a lot of new resources, contacts, and valuable knowledge to enhance and empower my presidency of the George C. Marshall High School Gay-Straight Alliance.

## PFLAG National Convention

### Comes to DC Area October 11 – October 14

PFLAG members from around the country will gather at the Hilton McLeanTyson's Corner for PFLAG's National Convention. The four-day event begins October 11 with the PFLAG Capitol Hill Lobby Day.

The convention will help to provide you with the support, education and advocacy training that you need to make your goals a reality. Whether you are just getting started or are a seasoned leader, there is no better way to gain valuable new perspectives and powerful tools than to join us this October. You can choose from among 50 workshops, which include, How to Be An Activist; Engaging Diverse Faith Communities; School Yard Violence and Homosexuality, and Biological Data on the Development of Sexual Orientation.

For more information and to register for the workshop, please visit the PFLAG website at [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

# The Flagpole

*of Metropolitan*

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**www.pflagdc.org**

*Confidentiality is maintained.  
Our goal is to help families heal  
and stay together.*

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