



The Flagpole

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

September 2005

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

Back to School with Metro DC PFLAG!

Safe Schools Program off to Great Start

By Erin Barker

Metro DC PFLAG's annual Safe Schools Training was held on July 21 and 22. The workshops were designed to help teachers develop skills to stop harassment of GLBT youth in DC public schools.

This year's training was different from previous programs for one reason: participants were mainly individuals who work with grade school and middle school children. In previous years, most participants were primarily high school teachers.

Many of these teachers had seen bullying aimed at sexual orientation, but more saw harassment based on gender identification. In other words, the harassment wasn't because a student was GLBT, but rather their gender expression was questioned – girls could, for example, be ridiculed for being too boyish, while boys could face mocking because they seem too feminine.

Fortunately, on the second day of the training, we received some assistance in understanding these issues from Dr. Edgardo Menvielle, who once again joined us for his presentation about gender variant children, a subject nearly all the participants seemed to be dealing with in their classrooms.

Irena Bui, a representative from the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance

League (SMYAL) who discussed her own experiences as a transgendered individual, also addressed the group. Many participants commented on their evaluations that they had specifically enjoyed hearing her speak.

Officer Zunnobia Hakir from the DC Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit, led a discussion on safety, security, and a teacher's role in ensuring that all students – but especially ones who are victims of harassment – are provided with support and resources to address the problems they face.

Jennifer Crisler, executive director of Family Pride, led a panel discussion on GLBT students in schools, while Wilson High School teacher Michael Garbus spoke on his experiences as a gay teacher and father.

The feedback we received reflected a common theme: success. In the evaluations, all of the participants indicated that they now felt comfortable addressing harassment of GLBT youth in their schools. Most reported that their understanding of the issues GLBT youth face is now better and that they will go out of their way to be supportive. Finally, nearly every participant said the training was worth their time, with some adding, "I want to thank PFLAG and its supporters. Thank you!" ▼

Funding Opportunities for GLBT Students

By Scott Gilbert

Looking for a way to help a GLBT student fund their education?

This list describes just a few of funding opportunities available to GLBT students. These programs offer a variety of criteria for eligibility and application deadlines. Find out about other sources from the GLBT Student Services Office, Financial Aid Office, or GLBT Association at your college or university. Look for additional funding resources in the October issue of *The Flagpole*.

PFLAG

www.pflag.org

PFLAG National Scholarships provide an important, positive statement to a group of young people that is often marginalized, and subjected to harassment and discrimination.

The Point Foundation

www.thepointfoundation.org

The Point Foundation provides financial support, mentoring and hope to meritorious students who are marginalized due to sexual orientation or gender identity.

Deaf Queer Resource Center

www.deafqueer.org

The Deaf Queer Resource Center awards monetary scholarships to deserving self-identified Deaf GLBT and Intersex college-bound youth.

Continued on p. 5

Asking What *You* Can do for PFLAG

A Conversation with Joan Van Stone Award Winner Bob Kenney

At the Metro DC PFLAG Annual Picnic in June, Bob Kenney received the Joan Van Stone Award for Volunteer Excellence. The award, named after a Van Stone, a long-time PFLAG volunteer who died two years ago, highlighted Kenney's many contributions to the organization. He served on the Board for seven years, served as Vice-President, Interim President, chair of the Speaker's Bureau, and Co-Chair of the Gala, as well as working as a facilitator in two of PFLAG's support groups. We had a chance to talk to Kenney about his history with PFLAG and hopes for the future.

How – and why – did you become involved with Metro DC PFLAG?

I joined PFLAG in the early 90s as I was changing my career path by going back to graduate school to get my master's degree in social work. I was also wrapping up my initial coming out process, having told all my friends and family and beginning my life as an out gay man. I was attracted to PFLAG and its mission, especially the support component. The groups offered a unique opportunity for parents, friends, and gay people to come together in a safe environment where stories are shared, people listen, and learn and receive support. I soon found myself facilitating the Dupont Circle support group. In one short year, we quickly grew from two or three members to 12-15, and were considering having two groups meeting simultaneously. I continue to facilitate PFLAG support groups and am currently in the Alexandria group.

I've been fortunate enough to attend every PFLAG Gala since its inception. It was maybe the third Gala when its popularity took off and attendees soared from 300 to 700. That evening, I remember looking out into the ballroom. It was the first time I had been to such a large event full of people who shared a common purpose to make the world a better place for the GLBT community. At the same time, the Gala would prove to be a diffi-

“So if nothing else, don't hide who you are. Be yourself, be honest, and ask what you can do for PFLAG.”

cult time of year for me. My father attended regularly, yet my mother refused, and so I was again confronted with the rejection and reminded of my mother's struggle in the acceptance of me and my sexual orientation. To her credit, she did attend the Gala this year as a gesture of support.

Why have you stayed close to PFLAG?

I believe I have kept coming back to PFLAG for so long because of my participation in the support groups. I have facilitated a PFLAG support group nearly every month for the past 10 or 12 years. It has been my reward to witness the journey of so many people's coming to acceptance.

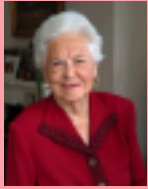
Just by being there, every person who comes to a PFLAG support group is saying, “I want to get to a place of love and acceptance.” And so we are supportive of them regardless of where they are in the coming out process. I continue to still see gay men and women come into our support group and soak up every word that is said, their eyes fixed and intent on whichever group member is sharing a story that they feel like they could be telling themselves. They return to the group, begin to open up to others about their sexual orientation, and start to learn to love themselves again.

There are also the parents who first show up with tears and a prescription for Prozac. Six months later, this same parent is comforting another new parent, explaining to them that it will get better. It's the people and the stories of the support groups that keep me engaged and remind me of the important work that PFLAG is doing and needs to continue to do.

Why is PFLAG so important to you?

PFLAG has given me the opportunity to meet many truly wonderful people, share in so many extraordinary journeys, and form invaluable friendships along the way. I have always believed that if the general public knew who all of the GLBT people are, that in itself would be monumental in our quest for equal rights, acceptance, and respect.

So if nothing else, don't hide who you are. Be yourself, be honest, and ask what you can do for PFLAG. ▼



PFLAG Mourns the Passing of Elsie Frank

Elsie Frank, mother of openly gay Congressman Barney Frank and a

PFLAG mom, died on August 8, 2005. In 2003, she told the *Boston Bay Windows*, “My most rewarding work with PFLAG has been to know that there are so many parents and relatives who are proud of their children.”

Frank was 92 years old and still involved in her community. PFLAG’s Safe Schools program was particularly important to her. Last year she joined a group from PFLAG Greater Boston to lobby the state legislators to reinstate funding for programs that provide support to GLBT teens. Elsie received PFLAG’s Voice of Truth Award in 2003. ▼



Gunderson to Head Council on Foundations

Steve Gunderson, former congressman from

Wisconsin and PFLAG friend who was instrumental in developing and expanding the success of the Gala, has been named the new President and CEO of the Council on Foundations. The organization is the oldest and largest voice for philanthropy in America with headquarters in Washington, DC. He will conclude his tenure at the Arlington, VA-based Greystone Group on October 1, to lead a staff of 100 and an annual budget of approximately \$20 million in promoting the environment for and the role of philanthropy in America, Canada and beyond. ▼

Headlines from Around the Globe

Sources: *gay365.com*, *PlanetOut News*, and the *Associated Press*

Increase in Support for Gay Marriage

Public support for allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally has rebounded a bit after declining between 2003 and 2004. A new Pew poll revealed that 36% of Americans favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry, up from 32% in December 2004. The percentage favoring gay civil unions has risen as well, up to 53% compared with 48% last August.

Report: Social Security Privatization Bad for GLBT Americans

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force released a report arguing that GLBT Americans will be disproportionately harmed by the Bush plan to privatize Social Security.

The report found that on average, GLBT individuals have lower incomes than their heterosexual counterparts, which translates into lower Social Security benefits when they retire. Additionally, since same-sex couples are not eligible for Social Security’s spousal and survivor benefits provisions, they are disproportionately vulnerable to the benefit cuts and risks inherent to the president’s plan.

Other factors – such as the more than 1,000 federal benefits and protections – exacerbate the problem, including costs in maintaining domestic partner benefits and the lack of pension plan inheritance.

You can download the full report at <http://www.nglft.org>

Library Offers Gay on ‘Loan’

A Swedish library project that allows people to ‘borrow’ a real live human being may provide some useful insight in overcoming stereotypes.

Ulla Brohed, of the Malmoe Library in southern Sweden, says the Living Library project will enable people to come face-to-face with their prejudices in the hopes of altering their preconceived notions.

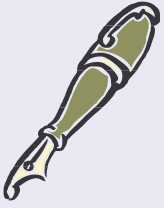
Nine people, including a gay, an imam, a journalist, a Muslim woman and a gypsy, will be available at the Malmoe Library for members of the public to “borrow” for a 45-minute conversation in the library’s outdoor cafe.

No on Joe for Concerned Women

Concerned Women of America, an outfit run by Beverly LaHaye, has targeted Starbucks for promoting “homosexual values.”

LaHaye alleges that the company is corrupting youth on its coffee cups with the “The Way I See It” series. One cup features a quote from openly gay writer Armistead Maupin that reads, “My only regret about being gay is that I repressed it so long. I surrendered my youth to the people I feared when I could have been out there loving someone. Don’t make that mistake yourself. Life’s too damn short.”

Starbucks received a second strike from LaHaye by providing funding for San Diego’s Gay Pride celebrations. ▼



From the President...

by Allen Keiswetter

The Future of Metro DC PFLAG

It is a great honor to lead Metro DC PFLAG, and thanks must go to the many PFLAGers who have over the past few months contributed to PFLAG's successes – everything from the launch of our Stay Close campaign to our chapter's winning the top prize in the Gay Pride parade.

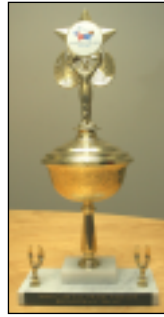
Since the new Board assumed office in July, we have focused on the future. Eleanor Roosevelt said that the future belongs to those that have the strength of their dreams. It is an appropriate time to dream new dreams, and plan for the future.

The Board started the process a few months ago with the creation of a strategic planning committee, and at the Board retreat in early August we took up the question: what does "growing to the next level" mean? We came up with several answers: It means identifying the next steps for our Stay Close campaign, planning for the future of the Safe Schools program, strengthening our advocacy efforts, improving our administrative support arrangements, reactivating our Religious Affairs Network, and finding the resources to pay for our dreams.

The hard part is setting priorities among our dreams. We would welcome your ideas about PFLAG's future. Please attend one of the meetings being scheduling over the next few weeks or get in touch at keiswetter@aol.com. ▼

Welcome a new PFLAG sponsor!

Dawn Lednum, owner of the vacation rental property on St. Michaels advertised in the enclosed flyer will donate 1% of all rental proceeds to Metro DC PFLAG. If you rent, be sure to tell them you saw the ad in *The Flagpole* and Metro DC PFLAG sent you! ▼



The Pride Goes On...

Late-breaking news! Metro DC PFLAG won a trophy for Best Overall float in the 2005 Capital Pride parade.

Congratulations to everyone who helped make the parade and our showing at the event an award-winning night to remember!

Gay Finally OK in Utah – Thanks to Beano

In December, Elizabeth (Beano) Solomon, a Metro DC PFLAG member and 2005 awardee, applied for three personalized license plates: "GAY WE GO," "GAYS R OK," and "GAY RYTS" in Salt Lake City, UT. When her application was denied, Mrs. Solomon sought assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, which represented her in appealing the Tax Commission's initial denial.

Last month, the Utah State Tax Commission ruled that it will approve three personalized license plates with gay-positive messages. The decision is a first for the commission, which, until this decision, had never approved a personalized plate containing the word "gay." Personalized plates with gay-positive messages are now clearly permissible, so long as the requested plates do not violate any statutory or regulatory restrictions.

You've Got (Hate) Mail!

PFLAG offices around the country, including Metro DC PFLAG, have been receiving mystery CDs in the mail from an anonymous sender. A brave Massachusetts PFLAG volunteer put the CD in a player: it turned out to be a 10-minute anti-gay sermon. Metro DC PFLAG opened only one of two CDs received and destroyed both.

It's Never Too Early to Get Into the Gala

...As a sponsor, that is. We're thrilled to announce that Booz Allen Hamilton has committed to once again being our lead sponsor and have increased their donation to \$25,000. The Hyatt Regency Capital Hill – the site of the event - has again agreed to be a sponsor for \$2,500. Get your company contacts ready to help! For more information, contact the Metro DC PFLAG office at (202) 638-3852. ▼

An Intern's PFLAG Lessons

By Christine Schlosser

My work at PFLAG this summer has been great. I've done everything from marching in the Pride parade to writing grant applications. But I think the work I am most proud of is reading and responding to questions e-mailed from the Stay Close website (www.stayclose.org).

In the beginning, I was scared. How do I deal with the fact that my advice may permanently affect someone's life? But in the end, I knew I just had to take the proverbial bull by the horns. I jumped in and started answering questions, trying to give the best guidance I could – with a review from Rhonda – and hoped that it was enough.

Each email was different. The first thing I did after I read an email was think, "What is this person looking for?" One girl, whose girlfriend was having trouble coming out to her parents, had written a lengthy e-mail. Eventually, I realized that actually she told me what she wanted: "I guess I'm really just looking for support."

Another man was looking for some help for a gay relative. His relative's mother was not reacting well to the news that he was gay. He'd tried to talk to the mother and get her to attend a PFLAG meeting, but she refused. The important message that I conveyed was to keep trying.

It's hard telling someone to continually face potential – and sometimes likely - rejection, but I think the Stay Close message explains why the effort is worth it: relationships are too precious to lose.

While the questions were often sad, there were other times when the emails were uplifting. A woman asked how she could explain her son's gay wedding-commitment ceremony to her granddaughter who was just a toddler. I advised her to treat the ceremony like any other wedding. "Stress the love and feeling behind the relationship, not the gender aspect. For a five-year-old, gender is rarely significant when it comes to emotion." If only I could say the same for people of all ages.

My favorite aspect of managing the submissions was reading all the PFLAG praise! It made me happy to see people whose lives have been changed for the better thanks to our group. As one man wrote, "Thank God there is such an organization." Another woman was incredibly enthusiastic about the Stay Close campaign: "I just want to say CONGRATULATIONS on a GREAT campaign. The ads are terrific. I love the representation from people in various fields and of various races and ages."

Another thing I loved about our submissions was the diversity. About one in ten of the e-mail messages we received was from a Spanish-speaking person, and the ages of people who submitted questions and comments ranged from 11–67. It is obvious that the Stay Close message reaches and inspires people across all ages and races. After all, it's a message about family and lasting relationships. Who wouldn't be inspired by that? ▼

Student resources, continued from p. 1

FinAid

finaid.org/otheraid/gay.phtml

This section of FinAid describes a number of scholarships available to GLBT students. FinAid maintains a strict privacy policy for its search engine.

Fund for Lesbian and Gay Scholarships (FLAGS)

washburn.edu/sobu/broach/flags.txt

This fund provides financial assistance to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students involved in the community. The scholarship amount varies and depends on financial need, academic achievement, and school or community involvement.

NGLTF Fellowships

www.thetaskforce.org

The Billie Jean King Foundation and the Anita May Foundation fund three Vaid Fellowships to work in the in the NGLTF Policy Institute in New York City. The fellowships, for people of color and other emerging leaders, are named after activist and former NGLTF head, Urvashi Vaid.

LEAGUE Foundation

www.league-att.org/foundation

The LEAGUE Foundation is a scholarship fund, created by and affiliated with LEAGUE at AT&T. It awards academic scholarships to assist self-identified GLBT youth in attending college.

Minnesota GLBT Educational Fund

scc.net/~t-bonham/EDLINKS.HTM#Link-Students
A collection of GLBT Scholarship programs sorted by national and state levels in the United States collected by the Minnesota GLBT Educational Fund.

Look for more resources in the October *Flagpole*! ▼

Upcoming Events



20th Anniversary Celebration of Open and Affirming in the United Church of Christ

October 22, 1:00-6:00 p.m.

First Congregational UCC (www.fccuccdc.org)
945 G St. NW, Washington, DC

This event celebrates the decision of the UCC General Synod in 1985 that made the United Church of Christ an Open and Affirming Church and the recent resolution on Marriage Equality voted at the 2005 General Synod.

There will be a plenary, five workshops (Becoming an Open and Affirming Church, Biblical and Theological Groundwork, Marriage Equality, Living Diversity, Youth), a worship service, and a reception. Ruth Garwood, Coordinator of the UCC Coalitions for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns will be the keynote speaker. The Rev Yvonne Delk will preach and the Rev. Countess Clarke will coordinate the music.

For more information, contact Rev Barbara Gerlach
gerlachmack@erols.com

An Afternoon with Author Alex Sanchez

Saturday, November 12, 3:00 p.m.

Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library
7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA

Alex Sanchez (www.AlexSanchez.com) was special guest at a PFLAG book drive for the Fairfax County schools several years ago. Sanchez' upcoming Falls Church reading will be a groundbreaking event: there has never been a program sponsored by the Fairfax County Public Library geared toward the GLBT community, and especially toward GLBT youth.

This bestselling local author of *Rainbow Boys* (an ALA "Best Book for Young Adults") and *Rainbow High* as well as *So Hard to Say* (2004 Lambda Literary Award), will read from his new book *Rainbow Road*, take questions, and sign copies of his books.

Call (703) 790-8088 for reservations beginning two weeks before the program.

Families of Value: A book reading with Bob Bernstein

Sunday, November 13, 1:00 p.m.

Politics & Prose
5015 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Join author and PFLAG dad Bob Bernstein for a reading from his new book, *Families of Value*. (Learn more about the book in the July-August edition of *The Flagpole*!) more details to come in October! ▼

From the Mailbag

Wanted: PFLAG Mom Seeks Submissions for Book of Coming Out Letters

Editor Iris Blumenthal is seeking coming out letters written primarily (but not exclusively) to parents or other family members. If you are the writer (or recipient) of a letter letting your parents know that you a lesbian, gay man, bisexual or transgender person, this can be a unique chance to help others.

The gay community feels a sense of responsibility to help smooth and illuminate the path for the next generation of GLBT youth. This is an opportunity to help them avoid some of the pitfalls and boulders on the way toward a full, free, honest, and rewarding life. By recognizing that each family dynamic is unique, this book will fill a need in the GLBT community, in the families of GLBT people, those in the helping professions who work with the GLBT community, and the general public.

Confidentiality will be completely respected. Any identifying attributes of the writer and recipient are concealed unless given proper permissions for disclosure. The letter does not need to be a "model" with perfect penmanship, grammar, or spelling.

Letters expressing wide experiences and all walks of life are welcome. You worked hard on writing that letter, now let it help someone else! Send questions and submissions to:

Iris S. Blumenthal
E-mail: irisblumenthal@optonline.net
20 Park Drive East
Syosset, NY 11791 ▼

Development News

Thank You, Metro DC PFLAG Donors and Members!

(Membership renewals as of 8/17/05)

Lifetime (\$1000)

Allen & Gerda Keiswetter
Mary Lou Lopez: Lifetime Membership for
James Lopez McMahon & Keith McMahon,
in memory of her husband, German
(Gerry) Lopez

Flagwaver (\$500)

Michael Heffner, 202design
Margaret Johnston & Sara Temple

Benefactor (up to \$250)

Nat Wilson
Hannah & Tim Lipman
Robert Bernstein
Kathy Kirkwood

Sponsor (up to \$100)

Maurelle Ain
Ken & Nancy Brown
Ellen & Chris Czeh
Edward Jiran & Frank Farrow
Edward G. Grossman
& Rochelle L. Stanfield
Phyllis G. Liner
Kathleen & William H. Mayer
John & Mary Miers
Eleanor B. & Walter E. Simonson
Marsha Moskowitz
Barbara Callahan
Karen Gardiner

Patron (\$50)

Margery Dimond
Nereide Ellis & Tonda F. Rush
Michael A. Forgash
Don & Rhona Friedman
Eleanor & Sam Frishman
Paulette Goodman
Rev. Madeline Jervis, HR
Linda & Edward Lloyd
Patricia McCeney
George Neighbors

Rebecca W. Perry
Edith F. Roberts
Carl Biagetti & Ellen Siskind
Neal Teplitz
Jerome & Sophie Teplitz
John P. Van Weeren
Thea Wernick
James W. Williams
Marjorie Witting

Household (\$40)

Stephen A. & Irene Anne Eckstrand
James & June Herron
Linda & Stephen Katz
Dorothy H. & John D. Kraft
Terry N. & Elizabeth W. Kreamer
Stephanie Krepis
Mark Hodge & Richard Madaleno
Thomas & Liz Trotter
Catherine & Jonathan Tuerk

Individual (\$30)

Alice R. Markham
Susan M. Bell
David Christopher Cannon
Erline Correll
Hilda Fishback
Barbara S. Fries
Tanjam Jacobson
Edward Jones
Thomas & Betty Kehoe
Betty & Henry Kostkowski
Paul Lindsey
Rebecca W. Moscoso
Judy Parvez
Justine Rowe
Charles Spencer

Other Giving Levels

Anne Barber
Kima Deboo
Yvonne McKay
James McQuarrie
Nancy & Charles D. Williams

Coming next month...

More on Education: Update on Montgomery Co. Sex Ed, More Funding Resources for GLBT Students, & National Education News • What Would a PFLAGer Do? • Meet the New Metro DC PFLAG Board • Local Events Listings and more!

Don't forget! You can help spread the news about PFLAG by subscribing to the online edition of *The Flagpole*. Send an e-mail to info@pflagdc.org with "Subscribe Flagpole" in the subject line to get started.



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:
September 13 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:
September 26 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: September 6 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:
September 18 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: September 18 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!**

