

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.

is a support, education and advocacy organization.

Founded in 1981 by 25 parents, PFLAG now services approximately 70,000 members and speaks for thousands of others. PFLAG affiliates are located in more than 450 communities in this country and overseas.

PFLAG is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization that is not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

Mission Statement

PFLAG of Greater Providence, an affiliate of National PFLAG, is dedicated:

to supporting parents on their journey to understanding and acceptance of their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children;

to helping the children -- of whatever age -- to understand and come out into loving relationships with their families;

to educating an ill-informed public about homosexuality, and

to the attainment of full civil rights for all.

Our Meetings are held on the **first Tuesday of each month** from 6:30—8:30 p.m.

At The Providence Center, 520 Hope Street
(off Doyle Avenue), Providence.

PFLAG is a welcoming place for parents and friends of lesbians and gays, but we are much more than that. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people are also encouraged to attend our meetings. Gays come with or without their family members, and parents and friends come with or without their gay loved ones. Confidentiality is assured. PFLAG IS FOR YOU.

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Editor: Carol-Anne Villanova

For further information or directions:

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of Greater Providence

January/ February 2002
Upcoming Meetings
Please Mark Your Calendar
Tuesdays, February 5 and March 5
Regular Meetings, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at The Providence Center
NEWS FROM OUR CHAPTER

Sincere thanks to Marc Paige, the speaker at our November meeting, who described the status of HIV awareness, prevention, and treatment in the world today. AIDS, he says is rampant in Africa, and is usually spread by heterosexual contact there. This gives the lie to the claims of homophobes who say that AIDS is a natural punishment for being gay. One tragic component of the epidemic on that continent is sexual violence against young girls, since many men believe that sex with a virgin is the only way to rid themselves of the disease.

In this country, black and Hispanic men account for a high percentage of new cases, but all young gays need constant reminders of the “safe sex” warnings that were widely promulgated in the last two decades. These young men haven’t experienced the death of young friends, as gays did in the last generation, and they seem to feel invulnerable -- as acted out in use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and unsafe sexual practices.

Marc is a high-profile gay activist who has been living with AIDS for a number of years, and has traveled tirelessly to speak at schools, religious organizations, and community groups and agencies to get vital information about HIV/AIDS to the young people who need it. We’re proud to say he’s a member of our chapter, and a strong supporter of the efforts of another member, his mother, Eileen Gray.

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**When you no longer need PFLAG...
PFLAG needs you!!**

**Please volunteer to help at one of our meetings
or with chapter duties!!**

News From All Over...

Dover, NH

Two girls will be listed as “class sweethearts” in their high school yearbook, after a dispute over whether same-sex couples were eligible for the honor. Nicole Salisbury and Ashley Lagasse, both 17, overwhelmingly led other couples when the yearbook staff conducted its annual “senior superlatives” survey. But the school principal declared the vote invalid, because the ballot asked students to choose one male and one female. Later the school district Superintendent reversed the principal’s decision and said the original results will stand.

Michigan

Voters in two Michigan cities overwhelmingly supported the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in November. Two measures to enact discriminatory city charter amendments, and one to repeal a civil rights law, all failed by strong margins.

Katharine Lee Bates, the author of “America the Beautiful, a song we’ve been hearing and singing a lot lately, was a lesbian.

Look for Cosmopolitan magazine’s December issue. In it is the life story of Laurie Cicotello, the daughter

of a transgendered parent. Cicotello has been actively involved in teaching about *TransFamily* issues for over ten years.

CONTROVERSIAL TEDDY BEARS

In December all Hallmark stores were running a promotion offering male and female teddy bears sold as a pair that would “kiss” when their magnetized noses touched. A gay couple wanted to buy two male bears from the Hallmark store in the Providence Place mall and the store refused, saying they could be sold only as a male-female couple! When the men protested, the manager called Mall Security, which escorted them out of the store and out of the Mall! That was a mistake, because one of the gay men was Fred Kuhr, editor of *InNewsweekly*, a weekly newspaper covering glbt news all over New England.

Mr. Kuhr called the head of the Hallmark national company, and was informed that they thought the store’s action was wrong, but the company had no control of individual stores’ policies. Of course he publicized this insult widely in his paper, saying that if the bears were available in a choice of black or white, and the store refused to sell a male black bear coupled with a white female bear (or vice-versa), that would be recognized as improper. Mr. Kuhr considers this just as bad, and wonders why Hallmark chooses to offend a large portion of its customer base.

OUR FIRST-EVER THEATER PARTY

We are going as a group to see an award-winning production at Trinity Rep on Sunday, February 3. “Another American -- Asking and Telling” has received rave reviews around the country. Prices are \$19 for those over 60, \$30 for all others. These are below box-office prices. To order your tickets, see Eileen Gray or email pflag@ids.net.

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LESBIAN MOMS CAN REAR MASCULINE SONS

Conservative advocates of “family values” pronounce the presence of a strong male figure vital to a child’s development. They say that children reared in homes led by women are likely to be poor, and to be involved in crime, teenage pregnancy, and low school achievement. Boys, they say, are especially at risk because they lack male role models. One family form that I have come to know as a psychologist tells us something different.

In my sampling of over one million lesbian couples who are parenting sons, the boys are thriving, confident in their maleness. The women honor and encourage their sons’ masculinity. The boys find men to admire and learn from among their relatives, teachers, coaches. These women-led families have much to teach us about family love, the adaptability of kids, and the power of women to raise psychologically healthy sons and daughters on their own.

Lesbian couples have given rise to the concept of the “**social mother**”: the parent who has no genetic link with the child she is rearing, and who may not have a legal relationship with the child, but who has established an emotional, even fatherly (motherly) bond with him or her. One ten-year-old boy, speaking of his social mother, says, “It was Nicole who taught me to play basketball. So when I get to play in the NBA, I’ll invite her to the games.”

In most of the lesbian-led families I studied, both mothers had professional careers, but they still spent **more** time with their children over-all than married heterosexual parents did. In two-mother families, the parents usually divide parenting tasks more equally, so the children tend to have greater interaction with them than a child with a mother and father.

If the American family is truly in crisis, lesbian parents and their sons offer us the opportunity to rethink and reshape our notions of family. They are calling on us to enlarge the possibilities of love.

Psychologist Peggy Drexler, reprinted from Newsday

More News From All Over...

New London, CT

Pfizer Inc. now offers domestic partner benefits, effective January 1, to eligible employees among their 6,000 workers in Groton and New London -- same-gender as well as heterosexual couples. Health coverage will be available to a partner who is older than 18 and not covered under another plan sponsored by Pfizer.

The two partners may not be related by blood or adoption, and the partner who is covered by the benefit may not be in another relationship.

Finland

Finland’s Supreme Court October 19 granted custody of two teenagers to their deceased mother’s female partner, rather than to their father, because that’s what the children wanted. It was the first such ruling in Finnish history.

Voices of Vision

Early next year a new documentary series, “Voices of Vision”, will air on public television. This is an insightful and probing series produced by the Teaching Learning Network that focuses on the people, places and institutions that shape our lives. **PFLAG will be one** of the organizations featured in a half-hour segment of the series. Perhaps more than any other organization, PFLAG impacts the lives of glbt people in small towns and large cities nationwide. Through this documentary, our message of family support will be taken into millions of homes.

Among the people appearing will be Amy Ashworth, who helped found the New York City chapter nearly three decades ago; Betty DeGeneres, PFLAG mother and author; and many chapter leaders from around the country. WATCH YOUR LOCAL LISTINGS for the broadcast dates in our area.

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Join Us! Become a Member of PFLAG/Greater Providence!

Student/Limited Income \$15

Household \$30

Individual \$25

Newsletter only \$10

Add'l Contribution \$_____

Send checks payable to PFLAG/Greater Providence to: PFLAG, c/o Apt. 212, 500 Angell Street, Providence, RI 02906

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Jerry Falwell Tries To Cash In On Controversy

Excerpt from Americans United for Separation of Church and State,
October 22, 2001

Although TV preacher Jerry Falwell claims to have apologized for his infamous remarks about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, his ministry has sent a fund-raising letter to donors recasting his statements in a positive light and depicting him as a victim of the news media "wolf pack" and "liberal lies."

In an Oct. 4 appeal for funds, Jerry Falwell Ministries accuses "liberals, and especially gay activists" of launching "a vicious smear campaign to discredit him." It says Falwell is "being roundly vilified by the news media for remarks he made in a TV interview while calling for spiritual revival in America." The letter, signed by Falwell's son Jonathan, compares Falwell to biblical heroes such as the Prophet Jeremiah and Queen Esther and says, "Liberals of all stripes, especially in the media, have seized on this opportunity to trash dad's deeply held Christian beliefs and to literally attack him day and night."

"It seems that Satan has launched a hail of fiery darts at dad recently," writes Jonathan Falwell. "He needs to know you still support him. Please return the enclosed Vote of Confidence Reply Card right away in the envelope I have provided within the next 5 days. And with your card, please remember to include a special Vote of Confidence gift for Jerry Falwell of at least \$50 or even \$100 along with your signed card."

Falwell's critics say the fund-raising letter is a new low... The Falwell fund-raising letter says donations to his ministry have plummeted in recent days and claims "we have lost more than \$500,000 in income since the terrorist attacks."

It complains that "even some Christian friends have remained silent while dad has faced the media wolf pack alone." In a P.S., it concludes, "[P]lease let Jerry Falwell know you don't believe the media distortions being spread about him."

Bangor Passes Civil Rights Law

Last month Bangor, Maine's second largest city, became the eleventh community in the state to pass a gay and lesbian civil rights law. This is significant because Bangor, long considered a rather conservative, less urbane city, has seen in recent years a more visible gay and lesbian community emerging. However, the state itself is the only one in New England that doesn't have statewide protections for GLBTs.

A bill approved in 1997 was later overturned by a ballot initiative. Protections have been passed town by town as efforts continue to pass a statewide law that will stick.

