

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 PFLAG, Inc., is dedicated:

to the preservation of families in loving relationships,

to educating an ill-informed public about homosexuality, and

to the attainment of full civil rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and their families.

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.

Confidentiality is assured. All are welcome, especially family members of g/l/b/t people, beginning or having successfully completed their journeys to understanding and acceptance, as well as g/l/b/t/ who wish to understand and support family and friends.

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PFLAG NATIONAL

E-mail: info@pflag.org

Web site: <http://www.pflag.org>

of Greater Providence

September / October 2001

Upcoming Meetings

Please Mark Your Calendar

Tuesdays, October 9 and November 6

Regular Meetings, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at The Providence Center

THE NEXT STEP FOR PARENTS?

Once parents have made the journey to acceptance of their gay children, they start to feel comfortable disclosing the news to friends, family and the wider world. Later they often feel the need to tell that world that they want a safe, just society in which their children are free to develop their potential. In other words, they become **ADVOCATES** for the rights of gays -- not special rights, but ordinary rights that heterosexuals take for granted.

Our chapter member Mary Horan is such an advocate. She has written to publications and individuals, educating them, pointing out the errors in their narrow thinking and -- just as important -- praising people who take public stands supporting civil rights of gays, and who open people's minds to the needs of our children.

Last spring the R.I. Medical Society passed a resolution saying that the Boy Scouts of America ban on gays increases the risk of depression and suicide among young gay men. Mary sent PFLAG literature to the president of the Society, Dr. Allen Dennison, along with a letter that said, in part:

"I am writing to commend you on your continued defiance of the ban on gays in scouting. I am the proud mother of a 30-year-old gay son. I am also very active in Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays...."

"We at PFLAG applaud your stand...as well as your efforts with the R.I. Medical Society to pass [its recent] resolution.... As more groups adopt similar policies, we can move away from inequality and injustice, and toward understanding and inclusion. Thank you for your continuing efforts to achieve this goal."

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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!!

A MESSAGE FROM NATIONAL PFLAG

PFLAG is recognized as the premier family voice on issues affecting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. We are uniquely positioned -- as the largest grassroots gay and lesbian rights group nationwide -- to speak back to those who claim to represent family values while spreading lies and ugly distortions. Polls show that most Americans just don't think it's right to discriminate against people because of his or her sexual orientation. You and other PFLAG members can take part of the credit for that. We can't sit back and allow right-wing political extremists to destroy years of progress. Speak out -- or write in -- or call in -- when you hear bigoted statements.

**PURLOINED FROM OTHER
PFLAG CHAPTERS**

I watch at meetings when parents come in confused and scared, not knowing what to do when they find out their son or daughter is gay. It's like a miracle to see the gradual change in them over time. And I always like it when they come back to help other people. PFLAG people are people who care about more than themselves.

-- Melina Waldo, Haddonfield, NJ

**NEWS FROM OUR CHAPTER:
GAY PRIDE DAY WAS A SUCCESS**

Here it is September -- where did the summer go? Before Saturday, June 16, fades too deeply into the past, let's celebrate our chapter's appearance at the Gay Pride Festival in the park opposite the Providence Place Mall. Among the dozens of vendors, food tables, musicians and entertainers, we had a booth where many people stopped and asked what PFLAG is and does. We gave out literature and sold "Straight But Not Narrow" buttons. We were gratified by the earnest private conversations we had with young people seeking help in coming out, and with adults concerned about their children. We greeted people active in the gay community, some of whom we hadn't seen since last Pride Day. And we certainly had the chance to eat, drink, enjoy the entertainment, and tour the rest of the festival.

Among the chapter members helping to set up and man the table were Pat, Jane, Myra, Gwen, Barbara, David and Mark, along with Shirley Smith of the Tiverton chapter.

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Dr. Dennison, who is the Providence scoutmaster who had earlier gone public with his troop's intention to defy the ban on gays, replied to Mary, in part, as follows:

"Thank you for your letter.... I am so proud of the 20+ council members who voted on this unanimously. Not even one grouch!"

"...I believe that as the scientific concept of increased risk becomes accepted, lawsuits will emerge against [the BSA establishment]. These, or their threat, will produce the rapid change that the Supreme Court could not."

"I support [PFLAG's] mission. I have gay family members, medical colleagues and patients. While I love scouting I cannot stand silent while it harms young men."

* * * * *

We thank Mary for her efforts and eloquence. One important result of

her activism is that now virtually every physician in the state can know what PFLAG is and does, and can refer parents to us.

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RHODE ISLAND LEGISLATION
NOW PROTECTS THE TRANSGENDERED

The legislature of the State of Rhode Island has passed, and Governor Almond has signed, a bill that gives civil rights protection to the transgendered. This is wonderful news. It makes our state one of just a handful in the country that offer this protection. In some of those other states the issue had to be fought in the courts. We believe one big reason our state could take this momentous step legislatively is that our own chapter member, Gwen Howard, testified before the Senate committee considering the bill. Those of you who followed the hearings must have been impressed with her quiet eloquence and frankness. Gwen, we honor you for your courage, and celebrate this victory along with you.

Special Meeting for Catholic Parents
to be held at LaSalette Retreat Center

“Journey to Strength”, the Eighth Annual Retreat for Catholic Parents, will be held October 26 -- 28 of this year at LaSalette. For complete details about the worship services, workshops and presentations on the theme “Celebrating the Bishops’ Pastoral Letter — *Always Our Children*”, write or call the

Catholic Parents Network

4012 29th Street
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712 (301-277-5674)
Reservations must be made by October 8.

*Brochures giving details about speakers and programs scheduled for the retreat will be available at our chapter meeting September 4.
If you are unable to be at the meeting, call or e-mail the chapter to have a copy sent to you.*

News From All Over...

Massachusetts --

Massachusetts, through its Department of Public Health, is the first state in the country to launch a Safe Colleges Program, an initiative of the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. Several colleges have full-time directors for the program.

Belgium --

Belgium's government has approved a bill allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry, a move that makes it the second country (after the Netherlands) to legalize homosexual weddings. The bill gives same-gender couples virtually the same legal status as heterosexual ones, except for adopting children. [Ed. note: that's some difference!] In April, the Netherlands saw the world's first legal homosexual weddings, as a lesbian couple and three gay couples tied the knot minutes after their law came into effect.

Gay Couples as Role Models

Some elite prep schools, which traditionally have a family ethos, require faculty to live in dorms with students, serving as role models and offering counseling and help with homework. At least three now include gay couples as dorm resident counselors and role models. Last year, Phillips Exeter Academy followed its rival, Phillips Andover, by putting this policy into effect. Both were behind Concord Academy, which approved the policy in 1997. Exeter's headmaster explained that the school is trying to teach students to be respectful and supportive of others, including those who are gay.

-- New Orleans PFLAG

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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: _____

PFLAGers IN PRINT

*In The San Francisco Chronicle,
from Michael Harmuth, PFLAG Pleasanton*

I am the father of a lesbian and am tired of reading the orchestrated hate mail from the bigoted buddies club of Contra Costa and Southern Alameda Counties. Their carefully selected/edited quotes from the Bible, Internet and statistical reports "prove" nothing. True knowledge and understanding come from personal association with gays and lesbians.

I questioned my daughter's "coming out", as does any other parent. But I did my homework -- the secular (www.pflag.org and www.hrc.org) and religious (Catholic: www.nacdlgm.org) outreach ministries, and have found gays and lesbians to be just as good, bad, happy, depressed, religious, atheist, hardworking or lazy as their heterosexual counterparts.

There is no homosexual "agenda" or lifestyle". They don't want to convert anyone any more than they want to be bothered by "converters", and we all, gay and straight, have different lifestyles. Gays' sexuality is just as much or as little a part of their lives as yours is. My daughter is the same person she always was, only now I am fortunate to know another of her many wonderful qualities.

Parents of gays and lesbians -- please do not be discouraged by those hateful letters to the editor. Celebrate this gift in your life. Get to know him/her better, and seek out those who know the truth, not the ones hiding behind narrow-minded religious bigotry.

In Time Magazine

*from Iris Blumenthal,
Past President,
PFLAG Long Island*

Not only are there "a greater number of visible and comfortable gays" today, as pointed out in your report "*The Struggle to be Gay in America*", but there are also a greater number of visible, comfortable and vocal parents of gays who are proud to express their unconditional love of all their children, straight and gay alike.

We stand proudly with our gay children; we help educate an ill-informed public; and we tirelessly advocate equal civil rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation.