



News & Views

Greater Providence Chapter
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

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16% of Rhode Island Marriages in August were Same-sex

Same-sex couples accounted for more than one out of six marriages in August according to recent figures from the State Department of Health. Since RI was the last New England state to approve mar-

riage equality, the number of same-sex marriages was not as dramatic as Massachusetts, for example, since many couples had already married in other states. Still, Rhode Island's numbers show there is greater interest in marriage than the previously allowed civil unions which were allowed in 2011. Only 89 couples entered into civil unions in the two

-year period of its existence; whereas 163 couples were officially married in August 2013 and as of this writing another 58 were married in September.

Ray Sullivan, who led the push for same-sex marriage as campaign director of Rhode Islanders United for Marriage, said he was not surprised by the

increased interest. "We heard from people, they wanted to continue fighting for marriage, because only marriage is equal," he said. "Marriage comes with universal recognition and acceptance, it's a term that comes with instant recognition that two people are in a life commitment to one another, and those that bond in mutual obligation and commitment should be appropriately recognized by all levels of government."

These initial marriage counts come from a tally of certificates filed with the RI Health Department by cities and towns once

the marriages occur. It does not include the number of marriage licenses that have been issued to date to same-sex couples. Once issued, the licenses are good for three months and then take another month or so to reach the Health Department.

(Credit: Randal Edgar, Journal State House Bureau, Providence Journal)

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Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays

Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and their families and friends through:

SUPPORT: To support parents on their journey to understand and accept their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children; and to help children, of whatever age, to understand and come out into loving relationships with their families;

EDUCATION: To enlighten an ill-informed public,

ADVOCACY: To end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

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

PFLAG is a welcoming place for parents and friends of all members of the LGBTQ community, but we are much more than that. Those who identify as gay, lesbian bisexual, transgender, or queer are also encouraged to attend our meetings, with or without their family members. Parents and friends may come with or without their loved ones who are members of the LGBTQ community.

Confidentiality is assured.

PFLAG/Greater Providence

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news from our chapter

PFLAG Guest Speakers

At our October meeting Ray Sullivan, former Campaign Director for Marriage Equality



Rhode Island, provided us with insight on his organization's strategic approach to convincing RI State legislators to support marriage equality. Organizers took to the streets and phones to connect gay and lesbian constituents and their stories to

offering of on-line webinars. They are accessible through their PFLAG Academy Online: www.PFLAG.org. You can find it under "Chapter Information and Resources."

Ms. Mesirow that of the 366 PFLAG Chapters in the United States, 26 of them were new this year and mostly located in more rural areas. They anticipate future growth of the organization to be in areas with a greater population of "people of faith" and with transgender individuals and their families.

PFLAG has updated its logo tag line to acknowledge all members of the LGBTQ community and has created a committee to explore how to be more inclusive as an organization.

"PFLAG National provides ongoing training for all its members through its offering of on-line webinars. They are accessible through their PFLAG Academy Online: www.PFLAG.org. You can find it under "Chapter Information and Resources."

their legislators. They were convinced that once they heard how not having the right to marry impacted the lives of these couples and families, legislators would finally understand why they had to support marriage equality. And they were right. On August 1, 2013 gay and lesbian couples were married for the first time in the State of Rhode Island.

Amy Mesirow, Director, Northeast Region President of PFLAG and Cape Cod Chapter, spoke to our group about the PFLAG National Convention, which is held bi-annually in Washington, D.C., home of PFLAG's national headquarters. PFLAG National would like to increase both chapter awareness and attendance at this 2 1/2-day conference. She acknowledged that the overall cost to attend this event has discouraged members from attending (\$700-\$1000) but highly encouraged members to attend if at all possible. In addition to the conference, PFLAG National provides ongoing training for all its members through its

Ideas for Topics/Speakers?

If you have a specific topic you would like to have addressed by a speaker or know of anyone whom you would like to recommend as a speaker for our Chapter, please contact **Scott at scmpmr33@gmail.com**.

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Just e-mail Sandie at svrichard@cox.net to send you the PFLAG newsletter by e-mail only.



New Transgender Documentary with RI Roots in the Works

Chapter member **Sandra Richard** spent the month of August traveling 6,000 miles in her mini-van to and from Seattle while filming the latest documentary by **Shifting Visions Films Education Project, Inc.**, a Rhode Island non-profit documentary film company established by Alexia Kosmider and her late partner Deborah Monuteaux in 2004.

Sandra and her transgender daughter, Annabelle, and another transgender woman, Shannon, are the subjects of the documentary. The film, a quest of discovery of family, acceptance, and identity explores three women's personal journeys and the ways their lives have become intertwined and made stronger because of one another. **TransJourney** embodies all of our stories, as we search for acceptance and affirmation.



The film was the topic of discussion and the trailer was previewed on November 21st at the **University of RI North Kingstown Campus** as one of their **"Trans Awareness Week"** events.

TransJourney is currently in post-production and is expected to be completed in time to premier at the **Boston LGBTQ Film Festival in May 2014**, with screenings to follow at other film festivals throughout the country. In addition, it will be available for screenings at universities and various community organizations, such as our **PFLAG** group.

PFLAG Greater Providence is proud to be listed as a noncontributing sponsor of this documentary, along with **SAGE Rhode Island, RI Pride, Ingersoll Gender Center (Seattle), RISD Inter-cultural Student Engagement** and the **University of RI LGBTQ Center**.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

To remember those who came before us.
That we who face the world today can
live for what they no longer can.

-Amber Neko

Transgender Day of Remembrance—November 21st at Temple Beth-El

by Myra Shays

Nearly 100 people of all sexual orientations and gender identities attended the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance November 21 at Temple Beth-El in Providence, convened each year by local activists as part of a nationwide observance to commemorate those who have lost their lives because of their transgender status. The event consisted of a ceremony, refreshments, a resource fair, and a revealing panel discussion.

In a somber atmosphere of very low lighting, Leslie Gutterman, Beth-El's Senior Rabbi, began the evening by quoting the biblical verse "Do not stand idly by the blood of your brothers and sisters." The speakers who followed had bad and good news. Bad: It is estimated that since 1970 between 700 and 1,300 people -- that we know of -- have been murdered because of their transgender status. Good: More health insurance companies are covering -- at least partially -- hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery for trans people who request it. And more states are including transgender as a protected class in anti-discrimination laws.

In a poignant ceremony, the names of 91 trans people worldwide who are known to have been killed in the last year were read aloud. For each name a candle was snuffed out, giving graphic depiction of the diminution of humanity. Then a musical duo played and sang "One Light," which includes the line, "We keep on fighting to live as we were meant to be."

Michelle Rini introduced her 12-year-

old daughter, Hannah, who transitioned a year ago, and described the successful steps she took with Hannah's school and her friends to assure her daughter's acceptance. This seemed like a roadmap for any parent of a school-age trans child. Congressional Rep. David Cicilline made a surprise appearance and encouraged the trans activists in their work.

The lights came up. The attendees enjoyed refreshments and visited the displays of about 20 agencies and organizations (including PFLAG/Greater Providence) at the resource table. Our chapter's own Nate Zane, a trans man who was on the organizing committee, was seemingly everywhere: helping with programs, seating, lighting, logistics, and distributing

A panel discussion concluded the evening. Three people who have transitioned to their true genders, and one who is about to, explained their journeys. They described the reactions of their families, friends and co-workers, and answered questions such as "What transphobic events have you experienced?" and "What is the best part of being transgender?" All agreed that the sense of release and relief when giving up their inauthentic lives was worth all the effort, expense, and occasional discrimination.

Sadly, when next year's Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed, there will probably be other names of the murdered read and more candles snuffed out. The hope is that these commemorations will increase public awareness of the need to respect and protect all citizens, regardless of gender identity or expression.

Gay Providence

Providence was founded in 1636 by Roger Williams, who believed in tolerance, liberty and free will. That spirit is alive today in bustling, dynamic Providence. Home to seven colleges and universities, the city boasts an eclectic arts scene, critically acclaimed restaurants and a youthful energy.

There is no "gay-borhood" in Providence. Members of the gay and lesbian community can be found throughout the city's many neighborhoods. From Federal Hill—Providence's famed Little Italy—to the funky cool of the East Side, the city offers plenty to see and do.



Providence was voted:

One of the Top Ten Cities for Gay Travel, **Travel + Leisure survey**.

One of America's Gayest Cities, **The Advocate, March 2013**.

One of the Top Ten Destinations for Gay Travelers, **Travel-Nerd, June 2013**.

"Providence's relatively small size might lead you to think it doesn't have much gay life, but the city has over two dozen gay bars, clubs, and other venues and a sizable lesbian scene; its pride festival in June dominates the entire downtown."

"Many gays in New England choose to reside in Providence because of its inexpensive prices, friendliness, and gay tolerance." - **Matthew Link, Out Traveler**

(Credit: GoProvidence.com)

news from all over

Marriage Equality Reaches Sweet Sixteen

On November 20th Illinois Governor Patrick Quinn signed a Bill approving same-sex marriage for Illinoisans, thus becoming the 16th State to do so. Hawaii became the 15th State to pass marriage equality earlier in November.

PFLAG in the Spotlight Once Again by an Advice Columnist!

After lambasting a parent who felt betrayed by his/her son because he is gay and with "tongue in cheek" suggesting the parent demonstrate how easy it is to change one's sexuality by changing their own, advice columnist Amy Dickinson urges the parent to contact PFLAG for help and guidance.



in all this was that "you didn't raise your son to be gay." Of course you didn't. He was born this way and didn't choose it any more than he being left-handed. You however, have made a choice of being hurtful, narrowminded

and backward. So, while we are in the business of disowning our children, I think I'll take this moment to say goodbye to you. I now have a fabulous (as the gays put it) grandson to raise, and I don't have time for a heart-less B-word of a daughter. If you find your heart, give us a call. - Dad.

- NYDailyNews.com

Mary Cheney Says She's 'Not Supporting' Sister Liz Cheney's Senate Campaign

If it wasn't already obvious, Liz Cheney probably shouldn't count on support from her sister in Wyoming's 2014 U.S. Senate race.

Still offended by her sister's public opposition to same-sex marriage, Mary Cheney told *Politico Magazine* in a story published Wednesday that she is "not supporting Liz's candidacy."

She added that she isn't necessarily rooting for incumbent Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) to defeat her sister.

A family feud bubbled to the surface this week after Mary Cheney and her wife, Heather Poe, criticized Liz Cheney over her opposition to gay nuptials.

"By supporting, I mean not working, not contributing, and not voting for (I'm registered in Virginia not Wyoming)," Mary Cheney wrote in an email.

The public quarrel prompted their father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, to release a statement in which he defended Liz Cheney's position on same-sex marriage.

- 11/21/2013 - Talkingpointsmemo.com

Grandpa's viral letter to daughter: I'm disowning you for kicking out my gay grandson

Somewhere in Michigan, there's a Grandpa who deserves a good pat on the back. A thoroughly "disappointed" grandparent reportedly scolded his daughter via snail mail after she kicked his 16-year-old grandson out of the house for being gay. The letter, handwritten on graphing paper, has gone viral after the clothing company FCKH8 posted it to their Facebook page. It reads as follows:

*Dear Christine,
I'm disappointed in you as a daughter. You're correct that we have a "shame in the family", but mistaken about what it is. Kicking Chad out of your home simply because he told you he was gay is the real "abomination" here. A parent disowning her child is what goes "against nature." The only intelligent thing I heard you saying*

"moment of honesty" in which he challenged the leadership of the nation's largest mainline Protestant denomination, which preaches that homosexuality is "not compatible with Christian teaching." He said he'd marry any other gay or



lesbian couples who want to be married while he is still a pastor. So far, none have come forward, but he has until December 18.

"I cannot fathom how I would change my mind in that time or in any time," Schaefer said. "To me this is discrimination. It's not right. So many people have been hurt. Not just my son -- my children -- but thousands of gay, lesbian bisexual, transgender people have been hurt by the church and by society. It has to stop. We've got to realize what we're doing here with our theology, our doctrine, and really, our hate speech."

The two counts of which he was found guilty go back to Schaefer having officiated over his gay son's wedding in 2007 in Massachusetts. Schaefer's son, Tim Schaefer, had come out to him in 2000, when the pastor spoke to his son after an anonymous caller told him his son was gay and was contemplating suicide.

"We said to him, 'You are made in the image of God just like everyone else,'" Schaefer said, thinking back to when his son first described his struggles with his homosexuality. "So when he asked me in 2007, 'Dad, would you do my wedding?' I was just honored."

- Huffington Post, 11/23/2013

Frank Schaefer, United Methodist Pastor, Discusses Conviction For Officiating Son's Gay Marriage

"I didn't do this to make a rebellious statement against the church," Rev. Frank Schaefer said on Friday, November 22nd, reflecting on the action taken by a United Methodist Church jury of fellow pastors that sentenced him to a 30-day suspension after convicting him of violating church law for having officiated over his son's same-sex wedding in 2007. At the end of the 30-day period, the Lebanon, Penn., pastor will be defrocked unless he renounces same-sex marriage, including his own son's marriage.

"I said to the jury, 'Look, all of this, in the last few weeks, has really outed me to the world in terms of where I stand on my theology,'" he told me in an interview on [SiriusXM Progress](#). "I have become an advocate for the LGBT community. I can no longer be a silent supporter."

Schaefer described his statements to the jury as a



"It has been amazing, the whole thing. People have just been so supportive and wonderful."

- The Providence Journal, 11/22/2013

Chapter Meetings

PFLAG/Greater Providence meets the first Wednesday of each month from 6:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.:

The MET School
325 Public Street
Providence, Rhode Island

Upcoming Meetings

December 4, 2013
February 5, 2014
March, 5, 2014
April 2, 2014

(NOTE: There is no meeting in January due to the New Year's Day holiday.)

Contact Us

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The holidays can be a stressful time for LGBT people or their families, but there are several strategies that you can use to help reduce stress and create a happy holiday this year. If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

- **Don't assume** you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised. **Realize** that your family's reaction to you may **not** be because you are LGBT. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
- **Remember** that "coming out" is a continuous process. You may have to "come out" many times.
- **Don't wait** for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a LGBT child. It took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn.
- **Let your family's judgments** be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
- If it is too difficult to be with your family, **create your own holiday gathering** with friends and loved ones.
- If you are transgender, **be gentle** with your family's pronoun "slips." Let them know you know how difficult it is.

Before the visit...

- **Make a decision** about being "out" to each family member before you visit.
- If you are partnered, **discuss in advance** how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
- If you bring your partner home, **don't wait until late** into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.
- **Have alternate plans** if the situation becomes difficult at home.
- **Find out** about local LGBT resources.
- **If you do plan to "come out"** to your family over the holidays, have support available, including **PFLAG publications** and **the number of a local PFLAG chapter**.

During the visit...

- **Focus** on common interests.
- **Reassure** family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
- If you are partnered, **be sensitive** to his or her needs as well as your own.
- **Be wary** of the possible desire to shock your family.
- **Remember to affirm yourself.**
- **Realize** that you don't need your family's approval.
- **Connect with someone else who is LGBT**—by phone or in person—who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.



**Greater
Providence
Chapter**

Membership Application

Yes! I want to be a supporting member of PFLAG.

Please provide the information requested below and make your check payable to: PFLAG/Greater Providence. You may bring this form with your payment to the next chapter meeting or mail to: PFLAG, c/o 500 Angell Street, Apt. 212, Providence, RI 02906.

- ☐ Household \$30 ☐ Individual \$25 ☐ Student/Limited Income \$15
☐ Newsletter Only \$10 ☐ Additional Contribution \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone No. _____ E-mail _____

☐ I'll do my part to help save a tree. Please send me the newsletter via email only (.pdf format).



Memberships and contributions to PFLAG are tax deductible. All information will remain confidential. PFLAG does not sell, lease or lend mailing lists to any person or group.