

PFLAG Annual Meeting Panel Exposes “Reparative Therapy” Issues

PFLAG board members, directors, and supporters from around the nation descended right in our backyard – Montgomery County, to be exact – on October 23 for the PFLAG Annual Meeting.

Following reports from officers and directors, PFLAG Executive Director Jody Huckabee crystallized his vision and plans for the organization, including the intention to start 16 new chapters in the upcoming year and build on existing programs such as “From Our House to the Statehouse” and Safe Schools initiatives.

It was the mention of Safe Schools and many of the issues that are included such programs that gave way to the panel program on reparative therapy.

The Montgomery County school board recently made national headlines when it stopped the introduction of changes to the Family Life and Human Sexuality curriculum. The changes would have covered topics such as homosexuality and safe sex, replacing a more restrictive program that does not allow teachers to respond to questions from students on topics not included in the program. (Charles County, MD has been the latest local school district to find itself part of a similar conflict.) These battles are rapidly moving from local

jurisdictions to federal courtrooms.

A vocal advocate in the effort to stop sex-ed programs has been Parents and Friends of Gays and Ex-

organizations like PFOX might be far smaller than those of progressive groups, their organization and strategy is powerful and necessitates a serious response to their actions.



Members of PFLAG’s panel on reparative therapy discuss the issues. Left to right: Judy Hoff, David Fishback, Dr. Jack Dresher, Mark Perriello, and Catherine Tuerk. (Photo: Rudy K. Lawidjaja)

Gays (PFOX), a Virginia-based organization that claims that homosexuality is a choice, and with the aid of spiritual counseling and reparative therapy, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people can be delivered from their “affliction.” (Members of the group were actually in attendance at the meeting.)

PFLAG’s national Safe Schools Coordinator, Judy Hoff, moderated the panel.

David Fishback, an attorney and PFLAG dad who has been closely involved in the struggle within Montgomery County’s school board detailed the legal maneuvers that are used in the debate, emphasizing that while the number of members of

He was followed by Dr. Jack Dresher, a psychiatrist from New York who provided an alternate explanation to the psychiatric mechanics behind the reparative therapy. He traced the path of thought regarding homosexuality among psychoanalysts from illness, to disadvantage, and explained where mainstream psychoanalysts diverged with

extremist practitioners who embrace the harmful (and failing) practice of reparative therapy.

Both the legal analysis of Fishback and the therapeutic approach of Dresher came to life in panelist Mark Perriello’s narrative of his own experience in reparative therapy programs. He detailed the havoc that the programs created in his life, emotionally and socially, sending him into self-imposed exiles in extremist religious groups and deep depression. Ultimately, he positioned himself as living proof that not only do such programs fail, but they do tremendous damage to both the individual in the program and their families.

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Metro DC PFLAG Receives \$10,000 Safe Schools Grant

The Cafritz Foundation has awarded Metro DC PFLAG \$10,000 in funding to be used to support the continuation of the Safe Schools program.

The Safe Schools program was created to help area public schools decrease bullying and harassment and create safer and more welcoming learning environments for all students, with a special focus on providing support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) youth. Funds from the grant will also be used to train DC teachers in its 2006 Summer Institute.

The grant will allow for the continuation of the work started at Washington, DC's Woodsen High School, and enable the addition of two new DC schools – Roosevelt and Bell Multicultural – that have expressed interest in participating in the program.

The combined student population of these three schools is over 2,000 and employs close to 200 teachers and staff that will benefit directly from Metro DC PFLAG's Cafritz-funded work. Through training, education, and technical assistance, we will have the resources to empower teachers, school personnel, and students to intervene when they witness bullying or harassment. Staff will also be trained on to serve as a source of support to GLBT students and facilitate the creation of support groups, gay-straight alliances, and other supportive measures.

“The long term goal is to create more positive learning environment for all students – especially for the GLBT students in Washington, DC, Maryland, and the Northern Virginia suburbs,” said Rhonda Buckner, executive director of Metro DC PFLAG. “The programs that we start here can and will serve as models to other schools around the nation who are developing programs and practices for doing this kind of work.” ▼



Family News from PFLAG Sponsor!

Jeff Travers and Mike Heffner (of 202design) are proud to welcome new additions to their family!

Neil Matthew Heffner was born at 2:39 a.m. (5lb.2oz, 16.5 in.)

and Emma Charlotte Heffner was born at 2:41a.m. (4lb.15oz, 16 in.) on August 10, 2005 in Philadelphia, PA.

Congratulations! ▼

Flagpole Printer Retires: Congratulations!

Dick Lucey has been the printer of Metro DC PFLAG's Flagpole from the time of its inception. Not only has he done an outstanding job at producing our newsletter, but he has also been a great friend of the chapter, doing whatever was needed at the lowest possible cost. He was patient when we were late, quick when we needed him to be, and always looked out for our best interests. Whether it was newsletters, annual reports, or conference materials, Dick was there. On behalf of the board, membership and staff, thank you Dick for all that you have done for our chapter, and for GLBT acceptance and equality by helping us get the messages out there! Congratulations on your retirement and we wish you the very best for the future.

Metro DC PFLAG Members Never Go Far...

Former Metro DC PFLAG members Joanne Cate and her husband, Dudley, prove that no matter where you go, you bring PFLAG with you. When they retired, the couple moved to Ashville, NC, and became active in the PFLAG chapter there. But they've taken it a step further. Using what they learned while members of the Metro DC chapter, they're expanding their involvement. Joanne is in charge of trying to start a youth group and Dudley is finishing up a stint as president of the chapter. ▼

Program Spotlight: Metro DC PFLAG Helpline

By Anne Thomas

At the heart of PFLAG's mission is providing support for families working through the coming out process – in all of its many aspects. And one of the clearest examples of this mission in action is the Metro DC PFLAG Helpline.

Started in 1981 by Paulette Goodman, the Helpline actually came to be about two years before she and her husband Leo started Metro DC PFLAG. From 1981 until 1994, the PFLAG Helpline resided in Paulette's home where she answered calls. When call forwarding became available, Paulette was able to have other volunteers share the work of answering the calls.

In 1984, Metro DC PFLAG received a grant that allowed them to publicize Metro DC PFLAG and the Helpline on Montgomery County public transit and a year later on DC Metrobuses. The Helpline number was changed at the

start of the ad campaign to its current number: (301) 439-FLAG.

In 1994, Leo Goodman became ill and died, and Paulette subsequently decided it was time to hand over the primary responsibility for the Helpline to others. The service was changed from a live person answering the phone to an answering machine service. Now those requesting help are asked to leave their name and telephone number so that their call will be returned. Callers are assured that any information they leave will remain confidential. But regardless of the mechanics, the Metro DC PFLAG Helpline continues to be a resource for those in crisis or looking for specific help.

We receive calls from all around the U.S. as well as local calls, and the range of topics for the questions we are asked vary widely. Most are from parents who have recently learned that their child is gay or lesbian. Others are from gays or les-

bians in a marriage who want to come out. Conversely, we frequently receive calls from straight spouses who are dealing with finding out that their husband or wife is gay. Some calls are from an adult child who has recently learned that a parent is gay, lesbian, or transgendered. Sometimes we receive calls from parents who suspect their young child might be gay. And, yes we do get crank calls.

We try our best to be compassionate and non-judgmental, referring folks to PFLAG support groups, therapists, and other organizations that can help meet their needs.

Currently there are five "PFLAG Moms" working the Helpline. We would love to have more volunteers. The work is rewarding and does not take up a lot of time.

Interested in becoming a member of Metro DC PFLAG's Helpline? Contact the PFLAG office at (202) 638-3852 ▼

Safe Schools Project Update

By Jillyenne Harris

So far the component of Safe Schools Project in which I am involved has certainly taken off with much momentum. We have made important contacts within the community and in the public school system that are very much concerned with the safety and well being of all children, regardless of their sexual orientation.

We have worked for four years with one of these

DC Public Schools contacts, Dr. Diane Powell. Recently promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Dr. Powell has been a tremendous ally to the Safe School Initiative's efforts to ensure safety for GLBT youth and has helped clear a path for our entry and greater understanding in the District's school.

Our support group for H.D. Woodson high school students is in full

swing and showing a lot of promise. The students who attend the sessions have expressed great enthusiasm and are glad that we are on campus. So far we have held two sessions and are scheduled to continue meeting through the end of the school year. We are also in the process of interviewing an assistant to help co-facilitate the support group.

Metro DC PFLAG has a

record of working closely with DC's Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL) to educate and support the GLBT youth population. Recently we were invited to build upon this history and join them in a coalition effort that would better enable us to serve GLBT youth and their families. The coalition may also be funded by a community organization to accomplish our combined goals. ▼



Headlines from Around the Globe

Sources: 365gay.com, PlanetOut News, The Washington Blade, and the Associated Press

GLBT Groups Show Strong Representation at NoVA Briefing

By Paula Prettyman, Co-President, Equality Fairfax

Northern Virginia Stand Up for Equality (NoVA SUFE), a coalition of organizations advocating for GLBT equality, is making a concerted effort to reach out to groups outside of the GLBT and allied community, to bear witness to GLBT concerns and to the normalcy of the our community.

On the cold and rainy evening of October 25, 2005, nine representatives, (including Metro DC PFLAG member Diane Puckett) of NoVA SUFE organizations attended The Family Foundation's NOVA Pre-Session General Assembly Briefing. This presentation provided an opportunity to learn about The Family Foundation's 2006 legislative agenda that includes such issues as the state marriage amendment, embryonic stem cell research, fetal pain relief, religious liberty, and parental authority. Information on how to influence legislators was also presented.

State Senator Ken Cuccinelli (R-37, Centreville) presented his likely legislative priorities for 2006. State Senator Jay O'Brien (R-39, Clifton) arrived after the meeting ended.

Our GLBT representative group of nine made up the majority of the audience. We wore rainbow ribbons and sat quietly during the presentations. We spent some time after the meeting talking with other attendees and the presenters. We appropriately represented the GLBT and allied community as a group of normal people who have the courage to stand up for their equality.

For more information on Equality Fairfax, visit www.equalityfairfax.org. ▼

Wins in Virginia!

Perhaps the tide is slowly changing for Virginia, the site of many antigay campaigns that have garnered national attention. In elections on November 8,

Del. Dick Black (R-Loudoun), sponsor of a bill to ban adoption by GLBT individuals and other virulently anti-gay legislation was defeated by Democrat David Poisson.

Del. Brad Marrs (R-Richmond), who sent a fundraising letter this summer complaining that his opponent had received a \$10,000 contribution from a "wealthy homosexual businessman," was defeated by Chuck Caputo.

Chris Craddock (R-Fairfax), who once told local high school students that AIDS spread fast in Africa because "Africans will have sex with anything with a pulse" was defeated by Katherine Waddell.

Openly gay Del. Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria) commented in a column in the *Washington*

Blade of the election, "The commonwealth does not yet live up to its famous tourist slogan: 'Virginia is for Lovers.' But after Nov. 8, we can at least say: Virginia is not for Haters!"

In other election news...

Voters in Maine defeated a ballot initiative that would have repealed the state's GLBT non-discrimination law that originally passed both houses of the Maine legislature in March and was signed into law by the state's governor. This was the third attempt to repeal the measure and the first time voters approved the law. Maine is now the sixteenth state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and the sixth state to outlaw discrimination based on gender identity.

In far less fortunate news, Texas voters overwhelmingly but not surprisingly approved a constitutional amendment that bans same-sex marriage. ▼

Save the Date!

Metro DC PFLAG's Annual Gala

March 11, 2006

New this year – Pre-Gala Online Auction!

Flagpole Essay: *Do our straight allies really understand tolerance?*

By Rudy K. Lawidjaja (*rk@pflagdc.org*)

In the English language, old words often evolve into new words, changing the meaning and the context in which they are used. One such word is “gay.” Looking it up in the dictionary, you would find several definitions — some new and some old.

But there is a disturbing new trend among youth who have come up with quite new definitions for the word. It has recently come to my attention that no matter how many gay friends or relatives a straight person may have or may know, it doesn't necessarily mean they understand that their use of the word gay in derogatory ways can hurt other people.

Recently I had a chat with fellow members of the Web site *modelmayhem.com*. It's a site where photographers and models post their portfolios online. The site was hacked and was down for three days. Once the site reappeared, I entered the chat room and asked if anyone was affected by the hackers.

Suddenly, in the middle of the chat, a woman who said she was 18 years old and used the nickname “JO” entered the room and made the following remarks: “Got in here, and changed my psswd too ... that little stupid person that is messing with all this is really gay...” At first I thought she was joking so I asked her to clarify her statement.

After numerous attempts without a response, she disappeared and reappeared with a different name. This time she logged in as “Josie Christine” and responded: “I mean that person is really gay by hacking the site ... didn't you guys see one of the posts ... anyway doesn't matter...”

Again I asked her to clarify her state-

ment because I found it very offensive and she responded: “‘Gay’ has a lot of meanings, thanks, and it may not be in the dictionary ... but ‘gay’ also means stupid, idiotic, ridiculous, dumb, etc.”

I told her that her statements, whatever the intent, were homophobic and that she should refrain from using the word “gay” to describe hackers and other people she thinks are idiotic, ridiculous or dumb, as it is insulting and homophobic. I also made everyone aware in that room that I'm gay, a PFLAG Member, a photojournalist working with several gay newspapers and magazines and that I was offended by such word association.

The reaction I received from other people in the room was not what I expected. Here are some responses I received:

Steve Cottrill, who claimed he has a lesbian daughter, wrote, “My youngest daughter is lesbian, and I take offense to Rudy's taking offense, so there. Don we now, our gay apparel ... that means the tight leather pants, and the open silk shirts?”

Jose-Jose Online, who claimed his best friend is gay, wrote, “Rudy, you know what — I can't agree with you — you're too extreme. You do not represent most of the gay people I know who are very level-headed and not ultra-sensitive.”

Theda, who claimed she has gay relatives and marched to support them, wrote, “I'm sure Rudy has never met a straight person. Not ever. It's astounding that people say horrifically insensitive things and then act like they've been victimized when others are bothered by it.”

Am I being overly sensitive when I tell them that when they associate

“gay” with stupid, idiotic hackers that it is offensive? If I am then sue me. Is it OK for an 18-year-old who claimed she has gay friends to keep using offensive language even after she is aware of it? My answer is a flat and loud *no*.

What does a straight person know about the sensitivity or tolerance on this issue? Just because they have gay relatives and friends doesn't mean that they know or totally understand what we have been going through.

Safe School programs were created to help teachers educate children and students to be sensitive in words they use. Every day children and others are bullied either by words or by actions. It's time for us to start educating people when they are still young about tolerance. It is not cool to use the word gay in a context that is demeaning.

If a father of a lesbian daughter and sister of a gay brother think that a straight 18-year-old can use the word gay in an offensive way then we are in for a rough ride.

So buckle up, PFLAG members, and get ready for the rough journey. Don't be afraid to tell your straight allies, friends or families members that the word “gay” does not mean idiotic, ridiculous or dumb. Ask them to start educating others and don't be afraid to defend us. The word gay means “A person whose sexual orientation is to persons of the same sex.”

What is hopeful though, is the work of Metro DC PFLAG's Safe Schools initiative, which has been established to educate people — especially those in the D.C. public schools — about GLBTQ youth and how to be supportive of them. It is their aim to reduce ignorance about gay issues and teach tolerance and understanding. ▼

Upcoming Events



FabYULEus: GMCW of Washington 25th holiday concert

Saturday, December 3 at 3:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
and Sunday, December 4 at 3:00 p.m.
Lisner Auditorium on the George Washington
University campus, 730 21st St., NW, Washington, DC

The Gay Men's chorus of Washington will present their 25th annual holiday concert with the best of beautiful music performed in past concerts along with 200 GMCW elves, leather reindeer, and a reprise of last year's hilarious Sugar Plum Fairy. Also on the bill is a new song, *Christmas in Washington*, featuring six former First Ladies.

To order tickets, visit www.gmcw.org or call (202) 293-1548.

Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School

December 11, 12:15 p.m. (as part of the Washington Jewish Film Festival)
Aaron & Cecile Goldman Theater
1529 16th St., NW, Washington, DC

See this documentary film about one student who transformed her community. Also watch excerpts from the film and talk with filmmaker Irena Fayngold and Idit Klein, producer and executive director of Keshet a non-profit organization working to create a fully inclusive and welcoming Jewish community for GLBT Jews.

You are also invited to a house party on the same day from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the home of Sybil and Steven Wolin, 3210 Newark Street NW, Washington, DC in support of the film.

RSVP to Sybil Wolin: sybilwolin@erols.com or (202) 966-8171. Visit the DCJCC website www.dcjcc.org for more information about the film. View a trailer for Hineini at www.boston-keshet.org/film ▼

Annual Meeting – continued from p. 1

Finally, Catherine Tuerk, former Metro DC PFLAG president and specialist in mental health nursing discussed her current work at Children's National Medical Center in working with children with gender variant children, constantly emphasizing that the "facts" alleged by supporters of reparative therapy could not be further from the truth, based on the work she does on a daily basis. Her findings continue to build a case for the healthy, thriving, and normal lives that can be built for

children who are supported in the development and expression of their gender identities and sexual preferences.

In the end, the panel presented a clear picture of the battles that are being faced – and are likely to continue and become more frequent – around the country. But most importantly, the event proved a major point: No matter what families, friends, and GLBT people themselves will face, PFLAG will be there to help. ▼

From the Mailbag

Submit Your Stories for an Upcoming Book!

Tell me what works in your parent/child relationship! I am writing and editing stories for a book *Mama, I'm Gay*, a book specifically targeted to GLBT teenagers and their families. I am looking for stories from both parents and teens (or from people who came out as teens). From a positive, encouraging and loving perspective, please show us what works in your parent/child relationship and what resources were helpful in creating and supporting a great relationship. I will accept stories from writers, or I can interview and write the story myself, whichever is best for those willing to share.

Names can be changed, as well as enough of the details to maintain privacy.

PFLAG in Albuquerque was very instrumental in helping me answer the questions I had about what the rules are for parenting a gay son. The literature that I found there and read helped me on my journey from bewilderment to a lovingly revised parenting style. They have been very supportive of my idea for this book and several members have contributed stories to the project. I welcome suggestions for a list of resources in the book to help other parents and teens.

All stories should be submitted by the end of Nov. 2005. I respectfully reserve the right to choose those stories best suited for the theme of the book to publish. Thank you!

Vicki Daigneau
1725 Martha NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112
vickitoriad@comcast.net
(505) 220-3301 ▼

Development News

Thank You, Metro DC PFLAG Donors and Members!

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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.

Reston, VA: Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m., Washington Plaza Baptist Church, 1615 Washington Plaza, Lake Anne Village Ctr. (First Tuesday of the month.)

Washington, DC (sign language interpreted): Dec. 5, 7:00 p.m., Galludet University, 800 Florida Ave., NE, Hall Memorial Building. (First Monday of the month.)

Alexandria, VA: Dec. 13, 8:00 p.m., Beverley Hills Community United Methodist Church, 3512 Old Dominion Blvd. (Second Tuesday of the month.)

Annandale, VA: Dec. 18, 4:30 p.m., Little River UCC, 8410 Little River Tpke. (Third Sunday of the month.)

Bethesda, MD: Dec. 18, 2:00 p.m., Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 9601 Cedar Ln. (Third Sunday of the month.)

Trans-people and their families: Dec. 18, 2:00 p.m., Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 9601 Cedar Ln. (concurrent with the monthly Bethesda support group).

Manassas, VA: Dec. 26, 7:00 p.m., Bull Run Unitarian Universalist Church, 9350 Main St. (Fourth Monday of the month.)

REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

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. If you'd like to help save postage costs (and trees) by receiving only the online edition, let us know by sending an e-mail to info@pflagdc.org.

