



The Flagpole

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

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

May 2006

It's Been A Great Pleasure ... by Rhonda Buckner

...to serve as your Executive Director for the past 5 years. I stepped down for health reasons effective April 27. I am continuing to work part time on safe schools and to help Paul Rose who has been appointed Interim Director, while the board conducts a search for the next Director. You'll hear more about Paul in the next newsletter.

I have met many wonderful people and have been so impressed with the dedication of the chapter's many past and current leaders and volunteers. I said when I came in that I felt like I had jumped on a speeding locomotive. Well, it hasn't stopped!

The chapter has experienced phenomenal growth in programs and finances. The Safe Schools program grew from a small



all volunteer effort contributing gay positive books to DC high schools to a full time Safe Schools Coordinator with 3 major initiatives, and a close collaborative relationship with the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League. So many people contributed to it's growth, but most noteworthy, I must thank Suzanne Greenfield for her dedicated leadership.

The Stay Close Campaign was an exciting program to be part of. I'm confident that there's lots more to do with that wonderful message with celebrities and their gay relatives. I fell in love with it from the beginning and I thank the NY City chapter for sharing it with us.

Our annual Honors GALA has been both a thrill and a huge challenge. Each year's volunteer teams have contributed to where we are today. It's an incredible effort of dedication by so many. I have to tell you that the Booz Allen team, this year, created the spectacular event. I am so grateful.

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One Can Change It by Barbara Warner

Have you ever wondered if one person really can make a difference? In Metro DC PFLAG, we sometimes hear people voice their opinion that they cannot make a difference and thus what is the use of stepping out and advocating for their friends or loved ones. Sometimes I feel at a loss as to what to say as it does often feel as if we are one against many when we advocate for issues that are of concern to us.

At the present time, PFLAGDC is challenged to meet

advocacy needs in Maryland and Virginia and in the near future the debate will probably begin in DC. We need every voice and every body we can find to help us make a difference. Will we prevail? I'm not sure. I hope history will repeat itself. Let me explain.

I recently learned that the Massachusetts Supreme Court outlawed slavery in 1781! At that time, in our country, slavery was considered a taboo topic. It was too controversial to handle and many just accepted that this was the way

God intended people to live.

An illiterate slave woman who overheard a conversation in her master's house about the Declaration of Independence concluded that she had as much right to experience the rights and privileges spelled out in the Constitution as anyone else.

I often think of this brave woman who took on the State of Massachusetts and won. I also often think of the members of that court who agreed and declared slavery unconstitutional because it violated the state constitution's provision of

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This month the Safe Schools Project has seen some exciting events take place. Rhonda Buckner and I had a terrific meeting with the new principal of Roosevelt High School, Dr. Husch. He expressed his support for having a LGBTQ support group and teacher trainings at the school. I conducted the first meeting of the Roosevelt group soon after. The first session had nine students and the discussion was great.

I have also been meeting with the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator, Adrian Faldivia of Bell Multicultural senior high school to find new ways of supporting that school's youth. The principal signed a letter last month expressing interest in having Metro DC PFLAG in the school. Our first goal is to provide training to teachers about the needs of sexual minority youth.

In April I had the privilege to be in attendance at the forum put on by the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL) called Confronting the Crisis: Issues Facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth Especially LGBTQ Youth of Color, in the District. This powerful symposium consisted of speakers from a number of LGBTQ supportive organizations. Suzanne Greenfield our former Safe School's Chair represented us. The forum illuminated the fact that the District's LGBTQ youth of color have not been adequately supported and as a result are in serious crisis with HIV/AIDS and homelessness at the forefront. A number of mayoral candidates attended and spoke. Everyone at the event was fired up and interested in finding new resources for DC's marginalized LGBTQ youth. SMYAL distributed an excellent report, available at their web site, www.smyal.org

The safe schools coalition building work that is spearheaded by SMYAL and includes Metro DC PFLAG, and the Youth Education Alliance (YEA) is continuing to make progress. On Monday's at SMYAL we are offering youth training sessions called SMYAL RYSE: Rainbow Youth for a Safe Education. These trainings are designed to help youth fight sexual harassment in DC public schools. They are open to youth in grades 9-12 who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, male, female, and transgender.

Finally, we met with Ms. Avise Watts, a school counselor with the Department of Mental Health, assigned to Friendship-Edison Collegiate Academy to discuss her understanding of the DCPS policy against harassment and sexual harassment in the schools.

Gratitude for Our Donors

A huge thank you to everyone who made a donation at the Gala to benefit the Safe Schools program. A total of 75 individuals and organizations donated over \$9000. Generous PFLAG donors in 2006 will be recognized the next newsletter.

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Newsletter Editor Wanted

A great opportunity for someone who wants to volunteer from home. If you would like to help, please contact Metro DC PFLAG's interim Executive Director, Paul Rose, at Paul@pflagdc.org.

Experience Pride

March and Volunteer

It's almost that time again. Saturday, June 10 will be an exhilarating time for all who come to march in the Capital Pride Parade with Metro DC PFLAG. Kick-off will be at 6:30, so plan to be there by 6. Make your own sign, carry one of ours, or just take in the love that you'll feel from the thousands of cheering GLBT people who will line the route. Bring your family members - GLBT or straight! Last year we had close to 100 people in our contingent and were recognized as "The Best Overall." If you think you're not a marcher- come anyway, you'll turn into one, I guarantee it!

On Sunday, June 11 we'll have a booth at the Capital Pride festival. We need volunteers to staff the booth all day, If you can spend two hours on a shift, please call or email the office. (info@pflagdc.org or 202-638-3852 x 0 We sell buttons , bumper stickers and other items, and give out lots of literature. We also provide referrals for parents who live in other states, so that their GLBT family member can give them contact information where ever they live. We need lots of help that day, and some to prepare for the event as well. Please call us to help out.

"Many communities, all proud" is the theme of Pride this year. Come celebrate the diversity of the gay community and learn about the breadth of the work that the community is engaged in. Also come to express your support for GLBT equality. Now, as much as ever, we need to demonstrate that there is widespread support.

A BIG THANKS

Jean-Marie Navetta has been our newsletter editor for 2 years. She updated our layout, added more news, asked members for interviews, started our online version, improved the newsletter and got it out in a timely manner. Jean-Marie also hosted a GALA table for the last 2 years.

A few months ago, National PFLAG made a great decision to hire Jean-Marie as their Communications Manager. We are grateful for her dedication and skills.

Home for an Intern

Lindsey Duchac, a 22 year old student at UNC, PFLAG member and YMCA counselor, is looking for housing from mid May to mid august. Her contact info is: linds0083@aol.com

CAN YOU HELP?

Facilitator needed for Reston Support Group. If you have one evening a month to give, you could make a difference in someone's life. PFLAG will provide the training, all you need is an open heart and a desire to help families as they deal with issue of coming out. The Reston group meets at 7:30 pm on the first Tuesday of the month. Please call Maryanne Warrick, Metro DC Support Group Coordinator, at 703-815-905, if you can help.

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I love parades and I'll always remember the thrill of marching in the Pride parades with PFLAG and the 2005 St. Patrick's Day Parade. Attending my first support group and years later being told by a participant in that group how helpful it was to hear my story is another special memory. And finally, I have to tell you that meeting the many people who work for our corporate sponsors and seeing the support that they have provided to our chapter has been inspiring.

The list of special people is too long to do justice, staff members over the years, and many volunteers. A few that I must thank from the bottom of my heart, at the risk of leaving some out: Barbara Warner, Allen Keiswetter, Bob Kenney, Sandy Loiterstein, Beano Solomon, Bob Bernstein, James Millner, Maryanne Warrick, Jean-Marie Navetta, Richard Lewis, Jody Huckaby, Cas Growchowski and the late Joan Van Stone who put her heart and soul into the chapter before I came on board and for my first 2 years. Last but not least, a special thank you to my partner, Diane Ullius, who supported me in this job from the beginning and helped in countless ways and my many friends and my dad who have supported me by supporting Metro DC PFLAG financially, as volunteers, and as members.

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equal protection under the law. At that time, it must have seemed a bold step but also the correct step.

It would be a long time before this position was accepted across our land. Virginia would fight against this idea and Maryland would fight for it. The battles carried heavy human costs for both sides of the Civil War.

I can only hope that Massachusetts will lead the way again on gay marriage but I hope it won't take almost a hundred years and then more to realize the rightness of their position again. I know it is not easy to be the person who makes a difference but we need our members and friends to be bold, to step forward and join us in our fight for equal rights for all.

The Flagpole

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Our goal is to help families heal
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