

PFLAG FLYER

The Official Newsletter of
Parents, Families, and Friends of
Lesbians and Gays of Houston, TX

PO Box 53796
Houston, Texas 77052-3796
HelpLine: 713-867-9020

WWW: <http://www.pflaghtx.org> (See article)

January 1996

Next Meeting January 7

Religion: "Power of Inclusion"

Many gays and lesbians go home for the holidays. Depending on the situation, this can be a difficult time. Many revisit family churches and temples. For many religion brings up issues of shame and confusion when it comes to sexual orientation. This month we will be joined by various religious leaders to discuss "The Power of Inclusion." As of press time, confirmed speakers are Rev. Wes Seeliger of St. Francis Episcopal Church and Rev. Jim Bankston of St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Join us for an interesting and non-typical look at the power of inclusion.

Join us from 2:00pm-4:30pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, off San Felipe between Voss & Gessner.

After our large group session, join us in one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss issues, concerns, and celebrations with others in a safe environment. If you are new to PFLAG and have recently found out about your gay or lesbian loved one, than our Family & Friends First Timers group is for you. There are special groups for Spouse Support, HIV Concerns, and Advocacy. Come join us as we begin a new year of Support, Education, and Advocacy.



1995 Black Tie Dinner News

PFLAG Receives High Honor

On Monday, December 18, the 1995 Houston Black Tie Dinner announced the generous gifts to the local Houston charities honored by this year's dinner. PFLAG Houston was honored for the second time this year. In 1994, PFLAG Houston received \$9,100 as a result of the Black Tie Dinner's generosity.



A Letter from the Presidents

Introducing the "Penta Prez"

As many of you already know, we are trying a new approach to P-FLAG leadership for 1996. You will have 5 presidents, and the name Penta Prez seems to be sticking. You will be seeing each of us sharing the leadership roles throughout the year, including columns such as this in the newsletter.

The fearsome, frenetic, fanciful, fun-loving, fabulous fivesome includes me, Pat Rickey, Gail Rickey, Barbara Winston, and Norma and Dick Graves. The job has simply grown beyond what any one of us was comfortable committing to, so we hatched this approach as a way to share the duties, encourage synergism of ideas, support each other, and hopefully to set a precedent for teamwork throughout the activities of Houston P-FLAG.

Very broadly we will split the three objectives of P-FLAG, with the Graves taking care of **Support**, Barbara Winston handling **Education**, and Gail and I concentrating on **Advocacy**. We hope you will go directly to the appropriate Prez with suggestions, questions and volunteering of your time wherever you have the most interest. We believe a team approach is the right model for almost all our activities. We can all contribute where our time and talents fit best, without feeling like we will be sucked into a never-ending whirlpool of commitment that makes us sorry we volunteered for anything.

We and the rest of the board will be calling on many of you to contribute during the year, as we have big plans for the future. Please say yes if you can when we ask for your help, and we will promise to be sensitive to everyone's limits in this busy world if you have to say no. One of our big goals for 1996 is to develop new leadership and to encourage and nurture already budding leaders. We intend to work ourselves out of a job eventually. With the team organization, new leaders can get their feet wet in one specific area, without having to handle all the different contacts and networks that we have and are developing. If we can work effectively as a team, we can all contribute a little (well, maybe more than a little in some

Upcoming Events

| | |
|------------|--|
| Jan. 7 | PFLAG Monthly Mtg., St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, 2:00pm-4:30pm |
| Jan. 15 | LGRL Pledge Training (See article) |
| Feb. 4 | PFLAG Meeting |
| Feb. 17 | "Homosexuality and Education" Seminar sponsored by PFLAG Houston, PFLAG Victoria and H.A.T.C.H (See article) |
| Mar. 3 | PFLAG Meeting |
| Mar. 6 | "Voices of Hope" Catholic Parents Network (See article) |
| Mar. 16-22 | PFLAG Bus Trip to DC (See Page 3 Articles) |

Introducing the 1996 PFLAG Houston Board of Directors

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| Penta Prez: | Dick & Norma Graves Gail & Pat Rickey Barbara Winston |
| Vice Pres: | Alan & Jane Montgomery |
| Secretary: | John Bush |
| Treasurer: | Lee Baker |
| Membership: | Jane & Irv Smith |
| Helpline: | Judy Filippone |
| Sm. Groups: | Carol Edens |
| Library: | Dale & Gail Adcock |
| Advocacy: | Mary K. Jones |
| Open Mind: | Susan Upchurch |
| Newsletter: | Doug Upchurch |
| Publicity: | Tim Curfman, Kyle Young |
| Fundraising: | Bill Gilmer |
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Congratulations to our 1996 Board of

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1995 is a little different. It's better! We are honored and grateful to announce that the 1995 Houston Black Tie Dinner presented PFLAG Houston with a generous gift of \$9,800. PFLAG Houston is honored by the generosity of the Houston Black Tie Dinner attendees. Thank you all for your this honor and your generosity.

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Welcome to 1996, Houston P-FLAG members and supporters! With the team we're building, we CAN change the world.

Pat Rickey

Point, 2:00pm-4:30pm

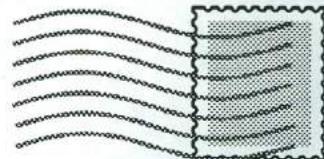
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Congratulations to our 1996 Board of Directors! Here's to an exciting year full of new adventures, opportunities and challenges!!!





News from Around the Nation

Group Accepts Homosexual Rabbis

Reform Judaism moving to welcome gays, lesbians

Reform Judaism's synagogue umbrella group said this week that rabbis' sexual orientation should have no bearing on whether they are hired. Meeting in Atlanta, more than 1,000 delegates at the biennial convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations overwhelmingly backed a resolution that was called the next logical step in Reform Judaism's effort to bring gay and lesbian Jews into the religious mainstream.

The UAHC first began reaching out to Jewish homosexuals in 1987 when it voted "to encourage" homosexual Jews to participate fully in synagogue life. In 1990, the Reform rabbinic body - the Central Conference of American Rabbis - said all of its seminary graduates would be admitted for membership regardless of their sexual orientation.

The resolution approved on November 30, 1995 said "it is now appropriate to build upon this progress" and further "promote equal employment and leadership opportunities within the UAHC, its affiliates and its congregations."

Some 850 synagogues in the United States and Canada belong to UAHC, the lead institution within the liberal Reform movement. Reform Judaism has 1.5 million members in North America, excluding Mexico, said organization spokeswoman Emily Grotta. There are about 5.5 million Jews in the region which includes the United States, Canada and US Virgin Islands.

From Beacon Journal wire services, Reprinted from PFLAG Akron Newsletter

PFLAG Houston 'Surfs the Web'

Announcing the PFLAG Houston Internet Home Page

What is the Internet and What is a World Wide Web Page?

The Internet is a world wide set of computers that are all interconnected. It is often referred to as the Information Superhighway because of the similarity between an interstate connecting numerous cities. One of the most exciting features of the Internet is the World Wide Web. The Web can be described as the billboards on the Information Superhighway. Many companies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions have set up what they call a Web Page, or Home Page. A Web Page is a place on the Internet that people across the world can visit simply by typing in the address of the web page. All that a person needs is a piece of software on their computer called a Web browser. (This feature is currently available on CompuServe, American Online, and Prodigy among other online services.)

What does this have to do with PFLAG Houston?

Beginning around January 15th, PFLAG Houston will be one of only 3 other chapters to have their own Home Page. At the address, <http://www.pflaghtx.org>, PFLAG Houston will have the ability to communicate numerous amounts of information to "Net Surfers" around the globe. Our Web Page will include an Internet Edition of this newsletter, information about the Washington Bus Trip, helpful brochures and book lists, and even links to other "PFLAG Friendly" Web Pages.

This is a very exciting opportunity for PFLAG Houston to educate a different group of people. The anonymity of the Internet means that people in rural areas of the state, nation and even the world will now have access to information about having gay and lesbian family members. We also anticipate many young closeted gays and lesbians will visit our home page. For these visitors, we will provide information on coming out to family members and where to find positive, supportive resources in their area. There will even be a way for visitors to find a PFLAG chapter in their area using PFLAG National's special email address.

We are very excited about this innovative use of technology to educate and support those in the Internet community. We are also very excited about our Internet Service provider, InSync, Inc. InSync is one of the leading internet companies in Houston. When approached regarding working with PFLAG Houston, he was more than willing, he was supportive of our cause and purpose. Thanks to InSync for their willingness to help us in this exciting new endeavor for PFLAG Houston! See you on the Web!!!

P.S. Don't worry if none of the above article made any sense whatsoever. What

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Check Your Bookshelves

PFLAG Library Needs Your Help

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Seminar for Educators

"Homosexuality & Education?"

PFLAG Houston, PFLAG Victoria, & H.A.T.C.H. are proud to co-sponsor and announce the seminar "What Does Homosexuality Have to Do With Education? An Answer." GLSTN Executive Director and Healing the Hurt 95 Speaker Kevin Jennings will discuss the work which led to Massachusetts becoming the first state in the nation to ban discrimination against students in K-12 public schools as well as GLSTN's ongoing national efforts to make school safe places for all youth.

GLSTN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Teachers Network) strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation.

WHEN: Sat, Feb. 17, 1996, 2:00pm

WHERE: Grace Lutheran Church,
2515 Waugh Dr., Houston

For more information call 713-942-7002 and press 4. Mark your calendars now and look for more info next month!

Straight Spouses Fact File

Adapted from NY Times Article

- ▼ Between 2 and 4 million Americans are or were married to gay, lesbian or bisexual partners, usually unknowingly.
- ▼ 20-35% of lesbians and gay men marry. Society's message: Homosexuality is wrong, therefore suppress the urge

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P.S. Don't worry if none of the above article made any sense whatsoever. What you need to know is that PFLAG Houston is now broadcasting our message worldwide across the Internet. That is Exciting!!!



Surf the Net With PFLAG Houston

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- ▼ 20-35% of lesbians and gay men marry. Society's message: Homosexuality is wrong, therefore suppress the urge.
- ▼ 95% of gay men were aware of same-sex feelings before marriage; 90% had acted on those feelings. They believed marriage would make them straight.
- ▼ When a husband comes out, 15% of couples remain married.

Together, We Will

Here's the latest Bus Trip Update letter sent to all PFLAG local chapters.

As you may remember, one of the "keys to success" for this project is to have representation from as many states as possible. To date, we've gotten responses from more than 20 states, including Alaska. One day we opened our mailbox to find letters from Anchorage, Alaska, saying that two people will participate, and from Columbia/Howard County, Maryland, reporting that 20 people plan to attend. Collectively, these two responses exemplify the spirit that we are aiming for: states that are distant from Washington sending at least a few representatives, and states that are close to the capital expanding our numbers.

Chapters in several parts of the country are organizing group transportation for their area. The Southern Route bus, departing from Houston on March 16, will pass through eight states, and hopes to pick up passengers in each state. In Flagstaff, Arizona, Molly Lind has developed a plan to travel via Amtrak, and has sent out a call to chapters along the route to join in. (Contact Molly via email at bob1330@aol.com.) Members of several P-FLAG chapters report interest in a Northern Route Bus and a New England Bus, but to our knowledge, no definite plans have been made. Meanwhile, many chapters are promoting the project at their meetings and through their newsletters. To help YOU promote the project, here is some additional information:

PROJECT LOGO: See Article and logo at right.

REASON FOR PROJECT: Our goals are to put a "face" on the parents of gays and lesbians, and to raise awareness of the issues that are so critical to the well-being of our children. Specifically, we will lobby for the passage of ENDA (Employment Non Discrimination Act), but, ENDA is not the reason that we have launched this project. We were looking for ways to advocate for equal rights in a visual way, and ENDA is proving to be an effective vehicle for doing so. Whatever the status of ENDA at the time of our visit, we know that our trip will be effective. By our very presence as a group, standing on the steps of the nation's Capitol to advocate for our children, we WILL be successful.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS: The overall concept is for persons who are not gay to stand up for persons who are gay. In addition to parents of gays and lesbians, some of the leaders of the project, both in Houston and in chapters across the country, are non-gay allies--people who believe in justice and equality, and who recognize that all of society suffers when discrimination is tolerated.

FUNDRAISING: Gay and lesbian members or our local chapter have initiated a variety of fund-raising projects to help individual participants with expenses. "Help send our parents to Washington for Spring Break," some of them say, as they turn to their friends for donations. If you are distant from Washington, your chapter might consider raising enough money to send one or two participants.

HOTEL ROOMS IN WASHINGTON: Our travel agent, Coy Tow (800-856-1835) is making the final arrangements in reserving a block of hotel rooms in Washington. Call Coy to find out the details. We will post the information on the PFLAG Chapters bulletin board on AOL, and send it to all Regional Directors and to all participants who contact us.

PROJECT EVENTS: Our TENTATIVE plans include a media event on the steps of the Capitol on Tuesday, March 19, an ecumenical service on the Mall on the evening of March 19, and a visit to the Holocaust Museum on Wednesday, March 20. Details WILL follow!!

LOBBYING/Paying A Call to Members of Congress: We encourage all participants to make appointments with their Senator and U.S. Representative. This is critical to the success of the project. How to lobby? Our primary purpose is to visit with Members of Congress and explain our concerns by talking about our families. If you want specific tips on how to lobby, Human Rights Campaign has a good video that they will send free of charge. Those of us on the Southern Bus are hoping to have a lobbying expert ride with us on short legs of the trip to talk about lobbying. (With three days on the road to D.C., we'll have plenty of time to practice!)

HOW YOU CAN HELP, Whether You Can Travel to D.C. or not: We are very interested in accessing every "big name" person we can. Who do you know?

- ▼ Persons on the political scene whom we can ask to be part of a media event
- ▼ Entertainers/others with national visibility who have gay children
- ▼ National media contacts (We are dreaming BIG.)

Please provide your input to mail/phone/fax/e-mail address listed below.

PFLAG FLYER



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Bus Trip Logo Contest Winner

Mike Fertitta designs a winner!

After months of searching, we have a logo for the Moms & Dads Go to Washington Bus Trip. Seen below, this exciting full color logo portrays the image of parents, family members, or friends standing in support of their gay or lesbian loved ones. Designed by Mike Fertitta of PFLAG Houston, the logo has already made its debut on letterhead and the World Wide Web page of PFLAG Houston. Congratulations and a BIG Thank You, Mike! What a Great Job!

Our newsletter editor converted the design to a clip art file (bitmap graphic file) that we can send you via e-mail (patrickey@aol.com). If you prefer, send us a disk and we'll mail you the computer file. We plan to make T-shirts (some of our local sages have advised that long-sleeve T's might be best for mid-March in D.C.), and we will probably make them available to other chapters. Stay tuned! You are welcome to make copies of either the black and white or color design in this letter and use them for your own promotions or products.



LGRL Launches Pledge Project

Training Rescheduled for Jan. 15

Dianne Hardy-Garcia will be in Houston on January 15 from 7pm - 9pm for a special training session on LGRL's new "Pledge Project." The Pledge is a new campaign to get Texans across the state to sign a pledge to help end hate crimes in Texas. With a great logo and a message that all Texans can commit to, LGRL is hoping to get thousands of signed pledge cards returned before the next legislative session.

This friendly campaign will allow us to talk to our neighbors, family members, friends, and co-workers about the hate crimes issue in a way that will make sense to people of all political and philosophical backgrounds. There will be plenty of extra Pledge cards at the January Meeting for you to pick up and use during the next few months.

If you are interested in being a speaker

FUTURE COMMUNICATION ON PROJECT: All future mailings will be to those

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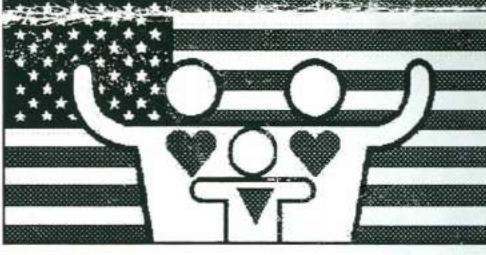
FUTURE COMMUNICATION ON PROJECT: All future mailings will be to those who request to be on our mailing list. Practically speaking, we will do more frequent updates via e-mail than by U.S. mail, so if you have chapter members on Internet, you may want to ask them to be the contact points. We will not discriminate against non-Internet-ers, however, so the most important thing is to let us know you're interested in being on our communication list.

Mailing Address: Gail & Pat Rickey, 13114 Holston Hills, Houston, TX 77069

Phone: 713-440-0353; **Fax:** 713-440-1902; **E-mail:** pat rickey@aol.com

After months of searching, we have a logo for the Moms & Dads Go to Washington Bus Trip. Seen below, this exciting full color logo portrays the image of parents, family members, or friends standing in support of their gay or lesbian loved ones. Designed by Mike Fertitta of PFLAG Houston, the logo has already made its debut on letterhead and the World Wide Web page of PFLAG Houston. Congratulations and a BIG Thank You, Mike! What a Great Job!

Our newsletter editor converted the design to a clip art file (bitmap graphic file) that we can send you via e-mail (pat rickey@aol.com). If you prefer, send us a disk and we'll mail you the computer file. We plan to make T-shirts (some of our local sages have advised that long-sleeve T's might be best for mid-March in D.C.), and we will probably make them available to other chapters. Stay tuned! You are welcome to make copies of either the black and white or color design in this letter and use them for your own promotions or products.



LGRL Launches Pledge Project

Training Rescheduled for Jan. 15

Dianne Hardy-Garcia will be in Houston on January 15 from 7pm - 9pm for a special training session on LGRL's new "Pledge Project." The Pledge is a new campaign to get Texans across the state to sign a pledge to help end hate crimes in Texas. With a great logo and a message that all Texans can commit to, LGRL is hoping to get thousands of signed pledge cards returned before the next legislative session.

This friendly campaign will allow us to talk to our neighbors, family members, friends, and co-workers about the hate crimes issue in a way that will make sense to people of all political and philosophical backgrounds. There will be plenty of extra Pledge cards at the January Meeting for you to pick up and use during the next few months.

If you are interested in being a speaker for the Pledge Project, join Dianne at Bering UMC for this special training session as PFLAG supports LGRL's launch of the Pledge. If you have any questions, as always, please contact the Helpline at 867-9020.

PFLAG Flyer

The Official Newsletter of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Houston, Texas

April 1996

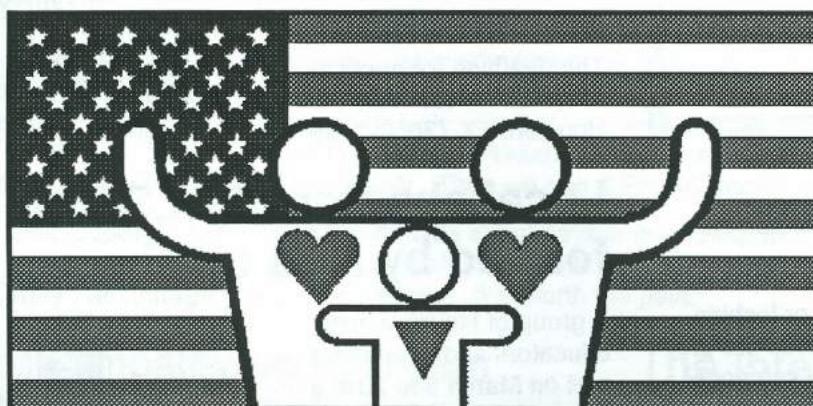
<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



Moms, Dads, DC, & ENDA

Washington will never be the same...



Over 175 parents descended onto our nation's capital and made sure that everyone they met knew about their gay and lesbian kids!

On Saturday, March 16th, over 30 Houston & Victoria PFLAGers boarded a bus headed through the southern United States headed for Washington, DC. Their goal was to make sure that our elected officials knew who they were affecting when they try to pass legislation that affects our gay and lesbian loved ones.

Joined in DC by over 150 other supportive PFLAGers from 28 states, the parents were ready to lobby their government. With the Employment Non-Discrimination Act proposed in the House and Senate, the PFLAGers had the target in their sites: increase support for ENDA. When it was all said and done, ENDA had received 2 new co-sponsors and everyone in DC knew who PFLAG was.

Whether it was Sen. Ted Kennedy from Massachusetts or Sen. Jesse Helms from South Carolina, PFLAGers from all over America met with elected officials and made sure the legislators were aware of who PFLAG is and why they were in Washington.

For PFLAG Houston, it was also a journey through the South meeting with other PFLAG chapters across the southern United States. In Mobile, AL, the local PFLAG chapter was only 1 woman 4 months ago. The bus riders however found this, now, 3 person chapter hosted a huge country western dinner and dance. They even taught us Texans a thing or two about line dancing.

When the group arrived back in Houston on March 23rd, it was obvious they were all affected by their experiences. Many mentioned a new found boldness at speaking out about their gay and lesbian children. Others realized how much they could do just be speaking to their elected officials. And whether it was the lesbian couple in Alabama or the gay waiters in DC, I am sure that each of the PFLAGers came back to Houston with new friends they had met along the way.

Next Meeting Apr. 14

Hear Reports from the Bus Trip

Have you heard the story about Jesse Helms and Don Sinclair in an elevator? What about Fred Wilson and the Cracker Barrel? No matter what you have heard, I'm sure you haven't heard it all.

Join us this month and hear reports, stories, and reflections from the Houston PFLAGers that went to Washington, DC to lobby for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, off San Felipe between Voss & Gessner.

After our large group session, join us in one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss issues, concerns and celebrations with others in a safe, confidential environment.

If you are new to PFLAG and have recently found out about your gay or lesbian loved one, than our Family & Friends First Timers group is for you. There are also special groups for Spouse Support, HIV Concerns, & Advocacy. So plan to join us this month! We hope to see you there!

We hope you like the new look of the PFLAG Flyer!

Here's what's inside...

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Schedule of Events

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| Apr. 14 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting, St. Francis Episcopal Church 345 North Piney Point **Note date change** |
| Apr. 20 | Speaker's Bureau Training Workshop, (See Article) |
| Apr. 27-28 | PFLAG Booth at Houston International Festival 1996 |
| May 5 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting |
| Jun. 2 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting |

Last month's meeting...

Khris S. Ford on The Grief Process
by Judy Filippone

Nothing in our culture prepares us for a gay or lesbian child! Our dreams and expectations for our kids are pre-programmed for a heterosexual child. When someone "comes out" to his or her family, how many times have we heard parents say that they feel as though they have lost their child, or, they feel that their child has died?

At our March meeting, Khris S. Ford, M.Ed., from Transitions: Centre for Grief, Growth, and Aliveness, gave us workable strategies for moving forward through the grieving process that often follows learning that our child is gay or lesbian. By experiencing and accepting our loss of the dreams and expectations we had for our child as *our grief*, we allow ourselves to choose the outcome of our grieving process. Ms. Ford suggests we write a list of the dreams we have for our child. Creating a written image of our dreams allows us to recognize what we are grieving, and what is still possible.

Ms. Ford defined for us the many layers of loss and how each affects us with an overwhelming sense of sadness and/or anger. By acknowledging these feelings, we are more likely to express them in appropriate ways rather than indirectly. She described how grief is a "whole body experience," eventuating in physical symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty breathing, changes in eating and sleeping habits, poor concentration, and difficulty coping.

The power to choose the outcome emerges when we "create a new picture" of the person we want to be after we have fully integrated our grieving process. We create a picture of who we want to be in our relationship to our child, and who we want to be in relationship to our life partner. By creating this new picture, we have a template from which to ask ourselves what this kind of person would do or feel in a given situation. Thus, our choices enable us to determine the outcome, to create new dreams and expectations.

PFLAG Houston Announces 1996 Scholarship Program

Recognizing the limited specific opportunities for gay and lesbian youth and the acute need for positive role models, PFLAG Houston has announced its 1996 Scholarship Program. The program is designed to recognize outstanding gay or lesbian students and to contribute toward their continuing education.

The award consists of \$1,000 each year for four years to recognize outstanding achievement in the areas of academic excellence, leadership, and extra-curricular activities by a gay or lesbian student.

The deadline for application is April 27, 1996. For more information, contact PFLAG Houston, P.O. Box 53796, Houston, TX 77052-3796, 713-867-9020

Local chapter of GLSTN is formed by area teachers

A group of Houston area educators and supporters met on March 5 to form a local chapter of GLSTN - the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network. National Executive Director Kevin Jennings was in Houston last month, co-sponsored by H.A.T.C.H., PFLAG Houston, & PFLAG Victoria. Jennings gave a dynamic presentation to an audience of about 50 at Grace Lutheran Church. "Every 5 hours and 48 minutes a gay youth dies," said Jennings. "Every time we teach, somebody dies."



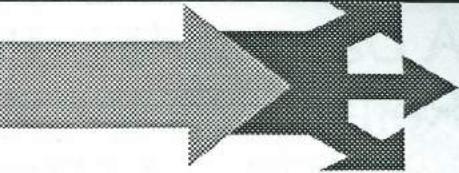
GLSTN strives to assure that every member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation. Statistics show that 28 percent of all gay youth drop out of school - three times the national average.

Both PFLAG and H.A.T.C.H. are lending strong support to the formation of the local GLSTN chapter. They feel that their combined efforts will help more school administrators, parents, and faculty become aware of the need for intervention on behalf of all youth - gay, lesbian, & straight - to combat homophobia in all schools.

The local chapter of GLSTN meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 8:00pm at the First Universal Unitarian Church, 5200 Fannin @ Southmore. All concerned educators, parents, and anyone interested are encouraged to attend. For more information on this local chapter, please call 942-7002, box 4. The national organization of GLSTN can be reached at 212-727-0135, or GLSTN@glstn.org.

Reprinted from OutSmart

PFLAG In Action



My Story, By Edna E. Martin

My story may help parents to "come out of the closet" as I did. You see, I have a daughter who is a lesbian, and I love her, and I am very proud of her. It all began at a United Methodist Women meeting at Terrace United Methodist Church, where I am a member. Someone was telling about the wonderful work Don and Kathy Sinclair are doing at Bering United Methodist Church, and about Kathy coming to our church to talk about AIDS. Suddenly I knew I needed to tell my story.

I believe it was God's plan for me to do this, and all that followed was God's work through me. I was so scared! My heart was pounding. My hands were dripping with sweat. I was trembling all over. The thought came to me that no one would ever speak to me again, or someone would say something ugly about gays and I would be embarrassed and hurt. So I sat in misery until the meeting was about to end.

Just before the closing I managed to say, "I have something I need to say." Then I said that I knew Don and Kathy Sinclair because they are active in an organization where I was a member. It is called Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, or PFLAG. No one said anything ugly -- in fact, my dear 84 year old friend sitting beside me said, "God loves them too." On the way out of the meeting the new President asked me to see about getting a speaker from PFLAG. Next, I was asked to be Vice-President of our UMW. Then we had a PFLAG panel at our February meeting.

Our pastor, Don Goodwin, has written two articles about gays in our newspaper, and included a story in a sermon that was told by one of our panel members, about his relationship with his daughter who is a lesbian. The story just keeps unfolding. So parents, may I encourage you to step forward - it is worth the pain.

Notes of Sympathy and Concern

- ◆ PFLAG Houston extends their sympathy to the family of Pat and Gail Rickey on the loss of Gail's father, Mr. D.C. Barber, Jr. of Hendersonville, NC, on Thursday, March 21.
- ◆ PFLAG Houston also wants to wish a speedy recovery to Ron DuPre who underwent unexpected surgery early in March.



PFLAG Speakers Bureau Wants You!

Attend the Speakers Bureau Training Workshop

If you are reading this, then the PFLAG Houston Speakers Bureau wants you! Your story and your experiences could be the catalyst to help someone else better understand and appreciate our gay, lesbian, & bisexual children.

You don't have to be a public speaker to be on the Speakers Bureau and you don't have to have some "amazing" story. You just have to be yourself and have a desire to dispel the myths about our gay, lesbian, & bisexual loved ones.

The PFLAG Houston Speakers Bureau is getting more and more requests each week for speaking engagements across Houston and even across Texas. If you would like to be a part of the Speakers Bureau, there will be a training workshop on Saturday April 20 from 10:00am until 5:00pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church. Lunch will be provided.

You must RSVP by April 15. You may sign up at the April meeting or call Barbara Winston at 464-3163.

The International Festival '96

PFLAG Houston: Out & Proud

P-FLAG plans to have a booth at the International Festival. This will be a chance to inform thousands of Houstonians of our existence, give out literature, and sell T-shirts and buttons. More importantly, it will be a chance to spread the message that it really is O.K. to be gay, or to have gay friends and family.

In order to have this booth, however, we must have your help. We need volunteers to staff the booth for 2 hour slots on the weekend of April 27th - 28th. The hours are from 10:30 A.M. to 8:30 P.M. (Including setup and break-down time.) We plan to have two people staffing the booth at all times, so round up a friend!

Please call Tim Curfman at 528-3589 if you would be interested in being an Out and Proud P-FLAGer at the Houston International Festival.

A Note from Down Under

The following message was received through our Internet Site at <http://www.pflaghtx.org>. Stop by and take a look if you haven't already.

Hello. Just a message to say that I think Pflag is a wonderful organisation and that the work you are doing is very important and (even speaking from a few thousand kilometers away) much appreciated. Keep it up and the best wishes in the world to all of you.

Thank you all!
K Adey,
Canberra Australia.

A Daughter's Letter: Reflections on DC

by Diana Morrow, Daughter of Donna DeCamp

The following letter was written by a lesbian daughter who shared part of the "Moms and Dads Go To Washington" experience with her mother and stepfather. From her home in New York City, Diana Morrow traveled by train to Washington, D.C. and met them at their hotel on Monday evening, March 18.

To: Mom & Don
Subject: For Mom & Don, from your favorite princess
[Ed Note: "Princess" is the name of the magazine Diana publishes]

I wrote you a letter as soon as I got home from D.C. But it's been sitting on my desk so I decided to e-mail it to you instead because I wanted you to get it as soon as possible. Anyway, here's my letter:

I wanted to let you guys know that I had a very intriguing experience with you in D.C. I learned a lot. But first of all, I think I owe you an apology. I'm sorry if I have seemed sort of apprehensive or unenthusiastic about P-FLAG stuff. I think it's taken me a little while to warm up to the fact that you two are becoming quite involved in an aspect of my life that I never expected you would. I think it's great that you are; it's just a surprise to see how much you've become involved, and, well, I just didn't know what to make of it. And maybe, too, I feel a little shy and unworthy of this kind of attention, the fact that you guys think I've done so much and been so brave... I am, however, more than glad that I could be the catalyst that has gotten you involved in such activities, doing very important and very necessary work. It's also taken me by surprise that you've come so far, so fast. I mean, just a year or so ago, I felt like you maybe didn't take me or my political views very seriously, and now we're in agreement on many things. Who would have thought?? I especially enjoyed our conversation at dinner when we went to Trumpets. [Ed Note: "Trumpets" is a gay bar in DC.] I felt like we communicated on a level that we hadn't before. It was pretty amazing to me.

It was an important experience, I think, that I was at the vigil. It was moving to see all the parents who have come so far, who have not only moved from denial to acceptance, but to fighting for their kids. I am more than appreciative of all the work that you have done. I'm very proud of your efforts, and I thank you. You are making important contributions to a revolution that has really only just begun.

So here's to further learning, sharing, struggling and growing.

With much love,
Diana

A Mother's Reasoning,

by Nita K. Pierce, Waco PFLAGer and Mom

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Nita Pierce, one of the PFLAGers from Waco that was a part of the Bus Bunch.

At my first P-FLAG meeting I learned of a trip to Washington that loving, non-gay moms and dads, brothers and sisters, grandparents and cousins, aunts and uncles, and friends of lesbians and gays are making in mid-March, from many states, hoping to meet with their congress members regarding the Employee Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Of course I would go. But the amount of resistance I have received from family and friends was anything but expected.

"You can't do that."
"You'll be ostracized."
"You'll get hate mail."
"You'll lose your job."
"You could be hurt or killed."

But how can I envision - yes, expect - a world where prejudice and oppression are no longer rampant, if I don't seize an opportunity that God has given me to speak out against these travesties? How can I expect a world where my son is once again judged on merit and character instead of sexual orientation, or a world where lonely teens and adults, locked in silence of fear and isolation have someone to whom they can turn, if I don't do my part.

A Gay Son's Response,

by Todd Pierce, Son of Nita K. Pierce

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Todd Pierce in response to his mother's going to Washington, DC.

My mom is going to Washington, DC, to defend the dignity and safety of gay citizens. She understands that being gay is not a sin, a choice, a phase, or a disease. While others want to make who I love the issue, she wants to make justice, respect, liberty, and community the issue. She understands that hatred as well as indifference are a threat to the well-being, opportunities, and rights of gays and lesbians in the U.S. Her conscience will not permit her to be silent while others suffer alone or are openly persecuted. She is going to Washington for herself, for her son, and for parents, friends, and families who may be unaware of how homophobia kills, isolates and hurts everyone....

She is a phenomenal woman to face the hostility, misinformation, and ignorance that oppresses gays and lesbians. She understands that laws that punish us for who we are, are unjust. She understands that hatred can promote violence, and that indifference keeps gays and lesbians in danger.

She knows that silence promotes fear that keeps parents and children apart, alone, and ashamed...She knows that being gay is not a curse or a terrible fate. She has a story to tell: it is her personal experience that can help and heal others....She is the greatest mom in the world.

On the lighter side...

An airline worker, whose last name is Gay, was using his free flight program recently. He got on the plane and found the free seat assigned to him occupied by a paying passenger. Mr. Gay took a seat nearby. Another of his company's flights waiting at the airport ran into mechanical problems. Airline officials, equipped with a list of freebie ticket-holders, began asking non-paying passengers to give up their seats to make way for paying passengers from the other plane. Going to the seat assigned to the airline employee, a ticket agent asked, "Are you gay?" Somewhat taken aback, the passenger nodded yes, at which the agent said, "Then you'll have to get off." Mr. Gay overheard the conversation and decided to clear up the confusion. "You've got the wrong man. I'm Gay." A third passenger, having heard the exchange, angrily said, "Hell, I'm gay, too. They can't kick us all off!" The mass confusion was soon cleared up, and no one had to give up his seat because of sexual orientation!

This is a true story from *The Second Stone*, a national news journal for gay and lesbian Christians, their families, friends, & relatives.
Reprinted from PFLAG Phoenix Newsletter.

Plan now to attend 1996 PFLAG National Conference in D.C.

PFLAG's 15th Annual Conference will be held October 11-14, 1996, at the Crystal City Marriott in Washington, DC. The theme is *"Love Takes Action: Building a Nation of Equality."* This year the conference coincides with National Coming Out Day and with the historic display of the Names Project Memorial Quilt.

Conference attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in "PFLAG Lobby Days" prior to Conference '96. More information will be available as the dates approach, but mark your calendars now and plan to attend this exciting event.

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

Here's the scoop...there are thousands of gay, lesbian, and bisexual men and women out there that are living in the closet because their religion is keeping the door closed. I was one of those closeted by religion. When I came out of the closet, it wasn't a fun experience. I was kicked out of my church and "disowned" by all of my church friends. Although it may seem unique, my story is far from it. Every Sunday, there is someone that is being ostracized because they have decided to accept their sexual orientation in spite of their learned religious beliefs. Recently a dear friend of mine was one of those ostracized. A leader in music and outreach he was looked at as a failure because he did not "continue to fight the demons within." Fortunately, my friend was not alone. There were others in his church that had experienced the same expulsion. I don't know that we can change the religious beliefs of some, but we can definitely be an oasis of support for those that are courageous enough to step out of the closet of denial and into the light of truth. Think about it...

Thanks again to all the parents that went to DC. Please jot down your thoughts, recollections, and stories and send them in! Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougupc@blcinc.com by e-mail! The deadline for the May newsletter is April 24. ☺ ♥ ▼

Join Us in the Work of PFLAG

PFLAG Houston belongs to the national organization Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc, with more than 350 local chapters and contacts. Our chapter is made up of parents, families and friends of lesbian and gay persons, and of lesbians and gay men. The financial support of members and contributors enables our chapter to expand our outreach to the community.

I / We would like to join P-FLAG HOUSTON:

Family/Couple: \$40 _____

Individual: \$25 _____

Student/Limited Income: \$10 _____

Your donation is tax deductible

PFLAG Houston is a Non-Profit

501 (c)(3) organization

(I.D. #76-0372-170)

I / We don't wish to join, but would like to contribute to the work of P-FLAG HOUSTON \$ ____.

Name(s): _____

Home Ph: (____) _____ () Please mark

*Mailing Address: _____

Office Ph: (____) _____ () confidentiality

Street Address: _____

FAX: (____) _____ () required on

City & State: _____

Pager: (____) _____ () these phones.

Zip+4: _____

e-mail: _____ ()

* The P-FLAG National Newsletter will be mailed "open" to this address unless you check here: _____
Please make all checks payable to and mail to PFLAG, PO Box 53796, Houston, TX 77052-3796.

PFLAG Flyer

The Official Newsletter of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Houston, Texas

May 1996

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston

PO Box 53796

Houston, TX 77052-3796

Pride, Parents, & Parades

Plan now to attend the 1996 Houston Pride Events

If you haven't been to a Pride Parade, you really don't know what you're missing. With hundreds and hundreds of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, & transgenders cheering along the parade route, various groups march down Westheimer towards Montrose in a show of Pride in ourselves, our family members and friends. For many it is an experience that will not be forgotten. (See poem on pg. 6.)

Houston's Annual Gay Pride Week begins Friday June 14th and runs through Sunday June 23rd. PFLAG invites you to be a part of the following activities:

The Pride Parade - Saturday, June 23rd 5:00 PM.

PFLAG is always a favorite at the Gay Pride Parade. A PFLAG Parent with a "We Love Our Gay Kids" sign is a ray of hope for many gays and lesbians whose families have disowned them.

This year the parade starts at 5:00 PM in order to beat the heat. The marchers will be carrying six streamers on small poles, making a 100 foot rainbow pride flag. Don't worry if you don't feel up to the march. PFLAG will provide a flat bed truck to ride, wave, and cheer in. We need as many members as possible. We also need volunteers to help coordinate this event and make signs.

The Pride Festival - Saturday June 23rd, 7:00 PM

After the Pride Parade, there will be a Pride Festival. PFLAG will have a booth at this festival and needs volunteers to run it. The booth will provide an opportunity for PFLAG members to educate the lesbian and gay community at large on our activities and get more people involved.

Sign-up sheets will be circulated at the May PFLAG meeting for these activities. We will also have an information booth set up outside of the meeting for anyone that has questions. If you miss the meeting, you can sign up by calling Tim Curfman at 528-3589.

If you've participated in a Pride Parade in the past, then you know how much fun it can be. If you have never participated in a Pride Parade, then you owe yourself this incredible experience. Just ask one of the parents that have marched before. Listen for more info at the May and June meetings! We'll see you there!



Pride Week Houston
June 14 - 23, 1996



PFLAG Houston

PO Box 53796

Houston, TX 77052-3796

Next Meeting May 5

Long-term, Committed Couples

For many parents, the awareness of their child's homosexuality forces them to examine the expectations they held for their child's future. Often that of marriage or a long-term relationship is one of the first ones to be confronted.

This month, we will be hearing from several gay and lesbian couples that have been in long-term, committed relationships discuss their family experiences. From relationships to raising kids, this meeting is sure to be informative.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, off San Felipe between Voss & Gessner. After our large group session, join us in one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss issues, concerns and celebrations with others in a safe, confidential environment.

If you are new to PFLAG and have recently found out about your gay or lesbian loved one, than our Family & Friends First Timers group is for you. There are also special groups for Spouse Support, HIV Concerns, & Advocacy. So plan to join us this month! We hope to see you there!

If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Gail Rickey with the announcement by Friday, May 3 at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 440-0353 or PatRickey@aol.com.

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Schedule of Events

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| May 5 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting, St. Francis Episcopal Church 345 North Piney Point |
| May 11 | Dignity Catholic Mother's Day Service (See Article Pg. 7) |
| May 12 | Mother's Day |
| Jun. 2 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting, Guest: Phillip Sherman Author of <i>Uncommon Heroes</i> |
| Jun. 23 | Houston Pride Parade, 5pm-7pm |
| Jul. 14 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting, **Note Date Change** |

Last month's meeting... Reflections on Washington Project

If only we could bottle the energy and excitement that the 30 parents, family members, and friends had when they returned from Washington, DC. For many it was their first experience with Advocacy or direct lobbying of congress. Edna Martin, Sherry Stephens, Kathy Whitmire, & Myrtle Meaux all received the Hot Pepper Award for Giant Leaps in Speaking Out. Don Sinclair made sure that Jesse Helms knew he was getting on an elevator with Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Susan Upchurch experienced New Orleans and the night life of DC with other "parent partiers". And much more. The meeting was audio taped if you would like to hear the presentation. Just check with the library. It's the closest thing to "bottled PFLAG energy!"

What's coming up... Author Phillip Sherman to speak

For many of you, the name Phillip Sherman may be new to you. But for some, it is as familiar as your coffee table. As author of the well known book, *Uncommon Heroes*, his work is atop many PFLAG coffee tables. Covering numerous gay and lesbian heroes in current history, this anthology is a must have. Former Houston Post columnist and PFLAGer, Juan Palomo is one of many gays and lesbians that grace the pages of Sherman's book.

On June 2, Phillip will be speaking at our monthly PFLAG meeting. Topics will include *Uncommon Heroes* and more. Barbara Winston had the privilege of meeting Phillip while in Washington and the idea of him visiting Houston came about. This program is sure to be one you won't want to miss. Phillip will also be signing copies of his book while at the PFLAG meeting

A Note of Appreciation

Dear Friends,

I truly appreciate the love that you extended to me and my family during our time of grief. The flowers that you sent were absolutely beautiful. I can't express how much it meant to me for them to be at the side of my father's grave, alongside flowers from Yokefellows Ministries, which is the organization that my father devoted much of his love and energy toward. Thank you so much for caring, and letting me know that you were with me and my family.

With love,
Gail Rickey

Together We Will An Opportunity to Show Our Support

Last November, many of you wrote letters of concern to our local news media regarding their refusal to accept the Project Open Mind commercials. Well, recently we have experienced a very positive portrayal from the local, regional and national media and we want them to know we appreciate it. With the "Moms & Dads" Project, there were numerous stories on TV and radio and in the newspapers and magazines. Well, we would like for you to write a note of thanks to some of these folks letting them know that we appreciate their coverage and accurate portrayal of the trip to Washington. Below are a list of names and addresses for you to write to. Take a minute today and send out a note.

5/12/96

- ✓♦ Barbara Karkabi, Houston Chronicle
P.O. Box 4260, Houston, TX 77210-4260
- ✓♦ Nancy Shafran, KPRC Channel 2
8181 Southwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77074
- ✓♦ Kristi Barnhill, KRIV Channel 26
3935 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77027-5096
- ✓♦ Irwin Brown, KTRK Channel 13
P.O. Box 13, Houston, TX 77001-0013
- ✓♦ Joe Duke, KHOU Channel 11
P.O. Box 11, Houston, TX 77001-0011
- ✓♦ Sue Davis, KNWS Channel 51
8440 Westpark, Houston, TX 77063
- ✓♦ Eric Roland, OutSmart Magazine
3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006
- ✓♦ Doris Childress, KUHT Channel 8
4513 Cullen Blvd., Houston, TX 77004
- ✓♦ Capella Tucker, KUHF 88.1 FM
4800 Calhoun, Houston, TX 77004
- ✓♦ David Elliott, Texas Triangle Newspaper
1615 W. 6th St., Austin, TX 78703
- ✓♦ Sherri Cohen Darbonne, Houston Voice Newspaper
811 Westheimer, Ste. 105, Houston, TX 77006
- ✓♦ KPFT - Gay & Lesbian Voices
P.O. Box 66075, Houston, TX 77266-6075
- ✓♦ Wendy Johnson, Washington Blade Newspaper
1408 U St. NW, 2nd Flr., Washington, DC 20009-3916
- ✓♦ Julie Dryer, Pacifica Radio News
702 H St. NW, Washington, DC 20001

Mother Phoenix

By Rhea Murray, Seymour, IN

(Rhea and her husband participated in Moms & Dads Go to Washington)

I was born and raised in Seymour, Indiana, the "Small Town" that is distinguished in song by John Mellancamp. Surprisingly, up until a few years ago, the city limits of this town comprised the dimensions of my entire world. I lived in a safe, comfortable environment as a wife, mother, and Sunday School teacher, a very predictable, milk-toast way of life, never challenging my self-imposed boundaries.

One by one our children left home. And now only my youngest was left, but soon he too would pursue his own life. Anticipating my soon-to-be-empty nest filled me with a bittersweet mixture of sorrowful longing for babies nestled in my arms, and a giddy elation for my imminent liberation from the all-consuming responsibility of tending to their every need. My future held the promise of relaxation and ease, a harvest I justly deserved to reap. Then came a revelation.

Like a big, bad wolf that huffed and puffed, it blew down the fragile walls of my June Cleaver world. My despondent thirteen year old son, Bruce, was contemplating suicide; his life was hanging by a frayed thread of indecision. He was struggling to decide which would grieve his parents the least; his death or the revelation he was gay.

Fortunately, my son had enough faith in us to tearfully tell us he was gay. I embraced my son and reassured him of my love for him, but all the while, I was wondering if I could possibly measure up to his blind faith in me. "Dear God, please let me be there for my child." This striving to be there for my gay son has profoundly impacted my life in such a way that it would be forever changed.

Following this disclosure, I spent many agonizing days crying uncontrollably, and lonely nights screaming into my pillow under the cover of darkness. I would wash my swollen, tear-stained face before my child would return home from school. He was assessing whether he had made the right decision and consequently was watching me very closely. Realizing I was inadequate at my masquerade, I put my arm around him and said, "Son, you are not responsible for my feelings. I am. Please give me some time to work through this. Have faith in me." At that moment, he grew taller with the weight of that incredible burden of guilt lifted off his young shoulders. Nonetheless, I was free-falling into the dark night of my soul.

In the solitude of an empty church, I would beseech God to take this bitter cup away from me; it was more than I could bear. However, God answered me with bone-crushing silence. The fear of rejection isolated me from my family and friends; my diminutive world shrank to the dimensions of a closet. Butch, my aptly named husband, took the revelation in stride

which only made me feel more forlorn. Consequently, I would have to wrestle this demon alone; but in order to do so, I first must identify this appalling demon.

I took a long, candid look at the haggard woman in the mirror until her unsightly warts were obvious. My prejudice was the rootstock of my caustic grief. Then, amidst this painful self-revelation, God broke his torturous silence. Instead of speaking to me in a grand cathedral, he chose my small, humble bathroom. Instead of speaking in a booming proclamation, he spoke to me in a still, piercing whisper: "Child, you must not put on your son the hateful stereotypes you have of gays, but rather put the face of your beloved son on the gay community. After all, you know what a gay person is like; you have lived with one for 13 years. He is the same child in whom you have always delighted." A metamorphosis began in the core of my being, much like the Phoenix rising out of the ashes of its former life.

After that life-changing encounter in my bathroom, I never shed another tear because my son was gay; however, I have shed many tears for all the indignities and injustices hurled at Bruce daily from an intolerant society. First, our minister told several people in our church and community that he believed our son, to be gay. This had dire consequences for Bruce and our family. Rumors in a small town spread like an oil slick on water; as a result, we were ostracized. Our minister declared that no church would welcome us. Meanwhile at school, teachers, as well as students, harassed Bruce. There are no words to describe what it does to a mother's heart to have her despairing child look at her with eyes full of pain and say, "Mom, in gym they spat upon me and the teacher did nothing." Tormented by our inner rage and feelings of impotency, his father and I would lie in bed at night staring at the ceiling.

The harassment escalated to such a degree that physical attacks and death threats occurred frequently. Inaction by the school left us with no other recourse than to withdraw Bruce from public school and enroll him in a correspondence school. Walking out of the principal's office with Bruce's newly signed release paper in my hand, I heard the principal's parting words: "Mrs. Murray, I hope you realize many doors will be closed to your son." In that instant, I made a fervent vow I would show my son otherwise. Perhaps Seymour did not offer many options to my son, but on the other hand, the world was teeming with unexplored possibilities. He would only be limited by the depth and breadth of his vision and his determination.

Developing networking skills was a definite tool I would need; however, in order to do so, I would first have to overcome my fear of driving in metropolitan areas. With white-knuckled resolution, I conquered Bloomington, Louisville, Indianapolis, and eventually Chicago. I networked earnestly; and I discovered gay youth support groups and PFLAG (an acronym for Parents,

(Continued on page 6)

Letters from PFLAG chapters across the USA

Thanks for "Moms & Dads go to DC"

Our PO box and email boxes have been flooded with notes of thanks and appreciation since we returned from Washington, DC. We firmly believe that this project is your project. So we wanted to share these notes with you. Thanks to all of PFLAG Houston for their support of the "Moms and Dads Go to Washington Project."

1. Being a part of "Moms and Dads" was a great experience for Carol and me. We had written letters before but it felt so much more meaningful to deliver our message in person. Now comes the task of building the fire of enthusiasm in our chapter. The message we got, as if we didn't know before, was personal letters count and the opposition does a better job in that respect.

We appreciate all the work you and your chapter did to make the event happen. The HRC connection was essential and we plan to keep in touch with our new friends there, too.

Sincerely,
Dale and Carol Kirkpatrick

2. Once again I have to say that you Houston folks did a TERRIFIC job and it was a privilege to be part of your lobbying campaign for passage of ENDA.

George and Alice Clattenburg

3. The reports I've received concerning the Moms & Dads project in DC have been glowing, indeed! Congratulations and many heartfelt thanks for a great idea, and rousing good energy and *success*!! Thanks for your vision and determination!

4. I wanted to thank you for all the hard work you did in organizing "Moms and Dads Go To Washington." People here in DC are still talking about it.

5. Congratulations on the great job you did for "The Moms and Dads" group in Washington of PFLAG groups as they lobbied congressmen about ENDA. Dubose McLane, editor of State College PA chapter PFLAG Newsletter.

6. To all the members of Houston PFLAG who worked so hard to make the Moms & Dads trip to DC a success, a great big THANK YOU! Your persistence in making your dream a reality is sure to bear fruit for a long time to come. A few congressman may have been ready to lend their support to ENDA immediately, but all of them, as well as millions of Americans who saw coverage of

our event have a new framework in which to place ENDA and all gay-related issues. I had a marvelous time, as did the others in our Louisville contingent.

Many thanks. Marie

7. Heartfelt congratulations for your successful trip to our capital! I would like to personally thank you on behalf of the many lesbian women and gay men, like me, who's parents haven't yet committed themselves to this struggle. All the "Moms and Dads" that accompanied you inspire us to keep the faith:

All is possible through love, education and understanding (and perhaps just a little more time)

Thanks Again!

Tony Gudell, PFLAG National Field Services Assoc.

8. On behalf of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Veterans of America, I wish to express our gratitude to you for your efforts on Capital Hill last week. Especially enjoyed your confrontation with Jesse Helms. We look forward to our participation in your upcoming convention. May our combined efforts over the next four years bring a positive resolution to the issue of America's sons and daughters, who happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, serving openly in our Nation's armed forces as well as well as living in open, loving, legally sanctioned relationships

Nancy Russell
President, GLBVA



**"People here in DC are
STILL talking about it!"**

9. ... thank you very much to Houston PFLAG for all your hard work in organizing the trip to Washington. We do appreciate it. Best wishes for the future in your organization there.

10. I've heard that you and your organization have just returned from a successful trip to Washington D.C. I simply want to thank you for making this extraordinary effort. The petition of a mother or father is strong, and with your continued advocacy, we shall overcome.

11. Thank you for all your hard work and a wonderful time in DC. I was glad to have the opportunity to meet so many folks from Texas and around the country with a dedicated purpose to help our kids and maybe even our grandkids.

12. My husband and I would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to have this wonderful experience. I cannot begin to imagine the time, effort, and heart that went into this project. Everything was well organized and well thought out. Houston PFLAG Chapter should all be patting themselves on the back. Thanks again for a very uplifting experience. Hopefully, we will see you in October at the National Convention.

13. Please express our thanks to your group for all they did in their preparation in going to Washington for "all of our children".

Moms & Dads Go to Washington

By Jane B. Smith, A PFLAG mom

We're heading North - we can't be stopped
 This bus is full of Moms & Pops,
 You ask us why we're on this bus
 I'll tell you why we're in this rush.

Houston, Texas - Baton Rouge -
 New Orleans, Mobile, too
 Mile after mile from South to North,
 We can't be stopped
 We must go forth.

We're moms and dads and we're on our way.
 We've come to speak,
 We'll have our say.

We've come to protect our children's rights;
 we're rising up to capitol heights.

P-FLAG parents speaking out,
 And we've chosen a very difficult route.
 Atlanta, Georgia and on to Charlotte
 Freedom, Freedom - hear us shout it!

Awesome - Awesome we've just begun!
 We love our kids - each daughter and son.

We've come to knock upon some doors,
 And see some people called Senators

Greensboro - Durham,
 finally D.C.

We demand you set our children free!
 Give them the rights
 they've been denied!
 Only then will we be satisfied.

PFLAG at the Theater

"Ten Percent Revue" at Ovations

From 4/28/96 thru 6/16/96, The Group Theater Workshop will be presenting "the quintessential gay musical revue," **Ten Percent Revue**. The Boston Globe says, "A funny, riveting show for gays and straights!" This musical has been produced in major cities all over the country since 1985. Tickets are \$10 and can be reserved at 522-2204. Shows begin at 7:00pm. Ovations is located in the Village at 2536-B Times Blvd., next to Main Street Theater. *At press time, there was discussion of a PFLAG Group going to see the show together. Come to the next meeting to find out more!!*

Corrections and Notations

- ♦ In an article last month, it was incorrectly stated that Sen. Jesse Helms was from South Carolina. He is from North Carolina.
- ♦ The Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Teachers Network meets at First Unitarian Universalist Church.

Thank You to PFLAG Houston by Kathy Whitmire

Well, we made it back from DC without any major problems and I am so full of love for all of those who made the trip and all of those of you who made it possible for me to go that I just had to sit down right now and write a thank you to you all.

So many members of the Gay and Lesbian Community took up collections and had raffles and just gave whatever they could and because they did that, I was able to go on the trip of my life. I wanted to do this so badly and just couldn't have if it wasn't for all of you. I vowed I would earn my trip by my action and never shirked one opportunity to pass out a flier or speak to someone who was curious or to help anyone on the trip that I could. This was such an amicable and courageous group it was just full of energy and love.

I tried to think what would you do if you could be here and act accordingly. What would you like to have said and say those things for you. We always tried to conduct ourselves as calmly and lovingly and patiently as our gay and lesbian children have conducted themselves toward us. That is the main thing I feel that I learned on this trip. That we have learned so much from our children.

We have learned love, courage, compassion, patience, tolerance and so much more. How could we do less than walk through our fears and end the silence that is keeping us all in the closet? It will not protect us. In the future it will only hurt us. At least that is the feeling I have come home with. That and such gratitude that I was able to go on this trip. I can't tell you what it has meant to me to hear a young man say that PFLAG saved his family. His father threw him out when he came out and another mother took him in until he could get a job and go back to school and put himself through. Meanwhile, his Mom joined PFLAG and later his Dad joined as well and the family was healed. Now he is able to joke about it with his Dad.

That was only one of the many stories I personally was privileged to hear. I have written a journal of my trip for all of you to read. It is long but I will put it on my computer and print it out or E-mail it to any one who wants it. It is my gift to you. And my thanks to all those who helped me to go.

God bless you all. And my love and gratitude for stretching my soul.

Hugs,

Kathy Whitmire
 Henry713@aol.com

From a PFLAG Mom

Gay Pride Parade, San Diego 1992

There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
And only a handful of us

They screamed and they shrieked
And they cheered as they passed
Yelling
"Thank You, It's Great that You care!"

Loudest of All

And Clearest of All

Were the Screams that Emerged from the Eyes
Of the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
Who watched as we marched down the street

I carried a sign that stated most clear
My Love for My Son Who is Gay
She stared at my sign
Piercing my heart with her pain
I left the parade and moved to her side
I held her in both my arms
Her sobs were intense
And I tightened my grip
As she whispered her secret to me

"My Mom has disowned me
Since she found out
She says I'm not right in the head
She says that I'm weird
That I'm one to be feared
That I've caused her to suffer such pain
Do you think that you could
Do you think that you might
Just be my mom for today?"

There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
Looking for parents they'd lost

There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
But only a handful of us.

Dignity Houston Hosts 'Mother's Day' Service

Dignity Houston, a Gay and Lesbian Catholic group, would like to invite you to join them in celebrating the gift of motherhood on Saturday, May 11, at 7:30pm at Dignity Center located at 1307 Yale, Ste. H, in the Houston Heights. This will be a 1 hour Catholic Mass with a special blessing for all mothers. Please feel free to join us. For more information, please call us at 713-820-2872.

Steve Ruimveld, President of
Dignity Houston

*Happy
Mother's
Day!*



May 1996

Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in those cities.

When my family and I walked into our first meeting, my cheeks blushed with shame, not for being there, but for being surprised at how normal everyone looked. The room was abounding with diversity (a new experience for this former June Cleaver). Witnessing people of different nationalities, religions, genders, and sexual orientation coming together and unconditionally affirming each other was truly a spiritual moment for me. Then I realized that basically there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who empathize and those who fear; those who take a leap of faith to embrace and those who rebuff. What separates the one camp from the other is the ability to affirm oneself. How can you affirm another, if you can not first affirm yourself?

After the meeting, my beaming son said, "Now I know I have a chance for a happy life. I couldn't even envision one before." Bruce blossomed by being surrounded by positive gay role models, for I was not the only one affected by those negative stereotypes. My ardent desire to show Bruce as many new corridors toward self-affirmation as possible required that I would challenge myself to try new things. Like a rose unfolding, my world blossomed.

Three years have passed since that fateful turning point. I am now president of Seymour's very own PFLAG. Bruce is employed full time at a gay-friendly business and continuing his education. Butch and I have used our feelings of rage and impotency as an impetus for becoming zealous activists. As a family, we serve on educational panels for workshops for police officers, teachers, family and school counselors. We are often requested to speak about our family's saga at several Indiana University classes. Contrary to the minister's grim prediction, churches not only welcomed us, but asked us to share our journey with their congregations. In addition, we had the humbling experience of having our story inspire sermons.

Recently, Bruce traveled to San Francisco for NGLTF (National Gay/Lesbian Task Force) Youth Training to acquire the skills necessary to organize a gay youth support group in southern Indiana. Next month he heads to Detroit for a gay youth convention and is on stand-by to address Congress. As you can see, I'm still very efficient at networking. As for me, I also conquered my fear of flying and fly coast to coast in my support and advocacy work. Furthermore, an author is collaborating with me on a biography about our family. The monotonous merry-go-round of our life has changed into this wild, thrilling roller coaster ride filled with unexpected twists and turns.

We are gaining new friends across the nation, and some former friends, having to grow at their own pace, are gently easing back into our lives. We now have a diversity of friends who greatly enrich our lives. We are still shunned by others; but like a weeding of a garden, we are now left with a group of loving friends, accepting relationships that can thrive and bloom.

Surprisingly, Bruce's gayness has brought me many gifts.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

First, it brought me the gift of liberation from a predictable life, a life limited by the fear of what others may think. I need only to be at peace with the lady in the mirror. Second, it brought me the gift of motivation, which caused me to stretch beyond my binding boundaries and see my own expanding possibilities. Third, it brought me the gift of discovery: I have courage to live by my principles, no matter the cost. Fourth, it brought me the gift of realization that I was a flat, one-dimensional person (much like a cardboard movie prop). My world lacked color and texture, but now it is a rainbow tapestry that fills me with reverence and awe. Finally, it brought me the most important gift; the gift of enlightenment which allows me to make that empathetic leap of faith to embrace humanity in all its diversity.

I was a frightened mother who stood on the edge, staring into the vast unknown before me; the love I held for my son gave my trembling legs the strength to leap. At first, it felt like a death spiral; but when I found the courage to open my eyes, I discovered my miraculous Phoenix wings. The view is intoxicating; the flight is exhilarating. And as an uplifting current catches my wings, I take a fleeting glance over my shoulders to the precarious ledge where the smoldering ashes lay of a woman I can barely remember.

Plan now to attend 1996 PFLAG National Conference in D.C.

PFLAG's 15th Annual Conference will be held October 11-14, 1996, at the Crystal City Marriott in Washington, DC. The theme is *"Love Takes Action: Building a Nation of Equality."* This year the conference coincides with National Coming Out Day and with the historic display of the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt. Conference attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in "PFLAG Lobby Days" prior to Conference '96. More information will be available as the dates approach, but mark your calendars now and plan to attend this exciting event.

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

Thanks to all of you for your positive feedback on the new look of the Flyer. Many of you told me that although the look was great, what you really liked were the personal stories. In an effort to move the newsletter in that direction, I have an announcement to make...

You are hereby commissioned as a PFLAG Houston Flyer Reporter and Newsgatherer!

So what does that mean? It means that if you hear a story that you think would be great in the newsletter, get the author to write it down and then make sure I get it for next Flyer. No matter how many places I am in, I still don't hear all of the stories. So now it's your job. Don't worry, I'll still be on the lookout for good stuff. But now so will all of you! Thanks!

If you have a computer and would like to help with the newsletter, please get in touch with me. I am looking for some typists and helpers! Thanks for all your articles and ideas! Keep em coming! Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougupc@blcinc.com by e-mail! The deadline for the June newsletter is May 24. Happy Mother's Day! ☺ ♥ ▼

Join Us in the Work of PFLAG

PFLAG Houston belongs to the national organization Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc, with more than 350 local chapters and contacts. Our chapter is made up of parents, families and friends of lesbian and gay persons, and of lesbians and gay men. The financial support of members and contributors enables our chapter to expand our outreach to the community.

I / We would like to join P-FLAG HOUSTON:

Family/Couple: \$40 _____

Individual: \$25 _____

Student/Limited Income: \$10 _____

Your donation is tax deductible

PFLAG Houston is a Non-Profit

501 (c)(3) organization

(I.D. #76-0372-170)

I / We don't wish to join, but would like to contribute to the work of P-FLAG HOUSTON \$ _____

Name(s): _____

Home Ph: (____) _____

() Please mark

*Mailing Address: _____

Office Ph: (____) _____

() confidentiality

Street Address: _____

FAX: (____) _____

() required on

City & State: _____

Pager: (____) _____

() these phones.

Zip+4: _____

e-mail: _____

()

* The P-FLAG National Newsletter will be mailed "open" to this address unless you check here: _____
Please make all checks payable to and mail to PFLAG, PO Box 53796, Houston, TX 77052-3796.

PFLAG Flyer

Official Newsletter of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Houston, TX

June 1996

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Supreme Court Rules on 2!

Anti-Gay CO Amendment 2 is deemed unconstitutional!

On Monday, May 20, 1996, the United States Supreme Court upheld the Colorado state Supreme Court's ruling that the anti-gay Amendment 2 is unconstitutional. Below is a brief news story regarding the decision. After that, I have included some direction for us to focus our advocacy efforts!

News Story from REUTERS

The Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a controversial Colorado anti-gay rights ballot measure in a ruling that could have nationwide impact on gay rights. The justices by a 6-3 vote upheld a Colorado Supreme Court ruling that the 1992 measure, which bars state or local governments from adopting gay rights laws, denies gays equal protection under the U.S. Constitution.

The decision could have far-reaching implications for gay rights legal battles around the country. Anti-gay initiatives have become a contentious political issue and have resulted in several court challenges.

The Colorado measure, blocked by the courts from taking effect, would have invalidated gay rights laws in Denver, Boulder and Aspen that barred discrimination in jobs and housing based on sexual orientation.

The amendment, adopted by a 53 percent majority, declared that there was no special legal protection based on a person's "homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation."

Justice Anthony Kennedy said for the court majority that Colorado's main argument that the amendment puts gays and lesbians in the same position as all other persons by denying them special rights is rejected as implausible.

So Now Where Do We Go From Here....from Gail Rickey

You know that there will be letters to the editor, and radio call-in shows, where folks who oppose equality for gays will be expressing their opinions. I don't know the "inside story," but my guess is that if the Chronicle gets a jillion anti-gay letters, and 2 gay-supportive letters, the number that they print will reflect that. Some of the "anti-gay" folks are inflamed, and they WILL be shouting (just as WE would have been, if justice had not prevailed). So you know what that means... Write letters, listen for opportunities to call in radio shows, whatever you can think to do.

A Supreme Response - Talking Points from NGLTF

The Supreme Court decision today on Colorado's Amendment 2 is a profound victory for all who believe in basic rights and the fundamental



WE WIN!!!



Next Meeting June 2

Phillip Sherman, Author of Family Values and Uncommon Heroes

Editor and publisher, Phillip Sherman will bring a special presentation on lesbian and gay role models and "family values" to our June monthly meeting. He will offer a brief perspective on lesbians and gay men in history and then talk about his well known book *Uncommon Heroes*.

He will also sneak preview his upcoming book *Family Values*, a book in which non-gay family members praise their lesbian and gay loved ones. Mr. Sherman will also be selling and signing copies of his book *Uncommon Heroes* at the PFLAG discount of 25% off retail. This is a meeting that you don't want to miss. Bring a friend with you!

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, off San Felipe between Voss & Gessner. After our large group session, join us in one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss issues, concerns and celebrations with others in a safe, confidential environment.

There are also special groups for Spouse Support, HIV Concerns, & Advocacy. So plan to join us this month! We hope to see you there! If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Gail Rickey with the announcement by Friday, May 3 at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 440-0353 or PatRickey@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

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Schedule of Events

Jun. 2 **PFLAG Monthly Meeting,**
 Guest: Phillip Sherman Author of
Uncommon Heroes & Family Values
 St. Francis Episcopal Church
 345 North Piney Point

Jun. 2 **PFLAG at the Theater: *Ten Percent Revue* at Ovations Theater** (See article at right)

Jun. 21-23 **School's Out: The Naming Project**
 (See Article pg. 7)

Jun. 23 **Houston Pride Parade, Meet at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 1440 Harold at 4pm, Parade lasts to 7:00pm**
Houston Pride Festival, 7pm-10pm

Jul. 14 **PFLAG Monthly Meeting,**
 Speaker: Bob McLaughlin
 Note Date Change

What's coming up...

Counselor Bob McLaughlin to speak

Bob will discuss "unearned privileges" granted to people because of who they are and not on ability, merit, or fairness. Unearned privilege is undeniably our cultural heritage, whether based on "good family," race, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, wealth, and other status. Bob will challenge us to appreciate the effects on our homosexual childrens' "special rights."

Supreme Court Decision (Continued from page 1)

principle that all Americans deserve to live free of discrimination. It would have created special barriers to basic rights. It would have blocked the open and free participation in our democratic process for gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

We commend those justices who defended basic civil rights and stood up to the anti-democratic agenda of religious political extremists. This case was not just about gay, lesbian and bisexual people. At stake were the very principles of democracy: justice, freedom, personal liberty, and the right to be different and still live free of the tyranny of the majority.

Unfortunately, our victory today may be short-lived. Despite this ruling, the Radical Right unfortunately will not stop. They are already evolving their measures to make them more difficult to challenge in court, such as the failed attempt in Maine last year that simply "omitted"

gay people and others from the list of those protected against discrimination. That's why we call on all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to remain vigilant. We call on all our families, friends, and neighbors, as well as all Americans of conscience to stand with us as we struggle for basic rights.

This was a momentous day for our movement and for all those who believe in personal liberty, justice and freedom. We are making progress at ending intolerance towards gays and lesbians and educating America about who they really are, not the lies the Radical Right says. At the same time we know our battle is not over. We must remain on guard and defend against what surely will be a backlash. With today's ruling, we are one important step closer to attaining our dream of a more compassionate and fair society.

Editor's Note: We must take to heart the words from both Gail Rickey and NGLTF. Now is the time to act, not rest on this decision. We must also help others understand the importance of this decision. *Reach out in love with truth!*

An Urgent & Open Letter From PFLAG Houston Scholarship Committee

In the spring of 1995 PFLAG Houston began a scholarship program with the approval of one \$1,000 scholarship to be given every year, renewable for four years simply by maintaining academic eligibility. Assuming we award one scholarship per year, at the end of the fourth year, we will be committed to a maximum of \$4,000 per year. We had 3 applicants last year and awarded one scholarship. Mission accomplished....or at least begun.

Move forward to this year while we tell you a story. We received and reviewed 5 applications -- 5 remarkable applications. We met and began our interview process. We laughed, we rejoiced, we cried, we marveled at uncommon courage.....and finally, we resolved. We find ourselves unwilling to give only one scholarship; we are unable to tell all but one of these young people, "So sorry, we only have one scholarship and you just didn't quite make it."

We are resolved to invest in the future of these fine young people who are determined to make a difference in our world. There are four young gay men and one young lesbian accepting the challenges in their lives and moving on. We believe you would share our feelings if you were to read of their dreams and their struggles and the comments from their references...."warm, caring responsible--with high ideals, unlimited potential, compelling honesty and integrity...dedicated to making a contribution to the Hispanic community as well as the gay and lesbian community, strengthened and challenged by adversity, intelligent and industrious, self-motivated, courageous, faithful to his causes....a young man worthy to be supported and encouraged."

There is an urgency in our writing this letter now....time and money. We have until June 2, the date set for awarding

(Continued on page 3)

Grassroots Victory: *The Story of One PFLAGer's Effort to Speak Out*

by Gordon Weisser

Ten years ago I became a citizen of the United States and a Republican. I was employed and paid taxes in this country - I wanted to vote. I have continued to pay taxes and vote Republican - until this year. I had not counted on having PFLAG or Tirey Counts in my political future - and certainly had no ambition to be a Precinct Chairman.

In an advocacy group Tirey asked for volunteers to work actively for the Republican Party and to consider running for Precinct Chairman. I listened to their plans, strategy and goals and signed on. Such an experience and education I have had these past few months. I have learned the meaning of "grassroot politics" - the importance of being informed, educated and active as I have attended meetings, talked to neighbors and mailed letters. In years past I had voted and sat back to hear returns - never realizing what time, work and energy had been invested by those working for change in our government and our lives.

This year we voted then returned that evening for our first precinct convention. We were surprised to find 33 people attending - then amazed to see that our opposition was a well-organized majority prepared to do battle with moderates - our first alert.

Our next move was to attend the Senate District 13 meeting on March 30. Because it was our first time we could not fully appreciate what was happening. Only later did we understand and could see how the leadership of Dale Carpenter and Tirey Counts had paid off. Tirey had continued to direct and guide me - I was fortunate to have such a fine mentor prepare me for this political activity. The best was yet to come....

When Tirey had asked me to run for precinct chairman - explaining that each chair had one vote at the Senate District meeting - I had no idea that one vote could mean so much. With my one vote I was part of the victory of Lynnda Paukune over Al Clements - an inclusive moderate over a religious right incumbent - as chairperson of Senate District 13. This was a stunning defeat - not by a slim margin but 2 to 1 and it proved that hard work and perseverance are rewarded - and that votes - one with others - add up to victory.. Now we understand what the election of a moderate can mean. As chairperson through the 1998 primary Paukune will have considerable influence in the decision making process and will be selecting members for the Resolutions Committee and many other committees also. With her promise to use her power and influence in a manner that will reflect the views of moderate Republicans and with many party activists in SD 13 on various committees of the county party organization the future is bright.

It was great to be a part of such a victory - but the call is to move on. With that win comes the challenge to be better informed, more visible and active, and to encourage others to vote. We urge you to vote and then attend your precinct convention to offer support and to become involved in the political process that determines the future of our country.

I will attend the Republican Party State Convention in San Antonio for one more new experience - then on with the work of the precinct - talking to neighbors, writing letters, and attending meetings - looking forward to the Senate District 13 meeting in 1998. Our thanks to Tirey for giving us this opportunity to work for liberty and justice for all.

Editor's Note: Tirey Counts and Dale Carpenter are active members of Houston's Log Cabin Republicans.

Scholarship Letter (Continued from page 2)

scholarships, and we need funding. Help us give these outstanding young people the affirmation and encouragement they have earned. We on the committee are contributing and we are asking that you, too, be a part of extending a lifeline of affirmation to these young people by contributing to this scholarship fund. Help us to give several scholarships at our June 2 meeting.

We believe PFLAG Houston is at the point in its growth to move toward a presence of this kind in the community and we need your help. We need to do more and that takes all of us; you can be a part of this exciting time in our history. Any money in excess of this current need will be designated for future scholarships. If you can be a part of this great opportunity, call Blake Weisser or Norma Graves to let us know you are sending a check. Make your checks payable to PFLAG Houston, Memo: Scholarship Fund, care of Gordon Weisser, 8411 Braes Meadow Dr., Houston, 77071. Thank you for supporting deserving Gay and Lesbian youth in our community.

Sincerely,

PFLAG Houston Scholarship Committee

| | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Phil Lacy, Chairman | Blake Weisser |
| Norma Graves | Peter Poit |

Lack of Love — Not homosexuality — real threat to values

By Father John Cunningham, Pastor of St. Bridget Catholic Church in Mesa, AZ



I Just finished reading yet another newspaper article wherein the writer purports to defend family values. But the approach and tone bore the family stridently of right-wing rhetoric of fear and polarization, which consistently targets gayness as the greatest threat to the family.

It strikes me as bizarre that anyone need be reminded that gay people do not come from outer space but from families, from homes like everyone else. Have we forgotten that the hallmark of a decent family is not hate and rejection, but rather acceptance and love among its members?

Gay children are born with certain statistical frequency just like left-handed children, or whatever other traits we regularly observe in the human population. The evidence overwhelmingly confirms this fact.

Like everyone else, gay people need support, not condemnation, and seek fairness, not privilege. I hesitate to even use terms like gay, lesbian, or straight, but find them necessary for the purpose of discourse. People simply are who they are. Is this not how we all experience life – namely, from where we are and as who we are? Consequently, labels can be harmful and are always inadequate to capture the reality of a person.

This is especially the case in that mysterious, complex, often ambiguous, and relatively new realm of human sexuality. Sex may have been around from the beginning as a biological marker and an experience in people's lives, but the notion of sexuality (or sexualities) is a uniquely modern construct. It would not have been an aspect of Classical or Medieval consciousness.

The article I'm responding to zeroes in on its target: "homosexual behavior . . . as damaging to society!" This may or may not be true, but the statement is biased. For is not a good deal of heterosexual behavior damaging to society? Are not its more squalid expressions equally depraved? Promiscuity, prostitution, molestation, sexual abuse and exploitation of all stripes are wrong and destructive, whether the offender is gay or straight.

To put it another way, our fundamental problem, the chief cause of our societal ills, our paramount deficiency as individuals, and – I would submit – the real threat to families, lies not in our sexual orientation, but in our lack of love.

The issue of same-sex unions, of course, has raised a lightning rod. But I think the fundamental question to ask – one which judges are wrestling with in the landmark cases before them – is one of rights.

Are people who are gay or lesbian not entitled to the same rights as the rest of society? Is one group, such as the majority, threatened or diminished or are rights infringed when another group, such as a minority, achieves a greater measure of equality? Does this make for a stronger or weaker democracy?

Where does justice lie? Is it served by attitudes of prejudice and practices of discrimination? Is our country more united or is it more divided when all are treated impartially under the law and no person is disparaged or disenfranchised on the basis of sexual identity? I knew a gay couple who lived in Texas. Thomas died a year ago from prostate cancer at the age of 60. He was as kind and loving a man as you would ever want to meet. My life has been enriched because he was my friend. During his illness, his partner Jim, cared for him with a depth of devotion and loyalty one doesn't see everyday. They were together 17 years and looking forward to their retirement. Since there was no legal provision for him to qualify for compensation or coverage through his working partner, Thomas, who was a self-employed contractor, it was fortunate that he had sufficient insurance to pay the steep bills incurred by his illness.

When I think of the current debate raging over sexual orientation, these two – and others like them – come to mind. Their experience is not that uncommon and their stories need to be heard in order to dispel the misconceptions and stereotypes that thrive whenever the cultural climate is charged with fear and ignorance.

Our knowledge of sexual orientation has simply exploded over the past two decades. There is presently available a profusion of scholarship on the subject with which we can educate ourselves, the latest and most revolutionary research conducted by the medical team at Cornell University in the field of neuro-chemical causation during gestation.

As our knowledge expands we gain a deeper grasp of truth. As more information becomes available we can, in turn make a wiser judgment. But even if, as some say, the jury is still out on this issue, we do well to keep an open mind.

What we need to fear is no particular group of people, but rather our own blindness: that ignorance which becomes too comfortable, that righteousness that is so self-congratulatory, producing the narrow mind and the constricted heart of the bigot.

Regrettably, racism in our society persists despite significant gains in legislation and changes in popular attitudes won by

(Continued on page 5)

Recyclable Reprint: "Lack of Love" (Continued from page 4)

heroic sacrifices throughout the civil rights movement. The same is true with regard to sexism and anti-Semitism.

The proponents of discrimination always invoke the highest authority for their justification while pandering to the grossest fears of the public. And let's be clear, the Holy Bible has been used to justify slavery for 1,800 years and racial segregation up to our own day. It has likewise been applied with singular effectiveness in the subjugation of women down throughout the centuries, and as a mandate for the oppression of Jews.

It should not surprise us that the Bible is used as a club to bludgeon gay people. But is this kind of appropriation really about honoring God or is it about validating our own prejudices?

The soul of a healthy society is justice; the heart of authentic religion is love. Let us build on this foundation to strengthen the human family to which we all belong as precious, unique children of God.

Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster and Benedictine monk, expressed an elegant insight that should not be lost on us, "Love between two persons whether of the same sex or different sex is to be treasured and respected. To love another human being is to have entered into the area of the richest human experience."

I'd like to add that without the contributions of gay and lesbian people – primarily in the arts, in spirituality, and in the helping professions – this world of ours would be infinitely less colorful, less inspired, less compassionate. In a word, less human.

Reprinted from PFLAG Fresno, CA, Newsletter.

Don't Miss the Excitement!

Join Us for the 1996 Houston Pride Parade!

If you haven't been to a Pride Parade, you really don't know what you're missing. With hundreds and hundreds of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, & transgenders cheering along the parade route, various groups march down Westheimer towards Montrose in a show of Pride in ourselves, our family members and friends. For many it is an experience that will not be forgotten. Houston's Annual Gay Pride Week begins Friday June 14th and runs through Sunday June 23rd. PFLAG invites you to be a part of the following activities:



Pride Knows No Borders
June 14 - 23, 1996

The Pride Parade - Sunday, June 23rd 5:00 PM: This year the parade starts at 5:00 PM in order to beat the heat. The marchers will be carrying six streamers on small poles, making a 100 foot rainbow pride flag. Don't worry if you don't feel up to the march. PFLAG will provide a flat bed truck to ride, wave, and cheer in. We need as many members as possible. We also need volunteers to help coordinate this event and make signs.

The Pride Festival - Sunday June 23rd, 7:00 PM: After the Pride Parade, there will be a Pride Festival. PFLAG will have a booth at this festival and needs volunteers to run it. The booth will provide an opportunity for PFLAG members to educate the lesbian and gay community at large on our activities and get more people involved. You can sign up to staff the booth by calling Tim Curfman at 528-3589.

If you have never participated in a Pride Parade, then you owe yourself this incredible experience. Listen for more info at the June meetings! We'll see you there!

PFLAG at the Theater

"Ten Percent Revue" at Ovations

Between now and 6/16/96, The Group Theater Workshop will be presenting "the quintessential gay musical revue," **Ten Percent Revue**. This musical comedy/drama has been produced in major cities all over the country since 1985. PFLAG will be going on Sunday night, June 2 after our monthly meeting. You can pay for your tickets that night at the door, however reservations must be made as soon as possible. If you would like to attend, contact John Kellett at 529-8368. Tickets are \$10 and the show begins at 7:00pm. Ovations is located in the Village at 2536-B Times Blvd., next to Main Street Theater. If you cannot attend on the 2nd, but would like to attend another performance, you can make reservations at 522-2204.

Proud

By Jane Bowen Smith, April 23, 1996

Come all of you P-FLAG'ers, out there in the crowd
I know a way to make you feel proud
Come join me one hot day in June
We'll march down Westheimer to a Civil Rights tune

The gays and the lesbians will stand and they'll cheer
The mere sight of parents will cause some eyes to tear
We'll bring all our love out there in the street
And our spirits will soar in spite of the heat

We'll wave our PFLAG banner up high in the air
This gay pride parade is an uplifting affair
It takes such a little to mean such a lot
It's worth it, you P-FLAG'ers - what a way to get hot!

At the end of the parade you'll collapse from the heat
You'll drink lots of water and pamper your feet
All year you'll remember the sound of that crowd
Come march with me - it's a day to be proud!

PFLAG National Conference 96

October 11-14, 1996 in Washington, DC at the Crystal Gateway Marriott

1996 Conference Highlights

Family to Family: Thursday, October 10 - Volunteer to be part of PFLAG's unique toll-free national family help-line. Family To Family gives families of gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgendered people an opportunity to talk with PFLAG family members about the emotional impact of learning their child is gay.

Leadership Training Institute: Friday, October 11 - Join PFLAG's grassroots leaders and discuss how to reach out to your community, how to get your community actively involved in PFLAG, and how to spread PFLAG's message. If you consider yourself a PFLAG leader, register now!

Computer Training w/Digital Queers: The Digital Queers' computer gurus will be on hand to teach you everything you ever wanted to know about email, the Internet, and how to organize on-line. Let us know what topics you would like covered at Conference '96.

Lobby Day: Let your voice be heard on Capitol Hill. Meet your representatives and senators to speak out on the issues that affect your family and community. PFLAG will provide training & help coordinate lobbying visits for conference participants.

Exciting Workshops: A large selection of workshops that address the issues affecting all of us.

Exhibits: This one stop shopping place is your opportunity to be exposed to products and services that meet your needs.

Plenary Speakers: Inspiring, motivating and informative!

Networking Opportunities: Visit with old friends and meet new acquaintances.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Chapter/Organization: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

FAX: _____

Email: _____

Please indicate if you would like to participate in any of the following:

- Digital Queers Computer Training
- Lobby Day
- Family to Family
- Is this your First PFLAG National Conference?

PFLAG Conference Fees:

| | Before Aug. 16, 1996 | After August 16 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Full Conference | \$190 | \$235 |
| Saturday Only | \$125 | \$125 |
| Leadership Training Institute | \$75 | \$75 |

Method of Payment:

- Check (Payable to PFLAG National Conference)
- Visa MasterCard Discover

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Mail this registration form and your payment or you may fax your credit card registration to:

PFLAG National Conference

19528 Amaranth Drive

Germantown, MD 20874

FAX: (301)353-1808

Registrations will not be accepted after October 1, 1996.

School's OUT/The Naming Project

A DiverseDialogues Residency

School's OUT again! With class and sass, a spirited team of lesbian and gay young artists investigates what it's like to be young and queer. This unique project, in which the team develops a multimedia performance through an intensive workshop in performance and media making, returns to Houston for a second year. In Houston, members of that now-veteran group team up with six local youth artists aged 17 - 24 to create an all-new performance. Houston young artists are: Brandy Merritt, Daaimah Mubashshir, Tiffani Raiford, Diana Taylor, and Ronnie Tipton. Tickets are \$12 and performances are June 21-22, 8pm and June 23, 2pm. All performances are at DiverseWorks 1117 E. Freeway (N. Main at Naylor). Call 228-0914 for reservations. **PFLAG Moms & Dads are Encouraged to Attend to show our support for these courageous gay & lesbian youth! See you at the theater!**



PFLAG Houston helps families understand their gay family member(s) and is totally committed to educating the community at large. To accomplish these purposes, we:

- Operate a help line to give information and help to anyone who needs us.
- Distribute educational material such as newsletters and booklets.
- Organize educational events for helping professionals in the city.
- Staff an information booth at city-wide functions.
- Have an active speaker's bureau. We speak out!
- Advertise in local newspapers and magazines to reach parents that might not know about us.
- Maintain an active internet site with helpful information.
- Testify at legislative hearings.
- Provide scholarships to deserving gay & lesbian high school seniors.

We do all of the above and much more. Your support is crucial to PFLAG Houston continuing to reach out to our community, our state, and our nation! Please take a moment and fill out the membership form on the right and mail it to:

PFLAG Houston
P.O. Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Join us in our mission and...

...Be a part of Our Rainbow!

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

Wow! What a month! Just when I thought I could slow down a little bit now that the DC trip is over, the ruling on Amendment 2 hits. I cannot tell you how wonderful it was to be at the celebratory rally at Tranquility Park on May 20. **By the way, have you noticed our advertisements in the Houston Chronicle?** Look for them at least once a month! Tim Curfman put them together and they look great!! Way to go, Tim!

There is a lot of information this month in the newsletter. I hope that if you're reading this, you've read the rest! I hope you enjoy it! I know I did! Thanks for all your articles and ideas! Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup67@aol.com by e-mail! The deadline for the July newsletter is June 23. **Happy Father's Day!** ☺

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Name(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ St: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Check Here if you would prefer that any PFLAG mail come in a sealed envelope.

Check here if you do not wish to receive the PFLAG Flyer Newsletter.

| Membership Category (Check One) | Amount |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red | Student/Limited Income \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orange | Individual \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow | Family/Couple \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green | Supporter \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue | Patron \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purple | Sponsor \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver | Benefactor \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gold | Advocate \$2,500 |

Special Contribution: \$ _____

\$8 of your dues go to PFLAG's National organization.

Please make checks payable to **PFLAG Houston**.

Your donation may be tax deductible. PFLAG Houston is a Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Organization. [I.D. # 76-0372-170]

PFLAG Flyer

Official Newsletter of Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Houston, TX

July 1996

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Be Proud, Candace Gingrich Tells Gays

Half-sister of House speaker honored in Houston

By Chad Binette

Candace Gingrich, the lesbian half-sister of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, encouraged gays and lesbians Sunday to let others know about their sexual orientations and to become politically active. Gingrich, a spokeswoman for the National Human Rights Campaign, received the Founder's Award at Pride Fest '96, part of Lesbian & Gay Pride Week. She also served as a grand marshal of the parade.

"We need to be open and proud," Gingrich told an estimated crowd of 50,000. "That's how we can educate people about who we are ... When people know us, they can't hate us anymore." Before Pride Fest, thousands lined Westheimer for the parade, organizers said. The crowd seemed smaller than in previous years because of morning and afternoon rain. A sparse crowd gathered by the start at Woodhead, but many paradesgoers flocked to the Montrose area, standing double- and triple-file and even sitting on a few rooftops.

"This is to remember within the gay community that we're together," said Carlos Briones of Houston. "And to show outside the community that we're proud to be gay. We have a right to be ourselves." At one point during the afternoon, organizers decided to cancel the festival because they could not get a sound system. But they changed their minds and moved only the concert part of the festival to a local club.

"We were prepared for the heat, but we weren't prepared for the rain," said Howard McHale, a Pride Week co-chair. McHale said Gingrich's presence gave the festival and the parade, in which about 100 groups participated, more of a national flavor than in years past. Though gays and lesbians celebrated Sunday, Gingrich reminded them of recent congressional action that would define marriage as a legal union between a man and a woman.

The U.S. House Judiciary Committee two weeks ago approved the bill, which would restrict same-sex marriages and would prevent surviving partners in gay and lesbian marriages from receiving Social Security, tax and veterans' benefits. The House is expected to vote on the bill in mid-July, and the Senate has not yet taken action.

Gingrich visited Houston last August to support legislation that would protect gays from losing their jobs because of sexual orientation. She served last June as grand marshal for the 25th annual gay pride parade in San Francisco.

Reprinted from The Houston Chronicle, Houston, Texas



Reflections on Pride 1996

Next Meeting July 14

*Dr. Bob McLaughlin Speaks on
"Unearned Privilege"*

Clinical psychologist Dr. Bob McLaughlin will discuss the "unearned privileges" granted to people because of who they are and not on ability, merit, or fairness. Unearned privilege is undeniably our cultural heritage, whether based on "good family," race, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, wealth, and other status. Bob will challenge us to look at these "privileges" and understand the effects on our homosexual children's pursuit of equal rights.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 N. Piney Point, off San Felipe between Voss & Gessner. After our large group session, join us in one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss issues, concerns and celebrations with others in a safe, confidential environment.

There are also special groups for Spouse Support, HIV Concerns, & Advocacy. So plan to join us this month! We hope to see you there! If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Norma Graves with the announcement by Friday, July 12 at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 467-4105 or NRGraves9@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

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| National Conference | 6 |
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Schedule of Events

| | |
|---------|--|
| Jul. 14 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting, Speaker: Bob McLaughlin **Note Date Change** St. Francis Episcopal Church 345 North Piney Point |
| Aug. 4 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting |
| Sep. 8 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting |

Project Open Mind Launches in Seattle with New Ad

SEATTLE, June 13 - Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, grandparents and friends joined together today to announce the next phase of "Project Open Mind" - the national educational campaign focusing on the effects of hate speech on lesbian and gay Americans. The campaign, engineered by PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, uses a twofold strategy of multimedia national and local communications and community outreach at the grassroots level. The second phase moves into Seattle this week with broad-based community and even corporate support. Targeted cities Minneapolis/St. Paul and St. Louis will follow with the advertising, public relations and community outreach campaign.

A Seattle press conference today debuted a new 30-second TV advocacy ad that takes on the issues of hate crimes and high teen suicide rates faced by lesbians and gay men. The ad will begin airing in Seattle this week as the campaign kicks off. Ad buys are also planned for Minneapolis/St. Paul and St. Louis for late summer.

"This campaign is about family values," said Mitzi Henderson, president of PFLAG's board of directors. "The number one family value is to love and protect your children. If our community and our society are to embrace family values, then we must love and protect all of our children. To do so, we must speak out forcefully against anti-gay bigotry wherever it occurs - and reaffirm to gays and lesbians that they are entitled to the same respect, dignity and civil rights as all Americans."

The first phase of "Project Open Mind" targeted the cities of Atlanta, Houston and Tulsa. The campaign drew national attention last fall after Pat Robertson and his Christian Broadcasting Network threatened legal action against any stations airing PFLAG's first ads which addressed the effects of hate speech (some voiced by Robertson) against lesbians and gays.

While the first phase of "Project Open Mind" became known for the attacks by Robertson, the second phase is likely to be recognized for a wide spread voice of support. Nordstrom - a Seattle based department store - signed on

as a corporate sponsor of "Project Open Mind." Likewise, Washington Federation of State Employees and the Washington Education Association are backing the campaign. U.S. Bank and the Washington State League of Women Voters endorsed "Project Open Mind." Washington's Governor Mike Lowry, Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, Congress members Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), John Lewis (D-GA), Gerry Studds (D-MA) and Houston and Atlanta Mayors Bob Lanier and Bill Campbell have also endorsed PFLAG and the group's efforts with "Project Open Mind."

The television ad is designed to help open the door for PFLAG members' community outreach. "The damage caused by hate speech affects every community - large and small," said PFLAG Executive Director Sandra Gillis, "that's why our local outreach program is so important. The television ads may get peoples' attention, but our personal message will be able to connect with them in a way a television ad can't."

The new 30-second spot, like its predecessors, is hard-hitting and emotionally compelling. The ad titled "They deserve it?" displays sunny images of children playing while the announcer states, "Some of them will be three times more likely to commit suicide than their friends. There's also a greater chance they'll be assaulted, beaten, threatened, harassed or even murdered... Just because they are lesbian or gay. But look at them, they deserve it don't they?"

Reprinted from PFLAG National Press Release

PFLAG Houston: How Do We Grow?

As our Houston chapter grows in size, we face the dilemma of how to maintain the strength of a large chapter while serving the needs of members all over the greater Houston Area. The Board has assembled a committee which includes Irv Smith, Blake Weisser, Barbara Winston, & Doug Upchurch. Their purpose is to evaluate ways in which we can meet the needs of our growing organization as well as reach out to others in the city that might not know about PFLAG.

We are currently looking at ways we can 1) expand our outreach into different communities, 2) appropriately handle the support needs of members within our large geographic region, and 3) provide support-only meetings during the month in certain areas of the city.

Although the first 2 are still in the research stage, we want to go ahead and start holding "support-only" meetings to bridge the time gap between general meetings. These will be small, probably in a member's home, and conducted by a trained facilitator. Ideally they will meet in various parts of the city, perhaps on a week night, and probably several weeks removed from the first-Sunday general sessions. A meeting should not last over about an hour and will not have announcements, advocacy talk, or a formal presentation.

If you are interested in participating in a monthly support group outside of the monthly meeting, please let Irv know of your preferences as to day of the week, etc. He will attempt to match up the groups geographically and time-wise, and pass the information on to those coordinating PFLAG's support efforts. If you have other ideas, please forward them to the Committee.

Disney Scoffs at Boycott

The Walt Disney Company is standing by its gay-friendly company policies in the face of a threatened boycott from the Southern Baptist Convention and its more than 15 million adherents. Rejecting the notion that a company with a tradition in "family" products should be hostile to gays and their families, Disney officials have issued a statement saying, "We find it curious that a group that claims to espouse family values would vote to boycott the world's largest producer of wholesome family entertainment."

Angry at the company's provision of health insurance to the domestic partners of gay employees, as well as the use of Disney theme parks for "gay days," the Southern Baptist Convention told its members "to give serious and prayerful reconsideration to their purchase and support of Disney

Poor Misunderstood Mickey...

by Deb Price

Poor, misunderstood Mickey Mouse. No, better make that rich, misunderstood Mickey Mouse. Southern Baptists don't want him playing with their children anymore. They say he's changed and can't be trusted. In a boycott resolution that hit Mickey right between his world-famous ears, the Baptists accuse his Disney Co. of being so gay-friendly that it's abandoning "its historic commitment to traditional family values."

Well, it's just not so. The grown-ups behind this Mickey Mouse controversy have their facts all wrong. Yes, Mickey has plenty of gay friends. After all, he's worked in show biz more than 60 years. And, yes, Disney now makes a policy of treating gay employees and patrons fairly. But Mickey and his Disney pals have never indulged in the fantasy that the traditional family -- papa, mama and 2.5 kids -- is the secret to everyone's happiness. Their movies and cartoons have always valued love, kindness, honesty and individuality, not just one style of living.

Disney's past perhaps confuses Southern Baptists because history isn't an easy subject for them: Their denomination didn't get around to apologizing for its defense of slavery until last year. Maybe a quickie course on Disney's world will refresh a few memories.

SINCE we're dealing with the kind of folks who think they saw S-E-X in the stardust of "The Lion King" (1994), maybe it's not best to start by mentioning that the lyrics in "The Little Mermaid" (1989) and "Beauty and the Beast" (1991) were written by an openly gay man, Howard Ashman. And they probably don't want to hear that Walt Disney said, "I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I've ever known."

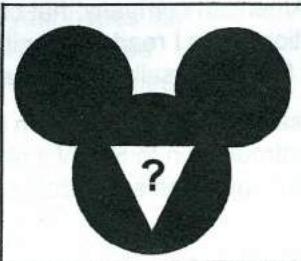
Instead, let's lower the lights and review Disney's family fare:

"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937): Young woman flees quite dysfunctional family (stepmother intent on cutting

products and to boycott the Disney theme parks and stores if they continue this anti-Christian and anti-family trend." In response, Disney said, "We question any group that demands that we deprive people of health benefits and we know of no tourist destination in the world that denies admission to people as the Baptists are insisting we do." Many attending this month's "gay day" at Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida, report that park officials were enthusiastic in welcoming the large crowds of lesbians and gay men, and showed no signs of wifing in the face of the threatened Baptist boycott. Let Disney know that we appreciate its willingness to stand up for its gay and lesbian employees, customers and their families even when threatened with economic losses.

Contact: Michael Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Company, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521, phone: 818.560.1000, or e-mail through Disney.com at <http://www.disney.com/Mail>.

out her heart) to live happily with very short, untidy men. Shows how much fun seven guys can have with one bar of soap.



"Pinocchio" (1940): Unmarried, warmhearted woodcutter wants son. Zero interest in acquiring one through traditional methods. With fairy's help, he gets well-built little guy, a chip off the old block.

"Bambi" (1942): Single mother -- let's call her Jane Doe -- bears a son. Absentee father nowhere in sight when they're reduced to eating bark to survive. Father speaks to Bambi only after Jane is fatally shot. Bambi fathers twins but skips out before their birth.

"Double Trouble" (1946): Daisy breaks up with Donald Duck because he mumbles. Donald hires a double to sweet-talk her. Double takes Daisy into tunnel of love. Donald follows; feathers fly. Donald and double emerge embracing. They dash off together, leaving furious Daisy behind.

"Cinderella" (1950): Pretty young maid escapes ugly home life.

"Peter Pan" (1953): Flighty young fellow in tights drops in on Darling traditional family, goes back to live with Lost Boys and the fairy who has a crush on him.

"Donald's Diary" (1953): Donald Duck recounts his "narrow escape" from getting into a nightmare of a marriage.

"Pollyanna" (1960): Relentlessly upbeat orphan moves in, forces aunt to enjoy life.

"The Jungle Book" (1967): Boy is raised by wolves.

So you see, Disney's never pretended that one particular family configuration is every heart's desire. Now the Disney employee health insurance plan acknowledges that some committed couples are gay. And a Disney book recognizes that some teens are, too.

The Southern Baptist Convention would have us believe it's wrong for Disney to treat gay people fairly. That's a wickedly

(Continued on page 7)

Get in the Game, by Linda Enger

Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in a newsletter for the Sexual Orientation in the Workplace Forum (SOIW). This forum is a special interest group within the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), a national organization of Human Resource Training & Development Professionals. Linda is an active member of PFLAG Houston.

I am a football fan. I must admit I've spent many a Sunday afternoon sitting in my recliner with chips and a cold one watching my favorite team battle the elements to carry a ball across the goal line. I cheer when they gain yardage and get frustrated when they lose it, all from the comfort of my nice, warm safe living room.

About two years ago, I realized I had taken the same arm-chair approach to the struggle for gays and lesbians in the workplace. I sought out articles about companies that took steps toward leveling the playing field using the three tools that Winfield and Spielman talk about in their book: Straight Talk about Gays in the Workplace:

1. Non-discrimination policies expressly inclusive of sexual orientation
2. Education programs and informational resources about sexual orientation
3. Equitable benefits, compensation and human resource policies

I quietly cheered every time I read about another American company that chose to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policy. And I felt the pang of frustration when I read about cities like Atlanta offering Domestic Partner Benefits to their employees only to have the wind taken from their sails by the Georgia Insurance Commissioner.

Up until then, my involvement had been from the "safety" of my nice, warm living room (my closet). Call it mid-life crisis but, after my first ASTD conference in '94 and my introduction to SOIW, I realized that equality in the workplace takes effort from all of us. I could no longer sit in my recliner with my chips and a cold one hoping my team would score. It was time for me to get in the game.

Since then, I've come out to my co-workers who were not alarmed or surprised, and I've met with the VP of Human Resources at my company regarding the non-discrimination policy and Domestic Partner Benefits. Guess what? Nothing bad happened. In fact, my relationships at work have strengthened and I feel I am more effective now that I don't have anything to hide.

I'm told that the updated non-discrimination policy includes sexual orientation and will be in print in March. I found it interesting that the decision makers were surprised that the language wasn't already in there. I guess there's something to those 1994 Human Rights Campaign statistics: "76% of Americans support equal employment rights for gay people and 70% don't realize that anti-gay job discrimination is still widespread and predominantly legal."

It was a big decision to come out to my employer and have open discussions about equality. But I have to tell you, it sure feels good to be out of that recliner(the one in the closet) and in the game!

Thoughts from the Democratic State Convention by Rosemary Wilson

This spring, after learning more about the anti-gay (political) plank, Fred and I decided that we had better get busy. We went to see our Polk County Democratic Chairman and told him of our concern. He informed us that he had already been made aware that there might be some interference on the part of the religious right. On election night we attended our local precinct meeting. From there we went to the county convention and from there to the Dallas State convention on June 7th and 8th.

Just before we left, I decided to notify the other PFLAG chapters in Texas, that we would be attending. I thought it would be good to meet but also to band together in case of any anti-gay resolutions. I got a phone call from Joan Nall in Garland. We arranged to wear our Promote Tolerance shirts to identify each other. The Stop Hate button and Promote Tolerance shirt began attracting persons right away in a positive manner. Then Fred and I discovered the gay and lesbian booth. Naturally we got a very warm welcome when we told them we were with PFLAG.

At 2pm, we attended the gay and lesbian caucus and were privileged to meet Glenn Maxey. He was in Uncommon Heroes and gave us his autograph for our daughter.

(Continued on page 5)

Family Pride

by Jane Smith, June 1996

Think back long ago to childhood - I'm sure you remember that door or wall
 Where Mom & Dad measured you with marks to show you'd grown tall
 They exclaimed every year as inches were added above
 Those marks through the years taught you family love

Now that you've grown, the marks continue inside
 Because all of life teaches lessons down where your soul does reside
 You either must change prejudices learned long ago
 Or your judgment will not permit your insides to grow

You accept others' lives though they're different from yours
 And rejoice that God opened your mind through the years
 You don't expect your children to be what they're not
 But encourage them, accept them - whatever their lot

Be glad when you see happiness and encourage it all
 Keep right on growing - don't let your hopes fall
 The marks long ago are now written inside
 You're still expanding - there's nothing to hide

Don't let others with their voices of gloom
 Influence your life and pluck your sweet bloom
 The marks of your growth continue inside
 Started long ago because of family pride

Thoughts from Democratic State Convention (Continued from page 4)

The next day we again went to the gay and lesbian booth to see what was happening. They told us of another caucus to attend. On the way to the meeting we stopped at the Christian Coalition booth. It was just a short distance from the gay and lesbian one. A nice young man in his 20's was brave enough to be there with a lady probably in her 40's.

They were handing out literature and calendars with Pat Robertson's picture on the back. We introduced ourselves and told them our opinions regarding the hate-producing language coming from their organization. We told them we wanted love and tolerance even if they didn't agree with us. They admitted that some of their group were too extreme. They appreciated that we were not argumentative and thanked us for the conversation. We believe that we left them with an open mind.

We met finally with Joan Nall and her son Jered. He is also in Uncommon Heroes. We hadn't had a chance to read the whole book, so this was a pleasant surprise. He was the precinct chairman from their area and very keen about politics.

It was a good convention. No anti-gay resolutions were introduced. We had time to meet and talk to so many members of the gay and lesbian community. They were a great bunch. It's so wonderful to belong to this great family. We feel very honored. It's been a wonderful first year in PFLAG. We have learned so much. We have grown and have become much more sensitive regarding everyone on this planet.

Before I close, I must tell you that during Sunday Catholic Mass, the PFLAG card went into the donation plate in Dallas. On the way home we stopped at Kroger in Huntsville. The sweet young checker heard our story and got the PFLAG card. She agreed with us totally but told us that we were the first parents to ever tell her of their gay child. She thought it was great.

Dear fellow PFLAG members, when you feel comfortable, please leave that card or send it when paying a bill. You may reach an unaccepting parent of a gay or lesbian child and it may turn their lives around. Wouldn't that be wonderful!

Kroger Share Card

We are happy to announce that Kroger Food Stores has chosen PFLAG Houston as a beneficiary of its popular Share Card program. This program helps support area non-profit organizations by taking a percentage of your purchases and refunding it back to PFLAG Houston.

Each time you shop at Kroger, simply present the card to the checker BEFORE they begin to ring up your order. They will scan the card and then proceed to scan your purchases.

If you do not have a PFLAG Houston Kroger Share Card, you can pick one up at the next PFLAG Meeting. So pick up your card and start raising funds for PFLAG Houston.

Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Teachers Network Meeting

Channel your enthusiasm and energy into GLSTN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Teachers Network). The group now meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month at 7:30pm at First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin at Southmore. Gays and straights, teachers and non-teachers are welcome, and anyone interested in a safer and non-discriminatory experience for teachers and students in the schools is encouraged to attend. The group is planning goals for next year and needs enthusiastic participants. For information about their program and support groups, call 713-942-7002, press 4.

PFLAG National Conference 96

October 11-14, 1996 in Washington, DC at the Crystal Gateway Marriott

1996 Conference Highlights

Family to Family: Thursday, October 10 - Volunteer to be part of PFLAG's unique toll-free national family help-line. Family To Family gives families of gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgendered people an opportunity to talk with PFLAG family members about the emotional impact of learning their child is gay.

Leadership Training Institute: Friday, October 11 - Join PFLAG's grassroots leaders and discuss how to reach out to your community, how to get your community actively involved in PFLAG, and how to spread PFLAG's message. If you consider yourself a PFLAG leader, register now!

Computer Training w/Digital Queers: The Digital Queers' computer gurus will be on hand to teach you everything you ever wanted to know about email, the Internet, and how to organize on-line. Let us know what topics you would like covered at Conference '96.

Lobby Day: Let your voice be heard on Capitol Hill. Meet your representatives and senators to speak out on the issues that affect your family and community. PFLAG will provide training & help coordinate lobbying visits for conference participants.

Exciting Workshops: A large selection of workshops that address the issues affecting all of us.

Exhibits: This one stop shopping place is your opportunity to be exposed to products and services that meet your needs.

Plenary Speakers: Inspiring, motivating and informative!

Networking Opportunities: Visit with old friends and meet new acquaintances.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Phone: _____

FAX: _____

Please indicate if you would like to participate in any of the following:

- Digital Queers Computer Training
- Lobby Day
- Family to Family
- Is this your First PFLAG National Conference?

PFLAG Conference Fees:

| | Before Aug. 16, 1996 | After August 16 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Full Conference | \$190 | \$235 |
| Saturday Only | \$125 | \$125 |
| Leadership Training Institute | \$75 | \$75 |

July 1996

Thoughts on National Conferences

by Dean Luttrell

My thoughts go back three years ago to my first national P-FLAG conference in New Orleans. If the city had not been exciting enough, the conference was certainly that! But it was more than just excitement. It was also very moving, joyful, healing, liberating, sad, hopeful and empowering. We made new friends, shared our stories, learned new stories, and encouraged one another in our mutual quest to create a more understanding and compassionate world.

We saw old friends and deepened the bonds of those friendships. We experienced the impassioned efforts to understand and to be understood from those new to the knowledge of homosexuality. We were stirred by those struggling with same sex marriage, or transgender issues. And we paused to give special remembrance to those whose journeys include HIV and AIDS.

All in all, seeing other American families representing so many parts of our country and society in a common quest is at once comforting and empowering.

I'm planning to go to the convention in D.C. this year, and I hope you will be able to join me. Tomorrow's chances come from today's efforts. Come be a part of those chances.

Editor's Note: Join Dean and the Graves, the Weissers, the Blacks, the Jones, the Smiths, the Sinclairs, Mary Parker, & Peg Nevers! Register today and then call Dick or Norma Graves at 467-4105 to let them know you're planning to attend.

Method of Payment:

- Check (Payable to PFLAG National Conference)
- Visa MasterCard Discover

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Mail this registration form and your payment or you may fax your credit card registration to:

PFLAG National Conference

19528 Amaranth Drive

Germantown, MD 20874

FAX: (301)353-1808

Registrations will not be accepted after October 1, 1996.

Poor Mickey Mouse (Continued from page 3)

false charge, of course, one the Baptists will someday regret. As a good fairy pointed out to slow-learning Pinocchio once upon a time, "a lie keeps growing and growing until it's as plain as the nose on your face."

Meanwhile, Mickey Mouse and his Disney pals will keep working their magic. And millions more children will learn to follow their hearts.

Deb Price is the news editor at the Washington bureau of the Detroit News. Her e-mail address is debprice@erols.com

THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, Thursday, June 27, 1996

Editor's Note: Although Disney is not likely to change its policy due to the actions of the Southern Baptist Convention, it is still very important for us to let them and others know of our support for Disney's true "family values." Take a minute to write Disney and say thanks.



PFLAG Houston helps families understand their gay family member(s) and is totally committed to educating the community at large. To accomplish these purposes, we:

- Operate a help line to give information and help to anyone who needs us.
- Distribute educational material such as newsletters and booklets.
- Organize educational events for helping professionals in the city.
- Staff an information booth at city-wide functions.
- Have an active speaker's bureau. We speak out!
- Advertise in local newspapers and magazines to reach parents that might not know about us.
- Maintain an active internet site with helpful information.
- Testify at legislative hearings.
- Provide scholarships to deserving gay & lesbian high school seniors.

We do all of the above and much more. Your support is crucial to PFLAG Houston continuing to reach out to our community, our state, and our nation! Please take a moment and fill out the membership form on the right and mail it to:

PFLAG Houston
P.O. Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

*Join us in our mission and...
...Be a part of Our Rainbow!*

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

Thanks to Linda Enger for her article as a lesbian standing up against discrimination in the workplace. I wonder what would happen if all PFLAG members asked the Human Resources department at their job to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policy? As Linda pointed out, for many people, it is a surprise to find out that sexual orientation is not already covered. So whether you use an anonymous suggestion or meet with your policy makers face to face, I challenge all of us to take a stand for other's gay and lesbian children that work at your company.

Thanks for all your articles and ideas! Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup67@aol.com by e-mail! The deadline for the July newsletter is July 19. ☺

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Name(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ St: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Other Information: _____

Check Here if you would prefer that any PFLAG mail come in a sealed envelope.

Check here if you do not wish to receive the PFLAG Flyer Newsletter.

| Membership Category (Check One) | Amount |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red | Student/Limited Income \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orange | Individual \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow | Family/Couple \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green | Supporter \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue | Patron \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purple | Sponsor \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver | Benefactor \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gold | Advocate \$2,500 |

Special Contribution: \$ _____

\$8 of your dues go to PFLAG's National organization. Please make checks payable to **PFLAG Houston**.

Your donation may be tax deductible. PFLAG Houston is a Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Organization. [I.D. # 76-0372-170]