

PFLAG Flyer

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

January 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Support • Education • Advocacy

"Hawaii Judge Okays Gay Marriage"

So what exactly does it mean?

Editor's Note: This is the first of several articles about the momentous decision regarding same-sex marriage that came from Hawaii earlier in December.

HONOLULU (AP) -- A state judge Tuesday barred Hawaii from denying marriage licenses to gay couples, a decision certain to be appealed.

The first word of the decision by Circuit Judge Kevin Chang came from Kirk Cashmere, an attorney for three gay couples who sued the state.

The ruling is expected to be appealed by the state, sending the case back to the state Supreme Court. It ruled in 1993 that denial of marriage licenses to same-sex couples amounted to gender discrimination under the state constitution's Equal Rights Amendment.

Copies of Chang's ruling were to be distributed later Tuesday. Chang "in a nutshell ruled that the sex-based classification in the state's marriage law is unconstitutional," Cashmere said.

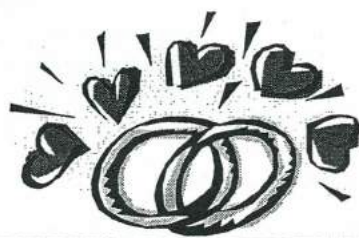
The judge said the state had not shown any compelling state interest to deny gay and lesbian couples the right to marry, the attorney said.

Reprinted from The Associated Press

From the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force: *Talking Points for local groups*, by Tracey Conaty

The First Circuit Court in Hawaii released its ruling today in the Baehr v. Milke marriage case. The ruling is in favor of the right of same-gender couples to marry. Many of you have and/or will be battling anti-marriage laws in your state. We can expect the Right will attempt to use the Hawaii ruling to feed the flames of anti-gay hysteria and further its attempts to pass state anti-marriage measures.

The following are brief talking points to assist you in your efforts to counter the Right's "spin" of this decision and advance your efforts to secure LGBT equality. Press attention around this decision will provide a window of opportunity for the LGBT community to move its messages on this issue. We hope these talking points will be useful to you when talking to local media about the Hawaii decision and its implications for your state. For information and support: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Tracey Conaty 202-332-6483 ext. 3303; (tconaty@ngltf.org), <http://www.ngltf.org>



Off to Hawaii?



Next Meeting January 5 Topic: To Be Announced

What is it they say about the best laid plans? Well, this month due to circumstances beyond our control, a speaker and topic had not been confirmed at press time. We encourage you to join us at our new home for the large group and small group meetings.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston.

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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, January 3 at 12 Noon. No announcements will be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Thanks again to everyone who attended the PFLAG Holiday Housewarming! Here's to a new year in a new home! See you there!



Don't
Forget!!
We've
Moved!

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Schedule of Events

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Jan. 5 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting at
our NEW HOME!!
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Jan. 12 | PFLAG Woodlands Meeting, 2 PM at
Northwoods Unitarian Universalist
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Jan. 15 | Reconciling Methodists Program
(See Article Below) |
| Jan. 19 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Feb. 2 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Feb. 16 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Mar. 2 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |

You don't have to be a teacher...

...to attend the Houston GLSTN Meetings

The Houston Chapter of the Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Teacher's Network of Houston will be meeting Wednesday, January 15, 1996, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin at Southmore. GLSTN is a national organization focused on making all schools a safe place for all students including those that are gay and lesbian. The Houston Chapter of GLSTN provides: (1) support for educators; (2) education on ending homophobia; and (3) advocacy in schools. Whether you are a teacher, counselor, parent, or a supportive individual, you are encouraged to attend! The 1997 meetings are currently scheduled for Feb 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, and June 18. For more information, contact GLSTN - Houston Chapter at 713-529-4571 or by mail at P.O. Box 541871, Houston, TX 77254.

Reconciling Methodist Coordinator to Speak in Houston

Mark Bowman, National Coordinator of the Reconciling Congregations Program of the United Methodist Church, will speak at Memorial Drive U.M.C. on Thursday, Jan. 9, 1997, at 7:00 PM. It will be an informational talk to explain and also to answer questions about this program which deals with churches and church members who openly welcome gays and lesbians as full and active members. All who are interested are invited to attend. If you have any questions, please call Janelle Armstrong at (281) 493-0851.

Get Well Wishes to Board Members

- Late in November, board member Dale Adcock had a minor heart attack and underwent heart surgery. Dale and his wife, Gail, are the wonderful librarians at our monthly meetings. We wish him a very quick and speedy recovery.
- In December, newly appointed board member and Bering United Methodist Church staff member, Troy Plummer, had a unexpected appendectomy. He is doing well and resting at home. We also wish Troy a very quick and speedy recovery.

We miss you guys!
Get Well Soon!!

A Word of Thanks to OutSmart...

A special note of thanks to the Houston gay & lesbian monthly magazine, OutSmart. The December cover story addressed coming out over the holidays. Interviews with several PFLAG members were featured along with a great list of recommended books and plenty of great information about PFLAG. If you don't already do so, I encourage you to pick up a copy of OutSmart at various bookstores, record stores, restaurants inside the loop including Barnes & Noble, Bookstop, Cactus Records, 59 Diner, Crossroads, Inklings, and more. Letters to OutSmart can be sent to 3406 Audubon Place 77006 or via email to OutSmart1@aol.com. The publisher is Greg Jeu.

Attention Randall's Shoppers... *Fundraising while you grocery shop!*

In conjunction with its new "Remarkable Card" Program, Randall's Grocery Stores recently announced its "Good Neighbor Program." Randall's Good Neighbor Program is designed to give non-profit organizations a way to raise funds while their members shop for groceries. PFLAG Houston has applied and received approval to be a beneficiary of this program. Here's what you have to do if you shop at Randall's.

On your next shopping visit, present your Remarkable Card and let them know you would like to have the Good Neighbor Program activated on your card for group # 1990, PFLAG Houston. **This must be done before the checker begins scanning your groceries.** Once your card has been activated for PFLAG Houston, simply present your Remarkable Card before the checker begins to scan your items. It's that simple. PFLAG Houston will be paid every quarter based on 1% of quarterly sales. If we exceed \$20,000 in quarterly sales, we will receive 2% of that amount. So activate your Remarkable Card for PFLAG Houston (Code #1990).

If you prefer to go Krogering, don't forget to use your PFLAG Houston Kroger Share Card. PFLAG Houston just received check for \$147.88 as a result of those that presented their Kroger Share Card when shopping at Kroger.

1996 Human Rights Award for Straight Parents/Gay Children Author and PFLAG Parent Bob Bernstein Recognized for Achievement in Combating Intolerance

Washington, D.C. (December 10, 1996) -- A popular book by the father of a lesbian daughter is among the winners of a prestigious annual award for the best scholarship on the subject of intolerance. Straight Parents, Gay Children by Washington author Bob Bernstein portrays families who feel their lives have been enriched by having gay children. The announcement was timed for December 10, International Human Rights Day, by the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights, which called Bernstein's achievement, "an outstanding book on human rights in North America."

The Center, based in Arkansas, is sponsored by many of the nations' leading human and civil rights organizations, including the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Urban League, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). This is the thirteenth consecutive year the Center has presented its award to outstanding literary achievements in the field of human rights.

"In highly readable fashion, Straight Parents, Gay Children makes clear that our openly gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans are devoted family members and valuable, productive citizens," said James R. Bennett, director of the Gustavus Myers Center, in announcing the award. "This book tells the very personal and vital story of how -- in the face of a massive social tide of misinformation and hostility toward a beleaguered minority -- many of these young people have become models of honesty, courage and decency for their families and friends."

Bernstein, a lawyer and former law professor, was featured earlier this year on the Oprah Winfrey Show as "Parent of the Week." His columns on the movement for gay equality and other civil rights issues have appeared in more than 50 mainstream newspapers, including the Washington Post and the New York Times, and in numerous gay publications. He is a frequent talk show guest and a popular speaker on college campuses, before civic, church and professional groups, and at chapters of PFLAG, which he served as national vice president for seven years ending in 1995.

Kirkus Reviews called the book a "compelling portrait of straight parents'...move toward celebrating difference and speaking out against injustice." The Washington Blade called it a "succinct, moving book about parents who have defied the social stigma of homosexuality to publicly support their gay children." Novelist Armistead Maupin ["Tales of the City"] describes it as "an invaluable book [showing] the parents of gay children how to stop merely tolerating their kids and starting being their heroes. Is there any higher goal for a parent?" Openly gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA) said, "If Bob Bernstein's book were compulsory reading in America, the population of bigots would dwindle at a rapid rate."

His book carries an introduction by Robert MacNeil of the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, whose gay son, Ian, is an award-winning set designer on the London and Broadway stages. Among the scores of parents (and grandparents) featured in Bernstein's book are former Senator Barry Goldwater, former Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher, former Portland, Oregon Chief of Police Tom Potter, and United Methodist Bishop Melvin Wheatley.

If you want to congratulate Bob, his email address is pflagbob@aol.com.

San Francisco Benefits Measure Signed into Law

Mayor Willie Brown signed a measure that makes San Francisco the first in the country to require firms and contractors doing business with the city to offer domestic partner benefits comparable to any spousal benefits they offer to their employees.

The measure, unanimously approved by the city's governing board of supervisors, prohibits the city from engaging in business dealings with firms or contractors that offer their workers spousal benefits but don't have similar benefit programs for their employee's domestic partners. The measure covers not only businesses located in the city itself, but also firms that do business with the city, no matter where they are located. Supervisors said they have received inquiries about the measure from other cities with partner's registration programs including New York and Boston.

Reprinted from OutSmart, December 1996.

Calling all Ex-Ex-Gays! New Web Site wants your stories

Houston PFLAGer Doug Upchurch is looking for personal stories of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals that have participated in either religious or psychological groups seeking to change their sexual orientation. Many of these individuals realize later that their sexual orientation is something to be accepted instead of rejected.

After spending nearly 12 years of his life in these groups, Doug is starting a new web site called "Ex.Ex" in order to provide honest information and personal stories for those seeking information on these groups. Unfortunately, there is currently no easily accessible source of information about these damaging groups and what they do. For more information, contact Doug at 713-528-3684, exexgay@aol.com, or visit the web site at <http://members.aol.com/exexgay>.



Same-Sex Marriage *(Continued from page 1)*

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund

212-995-8585

ldefmarry@aol.com

<http://www.freedomtomarry.org>

Issue: What does the Hawaii trial court decision say?

Answer: Today's decision by the trial court in Hawaii (referred to as the Circuit Court) means the state has not been able to demonstrate a "compelling" reason for denying marriage licenses to same-gender couples. The Hawaii Supreme Court had ruled in 1993 that unless the state could make such a showing, the denial of marriage licenses to same-gender marriages was illegal discrimination based on the equal protection clause of the state's constitution.

The trial court's opinion rejects the arguments raised by the state during the trial earlier this year, that same gender marriages will not provide the "optimal" environment for raising children and that two biological parents are the "best" for raising a child. These were the main arguments raised by the state to justify its discriminatory treatment of same-gender couples. The court instead seems to have relied on the overwhelming testimony, of both state and defense witnesses, that gays and lesbians raise happy, healthy and well-adjusted children just as well as heterosexual parents and that civil marriage brings important protections to all types of families whether or not they have children.

Issue: What is the implication of the lower Court's holding today?

Answer: By rejecting the state's main arguments for denying legal state recognition for same-gender marriages - because they would not create the best environment for raising children - this decision is a small, but crucial, step forward in the long march toward civil equality for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people.

Issue: Does this decision mean that same-gender couples in Hawaii can immediately file for state marriage licenses?

Answer: In theory, the answer is yes. BUT, it is expected that the State will ask the lower court or the state's Supreme Court to put a hold (or a "stay") on its decision until the state can appeal the merits of the decision to the Hawaii Supreme Court. It is very likely one of the courts will issue such a stay or hold.

This means the decision will not have any practical impact right away and legal recognition of same-gender marriages in Hawaii will have to wait for the outcome of the final Hawaii Supreme Court decision on the merits of the lower court's decision. The final judgment on this case will have to wait for the state Supreme Court to review the trial court's decision. That final judgment could be another year away.

Issue: Doesn't this decision, however, mean that we are one step closer to legalized same-gender marriages in Hawaii?

Answer: YES. Assuming that the Hawaii Supreme Court will agree with the lower court's decision, in about a year or so same-gender couples in Hawaii could begin gaining legal recognition of their relationships, just as heterosexual couples do now.

Issue: What impact will the federal anti-gay marriage legislation - the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) - have on Hawaii gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender couples' ability to gain such legal recognition?

Answer: DOMA will not prevent such recognition within the state of Hawaii. BUT, it will affect the ability of legally married same-gender couples in Hawaii to receive the same federal economic and social benefits which heterosexual couples receive.

If Hawaii grants marriage licenses to same-gender couples, those couples could challenge the DOMA as discriminatory since it denies them benefits solely based on the sexual orientation of the couples.

Issue: 16 states have adopted legislation to deny marriage licenses to same-gender couples AND to deny recognition of same-gender marriages which may become legal in Hawaii or any other state; other states may seek to adopt similar laws in 1997. What impact will the Hawaii decision to legalize same-gender marriages have in such states?

Answer: If Hawaii provides legal recognition for same-gender marriages in another year or so, then couples who are married in Hawaii but move to another state which has such a ban, may seek to challenge such laws.

Right now, states give recognition (or "full faith and credit") to heterosexual marriages, regardless of the state in which the marriage occurred. To deny such recognition to same-gender marriages solely on the basis of their sexual orientation would discriminate against such couples and create two classes of lawful marriages. We believe that the courts will find such laws to be unconstitutional on equal protection grounds.

Issue: Wouldn't same-gender marriages infringe upon the religious freedoms of some Americans?

Answer: Absolutely not. In the United States, marriage is both a civil and religious institution. Though some religious denominations do recognize and perform same-gender ceremonies, support for same-gender marriage is absolutely NOT a fight to force any religious institution to perform or extend religious recognition to any marriage union. This is about the freedom to have a civil marriage license issued by the state. Just as the state should not interfere in any way with religious ceremonies, religious groups should not dictate who gets a marriage license.

Editorial on Same-Sex Marriages

The Honolulu ruling on gay marriage is so hot it got reactions before it happened.

Just the possibility that a state court might allow same-sex marriage egged Congress into passing the Defense of Marriage Act to assure that other states would not have to recognize Hawaiian gay marriages. Arizona and 15 other states passed prohibitions.

Now that the court has ordered Hawaii to stop denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples, the heat builds.

Supporters of same-sex marriage hail the decision as "the beginning of the end of sex discrimination in marriage." Opponents condemn the ruling as an example of "liberal judges tampering with society's fundamental institutions."

Both are right. The decision, which will work its way back to the Hawaiian Supreme Court for final disposition, is a significant victory for gay and lesbian couples.

The decision is also an example of courts stepping out in front of social change, just as they did when they barred "separate, but equal" schools. Opponents of same-sex marriage point to polls that show 70 percent of Hawaii's residents oppose it. But similar percentages probably opposed changes that brought greater civil rights to minorities and women. The majority isn't always right. That's why the Constitution protects minority viewpoints.

The desire of same-sex couples to share the privileges and responsibilities of marriage cannot be dismissed as unholy or unworthy. It is a legitimate longing to participate openly and equally in society. Their commitments to each other deserve dignified recognition.

But should that recognition be called marriage? Marriage has long been seen as a union between a man and a woman. Many see homosexual marriage as a degradation of an institution venerated as the ideal way to further the species.

To uphold the ban on same-sex marriages, opponents had to prove in court that there was a compelling state interest in doing so. They argued during a nine-day non-jury trial in September that children are best raised in traditional families with two heterosexual parents. Assuring that children have the best possible parenting would be in the public interest. But using that logic would lead to bans on divorce and unhappy marriages. The judge said the state failed to show a compelling public interest in banning same-sex marriage.

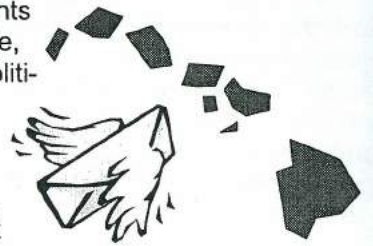
Attorneys for the same-sex couples who sought to overturn the marriage ban offered experts who testified that children raised by homosexual couples would be better off if their parents could marry. Experts also pointed out the obvious:

It is the quality of parenting, not the sexual orientation of the parents, which matters most.

Reprinted from THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC December 5, 1996
Box 1950, Phoenix, AZ, 85001
E-MAIL: Opinions@aol.com)

Letters Are Needed for Hawaii

In the matter of human rights and same-gender marriage, letters are needed. The politicians and people of Hawaii are timid and uncertain of how to handle this new kind of marriage. Perhaps our chief asset at



present is our tourist industry and they need to be re-assured that Tourism will continue and that there are people out there planning to visit, marry, spend and leave. To this end, letters to the following will have real effect:

The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii
1132 Bishop Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
chamber@hula.net

Hawaii Visitors Bureau
2270 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Governor Ben Cayetano
State Capital, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Representative Neil Abercrombie
Prince Kuhio Federal Bldg, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Prince Kuhio Federal Bldg., Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Senator Daniel Inouye
Prince Kuhio Federal Bldg., Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Representative Patsy Mink
Prince Kuhio Federal Bldg., Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Our two major papers:

Honolulu Star-Bulletin
Letters to the Editor
605 Kapiolani Blvd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(editor@starbulletin.com)

The Honolulu Advertiser
Letters to the Editor
Box 3110, Honolulu, Hawaii 96802
(76322.2016@compuserve.com)

Our local Gay paper:

Island Lifestyles Magazine
Post Office Box 11840
Honolulu, Hawaii 96828

If you send a copy to me, I will notify you if you have been published.

Ward Stewart
2085 Ala Wai Blvd, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815
wstewart@hi.net

Perot Systems gives gay/lesbian partner benefits

DALLAS, Dec. 14 (UPI) — A newspaper report (Saturday) says Perot Systems is now offering health insurance benefits to gay and lesbian partners of employees. The Dallas Morning News reports that Perot Systems is the first major Texas-based Company to make such an offer. Company officials could not be reached for comment, but spokeswoman Tara Sexton tells The News, "we want to attract, develop and recognize talented people." She says taking good care of workers and their loved ones is the way to attract and keep talent. Marriages between persons of the same sex are not valid in most states, so homosexual partners of covered workers can be locked out of benefits packages without such plans as Perot Systems has instituted.

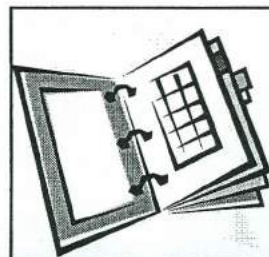
"But They're All Voters!", by Jane Smith

Irv & I spent the first week of December on the Delta Queen. The steamboat traveled from New Orleans to Galveston on the Intracoastal Waterway. There were 130 passengers with an average age of about 70. We understand this was a younger crowd than usually goes steamboating.

All these older people and - you guessed it - two young (30's) gay men. We spotted them early, and being good PFLAG parents felt obligated to watch over them. Believe me - they didn't need our protection. They and about twenty other passengers assembled a difficult 3-D crossword puzzle. They played rummy with another couple. The only comments we heard were about how friendly the young men were.

The people on that boat can no longer say they've never met a gay person, and they all left with a nice impression of two friendly typical gay young men. Steve - the older of the two - told us Roberto, his partner, was concerned about all the old people. Steve told him: "They are all voters!"

We left feeling really happy to see how easily a gay couple was accepted by a bunch of old geezers. It's a great lesson to all of us PFLAG'ers - we are all, gays and parents, changing opinions by our presence in other peoples' lives.



**FROM OUR
MEMBERS**

Remembering a Pioneer

Psychologist famous for 1950's studies on homosexuality dies

Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist who emboldened the fledgling homosexual rights movement in the 1950s by finding there was no measurable psychological difference between homosexual and heterosexual men, has died. She was 89.

Dr. Hooker, who died early in December in her Santa Monica home, spent 30 years teaching at UCLA and began studying homosexual men in the late 1940s, when they were considered maladjusted—at best—and generally ignored or anathematized by the medical and mental health professions.

"She never treated us like some strange tribe," recalled writer Christopher Isherwood, who knew her at the time, "so we told her things we never told anyone before." Her most significant work was a paper delivered in 1956 to the American Psychological Association in Chicago and published in 1957 as "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual" in The Journal of Projective Techniques.

Dr. Hooker administered three standard personality tests, including the Rorschach ink-blot test, to two groups of 30 men, one heterosexual, one homosexual, who had been matched in IQs, age and education levels. She then asked a panel of expert clinicians to assess results without knowing the subjects' sexual orientation. To their surprise, the judges were unable to discern between the two groups on the basis of the test.

"The most striking finding of the three judges," Dr. Hooker wrote, "was that many of the homosexuals were very well adjusted. In fact, the three judges agreed on two-thirds of the group as being average to superior in adjustment. Not only do all homosexuals not have strong feminine identification, nor are they all 'somewhat paranoid,' but, according to the judges, some may not be characterized by any demonstrable pathology."

Her study was criticized in many quarters, not least because it upended psychological orthodoxy. It was published in a journal that did not reach a wide public audience. Nonetheless, it was considered a precursor to the decision 17 years later by the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. "Her work in the 1950s really provided the framework within which the American Psychiatric Association could re-think its viewpoint," said Dr. Richard A. Isay, clinical professor of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College.

Great Gift Book Review by Jeanne Edmonds

The book Lavender Reflections by Eleanor Wagner would be a special gift of love to yourself or another. Affirmations alternating with quotations exclusively by lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are the messages in Lavender Reflections. The topics range from same sex love, spirituality, homophobia, loving, dying, fear of gay bashing, being single, coming out, growing old, community to other subjects little affirmed for homosexuals by the heterosexual culture. The words are frank, self-celebrating, and challenging. On one page Gertrude Stein declares, "Let me listen to me and not to them," a wise summation for everyone gay or straight.

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

The December 22nd episode of the CBS show "Touched by an Angel," took me by surprise. This holiday episode featured a gay man coming out to his family while in his final days living with AIDS. As someone said to me, "the script couldn't have been any better if PFLAG had written it ourselves. The angels message to the gay son is that he is accepted just the way he is. To the father, the message the angel brings is that his gay son is the most valuable masterpiece he will ever have. Needless to say, many will want to see this. If you happened to tape this episode, we would love to have a copy for our library. Also, take a minute to write CBS and KHOU-TV Channel 11 here in Houston to thank them for airing such a wonderfully positive show that features "PFLAG Family Values." I think my eyes are still a little wet after this one! Wow!

Here's to the new year! Start it off with an article for the newsletter. Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup@flash.net by e-mail! The deadline for the February newsletter is January 15th. ☺



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

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

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

February 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Partners in Parenting

By Dawn Bonker, Los Angeles Times

Increasingly, gay men and lesbians are becoming parents. And it's not so different—or difficult—as it might seem.

Dean Larkin of Whittier loves being a dad so much he wants to do it again. Big deal? Some might think so. Larkin is a single gay man. "I can't imagine being an adult and not having kids," says Larkin, an architect who shares custody of a 14-year-old daughter from a previous marriage and is just beginning an adoption effort. He hopes to adopt a pair of siblings, preferably out of diapers. "I would love to have a happy, dull, family. What better way to spend your life?" Many gay men and lesbians agree and are increasingly seeking a family life like that of heterosexual couples.



Same-Sex Parenting

And why shouldn't they? Asks

Larkin, who is co-leader of Maybe Baby, a support group sponsored by the Center for Gays and Lesbians Considering Parenthood. While sexual orientation may rule out the usual avenues to childbearing, it doesn't squash the desire to raise and nurture a child, he says. The American Psychological Assn. and several studies of gay parenting indicate that children raised by homosexuals are well adjusted.

Lesbians and gay men who do take the parenthood plunge do so only after much soul-searching and thorough consideration, Larkin says. There are, obviously, no "accidents." "I wish everyone would approach this decision like this," he says.

Gail Harrod and her partner of 11 years say they did just that before having a baby through artificial insemination. Harrod's partner gave birth to the baby girl last summer. "If people were to meet me and really look at what kind of life I would provide for my child, I think they would say, wow, you're just like normal people," Harrod says. "And that's what it's really about. When we became parents, we became parents. We have a lot of love to give. And that's what I think the important thing is in a family and home."

Forming a family in a gay home is perhaps not exactly like the traditional family, but it's not so different or difficult as it might seem, says Tim Fisher, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International in Washington.

"I have a pretty optimistic outlook," Fisher says. Sure, he has seen the problems and discrimination: the lesbian mother who recently lost custody to an ex-husband convicted of murdering his first wife 22 years ago; gay men denied adoption of children they've lovingly cared for in foster care; lesbian split-ups that leave non-biological mothers cut off from children they've helped raise.

Then there's the vocal disapproval from many religious and conservative

(Continued on page 4)



Next Meeting February 2 "Ex-Gays: The Real Story"

Across the country, groups are springing up saying that with the help of religion they can change a person's sexual orientation from gay to straight. The interesting thing about these groups is that the majority of people that join them leave only to realize that their sexuality is something to be accepted, not changed or rejected.

Join us this month as Houston PFLAGers John Bush & Doug Upchurch share their own personal experiences in these "ex-gay" groups. Doug will also share information on the different groups and what they believe. This informative presentation is one that you will not want to miss. (If I do say so myself!) :

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, January 31 at 12 Noon. No announcements will be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Schedule of Events	2
Simple Joys	3
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Schedule of Events

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Feb. 2 | PFLAG Monthly Meeting at our NEW HOME!!
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Feb. 9 | PFLAG Woodlands Meeting, 2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Feb. 14 | HRC Red Tie Ball (See Article, p. 1) |
| Feb. 16 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting Health Merchant at 27th and Broadway in Galveston |
| Feb. 18 | Speaker's Bureau @ Barnes & Noble Bookstore in the Woodlands, 7:30pm |
| Feb. 22 | Strengthening Our Voices, Training Session, 10am-4pm (See Article) |
| Mar. 2 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Mar. 9 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| Mar. 16 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Mar. 22-24 | LGRL "It's Time for Justice" Rally, Dance, March, & Lobby Day (See Article) |

An Invitation to PFLAG Houston

Dear PFLAG,
We are the Houston Gay and Lesbian Parents, a social and support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people with children. Our children have come to us in a variety of ways; prior heterosexual relationships, adoption, alternative insemination, and surrogacy. We come from all walks of life; all religions and ethnic groups are represented. Our love for our children binds us into a wonderfully diverse community. We are your sons and daughters.

Currently, we have over 150 families on our mailing list and we are growing daily. As part of our outreach, we would like to involve PFLAG in some of our activities. Our monthly support group for parents meets on the second Tuesday of the month at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh Drive, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. We need assistance from your membership to help us provide loving, supportive people to be with our children during that time, as we are dedicated to providing free child-care at our meetings. Part of our group's mission is to provide support and role-models to children growing up with gay par-

Presenting the HRC Red Tie Ball

HRC's first annual RED TIE BALL takes place on Valentines Day. Be sure to attend. This is the beginning of a wonderful HRC annual fund-raiser in Houston. It will be a festive event for those looking for a special evening on Valentines.



The Paraiso Maravilla is a perfect place for a romantic evening. It is located in the Galleria area off Chimney Rock and Fairdale. The interior courtyards of Paraiso Maravilla offer Latin American flavors and indoor-outdoor partying. Fountains gurggle in enclosed courtyards where palms, hibiscus, bougainvillea, banana trees and other greenery and flowering plants create a "marvelous paradise," which translation of the villa's name implies. It is the city's newest party and meeting place.

The money raised at this event is essential to the fight for our human rights. Funds raised at this event will support HRC's efforts in hiring professional to lobby Congress on our behalf.

Tickets can be purchased at Crossroads Market or for Ticket Information call 713-527-2743. The evening includes Hors d'oeuvres, dancing and the ticket price is \$100.

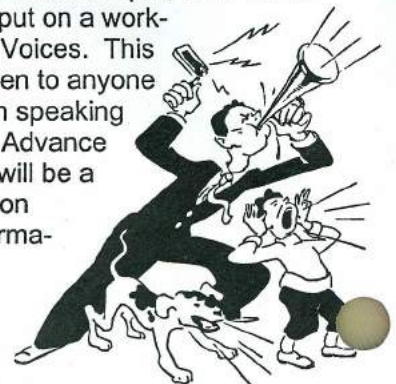
You don't have to be a teacher...

...to attend the Houston GLSTN Meetings

The Houston Chapter of the Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Teacher Network of Houston will be meeting Wednesday, February 1, 1996, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin at Southmore. GLSTN is a national organization focused on making all schools a safe place for all students including those that are gay and lesbian. The Houston Chapter of GLSTN provides: (1) support for educators; (2) education on ending homophobia; and (3) advocacy in schools. Whether you are a teacher, counselor, parent, or a supportive individual, you are encouraged to attend! The 1997 meetings are currently scheduled for March 19, April 16, May 21, and June 18. For more information, contact GLSTN - Houston Chapter at 713-529-4571 or by mail at P.O. Box 541871, Houston, TX 77254.

Strengthening Our Voices Workshop

On Saturday, February 22 from 10am to 4pm, the PFLAG Houston Speakers Bureau will put on a workshop called Strengthening Our Voices. This is an experiential workshop, open to anyone interested in developing skills in speaking out from personal experience. Advance registration is required. There will be a sign up at the general meeting on February 2. For additional information, please call Barbara Winston at 464-3163.



Simple Joys, by Sheron A. Rosen, PFLAG Washington.

Why do we cry when our children come out and tell us their secret?

I suspect we shed some tears of grief some tears of shock, and many tears because we know that the world today is not quite ready to treat our gay sons and daughters fairly. We cry because we know their lives will be even harder than they otherwise might be. We cry because we know there are those who would harm our flesh and blood just because they are who they are. We cry because their lives, their plight, their lot is out of our hands. We cry because we cannot protect them from the injustice we fear they will know. We cry -- and then we dry our tears.

They are our children. We love them. We resolve to be there for them. We kiss and hug them-and then we go back to our lives, our jobs. So I dried my tears and went back to work-and no one knew my secret. I was a teacher then, helping young people to learn. I worked for a hunger relief organization, helping others total strangers, to eat.

And I loved my son and I walked around with the gnawing pain of knowing how others would so harshly judge him-not on his character, not on his intellect or talent, not on his humanity; but by whom he might love. Sometimes the pain made me writhe in my sleep. Sometimes the discomfort was overwhelming. But I went back to my life (my job, my husband).

Monday mornings at work I could talk freely with my colleagues about my weekend-a simple pleasure I knew my son could be denied. On my desk a picture of my family-another simple joy probably not there for my son. And every morning before leaving for work there was the newspaper. I read and re-read every article about gay issues. Mostly they added to my anguish-gay rights equated with special rights, policies like "don't ask, don't tell", and gay bashing. It all seemed so ludicrous to me.

Straight people have no such restrictions on their speech, and

no fear of harassment for holding hands in public places-more simple joys denied to my son.

Pain heals with time, I thought. But I was wrong. Every time I kissed my husband "so long" at the airport, a sign flashed in my head: DENIED TO MY SON. Each time I said "I love you" to my husband from my office phone, the sign blinked: DENIED TO MY SON. Each time we take a walk, holding hands, that same sign screams: DENIED TO MY SON. The pain and frustration, though less immediate, now, grows as my awareness grows.

I've learned a lot from my gay son-lessons of immeasurable worth. I've learned about dignity, courage and truth. I've flung the doors open. My son is not a secret. He is just who he is. I am proud of him and I love him. I volunteer for PFLAG. I want my son to know the simple joy's that I have known. I want to leave this world a better place for him. That will be my greatest simple joy.

I know now that what is is not what should be. I know that oppression can only survive through silence. I will not be silenced. I am empowered and PFLAG has given my single voice the volume to be heard.

My anguish has turned to energy and the discomfort transformed into decision. I have dried my eyes. The tears have turned into triumph fortified with the knowledge that I can make a difference. I sleep well at night now.

Please join me and help give all of our children, sons, and daughters, brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues, the same simple joys you've known all your lives.

Reprinted from PFLAG Fresno Newsletter.

Area Clergy Oppose Their Church's Ban on Gay Unions, By John Dart

Fifteen prominent United Methodist ministers, including two Los Angeles area clergy and the pastor of a Washington church attended by President Clinton and his family, have signed a "statement of conscience" disagreeing with their denomination's ban against same-sex weddings and gay ordinations.

The 8.6-million-member United Methodist Church, the second-largest U.S. Protestant denomination, has long held that homosexual sex is "incompatible with Christian teaching." The Methodists' quadrennial convention last year barred clergy from presiding at services uniting gay and lesbian couples. Registering dissent, the statement being circulated this month to 2,000 Methodist ministers around the country says: "To withhold rituals of support for committed relationships is unconscionable."

One of the 15 original signers, the Rev. Ignacio Castuera, pastor of North Glendale United Methodist Church, said that he had permitted, presided over or participated in about a dozen such wedding-like rites for same-sex couples when he was previously pastor of the relatively liberal Hollywood United Methodist Church. Castuera said he would do so again "when those who request it are actively involved in religious life." However, "that is unlikely to happen at North Glendale," where he has been since mid-1996, said Castuera.

Castuera said the statement of conscience was designed primarily to provoke more dialogue on the issues. "In this era of AIDS, do we not want to encourage permanent relationships in the gay community?" he asked. As for his present congregation, he said, "Obviously, it will provoke some discussion; I hope everyone will have an open mind."

Two other signers, a Westwood pastor and Clinton's pastor, said that although they disagree with the ban, they have no plans to defy the denomination's "discipline," or rules of conduct. The Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, senior pastor of Foundry

Same-Sex Parenting, from Los Ange-

organizations. "There are still many things we have to have happen. There are still many tragic situations," says Fisher, who, with his partner, has adopted a son and daughter, ages 4 and 6.

In California, the state Department of Social Services is considering toughening a 10-year-old policy that says social workers should recommend against any adoption to unmarried couples. Excepted are relatives of orphaned or abandoned children, who account for 60% of adoptions by single people. The department is studying whether the policy should be made into a formal regulation. Testimony from a series of public hearings held last fall is still being studied by the department and no decision is expected until next fall.

Regulations are not law, though, and many judges routinely override the recommendations of social workers if single or unmarried couples who present adoption petitions meet the requirements for a stable and nurturing upbringing, attorneys say. But proponents of homosexual parental rights see the proposed regulation as a direct slight, since they cannot marry legally.

Despite the effort in Sacramento to make it harder for them to adopt, many gay parents say they find the legal and societal environment of the moment more tolerant, even welcoming, than ever. "Parenting is nothing new in our community," Fisher says. "It's always been there. But in terms of it being visible, that's new."

Only Florida and New Hampshire legally forbid homosexuals from adopting. In 21 states, the law permits secondary or joint adoption by both partners of a child born to one member of a same-sex couple. This is most often sought by lesbian couples because it gives legal status to the partner who is not the biological parent, allowing her to file for custody or visitation if the couple breaks up. Harrod is adopting the infant girl her partner gave birth to.

In California, with its policy that adoptive parents should be married couples, "You just have to hope you have a judge who sees through this policy and says, 'Well, this is more politics than best interests of the child,'" says Kate Schreurs, an adoption and family law attorney in Santa Ana. "The sad part is that there are hundreds of children, the hard to adopt, who are in need of homes. I'll tell you, the people who are adopting these kids and getting them out of foster homes, many, many times are gay," Schreurs says.

There are many routes to parenthood in the gay community. In addition to adoptions, some lesbian couples are opting to create families through artificial insemination. Gay men and lesbians with children from past heterosexual relationships are working harder to gain custody and visitation rights. And on the real frontier are gay men and lesbians joining together to create and raise biological children, often with long-term companions as co-parents, Fisher says. "We have arrived even within our own community. When I started working for the coalition five years ago, [parents] were the invisible minority," Fisher says.

While marriage, family and parental rights are joining the list of civil rights long sought by homosexuals, opponents say the interest in homosexual family life is overplayed to cast a more mainstream light on homosexuality. "It's perhaps a boom in more coverage," says Kristi Hamrick, director of communications for the Family Research Council in Washington. "The homosexual and lesbian activists have certainly tried to indicate that there is a movement that's becoming traditional."

But no matter how loving or stable a gay couple may be, they aren't what parents should be, Hamrick says. "Men and women are unique and different and bring different things to the parenting relationship. And a child needs both." There are no statistics, says Roger Coggan, director of legal services for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. But he believes there is an adoption and baby boom in the community. Mostly because the visibility of gay men and lesbian in all walks of life have made this path a little easier, Coggan says.

"There's no doubt in my mind that we are in a stage, or development as a society, where this is something that is more acceptable to society as a whole. Heterosexuals are beginning to know us more as human beings than as categories," Coggan says. "That factor is something that encourages gays and lesbians to be more out in terms of their children and also perhaps more willing to entertain the possibility of having children."

Originally appeared in: THE LOS ANGELES TIMES December 22, 1996
Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA, 90053, Fax 213-237-7679

Coming Out Not Easy For Workers: The Closet & The Office

by L. M. Sixel, *Houston Chronicle*

When Dale Carpenter received a job offer at one of Houston's big law firms, he decided it was important to feel comfortable. So Carpenter told the managing partner that he was gay and planned to be active in gay civil rights causes and asked if that would cause any problems. Carpenter said the managing partner told him it didn't matter to either the firm or its clients, so he accepted the job offer.

"I was not prepared to engage in an active campaign of deceiving everyone around me," the lawyer said. "It's too taxing emotionally to hide there's someone important in my life." The decision to "come out" at work is a tough one, experts say. Many gays and lesbians worry they will be ostracized by their co-workers or that it will harm their advancement potential if they reveal their sexual orientation. But sometimes they figure it's more important to be up front and let their colleagues know they have same-sex relationships.

Carpenter said he wanted to be able to be honest, so if someone in his partner's life died he could attend the funeral, and he

(Continued on page 5)

The Closet & The Office (Continued from page 4)

didn't want to worry that a co-worker might see them together at the movies or a restaurant. While he worried he'd be black-balled for disclosing his sexual orientation, Carpenter said he was helped by the fact he went to a top law school, got good grades and was the editor-in-chief of the law review.

More comfortable talking about it: People feel more comfortable coming out these days, said Mitchell Katine, a Houston lawyer who specializes in AIDS-related employment issues. The AIDS epidemic has thrust gays and lesbians onto the front pages of newspapers, and Americans have become more comfortable talking about the issues, he said. But still, many gay and lesbian employees want to keep their sexual orientation quiet.

Often they hide their orientation by never discussing anything personal at work, Katine said. Another common tactic is to lie and change the gender of their partner—instead of Michael, it's Michelle, he said. But neither option is very good, because it diverts energy, Katine said. Instead of focusing on the job, you have to think about phone calls, edit vacation photos and be careful about where you said you stayed on vacation.

Katine said he knows people who have been in 25-year relationships who refuse to let their partner call them at work for fear the receptionist will catch on. One engineer at an oil and gas company in Houston said he doesn't want anyone at work to know he's gay because he works with too many insensitive people. Some make cruel slurs about gays; others just point and whisper.

The engineer, who asked not to be identified, works with many construction workers and worries that he'll go from being one of the guys to being an outcast if they know he's gay. So he quit going to Christmas parties and makes sure he never talks about doing things with other people on the weekends. There's also the worry his boss wouldn't like the news and it would hurt his career. The company doesn't have an anti-discrimination policy based on sexual orientation so "my head could be on the chopping block," he said.

Different jobs, different reactions: Coming out is easier for people who work in fields where reason and enlightenment play a role, such as law, medicine and higher education, said David Wantz, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Indianapolis and director of the university's career counseling center.

And it's also easier for workers who can rise or fall by the quality of their work, such as graphic artists who design clever ads, Wantz said. It's harder to come out if your advancement depends on the perception of others. For example, it's more difficult for a military employee or firefighter to come out because fitting into the group is more important than individual achievement, he said.

Too often, gays and lesbians are too careful about coming out and fear things that aren't there, said Pat Gandy, former president of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus. Generally, if you have a good relationship with your bosses and co-workers, that will continue once you make your sex-

ual orientation known. And coming out has a positive effect on the whole gay and lesbian community, she said. People tend to be more tolerant when they realize they know someone who's gay and that he doesn't have two heads.

Originally printed in:

The Houston Chronicle 1/10/97, by L.M. SIXEL

Vinson & Elkins offers benefits

by L. M. Sixel

In a pioneering move, the law firm of Vinson & Elkins has extended its benefits package to the same-sex partners of its gay and lesbian employees. Annise Parker, past president of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, said she can't think of another Houston-based company that offers such benefits. Many companies now offer same-sex benefits, but they're not from Houston, she said.

Vinson & Elkins' policy, which went into effect Jan. 1, gives same-sex domestic partners the same access to health insurance and family and medical leave as married couples. The law firm has had a written policy since 1995 that it doesn't discriminate based on sexual orientation, said Harry Reasoner, managing partner. The new program assures that the firm's benefits program complies with that policy, he said.

Vinson & Elkins also surveyed other law firms around the country that it considers its peers and found that several include same-sex domestic partners in their benefit plans, Reasoner said. Vinson & Elkins' move was lauded by gay and lesbian activists. It sends the message that gay and lesbian employees are just as valuable as heterosexual employees, said Mitchell Katine, an employment lawyer who specializes in AIDS-related issues. "I feel it will spur other companies to do it. It's the wave of the future."

High technology companies have led the move to same-sex benefits, but IBM's decision in September to join the trend was particularly influential, Parker said. When companies saw that IBM, with its staid corporate image, had extended benefits, things started to change, she said. "No company wants to be way out in front of their peers on things that are controversial," Parker said.

Now, hundreds of companies offer domestic partner benefits, said Andrew Sherman, vice president of the Segal Co., a benefits consulting firm in Boston. Such companies once were predominantly on the East and West coasts, but the movement has been spreading, said Sherman, who specializes in domestic partner benefit plans.

Typically, the cost is very low—the number of employees who enroll a domestic partner is 0.5 percent—but companies say it's an important tool for recruiting and marketing, he said. A recent study by Towers Perrin, the management consulting company, found that 7 percent of large U.S. companies offer benefits to the domestic partners of their employees. Another 1 percent plan to implement a program in the next two years, while 15 percent are consid-

Methodist Clergy *(Continued from page 3)*

United Methodist Church in Washington, told one newspaper that he signed the statement because "a lot of good people have been injured by the church, and it's time we call attention to that."

The Rev. Sharon Rhodes-Wickett, pastor of Westwood United Methodist Church, said she signed with mixed feelings after receiving the mailed statement from ministers in Chicago and Omaha, Neb. "Some members of this congregation will be upset and angry with me for signing," said Rhodes-Wickett. She cited two reasons for signing the statement—that her understanding of her ministry involves reaching out to people on the margins of society, and that "there were people who stepped out in faith to lobby for women to be ordained in the Methodist Church" before the first women were ordained in 1956.

Rhodes-Wickett said she is loyal to the denomination's discipline. "But if I am asked to do a [gay union ceremony], I will have to face that decision when it happens," she said. Rhodes-Wickett and Castuera are both former district superintendents, regional authorities second only to the local bishop in the United Methodist Church.

If they were to openly preside over the union of a gay or lesbian couple now, Castuera said, they would technically be subject to charges of violating church rules. But given the liberal views on the issue held by Methodist Bishop Roy Sano, who heads the Southern California-Hawaii Conference, Castuera speculated that an offending pastor "would probably get a rap on the knuckles at most."

Asked to comment, Sano said each case might involve different circumstances. But, he added: "As bishop, I am committed to upholding the discipline and to follow the decisions of the Judicial Council, which interprets church law." Sano, who is based in Pasadena, was one of 15 active and retired United Methodist bishops who last year collectively stated their own personal pain over church restrictions against gay and lesbian Christians.

Their statement, "breaking the silence" on the controversial issue, was issued just before the start of the denomination's convention last year in Denver. Many delegates were upset by the publicity, noting that the official Methodist stance has withstood many challenges. Later, delegates in Denver rejected any change by a 577-378 vote. The latest statement, circulated by dissenting clergy, said, "We believe that public dissent from a teaching of the church must be done only prayerfully and with humility. However, we also believe when we have been confronted with an injustice we must not remain silent."

Vinson & Elkins *(Continued from page 5)*

ering it, according to the survey of 294 companies.

In Houston, however, employers haven't been jumping on the bandwagon. Gus Blackshear, chairman of the executive committee at Fulbright & Jaworski, said the firm has never considered same-sex benefits for domestic partners. No one has asked for it, Blackshear said. Bill Barnett, managing partner of Baker & Botts, said more than one gay lawyer has come to him asking for benefits for a same-sex partner. Barnett is studying the issue but said he's worried about implementing the program administratively. It would be difficult to define when someone is a permanent partner, or when the relationship is over, Barnett said. He also doesn't know whether unmarried, opposite-sex partners would feel left out if the program was just for same-sex domestic partners.

Vinson & Elkins requires employees who want to sign up their same-sex partners to certify that they've been living together for at least six months and they have a commitment of mutual support both emotionally and financially. That way, employees can't say, "I met someone last week and I want to put them on the list," Reasoner said. And when a relationship ends, employees can fill out a form terminating the domestic benefits for their former partner.

Like many other employers that offer domestic partner benefits, Vinson & Elkins decided to include only same-sex partners. People of the opposite sex can get married and have access to spousal benefits, Reasoner said. The new program is designed to make benefits equal for same-sex domestic partners.

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Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents *(Continued from page 2)*

ents. Interacting with the members of PFLAG may provide the only unconditional love and acceptance our kids receive from the heterosexual community. In an ideal world, our children would look to their own grandparents for this type of nurturing. Sadly, many of our members are not blessed with the kind of caring, accepting parents we have met at PFLAG.

We would also like to extend an exclusive invitation to the members of PFLAG to visit us at any of our fun family activities. If you miss the sound of children's laughter, join us when we fly kites, or build gingerbread houses! On a personal note, those of us who visited a recent PFLAG meeting were truly overwhelmed by a love that went beyond mere tolerance. How rare to feel so free. Thank you, and remember Love Makes a Family!

To volunteer, please call: Michele Dechant 713-528-5172, Kenny MacPherson 713-961-7940, or Susan Fan 713-621-1481. Sincerely, Susan Fan, Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents.

What to Say to A Parent When Their Child Comes Out

You have a child who will probably be the closest to you forever. Though possibly with hesitation, your child shared this with you -- what trust! You have brought this child up right! Your child will bring wonderful people into your life who you would never have known. You will grow in understanding and love that will give you insight into much more than the gay community. The friends you will make in PFLAG will hold your hand, wipe your tears, share their unique truths, and envelop you with such kindness and understanding that they will become a treasured part of your life and family.

Someday our society will accept all of its members as equals regardless of their sexual orientation. Someday our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, spouses, friends and parents will be accepted as the valuable human beings that they are. Until that day, there is PFLAG



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

Last month, I mentioned a special episode of the TV show "Touched by an Angel." It just so happens, that on my trip to Utah for the holidays, I sat next to a lady that is on the cast of the show. As soon as I realized that I really had seen her on TV, we talked about how positive a show it was. I have received a copy of the show that I will be placing the PFLAG Houston library in February. Be sure to take a look at it if you or someone you love has ever dealt with Christianity and Homosexuality. It is powerful!

Happy Valentine's Day to everyone, but especially to my partner Tyler! What a time to celebrate those that we love and care for. Send a valentine's day card to someone you care about. Spread the love. Send your ideas and articles to me at either 528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup@flash.net by e-mail! The deadline for the March newsletter is February 15th. ☺

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

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Phone: _____

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Other Information: _____

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

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<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]

February 1997
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PFLAG Flyer

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

March 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
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Houston, TX 77052-3796

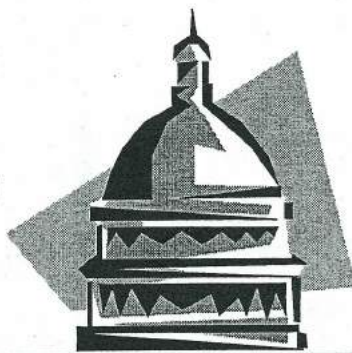
"It's Time for Justice!"

Join LGRL and PFLAG Texas in Austin

On the weekend of March 24, 1997, thousands of Texans will march to the Texas State Capitol in a united effort to end hate crimes in Texas. For too many years, hate crimes have devastated hundreds of Texans. It is time that Texas lawmakers do all they can to stop this type of violence by passing the Texas Hate Crime Bill, Senate Bill 80, sponsored by Senator Rodney Ellis.

The Texas Hate Crimes Bill would increase penalties for hate crimes motivated by prejudice or bias based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. Increased penalties would serve as a deterrent to hate-related violence in the same way that increased penalties for crimes against police officers has helped deter violence against police officers. On March 23, we will

(Continued on page 3)



It's Time, Texas!
March 22-24, 1997

1996 Black Tie Dinner a fundraising success

The November 1996 Black Tie Dinner was a major fundraising success, with over 80 attendees donating their contribution to P-FLAG. The Black Tie Dinner Organization presented P-FLAG with a check for \$13,857.00 in late December. This was a significant increase over the \$9,500.00 raised in 1995, and reflects the growing support of P-FLAG by the Houston community. The money raised at this event will allow P-FLAG to operate for another year, and to sponsor programs like the 1996 "Parents Go to Washington" trip.

The November 2nd event was held in the First City Bank Lobby, downtown. The huge room sported a circus theme, with large rainbow colored banners draped across the ceiling, and carousel horses as table centerpieces. The evening consisted of cocktails, followed by a delicious dinner, great cabaret style entertainment, and dancing through midnight. There was also a silent auction going on through the evening with everything from art to a new Ford Bronco.

The Black Tie Dinner is our major fundraiser for the year, and our member's participation empowers P-FLAG to pursue our mission of support, education and advocacy. P-FLAG would like to thank once again the attendees of the Black Tie Dinner.

**Thank You,
Houston!**



Next Meeting March 2

Dianne Hardy-Garcia of LGRL

Well, it's an odd-numbered year, so guess that what means? The Texas Legislature is back in session. Already there have been anti-gay resolutions mentioned in the state house. This month, the executive Director of Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby (LGRL) of Texas, Dianne Hardy-Garcia, will be discussing the legislative issues facing our State representatives in Austin this session. She will also be discussing the upcoming "It's Time, Texas!" rally, march, and lobby day in Austin on March 22-24. Whether you consider yourself an advocate, an activist, or just a parent wanting a better world for their child, join us for a very informative presentation from Dianne.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, February 28 at 12 Noon. Announcements will not be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

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Schedule of Events

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|------------|---|
| Mar. 2 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Mar. 9 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting,
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Universalist Church,
1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Mar. 16 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston |
| Mar. 22-24 | LGRL "It's Time for Justice" Rally,
Dance, March, & Lobby Day
(See Article) |
| April 6 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| April 13 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| April 20 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |

You don't have to be a teacher...

...to attend the Houston GLSTN Meetings

The Houston Chapter of the Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Teacher's Network of Houston will be meeting Wednesday, March 19, 1997, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin at Southmore. GLSTN is a national organization focused on making all schools a safe place for all students including those that are gay and lesbian. The Houston Chapter of GLSTN provides: (1) support for educators; (2) education on ending homophobia; and (3) advocacy in schools. Whether you are a teacher, counselor, parent, or a supportive individual, you are encouraged to attend! The 1997 meetings are currently scheduled for April 16, May 21, and June 18. For more information, contact GLSTN - Houston Chapter at 713-529-4571 or by mail at P.O. Box 541871, Houston, TX 77254.

Quote of the Month

"Jesus preached and talked about a whole gamut of sins. He never mentioned homosexuality at all."

Former President **Jimmy Carter**, discussing *Living Faith*, his new book on his religious beliefs, in the January 10 edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*

March 1997

Speakers Bureau has new brochures!

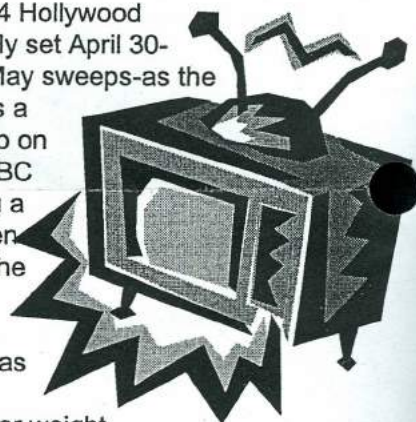
Have you ever wondered how the PFLAG Houston Speakers Bureau gets invited to speak? Almost always it is by word of mouth or referral. Someone knows someone that knows someone that might be interested in having the PFLAG Speakers Bureau present.

Well, now the Speakers Bureau is pleased to announce our new brochures are completed. Dwight Douthitt Design very generously contributed their time and energy to create a wonderful brochure that is both professional and appealing. These new brochures will be available for you at the March program.

We hope each of you will start thinking of the person you will call on with our brochure in hand. It is very evident from our speaking engagements that people do care and are interested in learning about the lives of our friends and our families. We are firmly convinced that the way to make positive changes is for each of us to speak out every opportunity we have. We look forward to hearing your success story and hearing from someone you know that has received one of our new brochures.

"Ellen" Coming Out Date Set for April

According to the February 14 Hollywood Reporter, ABC has tentatively set April 30- the first Wednesday of the May sweeps-as the date for Ellen to come out as a lesbian. "The final thumbs-up on Ellen's outing depends on ABC and Disney execs approving a script, which has not yet been submitted, spies say," said the Reporter. Additionally, GLAAD sources have revealed that Oprah Winfrey has been approached to play Ellen's therapist, giving further weight to rumors that Ellen would be coming out to her therapist.



Momentum is gaining, and again it is crucial to send support for Ellen's coming out to ensure the first-ever openly lesbian or gay title character on television. The show was placed on hiatus and then reinstated recently after a letter campaign by GLAAD, but ABC Entertainment President Jamie Tarses still refuses to commit to whether the episode will actually run. Radical religious groups still seek to control what you can see on television, and have staked out Ellen as one of the main battlegrounds. Help make history! Write Disney and ABC and tell them that it is high time to let Ellen out.

Contact: Jamie Tarses, Entertainment President, ABC, 2040 Avenue of the Stars, Los Angeles, CA 90067, fax: 310.557.7679, e-mail: abcaudr@ccabc.com;

Michael Eisner, CEO, David Neuman, President, Walt Disney Television, The Walt Disney Company, 500 South Buena Vista, Burbank, California 91521, fax: Michael Eisner - 818.560.5155, e-mail through feedback form on WWW: <http://www.tvplex.com/> Note.

"It's Time for Justice!" (Continued from page 1)

March to the Capitol to ask that our lawmakers pass the strongest hate crime laws possible. It will make Texas a better and safer place for everyone.

Find out more about how PFLAG Houston will be planning to participate in all of these events at the March 2 monthly meeting. This is an event you won't want to miss! If you can, come for the whole weekend, but if not, come for the march on Sunday! You won't regret it!

Schedule of Events

Saturday, March 22, 1997

PFLAG Southwest Regional Meeting, Grace United Methodist Church, 205 East Monroe, Austin, 12 Noon: PFLAG is sponsoring a statewide and regional gathering of all its chapters. The meeting will focus on the organization of PFLAG and advocacy issues. PFLAG chapters are encouraged to march together on Sunday. For more information, call Renee at 512-447-8873.

Youth Rally, State Capitol Building, South Steps, 1pm: LGRL is sponsoring a youth rally to create public awareness for the discrimination that gay and lesbian youth often face as they try to get an education in Texas. Youth from all over the state will gather and rally.

The Freedom Dance, 4th & Congress, 9pm-4am: LGRL is hosting the largest dance party in Texas on the eve of the March in March.

Sunday, March 23, 1997

Ecumenical Service, City Coliseum, 400 S 1st St, 10am: The Metropolitan Community Church is holding a statewide Ecumenical Service at the City Coliseum beginning at 10am. The service will include a special guest speaker.

The March to the Capitol, Palmer Auditorium, 400 S 1st Street, 12 noon: Gather at Palmer Auditorium at 12 noon. Bring your signs and banners, your family and friends and your organizations! Once assembled, the march will proceed across the Congress Avenue bridge and up Congress Avenue to the Texas State Capitol building.

After the March Rally, State Capitol Building, South Steps, after the march: We will be gathering at the South entrance of the Capitol to hear from several speakers.

After the March Party and Picnic, 4th and Congress, from approximately 4pm: Following the rally, join us for a festive, outdoor street party celebrating our past and future victories for Texas.

Monday, March 24, 1997

LGRL Lobby Day, State Capitol Building: Take a day off from work and visit your State Senator and State Representative to discuss hate crimes and other issues important to you. Personally meeting with and talking to your representative really does make a difference.

FIRST PERSON: Speaking Up After Too Many Silent Nights

By FRANK O. SOTOMAYOR

Editor's Note: I found this a month or two ago and was very moved by the personal story of this brother of a gay man.

"Ernesto, Hermano, 'Neto,' We Will Never Forget You."

It was a simple message that I wrote in chalk on the pavement of Pasadena City Hall Plaza. Thousands of others who had lost loved ones to AIDS did the same earlier this month at the conclusion of the Posada candlelight walk.

Four years have elapsed since the death of my brother, Ernesto, from AIDS. But writing down that message and lighting a candle in his memory were the first instances in which I had allowed my personal feelings of sorrow to be released in a semipublic way.

As I was writing the message, a Times photographer happened to come along and, not recognizing me at first, took a photo of me and my wife, Meri.

Did you lose a friend or relative to AIDS? the photographer asked later.

"Yes," I said, "my brother."

I had never told even my closest friends that my brother had died of the complications of AIDS—that Ernest, my wonderful older brother, was homosexual. Why not?

I am not sure, but I felt uncomfortable that I would be revealing some family secret. I wondered, too, what Neto (a nickname derived from Ernesto) would have wanted.

Maybe I was just clueless and gutless, rendered silent by society's foolish taboos about speaking candidly about homosexuality, about AIDS and about death itself. So, instead, I told friends that Ernest died of cancer.

We held a beautiful service for Neto at St. Teresa's Catholic Church in San Francisco, not far from the Potrero Hill home he had rebuilt, foot by foot, with his own hands and determination.

Later, we held another memorial service in Tucson, where we had grown up and where my beloved mother still lived.

I wrote a tribute to Ernie, which we distributed to family members, recalling him as a caring man who served his country in the U.S. Navy and who served as a U.S. Postal Service executive—including a stint as postmaster of Millbrae, Calif.

Ernie was the type of older brother everyone should have. In 1964, he bought a new Chevrolet Nova Super Sport for me, then a college sophomore from the West Tucson barrio. It was quite a step up from my 1949 Chevy clunker.

(Continued on page 4)

Bishop: Catholic church should welcome gays, by *Charlise Lyles*

The Catholic church should welcome, understand and accept homosexuals for who they are "in the eyes of God," a high-ranking Catholic clergyman said Thursday night.

"A reason why we've failed in the church to accept gay and lesbian people is we have not listened to their experience," Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit told about 700 students, faculty and others at the University of Dayton's Kennedy Union Ballroom. "We must let them share in the church what their experience of love is as they live out life as a homosexual person."

By demanding that homosexuals deny their sexual orientation, "the church is asking gay people not to be holy, but to be warped," he said.

In 1994, Gumbleton, the assistant bishop in the Archdiocese of Detroit, became the first high-ranking Catholic clergyman to speak out against Vatican teaching declaring homosexuals "intrinsically disordered." Gumbleton's stand was prompted by his own struggle to accept his brother's homosexuality.

A first step to welcoming homosexuals to the church is a pastoral letter to be published this year, Gumbleton said. A committee of U.S. Catholic Bishops has drafted *Your Gay or Lesbian Child: A Pastoral Message to the Christian Community*.

The letter will not address homosexual marriage, Gumbleton said. Rather, it attempts to answer whether the homosexual act is a sin, stating it is ultimately a matter between God and the conscience of the individual.

In statements often punctuated by long pauses, the 64-year-old priest shared his own odyssey of coming to terms with the issue of homosexuality.

He also read from pain-filled letters from parents and siblings of gay people, including the suicide letter of a 26-year-old Christian unable to come to grips with his homosexuality.

No one on a 16-member selection committee objected to inviting Gumbleton, a longtime social activist, to UD as part of the annual "Distinguished Speakers Series," said Sister Nancy Bramblage, director of the UD Center for Social Concerns.

"We were looking for someone to address homosexuality and the church's response," Bramblage said. "The bishops themselves have said we need to be pastoral in our approach to homosexual orientation, but when it gets down to how, they become less compassionate, in my view. He is unusually compassionate."

Non-Catholics look to Gumbleton to open the way for interfaith dialogue on homosexuality and the church. "His voice as a bishop and a religious scholar will bring people of faith into that dialogue who haven't been there before," said Michael Hawk, peace education director with the American Friends Service Committee.

Originally printed in the *Dayton Daily News*, Fourth and Ludlow Streets, Dayton, OH 45402

First Person *(Continued from page 3)*

Nowhere in my tribute to Ernie did I say that he died of complications of AIDS. That omission was a mistake, I now see. After the services, my family lurched ahead to the crises—small and major—of life.

Soon, my mother was hospitalized. A little more than five months after Ernie's death, Mama passed away. My wife says she died of a broken heart, which is pretty accurate. Although she was seriously handicapped by arthritis, Mom had held on as long as Ernie lived. But losing Ernie at a relatively young 56—and losing him to the scourges of AIDS—was too much for Mom. She had been born and raised in a traditional Mexican family that kept far too many secrets.

Mom was devastated when Ernie told her that he had AIDS. She accepted it courageously, but there was no way she could fully understand it. Mom, who was born in 1910 in Arizona, before it was even a state, better understood smallpox than AIDS.

We buried Mom and Ernie's ashes together at a cemetery in northwest Tucson, not far from the spot where my mother was born and where my father, who died in 1981, had once farmed.

I thought about writing something then, but I was not ready. And as weeks, months and even years went by, much of my grief was suppressed. Suppressed to a large degree by the discomfort that I thought would come in openly discussing Ernie's death.

In my mind, I had no trouble with the fact that Neto was homosexual. But until now, we did not share that information outside the family.

(Continued on page 5)

From the PFLAG Houston Internet Site

Editor's Note: The following was received via email from our PFLAG Houston Internet site. It is located at <http://www.pflaghtx.org>.

Thank you, thank you for the terrific information and brochures on your home page. I came out to my parents a few months ago, and while they're trying to understand, they are not seeking any support or information. I've downloaded your excellent brochures and am mailing them to Mom and Dad. Also, I want you supportive parents to know how much you mean to all of us. I went to the Gay Rights march in Washington, DC last year. I burst into tears when I saw parents marching for their children's rights and for all of us—tears of gratitude for you who were there, tears of hope that one day my parents will no longer be ashamed.

Thank you so much for your help and support.

First Person *(Continued from page 4)*

In the last weeks, that has begun to change.

My wife suggested that we attend a support group session on bereavement, and that allowed me to start to share my experiences with others. I learned that, like me, many people do not fully work out their grief and are not able to fully accept someone's death—or the circumstances of death.

I am beginning to find some closure now on Ernie's death. I remember the suffering of his last year, but I remember most the quiet dignity that he maintained—despite the pain—in his final weeks. He had lived his life as best he could. He had accomplished much; he had also made mistakes. In the end, however, Ernesto had found a way to make peace with God and was at peace with himself.

When we participated in the Dec. 7 candlelight walk in Pasadena, organized by the AIDS Service Center, I realized that I had been too passive in the face of the AIDS tragedy. Nationwide, more than 343,000 men, women and children have died of AIDS complications. That is equal to the combined populations of Pasadena, Santa Monica, Norwalk and Manhattan Beach. Worldwide, the AIDS death toll is a staggering 6 million people.

I feel humbled by the impressive work of those who have been working for years to provide care for people with HIV and AIDS. I feel that it is now time to do my small part, at first by just acknowledging my brother's death. Perhaps by reading this piece, others will be encouraged to deal with similar situations—and to know that AIDS is not something to hide but something we have to fight together.

For instance, it is time for all of us to do a better job of educating a new generation about AIDS. Despite all the efforts to date, teenagers in the United States are contracting the AIDS virus at an average of more than one an hour; one of four people newly infected are younger than 22.

For me, the healing process over losing Ernie will still take some time. But when I printed that message in white chalk on the Pasadena Plaza pavement, it was a way of seeking peace and letting Neto rest in his eternal peace. He was a special person and, indeed, we will never forget him.

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES December 19, 1996
Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA 90053
(Fax 213-237-7679 or 213-237-5319, print run 1,103,200)
(E-MAIL: voices@latimes.com letters@news.latimes.com ocletters@latimes.com)
(<http://www.latimes.com>)

A little golf humor from the Internet

(Ok, so maybe it doesn't have anything to do with golf.)

Four men were golfing together; three headed to the first tee, and one went into the clubhouse to take care of the bill. The three men started bragging about their sons. The first man said, "My son is so successful he gave a friend a new home—for free." The second man said, "My son is so successful that he gave a friend two Cadillacs." The third man, not wanting to be outdone, bragged, "My son is doing so well that he gave his friend an entire stock portfolio." The fourth man joined them on the tee. The first man said, "We were just talking about our sons. How is yours doing?" The fourth man sheepishly admitted, "Well, I'm not too proud to say that he is gay, but he must be doing well. His last three boyfriends gave him a house, two cars, and a stock portfolio."



It's Good Bye, Houston...Hello, San Francisco!

Don recently accepted a new job with Cisco Systems in the San Francisco Bay Area and we'll soon be moving! Until I find a job, we thought we'd rent a place to live. In addition to continuing to be advocates for P-Flag, I've learned we may become advocates for pets through another "Open Door" program!

From the Internet, Don found an article "A Tough Town for Renters With Pets" [by Emerald Yeh and Christine McMurry, October 7, 1996] which mentions that with competition for rental units at an all-time high and with the scarcity of available housing in the Bay Area, landlords refuse to rent to people with pets. "Open Door" was started five years ago when large numbers of pets were surrendered to the San Francisco SPCA because new landlords wouldn't accept them. The program suggests pet resumes, references from former property owners, neighbors, obedience instructors and veterinarians!

Our adopted Greyhound, Duchess, is family, too; and just as we don't want our lesbian daughter to experience discrimination, neither do we want Duchess to experience such! Pray for us! We'll miss you all --our P-FLAG family - but be assured we'll get involved in San Francisco P-FLAG if and when we find a place to live!

Sincerely,
Donna De Camp

Editor's Note: Donna and Don, we know that Houston's loss is San Francisco's gain! We look forward to getting updates from the West Coast outreach of PFLAG Houston! We're sending part of our hearts with you both to San Francisco!

United's Same-Sex Health Plan, *By Karyn Hunt, AP Reporter*

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) -- United Airlines will phase in health benefits for same-sex partners of its employees under an agreement city supervisors approved Monday to bring the airline into compliance with a new law.

The deal with United, which allows the airline almost two years to begin offering the benefits, comes on the heels of an agreement the city reached with the Archdiocese of San Francisco to implement the law in a way that doesn't violate the Roman Catholic Church's teachings.

"San Francisco has long been a leader in the fight for human civil rights and once again we are setting the standard," said Supervisor Leslie Katz, who is gay. In June, under a 2-month-old ordinance, the city will begin requiring all the companies it does business with to offer spousal benefits to their workers' unmarried partners.

On Monday, city supervisors unanimously approved the deal with United Airlines, which came in the form of a lease agreement for a \$90 million expansion at San Francisco International Airport. The city had said it would not approve the airline's \$13.4 million, 25-year lease until it promised to comply. Under the agreement, United must develop a spousal benefits program in the lease's first 20 months.

The airline initially complained the issue wasn't raised during lease talks last year, but on Monday, it said it was pleased with the compromise. The airline noted that its situation is complex because United is employee-owned, because it will have to offer such benefits worldwide, and because it will need the approval of at least 16 different unions.

Homosexual employees, who have formed groups to push for domestic partner benefits, say the company has treated them well. The city's agreement last week with the Archdiocese involved some tinkering with the language: It allows the church to avoid officially sanctioning domestic-partner relations.

Specifically, that arrangement lets employees of Catholic groups or any other organization doing business with the city—to designate someone in their household as eligible to receive "spousal-equivalent benefits." That could include a spouse, sibling other relative or unmarried partner. The city attorney must sign off on the changes.

"This is a broad agreement we came up with. We now have to work on the details," Katz said Friday. "This is certainly in keeping with the Catholic Church's position on both domestic partners and universal health care."

Associated Press 2/10/97

Southern Hospitality in Atlanta

The city of Atlanta, Georgia wants to extend some Southern hospitality to gays and lesbians. So Mayor Bill Campbell has signed an administrative order that requires companies seeking to do business with the city to forbid antigay discrimination in the workplace. According to the mayor's spokesman, Atlanta's new policy, effective December 20, 1996, was inspired by the groundbreaking legislation signed in November by San Francisco mayor Willie Brown.

Originally printed in The Advocate, Feb. 18, 1997



What to Say to A Parent When Their Child Comes Out

You have a child who will probably be the closest to you forever. Though possibly with hesitation, your child shared this with you -- what trust! You have brought this child up right! Your child will bring wonderful people into your life who you would never have known. You will grow in understanding and love that will give you insight into much more than the gay community. The friends you will make in PFLAG will hold your hand, wipe your tears, share their unique truths, and envelop you with such kindness and understanding that they will become a treasured part of your life and family.

Someday our society will accept all of its members as equals regardless of their sexual orientation. Someday our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, spouses, friends and parents will be accepted as the valuable human beings that they are. Until that day, there is PFLAG



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

Well, another month and another newsletter. It feels as though I just did one of these last week. I will tell you up front, that I am about to beg! I really need some assistance with gathering articles. Each month I find myself spending more and more time looking for articles instead of laying out the newsletter. Although I will always do this, I would really like to see us have a lot more personal stories from our chapter. If you want to tell your story of coming out or dealing with the coming out of a loved one, I encourage you write it down and submit it. I could use everyone's help in the next few months to make the Flyer a great newsletter for everyone. Thanks

Soooo, send your ideas and articles to me at either 713-528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup@flash.net by e-mail! The deadline for the March newsletter is March 15th. ☺

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

April 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

PFLAG Resolution for 1997: Create Safe Spaces for Gay Youth

Concerned by recent violent hate crimes against gay students, verbal harassment of gay youth, and attempts by school boards to deny extra-curricular status to gay/straight alliances, the members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) have committed to cultivating safe spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth, and children of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered parents in 1997.

"Today's youth will be tomorrow's teachers, technicians and tacticians," said PFLAG president and educator, Nancy McDonald. "As adults, we have a responsibility to set an example. We must be aware of what we say -- what messages we are sending to children. How can we talk of creating a more tolerant nation when we condone hate speech and violence in our classrooms and communities?" McDonald's nine year-old granddaughter was recently taunted with anti-gay remarks after wearing a T-shirt from PFLAG's 15th annual conference to school. Current attempts by state legislatures to pass anti-gay bills, and lack of action by schools and community groups to provide safety to gay youth have prompted PFLAG members to act:

- Following a savage gay bashing which left her son in the hospital, PFLAG member Carolyn Wagner wrote to President Clinton, imploring him to address hate crimes as a civil rights issue. Wagner's 16 year old son, Willie, had his nose broken, kidneys bruised and back

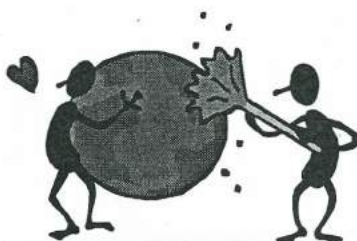
(Continued on page 3)

PFLAG Condemns Atlanta Bombing: Calls Attention To The Need For Safe Spaces For Gay Families

Angered and troubled by Friday night's bombing of an Atlanta lesbian and gay bar, the members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) call on all people to recognize and address the daily dangers faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, and their families and friends.

"We have had to fear anti-gay violence on the streets, on the job and in schools," said PFLAG President Nancy McDonald. "Now the violence has penetrated further, invading the very places where our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered family members and friends have found safety in the past. We must encourage tolerance, we must advocate for safety, we must speak out against hate, and we must do it now. If we

(Continued on page 3)



PFLAG National
1997 Resolution



Next Meeting April 6 Queer Artist Collective

Don't let the name throw you! QuAC, or Queer Artist Collective, will educate, inform and entertain us as they invite us to think. These young gay and lesbian artists cut through layers of therapy, angst and ecstasy to expose themselves and society in original and insightful ways.

Through the creative processes of writing, video and movement, the members of QuAC are charged to "fearlessly be themselves," acting as a young gay voice for the future of Houston's gay and lesbian community.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, April 4 at 12 Noon. Announcements will not be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

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Universalist Church,
1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Apr. 20 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston |
| May 4 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| May 11 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| May 18 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |

1997 PFLAG Houston Scholarships

As it nears graduation time once again for high school seniors across the greater Houston area, it also nears the time for PFLAG Houston and its membership to award a deserving gay or lesbian youth the PFLAG Houston Scholarship.

The program is designed to recognize outstanding gay or lesbian students and to celebrate the achievement of individuals with minority sexual orientation who are worth of our support. The scholarship consists of \$1,000 each year for 4 years to recognize outstanding achievement by a gay or lesbian student.

Applications are currently being accepted through April 26, 1997. Applications are available from Sherry Stephens at 713-729-7333. The winner will be notified by May 24, 1997, and will be invited to an awards presentation at the June 1, 1997 PFLAG Houston meeting.

If you wish to contribute to the PFLAG Houston Scholarship fund, please send your contribution marked "Scholarship" to the PFLAG post office box on the front of this newsletter.

PFLAG Members Respond To PFOX National Conference

In response to the announcement of the first national conference of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays (P-FOX) in Washington, D.C., several PFLAG members have released statements.

"PFLAG's 67,000 members work tirelessly throughout the year to create a world that is safe and inclusive for our gay, lesbian and bisexual loved ones. We know what is really hurting our families and it's not homosexuality -- it's homophobia. And we know what really needs to be healed and it's not our gay, lesbian or bisexual loved ones -- it's our intolerant society."

- PFLAG Executive Director Sandra Gillis

"We can understand that parents might want their children to conform to society's expectations. At times, many PFLAG parents have felt the same way. We've learned, however, that this hope is a result of the negative stereotypes of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in our communities. Rather than allow these stereotypes to interfere with our love for our children, we have chosen to seek out accurate information. Rather than trying to change our children, we have chosen to change our attitudes. Rather than remaining silent as these stereotypes are perpetuated, we have chosen to educate our communities."

- Former PFLAG National President Mitzi Henderson
Menlo Park, Calif.

"My experience is that whenever someone goes through an ex-gay ministry, as my son did, the ordeal can damage personality, character and spirituality. The experience can also harm family relationships since these min-

istries encourage members to place blame on their families. My family now believes that we are all created equally and that our spirituality and sexual orientation are gifts from God."

- PFLAG Houston Co-President Susan Upchurch

"Yesterday I got a letter from a 16 year old suicidal boy struggling to accept himself in a world that doesn't accept him. He feels he is who he is, and doesn't want to change, but he sees no hope is considering ending his life like my son did. I'm concerned that PFOX is helping to create an atmosphere that is toxic for our children. The organization needs to think about who is listening to its message."

- PFLAG member Gabi Clayton, whose gay son committed suicide two years ago Olympia, Wash.

"We subjected our son to four years of psychoanalysis beginning at age 8 to 'cure' him of his homosexuality. Not only was this unsuccessful, it was abusive and destructive to his self-esteem. We are extremely grateful that he survived and did not resort to suicide as so many of our gay young people do. Now, through his courage and conviction to be true to himself, he thrives as a happy, successful 28 year old person, who has been involved in a loving relationship for three years. Through our mutual love and with his help, we have learned to fully cherish and celebrate his life and happiness. Our hearts go out to the gay people and their families who cannot overcome the misery caused by homophobia and homo-ignorance."

- PFLAG members Dr. Jonathan and Catherine Tu
Washington, D.C.

Reprinted from PFLAG National Press Release

Safe Spaces for Youth *(Continued from page 1)*

- scraped when he was attacked by two teens after leaving school in Fayetteville, Ark. Since Willie came out to his family in junior high school, he has been the target of verbal and physical abuse from classmates, often without intervention by school officials.
- "We tried to stay quiet," said Wagner about her family's response to her son's previous harassments. "We tried to stay calm, and not be demanding, hysterical parents with the schools. We tried to be rational but persistent and it got us nowhere. Our son was beaten all the same. That approach did not work, and now that we think about it, has never worked. Gay, lesbian and bisexual people are murdered all the time, and beaten and taunted. It's time to stand up, and say, 'we're not going to take this abuse any longer.'"
- Members of PFLAG Seattle-Tacoma participated in the Safe Schools Coalition, a Washington state group comprised of 37 public and private agencies representing educators, parents, religious organizations, health care providers and youth. The coalition recently released its third annual report, which is based on in-depth interviews and a survey of public high school youth. The report found that nine percent of all students identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or unsure, and that straight students, as well as gay students, have been targets of anti-gay harassment. The report also offered recommendations for making schools safer for students.
- PFLAG Seattle-Tacoma Co-President Tawney Collins-Feay spoke at the press conference releasing the report. "Every single one of us knows what it is to feel put down, criticized, mocked, for just being the way we are," she said. "The difference for our gay children is that this is an officially sanctioned cruelty -- not from every pulpit, but from too many; not from every loved and respected adult in the child's life, but from too many; not in every classroom nor on every playground, but in too many... For the sake of all the children who are looking to us with their bright, hopeful faces, we must make sure that each one has a chance to bloom."
- When students at Dimond High School, in Anchorage, Alaska, met with resistance while trying to form a gay/straight alliance, PFLAG member Fred Hillman urged local school board members to examine the strategies other states are employing to provide safe space for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students. "Alaska," he said, "a state of pioneers, should be leading this issue."
- PFLAG members were also vocal in the original school board fight for safe space for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth in Salt Lake City, Utah. Last year, the local school board banned all non-academic clubs in an attempt to prevent students from forming a gay/straight alliance. The school board has adopted a new policy concerning clubs, and PFLAG Salt Lake City members are investigating whether any action is needed to ensure that the club will be able to meet.

- Eric Edberg, the faculty advisor of United DePauw, the gay student group at DePauw University in Greencastle, Ind., appreciated the online help of PFLAG activist Maggie Heineman after students published a newspaper mocking gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. From her home in Pennsylvania, Heineman established a web site (<http://www.critpath.org/action-project/depauw.html>) and sent national e-mail alerts letting the college administration know that reprimands for such attacks were expected. As a result of Edberg's and Heineman's collaboration, the newsletter editors have issued an official apology, the student congress has sponsored a panel discussion, "Is DePauw Homophobic?" and a PFLAG-led discussion of the Brian McNaught video Gay Issues in the Workplace with university faculty is planned. "We have to do more than speak up in the communities where our family members and friends live," said Heineman. "We must be advocates for safe spaces anywhere there is a need. New technology provides opportunities to support each other in unprecedented ways."

Atlanta Bombing *(Continued from page 1)*

wait, what happened in Atlanta on Friday could happen anywhere in the country tomorrow."

Concerned by recent violent hate crimes against gay students, verbal harassment of gay youth, and attempts by school boards to deny extra-curricular status to gay/straight alliances, the members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) set as an organizational priority the cultivation of safe spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth, and children of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered parents in 1997.

On Sunday, members of PFLAG Atlanta, with representatives from other community organizations, discussed this weekend's bombing with Mayor Bill Campbell's office. In 1995, the chapter spearheaded local development of Project Open Mind -- PFLAG's national education campaign designed to demonstrate the harmful, violent consequences of anti-gay hate speech.

HISD Requests Input

HISD Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, Harriet Arvey, Ed.E., has requested to hear from students, parents, teachers, and staff regarding the need to clarify the harassment policy to include sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation). It is recommended that folks call her at 892-6670 or fax her at 892-7494 and specify if they are parents, students or teachers. While written statement or appointments to visit are great, even phone calls are welcome and important. Personal stories from youth who are in schools would be most helpful. HISD, 3830 Richmond Ave., Houston, TX 77027

PFLAG Speakers Bureau: Have Story, Will Travel!

By Russ Jones

The Speakers Bureau training workshop was held at Christ Church Cathedral in February. Twelve people were trained during the all day session, and all left with the feeling of having their voices strengthened for future encounters with friends and acquaintances. Also, a number of new people feel prepared to join in with our Speakers Bureau activities.

Current and future Speakers Bureau engagements are:

- February 18--Barnes & Noble Bookstore in the Woodlands
- February 19--Rice University--PFLAG was included on a panel consisting of other gay support groups.
- March 13--University of Houston--two Psychology classes
- March 17--University of Houston Downtown--Psychology class
- March 20--Prairie View A & M--Gay Support Group
- April 3--University of Houston--Women's Issues
- April 5--North Harris County College--Psychology Class
- April 6--New Hope Lutheran Church
- April 14--University of Houston Downtown--two Sociology classes
- April 25--Mental Health Conference--Clear Lake

Business is picking up for the Speakers Bureau, and the key to understanding and acceptance is education. Our new brochures are now available for distribution, and we look forward to a greater penetration into schools, churches, businesses and civic groups.

Mothering: A Child's Insight About Gay Love, *by Fern Kupter*

It was a February more than a decade ago that my daughter was reading aloud the Valentine messages listed in our local paper. She said, "Hey, Mom, is Gerald ever a girl's name?" I told her I didn't think so. Why? There she showed me - listed amid the cupids and poems in lacy hearts: To David. Happy Valentine's Day. I Love You. Gerald.

Well, I offered, perhaps David and Gerald were brothers. Or friends joking around. Or maybe, David and Gerald were gay.

There was no giggling into her hand, no puzzled look. Gabi knew about homosexuality. I had told her a few years before when she was in kindergarten. Kindergarten, you might say. Seems awfully young to talk about such a difficult topic. But it wasn't at all - not when I recall the moment. Three generations of my family were watching television and suddenly there it was - the "teachable moment" as we say in the education biz. There was a commercial asking to help save the children from the menace of homosexuality.

Only the "H" word was not used. The voice-over simply asked that we help save the children and the schools from "people like these." On the screen were marchers from a Gay Pride

parade - this particular clip showed men in garish makeup and costume. The police were holding back an angry crowd.

"Why are those people so upset?" asked my daughter. It was not the flamboyantly dressed men who caught her attention but the hostile throng surrounding them.

"They don't like the people in the parade," I said.

"Who are the people in the parade?" Gabi asked.

My explanation came as naturally as if she had asked about a Memorial Day parade of veterans. "Because the men walking together are gay. These men love each other and like to hug and kiss and be with each other in the way that Daddy and I like to hug and kiss and be with each other."

"You mean like Judith and Anna?" Gabi asked.

I was astonished that a 6-year-old had made the leap to two middle-aged Midwestern schoolteachers, whose home Gabi had been in only once. She recalled, too, that Judith and Anna had lots of cats and had given us a batch of chocolate-chip cookies.

"Yes, like Judith and Anna," I said. "The way Judith and Anna love each other makes some people upset." Gabi looked confused. "What is it you don't understand?" I prodded.

"Well, what I don't understand..." she began, her lip puffed out in concentration, "is why?"

"Why what?"

"Why would loving someone make anybody else mad?"

Why indeed, I've thought over the years since. Since our cousin Jenny came out. Since one of the best teachers in the English department where I work is gay. Since two business-

(Continued on page 5)



Bishop Gumbleton tells of journey through homophobia

by Michelle Tedford

The Rev. Thomas J. Gumbleton began his talk on the acceptance of gay men and lesbians in the Catholic church from a starting ground that was familiar to him: ignorance.

The bishop from Detroit told the audience gathered at the University of Dayton Thursday that he hoped his lecture would draw others along the path to understanding.

"I know that I was deeply afflicted by what people call homophobia," he said. "It had been sort of drilled into me from the Catholic culture within which I grew up."

Gumbleton was raised in a Catholic family of nine that never discussed sex. In the ninth grade he entered a seminary. Homosexuality was never addressed, but branded as one of the most terrible sins. This was the background he received for dealing with the confessions of gay and lesbian Catholics.

"As I look back I can realize that they were coming, in a sense, almost begging me to say something compassionate, something helpful, something that would show understanding," he said. "But I never did. I simply treated it as that terrible sin."

Several years ago he began understanding the pain caused by a church that excluded the realities of some of its members. He met homosexual people and parents who were activists for their gay and lesbian children. "I knew God loved him every bit as much as I did," one woman told Gumbleton about her son who died of AIDS. "You know they say 'God doesn't make junk.'"

The experience hit home when his brother Dan revealed to the family that he was gay. The Catholic teachings were no solace. Gumbleton's mother believed her gay son was going to hell.

"She has been worrying, fearing because of her Catholic upbringing," Gumbleton said. And that's the problem. The Catholic religion should not cause pain, but embrace all voices of the Catholic experience, he said.

"A reason why we have failed in the church truly to understand and to accept gay and lesbian people is because we have not ... listened to their experience, we have not allowed them to be public in the church," he said.

Gumbleton is one of the bishops working on the draft of "Your Gay or Lesbian Child: A pastoral message to families and churches from the bishop's committee on marriage and family." Gumbleton hopes it will be helpful by removing judgment about the sinfulness of an act from the public arena and making it a matter between the person and God.

It's only a beginning, he said, but it is a step away from ignorance and down the path to an accepting, inclusive Catholic church.

Mothering *(Continued from page 4)*

men in our town adopted children who would have otherwise languished in a South American orphanage.

There are some people who lump homosexuals together with child molesters, exhibitionists and garden-variety perverts. From this perspective homosexuals can pay taxes, but that's about it. They should not be found around our schools, our military, our ministry, our public restrooms. Others see homosexual behavior as not exactly criminal, but unnatural and sinful - and with God on your side, it doesn't sound as mean to deny others their civil rights.

Then there's probably most of the middling population of heterosexual America: mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, colleagues and coworkers, moderate conservatives and uncomfortable liberals. Their version goes something like this: Whatever homosexuals do in the privacy of their own homes is all right... if it's kept strictly private, I don't see that it's anyone else's business as long as gay people are discreet....

Ironically, it's this "don't-ask-don't-tell" view that's probably most confusing to children. For what does this example teach? That it's fine if we're uncomfortable about something to pretend that it doesn't exist? The thing is, whom you have sex with is not only what it means to be gay. Being gay also defines who sits across from you at dinner, whom you take your walks around the block with, whom you send valentines to. And "coming out" has less to do with sexual activity than it does to say to the world: "This is who I really am." To be gay means saying to well meaning Aunt Helen, when she asks for the umpteenth time if you've found the right girl yet: "I'm not planning on finding the right girl - I date men." Coming out means that a coworker brings her female companion to the office Christmas party if everyone else is bringing a date.

Being homosexual in America - unless you live within a cloistered gay community - means living so very "discreetly" that you end up living a lie. And that, for anyone, is a lousy way to live. Afraid for your job, your home, your safety. Having to "protect" your family from your secret life - as if you were a bank embezzler or a neo-Nazi.

We owe it to our children to let them know that people are different in many ways, by choice or design, and differences are to be respected. Keeping gay people in the closet also keeps our children in the dark. And, oh, we do them no favor by nourishing the meanness that grows in those unlighted places.

Reprinted from PFLAG San Francisco Newsletter

The Dayton Voice, 127 N. Main St., Dayton, OH 45405, E-mail: thevoice@dayton.net
Originally printed on Wednesday, February 19, 1997.

What to do with all that extra time?

Rewarding. Gratifying. "Give-back". Helpful. Educational. Those are all words you would use to describe how you would feel after participating in this PFLAG project. In our on-going efforts to improve the support for our members, PFLAG is looking for a volunteer to help with the management and maintenance of our database systems. The ideal volunteer would be:

Computer literate. (Don't need to be an expert, but knowledge of data management systems/programs would be needed. Training/support will be available.)

Available. (We estimate that 20-40 hours - - over the next month or two - - will be needed to initiate this project. Then, 8-10 hours per month would be needed to sustain it.

If you are interested, please call Jim Bianchetto at 281-491-3114.

PFLAG Pole - - The national PFLAG newsletter

Were you aware that there is a national newsletter for PFLAG called the PFLAGPole? If you are not receiving it, but want it, contact Jim Bianchetto (Bianchetto@AOL.com or, 281-491-3114). Give him your name and mailing address. This newsletter is sent as an "open mailing". In fact, this may explain why some of you are not getting PFLAGPole, even though you are a PFLAG member. When you joined PFLAG-Houston, you were asked if PFLAG mail should be sent to you in confidential, "closed" mailings. If you said "Yes", you were automatically be deleted from the PFLAG Pole mailing list.

To accommodate those of you who would still like to see it but don't want your mailboxes overflowing with even more mail, we will have a bulk supply of PFLAG Poles available at our monthly general meetings in the future.

A Note of Thanks

Thank you for all that you do and your never-ending support and love. I cannot always attend meetings due to job and other commitments, but I feel that every gay and lesbian should join PFLAG as a measure of support for you. I have done just that and am encouraging my friends to do the same.

*Thanks again,
Barry Liss*

PFLAG in Texas Commerce Bank News?!

In the most recent issue of the Texas Commerce Bank Employee Newsletter, the subject at hand was diversity. The P.R.I.D.E team was formed last year to support inclusion of all TCB employees regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification as valued employees of the bank.

Through education and other initiatives, we are trying to encourage an environment that celebrates the individuality and diversity of each person," said Richard Bielec, P.R.I.D.E chair. People Recognizing Individual Differences Equally is what P.R.I.D.E. stands for.

Although P.R.I.D.E. is an employee initiated group, Texas Commerce Bank has supported the group's efforts in several areas. For example, the Bank was one of two corporate sponsors for PFLAG Houston's billboard advertisements in 1996. Texas Commerce also advertises in various gay and lesbian publications. The newsletter even included a picture of 1 of the billboards. Way to go Texas Commerce!

IT'S TIME!!!

**TIME FOR THE MOST
INNOVATIVE,
EXCITING,
ELECTRIFYING,
AND
INSPIRING
EVENT OF 1997!**

**Are you
Glowing with Pride?**

**1997 HOUSTON
PRIDE PARADE**

Special Guest at PFLAG Woodlands

In the PFLAG Houston-Woodlands Satellite group for a very special event. Rev. Don Sinclair, long-time minister at Bering United Methodist Church and past PFLAG Houston President, will be speaking at the April 13th meeting of the PFLAG Houston-Woodlands Satellite group. The topic will be "Changing Heart & Mind - The Journey." Join us at the Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church at 1370 N. Millbend Drive at 2pm.

Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

I just returned from the March in Austin and PFLAG Regional Conference that many of you also attended. I can tell you that it opened my eyes to learn more about the other chapters in Texas and what they were doing. How a mom in Denton was making in impact on the college campuses in her town. How another Mom in Lubbock is working with many of the college students at Texas Tech. This is just a small portion of what was shared by the different chapters at the regional meeting, but I will tell you that it inspired me. It reminded me of the saying, "We can't do everything at once, but we can do something at once." What is your "something?" What can you do today, this week, or this month to make a difference in someone else's life? Write a letter to HISD? Write a letter to your state representative or senator regarding the Hate Crimes Legislation? Write a note of love and support to a gay or lesbian loved one? Read a book? Whatever your situation, do something at once.

Please send your ideas and articles to me at either 713-528-3684 by phone, 1903 Portsmouth #21, Houston TX 77098 by mail, or dougup@flash.net by e-mail! The deadline for the May newsletter is April 15th. ☺



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!*

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

May 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Houston PFLAGers Featured on "60 Minutes" Ex-Ex Gays & PFLAG vs. Ex-Gays & PFOX

Houston PFLAGer Doug Upchurch was recently contacted by CBS and 60 Minutes regarding a story on the "ex-gay" movement. What was initially just a phone interview soon turned into a trip to New York and a camera crew coming to Houston to interview some local PFLAGers.

Scheduled to air some time in May or early June, the segment will focus on the debate over whether or not an individual can change their sexual orientation. Leslie Stahl interviewed Doug Upchurch because of his experience in the "ex-gay" movement. She also interviewed a leader in the group Exodus, a national agency claiming to be able to change a person's sexual orientation.

These interviews led to stories on PFLAG on both a national and local level as well as the newly formed group "PFOX- Parents and Friends of 'Ex-Gays.'" A camera crew was in Houston in mid-April to film several small group meetings as well as one of our Billboards which was put up for their visit and the "Ellen Coming Out." (See article below.) They also filmed a meeting focusing on developing diversity in PFLAG Houston that included representatives from groups such as African-American Gay & Lesbian Alliance (AALGA), Sisters, and other interested groups.

The segment should be very positive and although they spent hours filming, somehow they will edit it down to 12 minutes that is scheduled to air in May or June. So call your friends and family and set the VCR. Ellen and PFLAG Houston are hittin' the airwaves!!!

PFLAG Billboard & Party Thanks Ellen DeGeneres and "Ellen Morgan"

PFLAG Houston has placed one of the popular "Someone You Know and Love is Gay" billboards on the Southwest Freeway inbound at Bissonnet to promote our support for Ellen DeGeneres and her character, "Ellen Morgan" and their coming out. Given the publicity surrounding the Ellen episode and the 60 Minutes visit, PFLAG Houston felt that it was a good time for us to remind our community of our group and our message.

The billboard will be up for 1 month and cost PFLAG Houston \$5,000. If you would like to contribute to the "PFLAG Houston Billboard Fund," please send your contribution to the PFLAG P.O. Box at the top of this page.

By the time you read this, the Ellen Coming Out episode might have

(Continued on page 2)



**PFLAG Houston
on 60 Minutes!**



Next Meeting May 4 Kris Ford on Healing

Many of you may remember January 1996 when we were privileged to have Kris Ford speak to us on Grief and how it relates to our journeys with our gay and lesbian loved ones.

This month, Kris will be joining us again to discuss the Healing process that we go through as we move towards the celebration of our gay and lesbian family and friends. If you heard her last time, you won't be late this time. Be sure to join us for this wonderful guest speaker.

Join us from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, May 2 at 12 Noon. Announcements will not be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Children pay price...	3
Andrew Sullivan to speak	4
Film Festival & PFLAG	5
PFLAG Picnic	6

Schedule of Events

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Apr. 30 | Ellen Coming Out Party, 7-10pm at Birra Poretti's, West Gray & Shepherd. |
| May | Watch 60 Minutes for PFLAG Houston!! |
| May 4 | PFLAG Sunday at Bering UMC, 10:50am at 1440 Harold (See article on page 2) |
| May 4 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting 2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| May 11 | Happy Mother's Day!!! |
| May 11 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting, 2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| May 17 | PFLAG Houston Family Picnic, Memorial Park, 4:00pm-7:00pm (See Article Page 6) |
| May 18 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting Health Merchant at 27th and Broadway in Galveston |
| May 20 | Mid-Month Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, S. Gessner & Bissonnet (See Article Page 2) |
| Jun. 1 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Jun. 8 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| Jun. 8 | PFLAG Sponsored "Family Viewing Day" at the first ever Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival at DiverseWorks, (See Article on Page 5) |
| Jun. 15 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Jun. 28 | Houston Pride Parade, 9:00pm - Mark your calendars, First ever Electronic Light Parade |

Ellen Coming Out Party *(Continued from page 1)*

aired. Scheduled for April 30, the episode features Ellen DeGeneres and a cast of well-known actors. Laura Dern will play Ellen's love interest while Oprah Winfrey will play Ellen's therapist as Ellen finally comes to realize that she is a lesbian.

PFLAG Houston has scheduled a "Coming Out Party" on April 30 from 7-10pm at Birra Poretti's on West Gray near Shepherd. Appetizers will be served with a cash bar. The party will be held in the upstairs banquet room at Birra Poretti's. There is limited space available, so come early for this exciting event.

PFLAG Sunday at Bering Church!

You are invited to attend morning worship at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold Street, on Sunday, May 4, 1997. The service begins at 10:50 AM and we will sit together in a section reserved for PFLAG. The congregation at Bering, largely made up of those with gay and lesbian interests, would very much like to honor PFLAG on this day. They also want to meet and talk with us, so there will be a reception with refreshments following the service. If you have questions or need directions, call Peg Nevers at 713-526-0471.

PFLAG Houston holds a new Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday May 20th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This is not a one-time event, however! This meeting will happen on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG Helpline.

Newsletter Editor and Webmaster Needed

Well, it's good news and bad news. PFLAG Houston's Newsletter Editor and Webmaster, Doug Upchurch has taken a job in Austin, Texas effective the end of April and although it is great news for Doug, his efforts with the newsletter and website will be missed.

If you or someone you know is interested in working on either the newsletter or the PFLAG Houston website, please contact Don or Susan Upchurch at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com. All you need is a computer with Windows 95 and the willingness to help. We will do our best to train you and get you started.

We are especially interested in multiple folks to help with all of these tasks so that no one person is doing it on their own. So, don't be shy, give us a call!!! Thanks!

PFLAG Houston receives AALGA's Advocacy Award

March 29th, PFLAG Houston was awarded the African-American Lesbian & Gay Alliance's (AALGA) Advocacy Award for 1996. In recognition of the Billboard campaign, the "Moms & Dads Go to Washington" project, and the other advocacy efforts PFLAG Houston participates in, this award was given to PFLAG Houston. Thanks to everyone who made it happen and especially a BIG THANKS to AALGA for this honor.



Children pay the price for growing up gay

By Steve Blow / The Dallas Morning News

Several of us middle-aged guys were having lunch the other day, talking about the usual assortment of work and family misadventures. Somehow we began to talk about that inevitable stage in raising boys in which you discover their stash of "naked lady" pictures.

And almost in unison, we voiced our reaction upon making that discovery: "Yea! They're not gay!"

We all laughed and went right on to other topics. But I've been thinking about that moment ever since.

I don't think anyone in that group had that reaction because of hatred for gays or lesbians. It was more a feeling of relief that our kids won't have to endure the hardships of growing up gay.

We're in the midst of social upheaval in this country over the issue of homosexuality. We adults cuss and discuss the civil rights and moral rightness of gays and lesbians.

And in the meantime, many children pay a price.

Woe to any child in these heated days who gets branded gay or lesbian.

Male cheerleader

Did you see the news story last weekend about the young man in Midland? He thought his dreams had come true when picked as a high school cheerleader. Instead, a nightmare began when students began to taunt him.

Even from the grandstands at a football game, students called him "a . . . [expletive] faggot." And last month, the young man attempted suicide.

The study found that a third of teens who commit suicide are dealing with the hurt and isolation of homosexuality.

And a child need not even be gay or lesbian to suffer the tor-

ment. Lots of those boys with a stash of "naked lady" pictures at home get targeted because they are different - smaller, or smarter or simply less athletic than the other boys.

A study in Seattle found that for every gay or lesbian youth being harassed, another four heterosexual kids were being beaten up or tormented because they "appeared" gay.

Picture this

Next Sunday afternoon at 2, folks will gather in an auditorium at the Dallas Museum of Art to watch a film and talk about a nice, safe topic: Discussing homosexuality in our schools.

Can you say "brouhaha," boys and girls?

The event is sponsored by P-FLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. And the movie is It's Elementary - an award-winning documentary that shows how homosexuality is being calmly discussed in some elementary and middle schools around the country.

I watched the film last week and noticed that none of the schools were in Texas. What a surprise, huh? And I doubt the day will come when Texas schools celebrate "Gay & Lesbian Pride Day" as an elementary in Massachusetts does.

But the film does show that even the youngest children already know a lot about homosexuality (from those TV talk shows, mostly). And it demonstrates that kids are capable of getting beyond the giggles to heartfelt discussion.

Jim McBride also watched the movie last week. "That film moved me emotionally as much as anything I've seen," he said. "Because it was about me."

Jim will be discussing the film next Sunday. He is director of the Hope Counseling Center at the Cathedral of Hope.

He wasn't one of those tormented for being gay as he grew up in Vicksburg, Miss. In fact, he was class president and quarterback of the football team. He played quarterback on scholarship at Mississippi State and went on to a 25-year career with IBM.

"But I was miserable the whole time," he said, "because I knew people would hate me if they found out what I was really feeling inside."

He said he was moved by the film because it shows that children are capable of grasping what many adults can't - that it's not about approving or disapproving of homosexuality. "They understand it's all a matter of respecting people," he said.

Oh, we'll probably have a big controversy over whether homosexuality should be discussed in our children's schools. We'll argue back and forth as if we actually had a choice in the matter.

But the plain truth is that it's being discussed right now. Often with fists.

Maine Gov. speaks out on same-sex marriage ban

UPI-AUGUSTA, Maine, April 1 (UPI) _ Maine Gov. Angus King says (Tuesday) that while the newly passed ban against same-sex marriage will become law in June, he will have no part of it.

King refused to sign the legislation into law, saying it "sows hate and division" among state residents. He said he did not veto the measure because it would have triggered a statewide referendum.

The ban takes effect June 26.

The Maine Legislature last week voted overwhelmingly to support the ban, rather than oppose it and force a referendum.

Many lawmakers said they chose to support enactment to avoid stirring a bitter state referendum campaign on the matter through next fall. King said he did not veto the bill for the same reason.

King rebuked anti-homosexual activists for forcing a legislative vote on the proposal.

King said he believes the bill "has very little to do with marriage and nothing to do with love. Instead, the real purpose of its leading proponents is to keep some aspects of the issue in the public eye."

Gay Rights supporters praised King for refusing to sign the bill. Opponents chided him for ignoring the wishes of the 62,000 who signed the citizens' petition which brought the matter to the Legislature.

Spokesman Michael Heath for the Christian Civic League said "Why does he have to slap the 62,000 people who signed those petitions? I don't think it helps for him to call them haters."

Karen Geraghty of the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance said King had chosen the best course, and that "his unwillingness to attach his name to something so patently anti-gay sends a good message."

Andrew Sullivan to Speak at Bering

Set your VCR for Ellen, and come hear Andrew Sullivan speak at Bering Church! Sullivan, who wrote For Better Or Worse, a book about same-sex marriages, and the best-seller Virtually Normal will be speaking at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 30. Everyone is invited!!



What to do with all that extra time?

Rewarding. Gratifying. "Give-back". Helpful. Educational. Those are all words you would use to describe how you would feel after participating in this PFLAG project. In our on-going efforts to improve the support for our members, PFLAG is looking for a volunteer to help with the management and maintenance of our database systems. The ideal volunteer would be:

Computer literate. (Don't need to be an expert, but knowledge of data management systems/programs would be needed. Training/support will be available.)

Available. (We estimate that 20-40 hours - - over the next month or two - - will be needed to initiate this project. Then, 8-10 hours per month would be needed to sustain it. If you are interested, please call Jim Bianchetta at 281-491-3114.

IT'S TIME!!!

**TIME FOR THE FIRST-EVER
ELECTRIC LIGHT
HOUSTON PRIDE PARADE!**

*Are you
Glowing with Pride for
Your gay and lesbian loved ones?*

**THEN JOIN US FOR
THE 1997 HOUSTON
PRIDE PARADE
JUNE 28, 1997
9:00PM**

**CALL DON UPCHURCH AT
713-995-9777 TO HELP
WITH THE PFLAG ENTRY!**

First Ever Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

PFLAG Houston sponsors Family Viewing Day, June 8th

This year, DiverseWorks, along with Landmark Theaters, the Museum of Fine Arts, Rice Media Center, and SWAMP, are producing the first-ever Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in May and June of 1997. The festival features an extensive list of gay and lesbian themed films that have never played in Houston. The festival takes place over four consecutive weekends at four different venues.

PFLAG Houston is underwriting the Family Viewing Day on Sunday, June 8th at DiverseWorks. The films to be shown on this day celebrate positive family and community acceptance of gay and lesbian people. The films scheduled for this day include:

2:00pm and 5:45pm - **"It's Elementary"** (1995) by Debrah Chasnoff & Helen Cohen, a feature length documentary film shot in schools across the U.S. that makes a compelling case for including gay issues in multi-cultural education. This film is a window into how teachers and school administrators can find age-appropriate, sensitive ways to teach children respect for all people.

3:30pm and 5:00pm - **"All God's Children"** by Dee Mosbacher, deals head-on with the destructive impact of homophobia on the African-American community. It presents positive, supportive images of African-American lesbians and gays, along with strong statements of support from community, religious, and national public leaders.

4:15pm - **"Family Values"** (1996) by Pam Walton, a personal film documenting lesbian videomaker Pam Walton's attempt to reconcile with her long estranged father and her search for what "family" means to her.

As the underwriter for this event, all PFLAG members will receive free admission to the films listed above on this day.



Positive steps taken against homophobia in Petaluma

School districts focus on gay harassment

PETALUMA, Calif., March 26 (UPI) - Petaluma school officials are working on regulations and training to halt harassment of gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

While the district's policy is not as elaborate as cities like San Francisco that offer support services specifically for gay students, Deputy Superintendent Kim Jamieson said today (Wednesday) that the program hopefully will halt harassment of sexual minorities.

Jamieson says discussions about a district-wide policy began in January 1995 when 15-year-old Robin Reed, a gay Petaluma High School sophomore, leaped to his death from the Golden Gate Bridge after years of torment by his peers.

Jamieson says a Wisconsin case in which a school district paid \$900,000 last year to settle a federal lawsuit over harassment of a gay student also created concerns.

Jamieson says, "We've had people address the school board on the issue of harassment and the negative impact that it has had on their lives in terms of self-image and health."

The Petaluma board's policy, similar to those in San Francisco and Los Angeles, prohibits any harassment that appears to be motivated by prejudice, based on race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

The proposed regulation goes one step further _ requiring staff training and student education on harassment of sexual minorities.

Petaluma officials say there have been several incidents on campus, including students' use of a slur against homosexuals in a cheer during a basketball game.

Gail Kaufman, a spokeswoman for the San Francisco School District, says, "School districts try to treat all students equally, but we live in a homophobic society, and that is reflected in our schools."

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PFLAG National Supports Presidents' Summit for America's Future

On April 27-29, delegates from 127 communities met in Philadelphia, PA, for the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. Presidents Clinton and Bush are the honorary co-chairs. Colin Powell is the chair and Henry Cisneros is the vice-chair. The purpose of the summit is to launch a new national partnership between leaders from business, labor, the media, religious and educational institutions and the volunteer sector. The partnership is challenged with the task of ensuring that youth have access to resources that can help them lead healthy, fulfilling and productive lives.

In a letter from PFLAG National president Nancy McDonald, PFLAG submitted their commitment to this program. PFLAG's commitment is as follows:

PFLAG is committed to significantly increasing safe space and local support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered youth and their parents, friends and family members. We will provide safe space, family support services and programming in 500 communities across the United States by 2002. This commitment represents 100 new communities currently not served

by PFLAG volunteers. PFLAG is committed to working with youth service providers and agencies to help them meet the needs of at-risk sexual minority youth in programming and services. PFLAG will offer "family-to-family" training in a minimum of 50 cities by 2002.

PFLAG Houston is excited to be a part of this national community partnership and is committed to remembering all the chil-

A Letter from a Mom...

Dear PFLAG Friends,

It's 9pm and I'm waiting for my 15 year old son to conclude his H.A.T.C.H. meeting. The past year has found us burning the roads from our home in Brazoria county to the big city. No complaints here - only gratitude for the wonderful support obtained from the Houston PFLAG and H.A.T.C.H. groups.

This "outing" has been long and difficult. Many emotions have been experienced by my son and I. It is not over, however the journey is more pleasant and meaningful because of all of you! Thanks!

— A New Member of PFLAG Houston, Margie V.

Join us for the
1997 PFLAG Houston Picnic at
Memorial Park on Saturday
May 17th, 4-7pm

Bring Your Family, Friends and Food!
We'll provide the Drinks and the Fun!

For more information, contact
Denay Hudson at 281-584-0288

Final Notes from the Editor, by Doug Upchurch

Well, the past 3 years have been more than wonderful. Since my first meeting at PFLAG in February of 1994, I have really come a long way. And my parents, well that's a whole 'nother story! It is with both excitement and sadness, however, that I write my Final Notes from the Editor for the PFLAG Flyer. Tyler and I will be moving to Austin at the end of April for a very exciting career opportunity. We knew it might be happening, but we had no idea it would be this soon. First of all, I want to say a few very important thank yous to some very important people. Craig Stephens who brought me to my first PFLAG meeting. Jane Montgomery who made me feel so welcome at that first meeting. Gail Rickey for "letting me" do the newsletter. :) Nancy and Mary for always finishing on time what I often completed late. Pete & Judy Filippone for their support in small groups and broadening my horizons to include Macintosh computers. The 1995 Board of Directors for allowing me to take PFLAG Houston onto the Internet. Charlotte and Arden for introducing me to some wonderful "LOAFers!" Dick and Norma Graves for all the hugs and encouragement. And of course Mom & Dad for their love, support and courage to go where I never dreamed they would. To all of PFLAG Houston for showing me that when you stand up for someone you love and believe in, you are leaving a legacy to never be forgotten. Most of all, thanks to Tyler, the love of my life, for putting up with all my late night typing and surfing as I completed the newsletter. Don't worry, we'll be back, but we will never forget! Thanks to all! We love you!! Tyler and I will be at 1812 W. 38th St., Austin, TX, 78731, 512-4554-3113, or via email at dougup@flash.net. For all the newsletter stuff, please send your ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the June newsletter is May 15th. ☺



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!

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]

ANNOUNCING

The Grand Premiere

CLAIMING AMERICA'S PROMISE



Saturday, May 31, 1997
7 PM

Rice Media Center
(corner of University Blvd. & exit #8 at Rice University)

Bring Your Family and Friends to this Festive Event!

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Presented by PFLAG Houston

Starring:

Moms & Dads Who Went to Washington to Fight for ENDA

Producers:

Donna Pinnick, Tyler Reeves, Carla Webbles, Kyle Young

Video Production:

Steve Baker & Russell Byrd, TriAngle Video Productions

This video was made possible by a generous grant from
The Hollyfield Foundation.

Video Showing: 7 PM

Reception: 7:30 PM

Copies of the video will be available for sale.

PFLAG Flyer

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

June 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

"Claiming America's Promise"

Premieres May 31 at Rice Media Center

"Claiming America's Promise" a documentary of the "Moms and Dads Go to Washington" trip will premiere at the Rice Media Center at 7 PM on Saturday, May 31st. The trip to Washington was to support passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and was initiated by PFLAG Houston. While the legislation was not passed, the response to parents and friends lobbying Washington for the gay and lesbian community was impressive. PFLAG Houston was joined on this trip by other PFLAG chapters/members and this short film tells of the experiences they shared.

The Hollyfield Foundation made this film possible with a generous grant, for which we are very grateful. You are invited to attend the premiere showing, celebrate the occasion and express your appreciation to representatives of The Hollyfield Foundation, the "Moms & Dads", and the producers, Donna Pinnick, Tyler Reeves, Carla Webbles, and Kyle Young. Thanks also to Steve Baker and Russell Byrd of TriAngle Video Productions for their efforts and support.

The Rice Media Center is located on the corner of University Blvd. and Entrance #8 of Rice University. Copies of the video will be available for purchase at the premiere.



Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

PFLAG Houston - Family Viewing Day, June 8th

The First Annual Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival takes place over four consecutive weekends, beginning May 23rd. The festival features an extensive list of gay and lesbian theme films that have never played in Houston. Films will be shown at four different venues including Landmark Theatres, The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, DiverseWorks, and Rice Media Center, at a different venue each weekend.

PFLAG Houston is sponsoring the Family Viewing Day, June 8th, at DiverseWorks where films will be shown that celebrate positive family and community acceptance of gays and lesbians. The new PFLAG Houston film, "Claiming America's Promise" will also be shown. The schedule for showings on June 8th is as follows:

1:00 pm.....Claiming America's Promise

(Continued on page 2)



Next Meeting June 1

Dr. Cheryl Weill on Sexual Orientation Biology

One of the most popular presenters at our "Healing the Hurt" conferences in '94 & '95, Cheryl Weill, Ph.D, Professor of Neurology and Anatomy at LSU Medical School in New Orleans, returns to speak to us on Sexual Orientation Biology.

"Homophobia is in part a consequence of ignorance and misunderstanding as regards the biology of the development of sexual orientation," says Weill. Join us and learn more about this interesting topic so we have more facts to counter the intolerance which is so often NOT based on fact.

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. After our large group session, attend 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, May 30 at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Faber to Lead Chorus	3
Wisdom Comes Early	4
Pride Parade	4
Mother Tests Faith	5

Schedule of Events

- Jun. 1** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- Jun. 8** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- Jun. 8** PFLAG Sponsored "Family Viewing
Day" at the first ever Houston Gay &
Lesbian Film Festival at
DiverseWorks, (See Article on Page
5)
- Jun. 15** Happy Fathers Day!!!
- Jun. 15** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- Jun. 17** Mid-Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet
- Jun. 28** Houston Pride Parade, 9:00pm -
Mark your calendars, First ever
Electric Light Parade
- Jul. 13** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- Jul. 13** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
- Jul. 20** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
- Sep 11-14** PFLAG 1997 International
Conference, Clarion Plaza Hotel,
Orlando, Florida

STAY TUNED FOR "60 MINUTES"

No word from CBS on when the Ex-Ex Gay & PFLAG episode will air. The original schedule was for a Sunday in May but at "press time" we have not been given a confirmation of the date.

Family Viewing Day *(Continued from page 1)*

2:00 & 5:00 pm.....It's Elementary

3:30 pmFamily Values

4:15 & 6:30 pm.....All God's Children

For information, please call DiverseWorks at 713/228-0914 or contact their website at <http://www.DiverseWorks.org>.

REMEMBER - PFLAG members will be admitted free to the showings on June 8th!

"Ellen Party" Lots of Fun

Thanks to all who attended the PFLAG "Ellen Party" at Birraporetti's. We had an overflow crowd, good food (Thanks to Dr. Clark Carrol and Birraporetti's) and a lot of fun. The Thank You cards attendees signed have been sent to Ellen along with an 8x10 photo of our "Thanks Ellen" billboard. Thanks also to those of you who contributed toward the cost of the billboard! (We still need help on this!)

Several PFLAGers sent e-mail to ABC Television after the coming out episode and actually got responses. The responses were appreciative and prompt and promised the writer's comments would be forwarded to the ABC programming executives. It is nice to know that contacting them really works! We'll keep you posted when we get a response from Ellen.

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday June 17th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This is not a one-time event, however! This meeting will happen on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG HelpLine.

Newsletter Editor Needed

If you or someone you know is interested in working on the newsletter, please contact Don or Susan Upchurch at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com. All you need is a computer with Windows 95 and the willingness to help. We will do our best to train you and get you started.

We are especially interested in multiple folks to help with all of these tasks so that no one person is doing it on their own. So, don't be shy, give us a call!!! Thanks!

Dave Faber New Director of Houston's Gay Mens Chorus

Houston PFLAGer Dave Faber is the new Director of the Gay Mens Chorus of Houston. Dave is the Director of Choirs for North Harris County College and a very supportive member of PFLAG. CONGRATULATIONS Dave! This talented group of men are well known in Houston and they delighted PFLAG by performing at our Holiday Party last December. They will be performing next on June 21 & 22 at the First Universalist Unitarian Church at 5200 Fannin, in the Museum District. The program, "Simple Pleasures", features songs of gay freedom and a variety of music styles including spirituals, love songs and show tunes. The program will also include a performance by John-Michael Albert, nationally known composer/performer and past director of the chorus. Don't miss this opportunity for a very enjoyable performance. Tickets are available at Crossroads, Inklings, Lobo and at the door (\$10 all) The performance on Saturday, June 21 will begin at 7:00pm and the Sunday, June 22 performance will be a matinee starting at 2:30pm. For more information call 713-521-SING.



Letter from PFLAG Travelers Jane & Irv Smith on South Africa

"We just spent three weeks in South Africa. South Africa is the only country whose constitution bans discrimination against gays. We met a gay couple from England who were living temporarily in Cape Town. Alex had been transferred there by his company, Royal-Dutch Shell, which moved his partner, Ashley, to South Africa under its spousal-benefits program. Ashley also receives various other benefits from Shell.

Cape Town is known as the gay capital of South Africa. While our new friends were residing in South Africa, Ashley became a permanent resident in case they decide one day to return there to live.

After visiting South America and seeing how far they were behind us in issues relating to gays, it was a pleasant surprise to visit a country far outstripping our country in acceptance for gays."

Jane Bowman Smith

Editors Note:

Jane and Irv Smith are long term PFLAG Houston members and current Board Members. They enjoy international travel and are wonderful ambassadors for PFLAG wherever they go. THANKS TO YOU BOTH FOR ALL YOU DO FOR PFLAG!

New Gay and Lesbian Association for Retiring Persons

Los Angeles—(BUSINESS WIRE)—May 5, 1997

The Gay and Lesbian Association of Retiring Persons (GLARP), an international, nonprofit membership organization, has been launched to enhance the aging experience of gays and lesbians.

It fills a void in the gay and lesbian community for retirement-related information and services, as well as providing an ideal environment in which to research, anticipate and provide for its membership's unique needs.

Its ultimate plans include establishment of nonprofit retirement communities -- independent- and assisted-living -- for gays and lesbians in the United States and abroad, as well as development of skilled-nursing facilities.

"Getting older is already challenge enough -- aging as a gay or lesbian is even harder," said Mary Thorndal, GLARP's executive director. "AARP does a good job for the heterosexual population, but it makes no attempt to address the different needs of gays and lesbians. We're now starting to do so, on a modest scale, and we'll expand as our membership grows." The new nonprofit organization has established offices in Los Angeles, started up a Web site (<http://www.gaylesbianretiring.org>) and negotiated preferred member benefits with service providers in categories including legal services, auto rental, cellular phones and home exercise. There are even discounts on funeral caskets.

"Frankly," said Thorndal, "while we plan to focus on the business of living, it won't be at the expense of ignoring everyone's need to prepare responsibly for the end of their lives."

Membership is open to anyone -- there are no age or other restrictions -- for a \$25 annual fee. Three-year, \$60 memberships are also available, as are corporate memberships.

In addition to discounts on various services, GLARP members will receive the organization's quarterly newsletter, starting in the winter of 1997, which will report retirement-related news of specific interest to the gay and lesbian population, as well as periodic mailings on topics of special interest. Future benefits and services will be dictated by the membership, which will be surveyed regularly.

Research will be a very large part of GLARP's first-year operations. Using survey forms at its Web site, through questions on membership applications and in publications, through focus groups and through association with major education institutions (e.g., schools of gerontology), GLARP's leadership plans to pioneer an international collection of information about the

(Continued on page 7)

Wisdom Comes Early for Some *Sixth Grader Happy with Two Dads*

Chicago Tribune -

Dear Abby: I am 11 years old. I'm in the 6th grade and I'm adopted. I don't have a mother but I have 2 dads. My dad adopted me just after I turned 1 year old because my mother took drugs and didn't take care of me. My dad met his lover when I was 4, and we have lived together since I was 6.



The reason I am writing is for all the people who say bad things about my dad and me. It's usually not the kids at school, it's the parents and some of my teachers. They ask me if it bothers me that I was adopted by a gay man and don't have a mom. Well, it doesn't bother me --- only their questions bother me. I love my dad and he loves me. I have a godmother I see every couple of months and she's kind of like a mom to me.

Some people say that living with my dad is going to make me gay, but his parents raised him to be straight and he isn't. My dad was born gay and he can't change who he is. He says you either are or you aren't. He has never told me to like boys (or girls). He says when I am older I will feel love for somebody, just like he loves John, just like my godmother loves her husband and just like my uncle loves his wife.

Abby, I know a lot of people read your column. Please print my letter so maybe people will think twice before they say hurtful things to people like me. Just because my family is a little different doesn't mean I'm not happy.

HAPPILY ADOPTED IN ORLANDO, FLA

Dear Happily Adopted: Thank you for a wonderful letter. There is an incredible amount of wisdom in that 11-year old head of yours.

Attention Randalls Shoppers *Donate to PFLAG as You Shop*

The next time you are at Randalls, link your Remarkable Card to our Good Neighbor Account number and your purchases will be credited to our account. Randalls will pay PFLAG Houston a percentage of the amount credited to our account. So be sure to use your card and link it to our Good Neighbor Account. Our account number is 1990.

Thank You!!!

PFLAG Houston Selected

1997 Black Tie Dinner Beneficiary

We are pleased to announce that the Board of Directors of Houston Black Tie Dinner Inc. has selected PFLAG Houston as a beneficiary of the 1997 Houston Black Tie Dinner. The dinner will be held on November 8, 1997 in the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Houston. **Mark your calendars!**

The Houston Black Tie Dinner provides funding for many gay and lesbian charitable organizations in our community and it is an honor to be designated as a beneficiary of this event. PFLAG Houston encourages your support of this very important fund raiser. We will provide more information later but **MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND NOW!!!**

IT'S TIME!!!

**TIME FOR THE FIRST-EVER
ELECTRIC LIGHT
HOUSTON PRIDE PARADE!**

*Are you
Glowing with Pride for
Your gay and lesbian loved ones?*

**THEN JOIN US FOR
THE 1997 HOUSTON
PRIDE PARADE
JUNE 28, 1997
9:00PM**

**CALL DON UPCHURCH AT
713-995-9777 TO HELP
WITH THE PFLAG ENTRY!**

By Accepting Her Gay Son, a Mother Tests Her Faith by Cindy Loose

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Washington Post, May 11, 1997

Lanette Graves always had been a deeply religious person, a devout Mormon whose beliefs permeated her life. But one summer afternoon, she encountered something she didn't know how to pray about.

"What do you say to God about your son's being gay?" asked Graves, of Clifton. "Do you say, 'Gee, God, did you create him this way? If so, why? How am I to reconcile my love for my child with my beliefs?'"

After weeks of sleeplessness, as she huddled on the floor of a bathroom illuminated only by a night light, the beginnings of an answer came to her: "This is your child. This is who he is. Love him."

It was the beginning of a long process that she compares to a second labor and delivery of the same child. The pain before the actual birth of her eldest son, she said, was all but forgotten the moment she saw him and caressed his tiny fingers and toes.

The pain was greater at his second birth, she said. But whenever she gets the chance to comfort other mothers experiencing the same distress, she takes them in her arms and tells them: "One day you will be as full of joy as the first time. You will look at that child and say, 'This is my gay son, this is my gay daughter,' in awe and wonder of who they are and what they may become."

Graves's answer does not coincide with the teachings of her church, which regards homosexuality as willful sin and "same-sex addiction." The church, with 10 million members worldwide, counsels homosexuals to change their orientation or to dedicate their lives to celibacy and service to others.

But soon after hearing in 1991 that her oldest son, Kerry, was gay, Graves learned that he'd spent years trying to be different, promising God he'd do anything -- be the best son, the best friend, the best brother in the world -- if only he could be like other boys. Eventually, Graves came to believe that her son had no choice and that she could worship God and accept Kerry.

If there are 4 million to 10 million homosexual Americans, as various sources estimate, then there are 4 million to 10 million mothers with gay children. Many of them struggle, Graves said, with the disconnect between the love of their children and devotion to their faith.

Recently, she decided to reach out to such parents in churches across the Washington area, as religious affairs coordinator of the nonprofit Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-Flag). "I don't want other mothers to suffer so much and feel so alone."

Graves's own journey began nearly six years ago, the summer before Kerry's sophomore year at the University of Delaware. Kerry, then 20, had an elaborate plan for how he'd tell his mother. But while doing errands with her, he blurted it out. Kerry cried. She was stunned.

The two went home, and Graves completed preparations for a weekend trip with her husband.

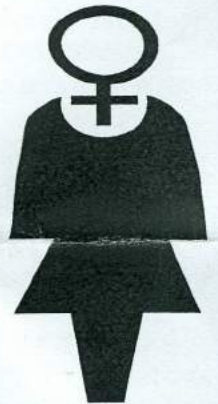
"My world had shattered, but I made dinner and packed a suitcase," Graves said. "I remember watching my hands, amazed I could do normal things." She and her husband waved good-bye and drove off. The minute the car's back wheels hit the end of the driveway, she burst into tears.

"Sorrow poured out, the kind of tears a mother cries at the death of a child," Graves said. Her husband couldn't imagine what could be so earth-shattering. Finally, he asked, "Are you having an affair?"

She calmed down enough to tell her husband that Kerry was gay and watched in surprise as he pulled the car into a strip mall parking lot and jumped out to use a pay phone.

She rolled down the window, listening. She knew one Mormon family who had tried to "beat sense" into a gay son; another

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put their son's belongings on the sidewalk. Some parents stop paying the tuition of gay children.

Then she heard her husband's words: "Mom told me. I love you unconditionally. It's okay. We'll figure out together how to have a happy life." Graves said she'll always love and admire her husband for that.

But her understanding was longer in coming. She barely slept or ate for weeks, until after that night on the bathroom floor. "Thoughts tumbled over each other and fragmented in a zillion directions," she said. "I remember feeling like I had died. Then a passage of Scripture passed through my mind: 'He that believeth in me, though he is dead, yet shall he live.'"

At that moment came, not a voice or a visitation, but what Graves calls a moment of pure clarity of thought about the need to love and accept her son. The struggle was not over, but peace came. "The unbearable feeling was gone," she said. "I could begin to think in an orderly way and figure out how life was going to be."

She began to read books by physicians, psychiatrists, theologians -- especially those who reinterpreted Biblical passages on homosexuality. She learned about and got involved in Affirmation -- a gay Mormons support group.

One night she attended "Pray for Bobby," a musical written by a fundamentalist Christian mother about her gay son, who at age 16 committed suicide by leaping in front of an 18-wheeler truck. It was there she discovered P-Flag, walking up to the mother handing out literature and saying, "I need to know you, and you need to know me."

Her acceptance of her son has come with a price. Relations with her mother and some siblings are strained by their urging her to help Kerry change so that he's not lost in this world and the world to come. Her mother does not want to lose the family vacations each summer, the holiday reunions. Those things will be unchanged, she tells Graves, as long as Kerry keeps what she calls his addictions private.

Graves still struggles to be a good daughter while being a good mother to her son. She understands her family's devotion to their faith. She knows they are good people for whom religion brings certainty in a crazy world.

"Remove any piece of the certainty, and you could lose it all," Graves said. "If you accept that the church is wrong about gays, you wonder what else it could be wrong about, and your whole world crumbles."

She understands so well because so much of her world crumbled as she reevaluated what she calls "received traditions and beliefs." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints formed the basis of her life, her friendships. It is her heritage, and she remains proud of it.

But she no longer feels comfortable in the church, even as she longs for the sense of belonging and community she once found there. None of her four children remains active in the church, but all, she said, still identify themselves as Mormons. And all "live what we would call the gospel of love and gospel of service."

Kerry Graves, who manages a store in Manhattan, sat recently with his mother at her kitchen table, and explained why grown men at Affirmation meetings cry when they hear the story of his parents' love and acceptance.

"It's like a fairy tale for friends rejected by their families," he said.

This Mother's Day, Lanette Graves will send her own mother a gift and call her in Utah to remind her of how much she loves her. Her immediate family will sit down together for a special meal. They will hold hands around the table and pray together, forming a bond and inviting God into their lives as a family. She will look at her children, as she often does, and remember a favorite line from a movie: "God loves infinite variety."

DON'T FORGET FATHERS DAY! - JUNE 15th

(Continued from page 3)

retirement-related needs of gays and lesbians, many of whom are "in the closet." Politics/lobbying, however, will not be a significant GLARP activity. "There are already highly effective gay and lesbian political organizations such as LAMBDA and GLAAD," explained Thorndal. "It makes more sense, regardless of resources, for us to work with them, when appropriate." For membership information about GLARP, call 310/966-1500; write to 10940 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1600, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024; or visit its Web site at <http://www.gaylesbianretiring.org>.

First Notes from the Editor, by Don Upchurch

Well, the past 2 years have been more than wonderful. Since my first meeting at PFLAG in February of 1995, I have really come a long way. And my son Doug, well that's a whole 'nother story! Does this sound familiar? Well if you read Doug's "Final Notes" last month, it should. With only a few changes Doug's final notes became my first notes. The difference is that Doug felt excitement when he wrote his notes and I'm sweating bullets. I have not had many opportunities to follow in my son's footsteps and I'm very proud that it is such a tough job. In addition he still has patience with me when I ask those really dumb computer questions. (the other ones too!) If you are patient with me I'll try to make a passing grade at this Editor business..... with Doug's help! Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! Deadline June 15th.



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!

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



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

July 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

HelpLine: 713-867-9020

ENDA Re-introduced in Congress

ACT NOW to Protect Jobs in Future

ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, was introduced into the 105th Congress on June 10, 1997 as Senate Bill 869. It was referred to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources. Now is the time to build support among our lawmakers.

ENDA would :

- Extend the employment discrimination protections of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sexual orientation, as it now includes race, gender, age, religion, national origin and disability.
- Extend fair employment practices to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and heterosexuals.
- Prohibit employers, employment agencies and labor unions from using an individual's sexual orientation as the basis for employment decisions.
- Prohibit employers from subjecting an employee to different standards or treatment based on that employee's real or perceived sexual orientation.

ENDA would NOT:

- Cover small businesses with fewer than 15 employees.
- Cover religious organizations, including educational institutions substantially controlled or supported by religious organizations.

(Continued on page 4)

INROADS IN PUBLIC OFFICE PAVE THE WAY TO GAY RIGHTS

By Deb Price / The Detroit News

Ever so slowly, the ranks of openly gay people holding public office are growing, much like a savings account accumulates interest. Elaine Noble gained first-in-the-nation status in 1974 by winning election to the Massachusetts House. Then, over decades, the number of openly gay officeholders reached double digits, then triple digits.

Today there are more than 130, according to the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, which helps to raise money for promising gay candidates. That 130, of course, is a very tiny fraction of U.S. elected officials. Is there really any reason to think that one gay school board member here or three gay city council members there can do much to advance gay civil rights?

(Continued on page 3)



Next Meeting July 13

"Staking Your Claim To America's Promise"

What happens in the midst of extremism? What should we do? How should we respond? Our presenter for the July meeting will be Kim Radcliffe, local PFLAG member and veteran of the Ballot Measure 9 controversy in Oregon. The premise of Ballot Measure 9 was to ban or prohibit any law giving special rights to gays and/or lesbians, based on "moral" grounds. Come and hear how Kim's experience opened her eyes so we don't find we've had ours closed.

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. After our large group session, attend 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, July 11th at 12 Noon. Announcements will not be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Gay Related Legislation	3
PFLAG Pres. Responds	5
PFLAG Scholarships	6
Disney Boycott	6

Schedule of Events

Jul. 13	PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting 2:00-4:30pm Christ Church Cathedral 1117 Texas Ave. Downtown Houston
Jul. 13	PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting 2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
Jul. 20	PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting Health Merchant at 27th and Broadway in Galveston
Jul. 22	Mid-Month Discussion Group, 7:30- 9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet
Aug. 3	PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
Aug. 10	PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
Aug. 17	PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Aug. 19	PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting
Sep 11-14	PFLAG 1997 International Conference, Clarion Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida

STAY TUNED FOR "60 MINUTES"

Latest word from CBS is that the episode on Ex-Ex Gays and "Ex Gays" will air in the Fall. We'll keep you posted.

SPEAKERS BUREAU SCHEDULE:

June 29	Thoreau UU Congregation - Stafford (Open to the Public)
June 30	University of Houston
July 9	Interfaith of The Woodlands
July 10	Depelchin
July 10	First UU Church - Houston

INTERFAITH OF THE WOODLANDS SPONSORS PANEL

Interfaith of the Woodlands will sponsor a panel presentation July 9th at 10:00am in the South Montgomery County Library. Rev. W.D. Broadway, Executive Director of Interfaith, sent a letter inviting local congregational staffs and members to attend. PFLAG Houston, a chapter of the national organization of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, will provide the panel members from their Speakers Bureau.

The presence of gay or lesbian persons and their family members within religious communities raises pastoral issues. How to best minister to give support and guidance is a prevalent question. When church or synagogue members experience the disclosure of their child's homosexuality, encounter a youth feeling stigmatized, isolated and contemplating suicide, or find their families breaking apart when the secret in "the closet" comes out, what educational resources are available? The PFLAG Houston panel, made up of moms, dads, brothers, sisters, grandparents and friends, as well as their gay and lesbian loved ones, will offer information and understanding. Each person speaks from the heart of personal experience and journey.

For more information contact Rev. Carol A. Prochaska, Rev. Dr. John Prochaska, Shepherd of The Woods United Church, 281-292-3532. Mrs. Mary Kay Jones, PFLAG Houston board member and co-chairperson of the Speakers Bureau, 713-722-9055.

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday July 22nd, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This is not a one-time event, however! This meeting will happen on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG HelpLine.

NAMES Project Anniversary

"A Decade of Remembrance"

A lively "Gospel Brunch" observing ten years of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt will be hosted by a number of prominent Houstonians at JAGS on Sunday, July 20 from 11:30 am til 2:00 pm. NAMES Project founder Cleve Jones will speak about the Quilt's ongoing role in the fight against AIDS. Call 888-99-NAMES for information about ordering tickets.

Inroads in Public Office *(Continued from page 1)*

Well, if electing gay people is viewed as a get-rights-quick scheme, the strategy is clearly bankrupt. If, instead, adding gay voices to governmental bodies is recognized as a long-term investment in a more just future, there's a big payoff -- one more evident this year than ever before.

In 1977, shortly after his election to San Francisco's board of supervisors made him the nation's first openly gay city official, the late Harvey Milk explained, "It's not enough anymore just to have friends represent us. No matter how good that friend may be. ... The anger and the frustration that some of us feel is because we are misunderstood, and friends can't feel that anger and frustration."

Years later, Tom Ammiano switched from teaching to politics because he, too, saw it's not enough for gay voters to have straight allies. "We always had friends of the gay community elected to the (San Francisco) school board with our votes and our money. But when it came to the really juicy issues, like counseling for gay and lesbian youths, they just weren't there. They were just a little too cautious."

Ammiano, who rose to school board president, is now one of his city's three gay supervisors. Together that trio is demonstrating the amazing rewards of electing people for whom gay rights couldn't be more personal. They spearheaded the San Francisco law that, as of June 1, allows city contracts to go only to companies providing unmarried, partnered workers all the same benefits as our married colleagues.

As a result, Chevron is offering employees domestic partner benefits, an oil company first. So are pro football's San Francisco 49ers, baseball's Giants, Bank of America and Pacific Gas & Electric. And four top California insurers have just announced they'll begin offering domestic partner coverage -- often available only to large corporations -- to small businesses. Shamefully, the airline industry is suing to try to keep San Francisco airport leases without living up to the law. (United Airlines, which won a lease in February by seeming to

move toward compliance, has joined the suit and brands the ordinance "illegal.")

While San Francisco's gay officials are having the most dramatic impact, their counterparts scattered around the country are proving their worth -- pushing gay-friendly bills, trying to derail homophobic initiatives and, win or lose, improving the tenor of the debate:

* In Oregon, Republican state Rep. Chuck Carpenter forced the House to vote on outlawing anti-gay job bias. He won, 40-20. Now, two weeks from adjournment, he's just one senator short of passage.

* Arizona state Rep. Ken Chevront, a Democrat who's the first openly gay person many of his colleagues have known, pushed through a hate crimes bill this year and helped to block proposals to boost sodomy up to a felony and to forbid gay student groups. Because lawmakers know him, being gay doesn't "hold the stigma" it once did, he adds.

* Freshman state Rep. Mike Pisaturo, Rhode Island's first openly gay legislator, introduced a proposal to legalize gay marriage in order to use it as a bargaining chip. "I worked out a deal with the leadership" offering to drop his bill if an anti-gay marriage bill were defeated, he says. "And that's exactly what happened." Next year, though, he hopes to push for gay marriage as well as domestic partnership rights.

* Monday, the California General Assembly passed and sent to the Senate a bill requiring insurers to offer domestic partner coverage. Democrat Carole Migden, a lesbian, introduced the much-needed measure.

We gay Americans obviously need all the friends we can get. Their support is essential. When it's combined with the special assets gay people bring to public office, the yield can be extraordinary.

Reprinted from The Detroit News, June 6, 1997, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, MI, 48226, FAX: 313-222-6417, Email: letters@detnews.com

NGLTF LEGISLATIVE UPDATE MORE MARRIAGE VICTORIES AND DEFEATS; MAINE CIVIL RIGHTS MEASURE BECOMES LAW

Washington, DC---May 28 1997---The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) today released its update of gay and HIV-related legislation in US state capitals. Highlights include the defeat of a "no promo homo" bill and the movement of the Dignity For All Students bill, both in California. Lowlights include the defeat of hate crimes bills in Texas. The Iowa legislature, with its "psychologically impacted houses" measure, has given NGLTF cause to consider creating a "bizarre bills" category.

On the Marriage front, more anti-gay marriage bills were beaten back and more moved forward. The good news first: Alabama, California, Louisiana, and Texas bills were all defeated. In California and Louisiana activists had to wrangle two defeats before being able to rest. Unfortunately, bills in both states may pop up again, though it's unlikely. For the second year in a row Alabama's anti-gay marriage bill went down. This brings to eleven the number of states where marriage bills were defeated this year. On the downside, Indiana became the seventh state this year to enact an anti-gay marriage law, and in Colorado, Florida and Minnesota, marriage bans await action by the Governor.

Meanwhile, Maine officially became the 10th state to ban discrimination against gay men and lesbians. As expected, Governor Angus King signed the bill that passed the state legislature last week. The new law bans discrimination against gays and lesbians in employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. New Hampshire is poised to raise that number to twelve. Governor Jeanne Shaheen (D) has pledged to sign the bill, and she is expected to do so any day.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 1)

- Apply to members of the armed services.
- Allow for any type of affirmative action, quotas or preferential treatment.
- Require employers to provide domestic partner benefits.
- Apply retroactively.

As the law now stands, Americans who face workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation have no protection. They are ineligible for unemployment benefits and have no legal standing to seek redress. They have no recourse under current federal law or under the Constitution as it has been interpreted by the courts.

Both straight and gay Americans are affected by discrimination in the workplace. A straight person perceived to be gay is as vulnerable to this kind of discrimination as a gay person. This discrimination affects not only the worker, but the family he or she supports. It hurts the economy in that individuals are prevented from achieving their highest potential, making their most significant contributions. Leaders in the private and public sectors recognize that employment discrimination is not only un-American, it is counter-productive. It excludes qualified individuals, lowers workforce productivity and runs counter to fundamental American values of fairness.

ENDA does NOT create any special rights for gay and lesbian Americans. As the Supreme Court explained in *Romer vs. Evans*, there is nothing "special" about laws which prevent people from losing jobs and homes because of who they are.

A broad coalition of business, political and religious leaders have taken public stances in support of ENDA. Eleven states, the District of Columbia, over 200 municipalities and hundreds of businesses have enacted laws and policies protecting workers from discrimination based on sexual orientation. Corporations including A.T.&T., Citicorp, Johnson & Johnson, Aetna Life, Boston's Children's Hospital, American Express, Lillian Vernon, Proctor and Gamble and Sears have recognized that providing equal opportunity is good for business.

The National Council of Churches, the American Jewish Committee, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Methodist Church are only a handful of the many religious institutions supporting ENDA.

Civil rights organizations and leaders supporting ENDA include the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Coretta Scott King, the National Council of La Raza, the Japanese American Citizen's League and Francis Berry, Chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

And most Americans support fairness in the workplace: a poll taken of voters in 1995 showed that 74% of all Americans believe that discrimination is wrong, regardless of how they feel about gays and lesbians.

At its reintroduction in Congress, ENDA had already earned a record number of cosponsors — but more are needed to move the bill forward. **ACT NOW!!**

Urge your U.S. senators and representatives to support and cosponsor the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Refer to the bill by its full name and number — S. 869 in the Senate and H.R. 1858 in the House. Call your senators and representative through the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. If you're not sure who your members of Congress are, just ask the switchboard operator and you will be advised and connected. You can also send electronic messages to Congress through the Human Rights Campaign's online action center at <http://www.hrc.org>. You can also write to Congress through the mail.

The following Houston-area members of Congress have NOT signed on as co-sponsors of ENDA. Contact them!!

- Sen. Kaye Bailey Hutchison (202-224-5922)
283 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington D.C. 20510
- Sen. Phil Gramm (202-224-2934)
370 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington D.C. 20510
- Rep. Jim Turner, Dist. 2 (202-225-2401)
1508 Longworth HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Bill Archer, Dist. 7 (202-225-2571)
1236 Longworth HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Kevin Brady, Dist. 8 (202-225-4901)
1531 Longworth HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Nick Lampson, Dist. 9 (202-225-6565)
417 Cannon HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Tom DeLay, Dist. 22 (202-225-5951)
341 Cannon HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Ron Paul, Dist. 14 (202-225-2831)
203 Cannon HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Ken Bentsen, Dist. 25 (202-225-7508)
128 Cannon HOB, Washington D.C. 20515
- Rep. Gene Green, Dist. (202-225-1168)
2429 Rayburn Office Bldg., Washington D.C. 20515

Note: Rep. Green represents a lot of PFLAGers and was a co-sponsor last year but is not a co-sponsor now. He needs our encouragement and to hear from his constituents about the importance of ENDA.

Books About Subject:

Straight Jobs, Gay Lives by Friskopp and Silverstein

Gay Issues In The Workplace by McNaught

A Manager's Guide to Sexual Orientation in the Workplace by Powers and Ellis

PFLAG PRESIDENT RESPONDS TO ADVERTISING ATTACK

Emphasizes Support for Corporations Advocating Equality

Recently, an advertisement was placed in several newspapers across the country, including the Washington Times, condemning the efforts of American Airlines to serve all Americans equally, and promote the American ideals of justice and fairness. The letter, which mentions Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) by name, was signed by the leaders of several conservative so-called "pro-family" organizations, including the American Family Association, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council and Focus on the Family. The following is a response to this advertisement by Nancy McDonald, National President of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

Several months ago, I wrote to Gary Bauer, President of Family Research Council, as one parent to another. In my letter I described my journey after finding out that one of my daughters is a lesbian. I wrote, "I am sharing my story to remind you that difference and diversity can brighten the lights of love, faith and freedom that you hope to keep burning this year. I hope, as you outline your policy steps for the future, you keep families like mine in mind." When I saw the advertisement condemning American Airlines this morning, what I felt was disappointment - disappointment that my efforts to reach out and find common ground had been returned with a public attack on families like mine.

I now find myself having to once again remind Mr. Bauer, and the other signers of the letter, that there are thousands of American families who believe the "American Way" is rooted in the values of tolerance, love and appreciation of differences.

I am not, as the advertisement implies, a 'militant homosexual.' I am a mother and a grandmother who believes that all of my children - and by extension, all people - should be treated equally. I know thousands of others who share these beliefs. I had hoped that my outreach to Gary Bauer would put an end to the name calling between organizations. I am disappointed to discover that I was wrong.

I join thousands of other PFLAG families to applaud the efforts of American Airlines, and other corporations like American Express, Apple, Disney and IBM, who recognize that ending discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not only good for business, but good for American families nationwide.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and secure civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy, and respectful of diversity. Founded in 1981, PFLAG is now organized in more than 400 communities nationwide, with more than 68,000 household members.

CHURCH SUPPORT OF GAYS AND LESBIANS

Sixty Wisconsin Clergy Promise Support

By William R. Wineke, Wisconsin State Journal

More than 60 Madison clergy issued a statement Monday promising church support of gay men and lesbians. Although the statement stopped short of endorsing same-sex marriage, it did promise that the clergy "commit ourselves to the encouragement of relationships that meet the test of fidelity and loving nurture" It said "we often find the term 'family values' applied to only some Christian families" The statement was signed by clergy of the American Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Quaker, Moravian, United Methodist, Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ. In addition, local Unitarian-Universalist and Jewish clergy signed the statement.

It began by declaring "As Christian clergy we embrace gay and lesbian persons as our neighbors. From our reading of scripture and from our pastoral experiences, we believe there is sufficient evidence to conclude that homosexuality is neither sickness nor sin"

The clergy said they "strongly uphold the family as the basic social unit in which we are called to live together and to give and receive nurture and support" They said they are "saddened and concerned by the breakdown of the family that stems from various forms of infidelity, violence and failure to maintain long-term loving commitments among both heterosexual and homosexual communities" Therefore, the clergy said, "we believe it is time to eliminate all policies and practices which create barriers and restrictions to the full participation of gay and lesbian Christians in all of the privileges and responsibilities of church membership"

The statement was released at a press conference in the First Congregational United Church of Christ. The Rev. Paul Kitlaus, senior minister of the church, said the initial statement was drafted by local Christian clergy because most of the debate about homosexuality takes place within Christianity. Lay people and clergy of non-Christian organizations were invited to sign as a symbol of their support, however.

Wisconsin State Journal, May 13, 1997

1997 PFLAG-HOUSTON SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

The PFLAG Houston Scholarship Committee, consisting of Sherry Stephens (Chair), Norma Graves, Pat Rickey, and Blake Weisser, is pleased to announce the recipients of college scholarship awards for 1997.



As usual, the choice was quite difficult, as all the candidates this year are outstanding young people whom we all salute for their achievement and for their courage. In most cases, their orientation has led to difficult situations with their classmates, and in some cases, family. All of the award recipients have been accepted by the universities that they plan to attend. At the June 19 PFLAG Houston Board Meeting, the following awards were approved:

- The four-year scholarship award for 1997 will be presented to Thu Nguyen, an immigrant from Vietnam, who will be graduating from Milby High School and will be attending the University of Houston.
- One-year grants were also approved by the board:
 - A \$1,000 award to Cornelean Wayne Block, a graduating senior from Booker T. Washington High School, who will be attending Stephen F Austin.
 - \$500 awards to Nathan Bayless and Efrain Perez. Nathan is graduating from Friendswood High School and will attend University of Houston. Efrain is graduating from George Sanchez Charter High School and will attend University of Houston Downtown.
- Last year's winner of a two-year, \$1,000/year scholarship, John Markert, will be upgraded to a four-year scholarship, to replace our 4-year winner for 1996, who received a full scholarship and declined our award.

The Scholarship Committee and the PFLAG Houston Board of Directors are pleased to note the diversity among our applicants this year, including a lesbian Asian American, a gay African-American, a gay Hispanic American, and a gay Euro-American. We feel good about progress toward our goals of getting recognition in Houston-area high schools and recognizing and aiding youth who can provide role models for others who follow them.

We appreciate the contributions of all our members and supporters who make this program possible. Stay tuned for announcement of a gala event to provide funding for an even bigger scholarship program in the future.

KYLE YOUNG SPEAKS-OUT ON DISNEY BOYCOTT PFLAGER LETTER IN HOUSTON CHRONICLE

The following letter from Kyle Young, Board Member and Media Director of PFLAG Houston, appeared in the Houston Chronicle on Friday, 20 June 97. Well Done, Kyle!! - Ed

"A moral decline of the nation's largest Protestant denomination has reached an all-time low. The annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention did not focus on caring about people. There was no strong uprising to end the bitter destruction of racism. There was no demand to offer hope and opportunity for the homeless. There were no cries to protect the environment or make health care affordable for all people.

Instead, the Baptists chose to boycott the Disney Co. for allowing gay people to visit its theme parks and for offering health benefits to the life-partners of gay employees.

According to Baptists, Jesus commanded his followers to heal the sick. That is, unless the sick are the loved ones of gay employees. Boycotting Disney in the name of Christ is an insult to Christians everywhere.

Singling out gay people as the root of America's problems fosters an atmosphere which breeds hatred and leads to violence toward gays. The church's position turns parents against gay children, ripping apart families by spreading misinformation and lies about gay and lesbian people.

While the Baptists are directing their energy and resources at attacking the lives of millions of Americans, in 41 states productive employees can be fired simply because they are gay. Recent hate crimes statistics show that hate crimes against gays and lesbians are on the rise. Over a third of teen suicides are gay and lesbian youth who can't take another day of being told they are less than human. The Baptists are silent on all these issues and the stench of hypocrisy is in the air.

Would Jesus boycott Mickey Mouse? I think Jesus would have been more likely to boycott the Southern Baptist Church."

QUOTE TO CONSIDER:

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices. - William James

FOR SALE — CHEAP!!! Sweatshirts and T-Shirts

The last of the "Moms and Dads Go to Washington" sweatshirts and T-shirts are available, first come, first serve. These are very nice navy shirts with the specially designed logo on the front. Sweatshirts are \$5 (M -XL) and T-shirts are \$3. Call Jim or Sue Null at 713-664-1083 to order. Only a limited number are left.

(Continued from page 3)

"While it's not over yet, it's clear 1997 is going to go down in the win column. Slowly, but surely, thanks to the efforts of activists on the frontlines, we are making important headway in our struggle for full equality," stated NGLTF executive director Kerry Lobel.

As of May 28, 1997, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force tracked 255 gay or HIV/AIDS-related state legislative measures. Over half, 131, are considered unfavorable or hostile. The remaining 124 would favorably impact the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. A chart detailing a breakdown of these measures is available on our homepage at <http://www.nglft.org/legchart04.gif>.



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 Don Upchurch

It was Father's Day when I started this issue of the Flyer and I was thrilled to have my children with me to share much of that special day. But working on the PFLAG newsletter on Father's Day made me especially mindful of how lucky I am to have both gay and straight children. I have two of the most wonderful children in the world and they have each blessed me in unique and special ways. They both selected wonderful life partners and I'm very proud of them also. I have learned so much by keeping my mind and my heart open to new opportunities, and PFLAG has been a big part of that learning experience. Thanks to you all!

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the August newsletter is July 15th. All the best, Don.

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

____ **Red** Student/Limited Income \$10

____ **Orange** Individual \$25

____ **Yellow** Family/Couple \$40

____ **Green** Supporter \$100

____ **Blue** Patron \$250

____ **Purple** Sponsor \$500

____ **Silver** Benefactor \$1,000

____ **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

August 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

PFLAG HOUSTON - A REAL WINNER!!

Parade Entry Wins "Stonewall Trophy"

By Don Upchurch

PFLAG Houston's entry in the 1997 Houston Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade was awarded the Stonewall Trophy for being "the best entry to commemorate pride" There were eighty-five entries in this years first ever night-time parade and it was a real joy to participate again. Our entry was a twenty two foot long truck with a lighted canopy of rainbow colors as a background for our "riding" contingent. Lighted panels on the sides of the truck displayed our PFLAG logo and the message "PROUD OF OUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS" Our walking contingent followed with glowing necklaces, rainbow visors with flashing lights, painted faces and flashlights with rainbow colored cones. Music including "We Are Family" and "I Don't Care If the Sun Don't Shine" (among others) rang out from the truck, exciting the crowd of thousands and providing accompaniment for the spirited "Stephens Dance Troupe"



PFLAGer's from Austin, Victoria, Waco and The Woodlands joined the Houston Chapter in this celebration, for which we are very grateful. The Woodlands had TEN enthusiastic members in our unit, which is more than half of this young chapters' membership. Our friends from Waco helped us finish out the truck decorations and along with Austin and Victoria provided enthusiastic support. Thanks to all who participated and to the Pride Committee for organizing a GREAT parade.

And a SUPER SPECIAL THANK YOU to the dedicated and hard-working crew that created that award winning float in just nine hours, Alan, Charles, Ninh, Glenn, Ron, Dick, Norma, Henry, Kathy, John, Tim, Jim, Darby and Carrie. Thank you! You're the best!

Needless to say everyone that participated had a wonderful time and once again the PFLAG spirit of love and caring filled the air.

"LOVE TAKES ACTION" - PFLAG's

Annual Conference in Orlando-Sept 11-14

Making the World a Safer Place

PFLAG's 16th Annual Conference will be held at the Clarion Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida during September 11-14, 1997. The conference will host more than a thousand PFLAG members for leadership training, computer training, helpline training and workshops, as well as regional caucuses and the annual national meeting. A chapter networking picnic is also planned for Sunday. This is a great opportunity to network, socialize, have fun and learn. Make plans to attend now.

(Continued on page 2)



Next Meeting August 3

"Norma's Vacation"

Not really, but as I write this article Norma is on a well deserved vacation and I don't have the foggiest idea what she has planned for our August meeting program. But based on her performance to date I suggest you attend or you'll miss a good program. I do know that our 1997 Scholarship Recipients plan to attend and they will be introduced and presented with Certificates of Recognition. That should be reason enough to attend! In any case I promise not to show slides from Norma's vacation (Ed.) Come and share.

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. After our large group session, attend 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, August 1st at 12 Noon. Announcements will not be accepted after this point. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Silent Auction	3
Lesbian Cows	4
Pro-Disney Campaign	5
HATCH Expanding	6

Schedule of Events

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Aug. 3 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Aug. 10 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Aug. 17 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston |
| Aug. 19 | Mid-Month Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet |
| Sep 7 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Sep 11-14 | PFLAG 1997 International Conference, Clarion Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida |
| Sep 14 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| Sep 16 | PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting |
| Sep 21 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |

STAY TUNED FOR "60 MINUTES"

Latest word from CBS is that the episode on Ex-Ex Gays and "Ex Gays" will air in the Fall. We'll keep you posted.

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday August 19th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This meeting will be held on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG Helpline.

(Continued from page 1)

PFLAG Annual Conference-

Advance registration available thru the end of August and at the door if space permits. Phone 202-234-3880 - Fax 202-234-3884 to register.

The following letter from Cher, Co-Chair of this year's Honorary Host Committee, reflects how she felt after attending her first PFLAG Annual Conference last year.

Dear Friends,

I still have warm memories of spending time with many of you at PFLAG's 15th Annual Conference in Washington D.C. For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by the warm support of many people who knew exactly what I was experiencing by coming out as the mother of a lesbian daughter.

Addressing the PFLAG conference was a great leap in my personal growth. I came to terms with what I have dubbed my "un-Cher-like" response to Chastity's coming out to me. I began to recognize and release my deep-rooted prejudices. I began to see the tremendous value of supporting Chastity in her activist efforts.

Most importantly, I came to understand how I could use my own voice as a celebrity to help create a safer and more just world for her, and for so many other lesbian, gay and bisexual people and their family members and friends.

You don't have to be a celebrity, however, to experience the power of a PFLAG conference. You just need to have a desire to learn, the open mind to grow, and the commitment to creating a better world for our loved ones.

It's a challenge, yes! But it's a challenge that I'm proud to be a part of, and grateful to have taken on with PFLAG. I am honored to serve on the National Honorary Host Committee for PFLAG's 16th Annual Conference. Please join me and register today for PFLAG's Conference '97

Attending a PFLAG conference is a life-changing experience. I know it was for me. Make this year's conference a life-changing experience for you.

Cher

HOUSTON BLACK TIE DINNER SILENT AUCTION

Donations Requested

● following letter from Shannon Scoville, Silent Auction Chairperson for this year's Houston Black Tie Dinner requests our (your) support. As stated, PFLAG Houston is one of the beneficiaries of this outstanding event and I hope you will respond to this request as generously as possible. Thanks. -Ed.



Dear Friends,

The Houston Black Tie Dinner, Inc. is a non-profit volunteer organization comprised of men and women whose mission is to fight AIDS, prejudice, and discrimination while taking a firm stand on men's and women's health issues. I am proud to be a member of this group which raised over \$120,000 for one national and twelve local non-profit organizations last year.

This year's Houston Black Tie Dinner will be held on Saturday, November 8th at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Houston. This event will benefit Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and ten local nonprofit organizations which include The Assistance Fund, AssistHers, Bering Community Services Foundation, Lesbian Health Initiative, Montrose Clinic, Montrose Counseling Center, Omega House, People with AIDS Coalition, PFLAG Houston and the Texas Human Rights Foundation. I would be happy to forward a description of each of these organizations upon your request.

We humbly request you or your company to donate an item or service for the silent auction. Your donation to the silent auction is also a tremendous advertising tool as we are expecting over 1,000 guests at the dinner. You will be credited for your gift in the silent auction guide and in the display. In addition, for any donation with a retail value of \$2,000 or more, you will receive a complimentary half-page ad in the Black Tie Commemorative Program. But most importantly, where else can you benefit so many worthwhile organizations at once? Last year we raised \$40,000 from the silent auction alone - one-third of the total amount donated to the beneficiaries!

With your help, we plan to raise \$50,000 from the silent auction this year! Please complete the enclosed donor form and return to the address provided or call at your convenience. I will be happy to pick up your donation and answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for making a difference.

Very truly yours,

Donation forms will be available at the August PFLAG meeting or you may call Shannon Scoville at 713-520-1633 or Susan Upchurch at 713-995-9777.

RAVE REVIEWS FOR "CLAIMING AMERICA'S PROMISE"

Thank You Letters Glowing and Inspiring

Since sending copies of our "Claiming America's Promise" video to other PFLAG chapters we have received many letters and e-mail messages of appreciation and support. Gail and Pat Rickey organized the distribution and having received most of the responses. They wanted you to share the response. (Comments selected by Ed.)

● "Thank you very much for sending the fabulous video, It warmed my heart to see that scene on the Capitol steps... The opening family photos and interviews were just right..no "distant dad" there..., planning on showing it later this week to (some)Bell Atlantic Corporation employees...,Your video made me so jealous. How I long for a wonderful group like yours to give me local support...,Please express to your members our appreciation for the Claiming America's Promise video...,...very well done and has a great message..., We are going to build a program around it ...to encourage people to write, fax and call their legislators...,From the video, one gets the idea that they might do another Moms and Dads trip. Anything concrete in the works? I might even get brave enough to go along and beard Jesse Helms in his den...,I can't ● enough about the effectiveness of this video-wonderful work-I am so glad that you could capture the energy and spirit of what you accomplished. Thank you SO much for the added bonus of instilling a vision to each and every PFLAG Chapter...Much love and gratitude...,The video is terrific....made me wish even more that I would have been there. I sure plan to be on the next one...,Thank you - all of you - for the exceptional, inspirational work you do "down there"!! With love in PFLAG,.....

LESBIAN COWS AND LAVENDER TEENS

By Lyssa Friedman

Mill Valley

LAVENDER YOUTH were compared with heifers last month when Assemblyman Peter Frusetta, a Republican rancher from Los Pinos, commented on legislation that would bar discrimination against gays and lesbians in public schools.

"I've probably seen three and, at the top, four that had the hormonal imbalance of being odd. We called them the heifer hermaphrodites," he said. "They must have some hormonal imbalance that makes them shy away from bulls and take up with other heifers."

Right on, I thought. An elected official persuades colleagues with a combination of critical thinking and creativity. The bill, introduced by Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica, was slaughtered by a 36-40 vote.

Let's take Frusetta's assertion one step further. If young people are like livestock, then within the chain-link fence of one politician's cattle ranch sits the perfect petri dish for the examination of human sexuality, homo and otherwise.

Because if we have learned anything from contemporary medicine, it is that bovine models are terrific predictors of human response.

Simply create a control group, the "heifer hermaphrodites," for example. And an experimental group, heifers who run with the bulls.

Apply the data to people and - voila! - we'd finally find the solutions to those mysteries that have caused philosophers and scientists to abandon their unfinished dissertations and become taxi drivers.

I bet that Frusetta would lend us a herd or two in the interest of research.

I propose a multifaceted study design.

First, let's analyze psychological development. When did the female calves first know they were hermaphrodites? Was it in fifth grade? Tenth? And who were their calfhood role models? Unmarried aunts? P.E. teachers?

Next, I would investigate social practices. How did the rest of the cattle respond? Did they isolate the homosexuals? Call them names? Deface their lockers?

Did the bulls sneer when two heifers got gussied up and slow-mooed at the prom? Were their suicide rates higher than among the rest of the stock?

I would query each lesbian bovine regarding individual behavior. How did she cope when she looked up "heifer hermaphrodite" in the dictionary?

Did she pierce her udder, shave her head, crank Melissa Etheridge? Did she throw herself into sports, sinking hoops or perfecting her backhand? When she told her parents, did she fear rejection?

And when she and her girlfriend nuzzled in an abandoned pasture, what on Earth did they do together?

As the anti-bull queer grew from adolescence to adulthood, were her calves remanded to the custody of heterosexual cows? Did she even have a biological clock? And if she and her partner desired their own home on the range, were the bulls willing sperm donors?

Finally, I would evaluate hormonal levels and conduct physical examinations in an effort to put that decades-old nature versus nurture question to rest: What causes a cow to be straight?

There are limitations to this line of questioning. Heifers, by definition, are female. It would take so much extrapolation to apply the findings to bulls that peer-reviewed journals would reject the statistics as meaningless.

(Continued on page 5)



DON'T ASK, DON'T DISCRIMINATE

Boston Globe Editorial

By Globe Staff, 07/13/97

Earlier this month, U S District Judge Eugene Nickerson pointed out the flaw in the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy: It's illegal.

While President Clinton and the Congress have wrapped this policy in twisted sheets of rhetoric, Nickerson sums it up in a word: unconstitutional.



"It is hard to imagine," Nickerson wrote in his ruling, "why the mere holding of hands off base and in private is dangerous to the mission of the armed forces if done by a homosexual but not if done by a heterosexual." Rather than promoting "unit cohesion," Nickerson concluded, "don't ask, don't tell" is just prejudice dressed up in official clothing.

What a relief to have a government official so bluntly point out the obvious. Nickerson's initial ruling against the policy in March 1995 cited the violation of free speech rights. This recent ruling is the result of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals asking that Nickerson rule on the entire policy, including the ban on homosexual conduct.

Unfortunately, Nickerson's clear-sightedness won't settle this issue. Three other appeals courts have issued rulings in support of "don't ask, don't tell." The final word will be up to the Supreme Court.

While it earns its reputation as bad law, the policy also turns out to be a lousy practice. In effect since Feb. 28, 1994, it has failed to stop military officials from asking service members about their sexual orientation. Some of those who have hesitated to answer have been told that noncompliance or a lie could jeopardize their careers. The result is an unofficial practice of: Tell, or else.

This injustice increases because not all military personnel are mistreated equally. Violations of "don't ask, don't tell" vary. And some service members mitigate illegal inquiries by hiring lawyers and alerting the media.

Now that the country has tried and noticeably failed to sneak up on the issue, it's time for the president to provide strong, constitutionally legal protection for gay military personnel.

GAYS HIRED IN GOVERNMENT

WASHINGTON, July 14 (UPI) — A White House spokesman confirms (Monday) that former gay White House staffer Robert Hattoy brought homosexuals into the administration. Hattoy, now an Interior Department official, told special prosecutor Kenneth Starr he was successful in the recruitment. Asked whether Hattoy had fulfilled that role, press secretary Mike McCurry says: "I hope so."

(Continued from page 4)

Lesbian Cows-

Frusetta would spot the cow pies smearing my proposal and lock me out of his stockyard.

And as I graze other pastures in search of research dollars, I must admit to investigator bias. I'm not likely to prove that youths are like cattle. There's no research tool appropriate to ask what two gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning or just-not-sure teens do when they're alone together.

And since in my professional opinion none of the above sexuality is abnormal, the nature versus nurture question loses its validity.

So in conclusion, Assemblyman Frusetta, I hypothesize that our state legislature is no place for someone who clearly flunked freshman biology. But before we send you back to the ranch, there is one question I believe only you have the scientific know-how to answer.

Just where does chocolate milk come from?

Examiner contributor Lyssa Friedman is a nursing administrator for a cancer research program in Marin County

San Francisco Examiner 7/10/97
P. O. Box 7260, San Francisco, CA, 94120
(Fax 415-512-1264, print run 137,635)

HRC LAUNCHES PRO-DISNEY CAMPAIGN TO HELP FAMILIES WITH SICK CHILDREN

The Human Rights Campaign has kicked off a nationwide effort to encourage all fair minded Americans to counter the Southern Baptist's anti-Disney position. The HRC initiative is asking people to purchase Disney gift certificates and donate them to children in hospitals throughout the country. HRC spokesperson, David M. Smith said "Our members wanted to be truly family-friendly by helping children in need while supporting Disney's commitment to fairness.

PFLAG Houston supports this effort and has joined with the local HRC chapter to make it a success in Houston. PFLAG members and friends wanting to contribute to this effort with money and/or time should contact Denay Hudson (dlhudson96) or Susan Upchurch at 713-995-9777, or send your gift certificates or designated contributions to PFLAG Houston, P.O.Box 53796, Houston, TX 77052-3796.

SAME-SEX BENEFITS NOW LAW IN HAWAII

Governor Refuses to Sign Bill

AP/MSNBC

A bill authorizing benefits for same-sex couples is becoming law without the signature of Hawaii's governor.

The bill took effect Wednesday, and grants benefits to same-sex couples that previously were reserved only for married couples.

Gays and lesbians, siblings and roommates — any adult couples who can't legally marry — can get about 45 of 400 benefits that range from medical insurance to joint property ownership under the new state law, the first of its kind in the nation.

Gov. Ben Cayetano said he supports the intent of the bill to give benefits to gay couples but opposes concessions made by lawmakers that allowed benefits to be given to same-sex couples who are not gay.

"It should have been limited to same-sex couples," the governor said. "It was never my intent to include widows and sons" among those who would be eligible for benefits.

"Apparently the religious right did not want the bill to be seen as specifically tailored to same-sex couples," Cayetano said. "Unfortunately, the legislature gave in to that but created another problem."

Cayetano wants the legislature to work on the bill next session so it's limited to gay couples and said he sees no legal problems with such a change.

"It can be limited to same-sex couples for the same reasons I think marriage can be limited to heterosexuals," he said.

Proponents of the law called it a historic day leading toward equal rights but admitted the law is flawed and too broad.

Couples don't even have to know each other, live together or be Hawaii residents to apply. They only have to be legally barred from marrying each other and be at least 18 years old.

That makes a vast number of people eligible for the reciprocal benefits, and it's stirring up a tangle of confusion because no one seems to know what the effects will be.

Nation IN BRIEF, HAWAII

Gay Couples Begin Sharing Benefits

>From LA Times Staff and Wire Reports

Homosexual couples in Hawaii began exercising their rights to joint health insurance and property ownership under a new law that guarantees them many of the benefits married couples have. The measure also applies to other domestic partners who cannot marry, such as a widowed mother and her son or daughter.

It took effect Tuesday, after Hawaii Gov. Ben Cayetano let it become law without his signature. Cayetano said he wanted the law to enable gay couples to provide for one another, but had reservations about extending those rights to non-gay domestic partners.

H.A.T.C.H. EXPANDING PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

By Peter Poit

Additional volunteers, facilitators, and program personnel are needed for The Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals to expand their program and outreach this fall.

H.A.T.C.H. provides safe social environments for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and questioning youth, offers role models and peer support, and sponsors educational and community outreach opportunities to empower sexual minority youth to become positive contributors to society.

YES...H.A.T.C.H. is growing! We need additional facilitators for the Friday and Sunday night programs. We also need volunteers to work with the youth. And... if you want to give to H.A.T.C.H., but not work with the youth, there is always and opportunity to help on the Board of Directors. Many talents are needed because the youth are multi-talented. You might be just the one to make a difference. Consider volunteering with H.A.T.C.H.

Any adult (24 years or older) wishing to work with the youth or facilitate, must attend a Facilitators Screening to be held in the middle of August. Please call Peter Poit at 713-521-1004 to sign up of for additional information. This is a great opportunity to give to the youth of the community.

Peter Poit

Phone: 713-421-1004

FAX: 713-521-1004 (call first)

e-mail: Poit@IBM.net

HOUSTON'S SUMMIT FOR YOUTH Mission Statement Announced

The Houston Delegation to the President's Summit on Youth met with local non-profit and corporate representatives on July 17th to present the Houston Summit for Youth mission statement, approach and logo.

The mission statement is "To unify the community in support of volunteerism for the children and youth" This mission will be accomplished by:

- bringing back and communicating the goals and ideas from the President's Summit
- identifying successful local ideas and methods
- highlighting areas of specific needs
- creating a long-term vision for the future of children and

(Continued on page 7)

QUOTE TO CONSIDER:

"Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul; the blueprints of your ultimate achievements"

Napoleon Hill

(Continued from page 6)

- youth in Houston
- developing an action plan
- promoting volunteerism and facilitating access to volunteer opportunities
- instilling an ethic of lifelong volunteerism within children and youth
- establish measures and goals

The "Houston Promise" is a mobilization of citizens, community leaders and the corporate sector increasing a long-term vision for the future of children and youth in Houston. PFLAG Houston is committed to ensuring that this vision includes our gay and lesbians children. A Houston Summit for Youth will be held in the Spring of 1998. Leaders are currently being recruited. More later.

Notes from the Editor, by Don Upchurch

Things don't happen in organizations like PFLAG without a lot of people willing to give of themselves for others. Our entry in the Pride Parade was a perfect example. Many contributed to this effort utilizing their individual talents and resources to make the combined result a success. The key words are "willing", "contributed", "effort" and "combined". We all have something to contribute and I'm proud to say that within PFLAG Houston there are SO many who are willing to put forth the effort. We all share a dream for families and friends and together we are making progress. Our continued effort will bring us ever closer to our dream, AND we'll enjoy the trip!

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the August newsletter is August 15th. All the best, Don.



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!

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



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

Sept. 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020

PFLAG HOUSTON TO SPONSOR

"HEALING THE HURT '97"

An Educators' Conference, October 30th

With the encouragement of people familiar with the needs of educators concerning gay and lesbian youth, your chapter has undertaken a one day conference similar to the previous Healing the Hurt conferences in 1994 and 1995.

We are delighted to have as keynote speakers Robert McLaughlin, PhD. and Kevin Jennings, M.A. Bob is a Houston psychologist familiar with the schools and a long time friend and supporter of this chapter. He will speak on The Dilemma of Invisibility for Sexual Minority Youth and lead a Counseling Consultation Workshop giving concrete counseling ideas for educators. Kevin is the Executive Director of GLSTN (Gay Lesbian Straight Teacher's Network). His topic for the day will be Education for All: Creating Safe Schools for Gay and Lesbian Youth.



Additionally we feel privileged to have Karen Holmes, PhD., Dean of the School of Social Work at the U of H, Diana Storms, LMSW-ACP, doing workshops on Creating a Hospitable Environment for Your Schools Gay and Lesbian Students, Families and Employees, and Steve Walker, Public Information Officer, Houston Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention, moderating panels on Young, Gay and of Color: The Struggles of Being A "Double Minority."

We are excited about this opportunity and want to enlist each of you to help us make this all it can be. You may have a favorite counselor from your local high school or a friend who is an educator or therapist. Brochures are available if you would like to send one to a prospective participant. Personal invitations are always one of the best methods of advertising for Healing the Hurt. Registration by September 15 is ten dollars and fifteen dollars thereafter. As you can see, this is a low fig

(Continued on page 3)

WELL SAID, GOVERNOR!!!

"We have enemies in Maine.

They are poverty, disease and ignorance.

They are NOT gay people."

...Maine's Governor **Angus King**, during the signing of the state's gay civil rights bill into law May 16. Ten other states have laws that ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.



Next Meeting September 7th

"What does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?"

Reverend Clark Chamberlain, Pastor of the Central Congregational Church, 1311 Holman will be our speaker for the September 7th general meeting. Rev. Chamberlain is a member of the Presbyterian Supreme Court (for six years) and is a Stated Clerk of a Presbyterian Synod. He will bring an interesting perspective on a topic of interest, and one that seems to often be "a point of reference" Come and share!

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. After our large group session, attend 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, September 5th at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

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Woodlands Coverage	5
Address Verification	7

Schedule of Events

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Sept 7 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Sept 11-14 | PFLAG 1997 International
Conference, Clarion Plaza Hotel,
Orlando, Florida |
| Sept 14 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Millbend Dr. |
| Sept 16 | Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet |
| Sept 21 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston |
| Oct 5 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Oct 11 | National Coming Out Day |
| Oct 12 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| Oct 19 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Oct 21 | PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting |
| Oct 30 | "Healing the Hurt '97" Educators
Conference |
| Nov 8 | Houston Black Tie Dinner
Hyatt Regency Hotel |

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday September 16th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This meeting will be held on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG Helpline.

DATELINE: NBC "THE CURE" *A Mother and Son Look Back*

On Tuesday, September 2nd, Dateline: NBC will air a program segment, "The Cure", about a mother and her gay son looking back over his life. This program is part of the story of Marlene Fanta Shyer and her son Christopher. The Shyer's book, **NOT LIKE OTHER BOYS** is the story of their lifelong and futile struggle to alter the inevitability of Chris's homosexuality. In alternating voices, both mother and son tell what is essentially the same heart-rendering story: both knew Chris was gay, both tried to change it, and both eventually came to accept it. Along the way, the Shyers provide a painfully honest inside look at the homophobia, fear and denial that exist in our own lives. Sounds like our kind of story! Tune in at 9:00pm CST, Tuesday, Sept 2nd.

PFLAG INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE *"Love Takes Action" - Sept 11-14*

PFLAG's 16th Annual Conference will be held at the Clarion Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida during September 11-14, 1997. This year's program is filled with family to family networking opportunities, leadership training sessions and over fifty different interactive workshops. On-site registration will be available, if space permits. Register through PFLAG National at (202) 234-3880. Hotel reservations must be made separately. Group rates are available at the Clarion Plaza, (800) 627-8258.

NEW MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE *VOLUNTEERS NEEDED*

Anyone interested in volunteering to serve on a Membership Committee should contact Jim or Marge Bianchetta at (281) 242-4335.

NO MATTER WHAT THE SPIN, RELIGION AND HATE DON'T MIX

Atlanta Attorney Shares His View

The following is an article printed under the MY VIEW section of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on Wednesday, February 26, 1997. The author is Chris Crain, Atlanta attorney.



More than 50 law enforcement agents have been assigned the task of finding out who planted bombs Friday at The Otherside, a popular lesbian and gay nightclub in Midtown Atlanta. Meanwhile, the rest of us wrestle with the question shy.

In this bombing, the latest in a rash of domestic terrorism in "The City Too Busy To Hate," we need to look no further than the ingrained violence of the Middle East for at least one possible clue. The blood of innocents is an accepted aspect of the landscape of the Middle East. It is second nature for us to condemn the religious zealotry that teaches its adherents to hate those who are different because to be different is to be evil.

It is time we held accountable those among us who preach the same type of hate and intolerance of homosexuals in the churches of Atlanta and across the United States, and who must accept at least some responsibility for the violence their preaching has reaped.

This American brand of religious hatred isn't given over to the same extremes as its Middle Eastern counterpart. Although some religious fanatics teach their congregations that "God hates fags," the mainstream American religious leaders who pass judgment on homosexuality take a more subtle route, one that permits leader and follower alike to rationalize away the consequences of their rhetoric.

"Hate the sin and love the sinner" is the popular catch phrase used to soften the condemnation of homosexuality. Hate knows no such subtlety. When a total stranger calls me sick and perverted for holding hands with my partner of more than three years, it is of no particular comfort that his minister probably told him to hate what I am, not who I am.

Most American religious leaders have a startling lack of curiosity about the lesbians and gay men whose "lifestyle" - not lives, mind you, they so readily condemn. No serious effort is made to determine whether the Bible's ancient Jewish prohibition against certain sex acts between men bears any relationship to the loving, committed families of gay men and lesbians today.

Inside the posh, old-line churches of Buckhead, so many ministers cheerfully welcome the donations and spirited involvement of their gay parishioners, and yet make no effort to understand and respect their relationships.

How long must God's gay and lesbian children wait until those religious leaders who teach hatred of homosexuality (but not homosexuals) apologize for the violence - physical, emotional, financial and spiritual - wrought by their rhetoric? As long as African-Americans waited for the Southern Baptist Convention to apologize for slavery and Jim Crow?

Hate is not a weapon wielded with precision, and it has no place in the house of God. The time has come, once and for all, to banish hate from the rhetoric of religion.

(Continued from page 1)

"HEALING THE HURT '97"

ure. We are seeking foundation support for unrecoverable expenses and are aiming for high quality while practicing financial restraint.

We know that many of you will want to be a part of this conference. Because we hope to fill our two hundred seats with educators, we are not, at this time, opening attendance to our membership. However, there will be many different kinds of volunteer jobs both before and during the conference. We will have packets and programs to assemble, teams to put together for hospitality, help needed with registration and other opportunities still to be discovered. In addition to a sign up sheet at the next meeting you may call Blake Weisser (713-776-1227), Carrie La Porte (281-681-0794) or Norma Graves (713-167-4105) if you can help. All of us working the day of the conference will need to register, the fee for which includes lunch.

This is one of those opportunities to make a difference! We need to show through our support of this conference that we believe in safe learning environments for ALL children and that PFLAG Houston is ready to work for them!

IS THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE CENSORING COMIC STRIPS? "FOR BETTER or FOR WORSE " *Gay Episodes Moved To Page 2A*

The following letter to The Houston Chronicle was written by Sue Null, a member of PFLAG Houston.

I had hoped to write the Chronicle a letter of applause for running the four "For Better or For Worse" comic strips touching on a gay teenager's anguish over the departure of his partner. Instead, I'm writing a letter of disgust over the Chronicle's wimpy cop-out.

Yes, the four episodes were published as a news item in Monday's paper on page 2A, but they were pulled from the regular comic page, presumably because someone thought they might be "offensive."

Is the only major newspaper of the fourth largest city in the U.S. exercising censorship? Are Houstonians unable to deal with reality? Have we reached the deplorable state of the ABC station in Birmingham, Alabama, which refused to run "Ellen's" coming out episode?

The comics have increasingly become involved in serious issues of everyday life, from rape to drug addiction, from family disintegration to crime. Jason in "Fox Trot" has a black friend and nobody thinks twice about it. Michael Patterson in FBOFW has a gay friend, but children mustn't see that. The mother, daughter, and her male adolescent friend in "9 Chickweed Lane" engage in wild sexual fantasies; and Sally Forth and her husband discuss for a week the number of times they ought to make love compared with the national average of 2.4 times/week. These last two are topics for children? Maybe anything goes, until you get to the "g--" word.

How can you be offended by love? How can you be offended at the support Elly Patterson and her son Michael offer to Lawrence who risks losing the most important person in his life? How can you be offended at people who love someone for who he is, not for who they think he should be?

There are beautiful lessons to be learned in these strips of unconditional love, acceptance and celebration, of letting go, of the risks of loving. This is inappropriate for children?

The Chronicle should not be in the position of overprotecting children from the world of reality. Like it or not, the world is full of gay people who love and who are loved by their families and friends. To pretend otherwise is to paint an unreal world; it is to succumb to the conservative factions who would like to obliterate life as it is. When Lawrence came out a few years ago, the Chronicle ran the strips on the comic pages. Has the Chronicle now stepped backwards?

I have gay children whom I love dearly. I am delighted to see "my" family represented in Lynn Johnston's vision of reality. Like Elly, I have offered love and support to gay people whose families have deserted them. But I am distressed that the Chronicle has deserted me if it finds my family offensive and feels a need to protect its younger readers from people like us.

SUPPORT THE HOUSTON BLACK TIE DINNER!!! Ticket Sales and Silent Auction Donations Needed

The Houston Black Tie Dinner will be held on November 8th, 1997 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Houston. This wonderful event benefits Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and ten local non-profit organizations, including PFLAG Houston. In fact, PFLAG Houston receives a major portion of our annual funding from the Black Tie Dinner proceeds. The amount we receive depends on our level of support for this event and WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION! Ticket sales and silent auction donations are the two ways you can help.

This is a fun event serving causes that are important to us and it as one person said "it's a lot better than doing bake sales" Please support our PFLAG chapter by buying tickets, getting your friends to buy tickets, get corporations to buy a table of tickets or you can make a donation to the silent auction. Over one third of the donations come from the silent auction! Silent auction donation forms are available from Don or Susan Upchurch and they must be submitted by Friday, October 31, 1997. Please make your plans to attend and give the Houston Black Tie Dinner and PFLAG Houston your much needed support. Thank You!



WOODLANDS SATELLITE GETS LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE

The following article appeared in the Conroe-Courier on August 11, 1997. It was written by Jenalia Moreno of the Courier Staff.

When Arnold and Chig Dyson's daughter, Martha, "came out," they had to dispel their stereotypes about homosexuality. "I couldn't figure out, when our daughter came out to us, why she was afraid to tell us," Chig Dyson said, "We had so many stereotypes that it made it difficult for her to come out to us."

Even though they had received misinformation all their about homosexuals, they realized their daughter was the same person they loved, Arnold Dyson said. Now they are members of the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, a support group with headquarters in Houston and a satellite chapter in The Woodlands.

"Believe it or not, there are gays and lesbians in The Woodlands, Conroe and Montgomery County," said Jeanne Edmunds, a board member of Houston PFLAG. "We want to be able to reach parents with the message that all our children are special."

The incident involving Woodlands teen-agers attacking and killing a gay man in Houston a few years ago indicates that there is misinformation about homosexuality in the area, Edmunds said.

The group meets at 2 p.m. every second Sunday at Northwoods Unitarian Church, located at 1370 N. Millbend Drive.

The PFLAG Woodlands satellite chapter organized in January and has approximately 20 active members.

On Sunday, 15 PFLAG members listened to Kim Radcliffe, a Woodlands resident, discuss ballot Measure 9 in Oregon.

The proposed ballot measure would have amended Oregon's state constitution to label homosexuality as abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse. It would have required state-supported institutions to actively discourage homosexuality. Radcliffe and her husband were activists who opposed the measure, which was defeated, but not until two women were killed when a bomb exploded in their home and burning crosses were placed in the yards of gay rights activists.

"I believe that none of us can afford to be silent about something that is wrong," Radcliffe said. "Ballot Measure 9, for me, was a message about hate and, unfortunately, homosexuals were the target."

The group also watched a documentary Sunday depicting the Houston PFLAG's bus trip to Washington D.C. to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which went before Congress in September 1996 and failed by one vote. The Dysons were unable to go on the trip, but supported the 200 parents who did. While the Dyson's daughter has found employment, they said she applied for many jobs before she was hired. "We don't know how many times she was turned down because she was gay," said Arnold Dyson.

Chig Dyson said her daughter has encountered some discrimination. "I want to support any gay person who's trying to have an equal life where there's so much discrimination against them," said Chig Dyson, who joined PFLAG five years ago, soon after Martha announced she was a lesbian.

DOES IT MATTER?

My father asked if I am gay
I asked Does it matter?
He said No not really
I said Yes
He said get out of my life
I guess it mattered.

My boss asked if I am gay
I asked Does it matter?
He said No not really
I told him Yes
He said You're fired faggot
I guess it mattered.

My friend asked if I am gay
I said Does it matter?
He said No not really
I told him Yes
He said Don't call me your friend
I guess it mattered.

My lover asked Do you love me?
I asked Does it matter?
He said Yes
I told him I love you
He said Let me hold you in my arms
For the first time in my life
something matters.

My God asked me Do you love yourself?
I said Does it matter?
He said Yes
I said How can I love Myself? I am gay
He said that is the way I made you.
Nothing will ever matter again.

*Authored by an anonymous high school student.
Reprinted from PFLAG Washington DC*

Woodlands - (cont.)

Martha, an ordained priest living in Vermont with her ordained partner, encouraged the couple to join PFLAG and ever since they have been trying to promote equal rights for homosexuals.

The Rev. Carol Prochaska said she also attends the PFLAG meetings to promote equal rights for homosexuals, who she said are considered today's untouchables. "I can't imagine any group not having all the rights that I do," Prochaska said.

Prochaska is a reverend for Shepherd of the Woods United Church, a United Church of Christ with a national stance of total acceptance of homosexuals.

Thanks to Jeanne Edmunds for her outstanding efforts in organizing and leading the Woodlands Satellite Chapter. Thanks also to Jenalia Moreno and the Conroe Courier for the very nice unbiased article. - Ed.

RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGNS NOT PUBLIC SCHOOL BUSINESS

Recently, in the wake of the Baptist boycott of Disney, Carrollton-Farmers Branch public school trustee Doug Hellman asked the board to not allow a C-FISD band to attend a competition at Walt Disney World.

Roger Cramer, Editor of The Metrocrest News, used his July 4th editorial to address this issue. Mr. Cramer's editorial follows:

While the Carrollton-Farmers Branch public school trustees ponder their attitudes toward a boycott of Walt Disney Co., they should ponder also the reasons they were elected.

A school board serves a diverse public. There are people of varying cultural and social traditions as well as people of varying religious beliefs among the very general public a school district serves. School boards and their policy decisions must be free of politics. School boards must not advocate religious doctrines. School boards do not exercise moral judgement on the world around them, giving or withholding endorsements of things having no relationship to the educational mission they are elected to fulfill.

Doug Hellman and Duane Baccus sit on the board convinced they have a mandate to impose a narrowly contrived, fundamentalist Christian agenda in a school district whose makeup is as diverse as any in this nation. They are working their way through that agenda, setting up a bible-based history curriculum in the high schools. We can wonder why the other trustees seem to go along with these Luddite learnings, but those questions and others can be resolved eventually at the polls.

This latest initiative of the ultra-religious conservatives, a boycott of the Walt Disney Co., is a homophobic adventure that seems daring, even for Hellman and Baccus. Perhaps they have been encouraged by the acquiescent attitude of other board members toward their Christian Coalition agenda.

Hellman, who went on record early in his term on the board with racist remarks about one of the largest constituencies in the school district, Has shown that he has no inhibitions about parading his hatreds and voicing his condemnations in the forum his public office creates. His freshest idea for educational innovation is probably parroted from some dire warning he has gleaned from radical tracts. Those tracts, in turn, probably feed on his fears of people with skin, ancestry, culture or lifestyle that he perceives to be different from his own. Such a dark view of the world has no place in the bright halls of learning that the public has created in local schools.

Public school districts have no business venturing onto the slippery slopes of boycotts to prosecute the beliefs of certain segments of the society. Whatever any of us may think of the Walt Disney Co.'s selection of topics for entertainment, or its policies on employee benefits, we have no business singling out that company or any other for condemnation. We have no moral imperative to prohibit a group of students from visiting that com-

pany's theme parks when the parks are operating legally and offering age-appropriate, family entertainment.

There is plenty for the Carrollton-Farmers Branch trustees to do these days. There are decisions to be made that will change permanently the communities the school district serves and the educational opportunities for large groups of the children it enrolls. Side trips into little displays of hatred and little rules based on fear of the unfamiliar just aren't appropriate at any time, but least of all now.

Independence Day is a fine opportunity to note the long-standing abhorrence we hold in this nation for the tyranny of one man's beliefs when he imposes them on others by abuse of office.

Editor's Comment:

As I read this editorial in the newsletter from PFLAG Dallas I could not help but think of our July program on Oregon's Ballot Measure 9. Positions such as those taken by the school board trustees in this case must be met quickly and firmly to protect the principles we Americans cherish. Kudos to Mr. Cramer for his effort in that behalf. Stay Alert!

VOTE UPCOMING ON BY-LAWS Term of Office Change Proposed

The PFLAG Houston Board of Directors is recommending that the term of office for Board Members and Officers be changed to run from June 1st to May 31st instead of the current calendar year term. This change will allow the transition of officers to occur at a less busy time of year and will be much better for the scholarship committee efforts which need to work with the school year vs. the calendar year. The current officers and Board would continue to serve until May 31, 1998, (to be confirmed with each officer and board member) The fiscal year for our chapter would remain on a calendar year basis.

In accordance with our by-laws this change must be approved by a two-thirds majority of members attending the general meeting when the vote is taken. We will vote on this change at our October 5th meeting. Please give this issue your consideration and support your Board with your participation and feedback.

Your Board invites you to consider serving PFLAG Houston as a Board Member and Officer in the future. Our strength is in the active participation of many individuals with vision and talents that compliment each other. Please give serious thought to accepting a leadership position in YOUR PFLAG chapter.

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER:

**Begin to see what "is" in front of you,
rather than what you learned is there.**

THIS AND THAT!!!

- We are still receiving wonderful letters from other PFLAG chapters about our "Claiming America's Promise video. From Cape Cod to California the message repeats that this video provides a strong and inspiring message to its viewers. Thanks again to all those who gave to this wonderful project.
- We frequently receive requests from graduate students who would like to receive data to support dissertations regarding various topics involving gay/lesbian/family related issues. We do not publish these requests but if you are interested in participating in these efforts please let me know. —Editor.



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!

DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS ????????

PFLAG Houston has just concluded a major realignment of our newsletter mailing list. PLEASE check the address label on this newsletter mailing and if changes are needed, please:

- indicate the changes on the form below and mail it to PFLAG Houston, PO Box 53796, Houston, TX 77052-3796;
- OR notify us by e-mail (tgranger@VElaw.com);
- OR call the Helpline (713-867-9020) **THANK YOU!!!!**

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the October newsletter is September 12th.

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Name(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Phone/Fax _____ / _____

Other Information: _____

____ Check here if this is for address/phone/fax change only.

____ Check here if you prefer PFLAG mail come in a sealed envelope.

____ Check here if you do NOT want 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

Oct. 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

CHAPTER ACCOMPLISHMENTS RECOGNIZED AT 16TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ANN ARBOR, MOHAWK VALLEY AND NEW HAMPSHIRE RECEIVE CHAPTER AWARDS

By Don Upchurch

During PFLAG's 16th Annual Conference in Orlando three chapters received Chapter Awards for their efforts in addressing the "ends" of PFLAG's mission statement. Nine chapters were nominated for awards (including Houston) in the three mission areas of Support, Education and Advocacy. All 400 plus chapters were recognized as "winners" but the awards were given to Ann Arbor for Support, Mohawk Valley for Education and New Hampshire for Advocacy. The basis for selection included how well the achievements addressed PFLAG's "ENDS" policies, whether the program produced tangible results and how well the program could be modeled by other chapters. The nominees were:



Support

- **PFLAG ANN ARBOR** for "A Friend's Place," a local community group dedicated to the creation of safe space for youth. The program offers rap groups and monthly dances which draw from a wide geographic area. PFLAG and the group have also facilitated the formation of Gay/Straight Alliances in three public schools.
- **PFLAG Toledo** for the publication of the book *The Beloved and the Bent* and the video "Weird and Wacky."

Education

- **PFLAG Albuquerque** for achievements including outreach to religious and school constituencies, running a speakers bureau, offering a helpline and sponsoring the Anne Frank exhibit in their community.
- **PFLAG Appleton** for providing police training in their community for

(Continued on page 5)

APA COUNCIL PASSES RESOLUTION

Reaffirms Opposition to Homophobia

CHICAGO- August 14, 1997 - The Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association (APA) today passed a resolution affirming four basic principles with regard to appropriate therapeutic responses to sexual orientation.

Those principles are:

(Continued on page 3)



Next Meeting October 5th

"Young, Gay and of Color: The Struggles of Being a Double Minority"

Mr. Steve Walker, Public Information Officer for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention, will share with us his perspective on what is like to be a "double minority" Steve is a leader in our community and a long time friend of PFLAG. In his job Steve has a unique opportunity to interact with many diverse groups and that experience makes his perspective special and his presentation very informative. Please join us!

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. After our large group session, attend 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, October 3rd at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

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Schedule of Events

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Oct 5 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston |
| Oct 11 | National Coming Out Day |
| Oct 12 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr. |
| Oct 21 | Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet |
| Oct 19 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston |
| Oct 30 | "Healing the Hurt '97" Educators
Conference |
| Nov 2 | PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting |
| Nov 8 | Houston Black Tie Dinner
Hyatt Regency Hotel |
| Nov 9 | PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting |
| Nov 16 | PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting |
| Nov 18 | PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting |
| Dec 7 | PFLAG Houston Winter Party |

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday October 21st, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members that would like to meet more than once a month or are unable to attend our Sunday meetings. These groups will have a facilitator and focus on small-group sharing and discussion.

The meeting will be at Church of the Epiphany at 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet from 7:30-9:00pm. This meeting will be held on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG Helpline.

HEALING THE HURT '97 Educator's Conference

We are excited about the upcoming "Healing the Hurt '97" conference at the University of Houston. This one day conference on October 30th is intended for area educators, counselors, coaches, and other professionals that work with youth. It is being presented by PFLAG Houston with the goal to provide information about the issues that confront the gays, lesbians and bi-sexuals in our schools, and to provide an opportunity for dialogue in developing positive programs and environments for our G/L/B youth.

We have a great group of presenters and workshop leaders including Bob McLaughlin Ph.D., a Houston psychologist, Kevin Jennings M.A., Executive Director of GLSTN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Teachers Network), Karen Holmes Ph.D., Dean of the School of Social Work at the U of H, Diana Storms LMSW-ACP, and Steve Walker, Public Information Officer with the Houston Department of Health and Human Services.

We look forward to a successful workshop and you can help make it happen. Call that favorite counselor from high school, or a friend that works as an educator or therapist and tell them about this conference. Your personal invitation will be our best advertisement. We need to create safe and accepting schools for ALL our children.

WANTED: Survey Data Entry and Processing Support

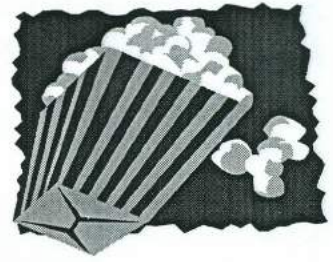
The Membership Committee is seeking one or two volunteers who have experience with and access to survey data management and analysis software. This would involve entering the data from various member and non-member surveys and creating graphical reports (pie charts/bar graphs/trend charts, etc.) which summarize the results of those surveys. If you are interested, please contact Jim Bianchetta at 281-242-4335.

FUN NIGHT OUT AT THE MOVIES!

"IN AND OUT" Pokes Fun at Homophobia

by Tim Curfman

"In and Out" is a comedy about a small-town English teacher who is "outed" on national television as being a homosexual man. Kevin Kline plays the teacher, who is about to marry his long-time female finance', and who is dead sure that he is NOT gay. Suddenly he is under the heavy scrutiny of the members of his rural community, and the national press. As the story unravels, it becomes apparent that everything about the guy, including his mannerisms, his intellect, and his impeccable good taste, all scream that he really is gay.



To tell anything more would give away the story. This is a very funny movie about homophobia and how it comes to play on family, friends, and co-workers. Kevin Kline hits pure comic gold as he desperately tries to butch it up. Tom Selleck and Matt Dillon are also very charming in their supporting roles.

Unfortunately, this movie has the usual gay stereotypes that Hollywood can't seem to get past. Also, many of the negative aspects of homophobia are handled in a fluffy, light comedy manner that belies the true pain that most homosexuals have to go through.

If you want to join some Pflagers for a viewing on Friday, October 3, call Tim at 869-1890. We will have dinner at Rock Bottom Brewery at 6111 Richmond at 6:30pm and make the 8:00pm show at the AMC - Studio 30 at 2949 Dunvale at Westheimer.

(Continued from page 1)

- Homosexuality is not a mental disorder and the APA opposes all portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual people as mentally ill and in need of treatment due to their sexual orientation;
- Psychologists do not knowingly participate in or condone discriminatory practices with Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual clients;
- Psychologists respect the rights of individuals, including Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual clients, to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy;
- Psychologists obtain appropriate informed consent to therapy in their work with Lesbian, Gay and bi-sexual clients.

The resolution further states that the APA "urges all mental health professionals to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual orientation".

Supporters of the resolution, which passed the APA Council by a overwhelming majority, believed that it was critical for the association to make such a statement due to the questions of the ethics, efficacy and benefits of so-called conversion or repetitive therapies which are now being debated within the profession and within society as a whole.

"Our concern," states Douglas Haldeman, Ph.D., President of APA's Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues, "is that a person, especially a young person, who enters into therapy to deal with issues of sexual orientation should be able to have the expectation that such therapy would take place in a professionally neutral environment absent of any societal bias. Additionally, therapists should be providing clients with accurate information about same-sex sexual orientation. This resolution reasserts the profession's commitment to those two principles."

The APA Council of Representatives is the major legislative and policy-setting body of the organization. Its voting members meet twice yearly in February and August. (Full text available from the APA Public Affairs Office.)

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 151,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 50 sub-fields of psychology and affiliations with 58 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

BETTY DEGENERES BECOMES HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN SPOKESPERSON

Mother of Ellen DeGeneres Joins HRC's National Coming Out Project

LOS ANGELES - Sept 8, 1997 - Betty DeGeneres, the mother of actress and comedian Ellen DeGeneres, will serve as spokesperson for HRC's National Coming Out Project, the Human Rights Campaign announced today.

"Ending discrimination based on sexual orientation is a family issue, and we are so grateful Betty DeGeneres will be driving that message home," said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. "She'll be encouraging gay people to come out and be honest, while also urging our fair-minded friends and family members to come out for equal rights." As 1997-98 spokesperson, DeGeneres will appear in television and print public service announcements, and will speak throughout the country to promote honesty and openness about being gay or, as in her case, having a gay family member and supporting equal rights for gay people.

"As long as our gay sons and daughters face discrimination and are excluded from the basic protection of our laws, I will urge all American families to come out for fairness," said DeGeneres. "I am thrilled at this wonderful opportunity to talk with gay and straight Americans about the importance of coming out, because honesty truly is the best policy." HRC's public education campaign featuring Betty DeGeneres will kick off in time for National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11, the observance created in 1988 to recognize the importance of coming out and to honor the anniversary of the 1987 march on Washington for lesbian and gay equal rights. HRC's National Coming Out Project is an ongoing campaign to encourage and assist gay people to be honest about their lives; provide guidance to campus groups and individuals dealing with coming out; and sponsor National Coming Out events.

The selection of DeGeneres marks the first time the Human Rights Campaign has named a heterosexual to serve as a National Coming Out Project spokesperson. In past years, public figures chosen for that role were gay, and included Amanda Bearse of Fox-TV's "Married...With Children," Candace Gingrich, Chastity Bono, Dan Butler of NBC's "Frasier" and Sean Sasser, formerly of MTV. "The fact that Betty is a concerned mom underscores the point that ending discrimination based on sexual orientation is not just of interest to gay people," said Birch. "It's a family issue that all Americans have a stake in."

DeGeneres' daughter, Ellen, made history last April when she and the character she plays on her ABC sitcom "Ellen" both came out of the closet, becoming the first lead actor and character on network television to honestly acknowledge being gay. During that April 30 coming out episode of "Ellen," HRC aired a ground-breaking television ad on 35 ABC affiliates throughout the country, spotlighting the fact that job discrimination based on sexual orientation remains legal in most states. Birch emphasized the importance of coming out as a key element in the struggle for equal rights for gay Americans. Polls consistently show that Americans who say they know gay people are much more supportive of ending discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization, with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that lesbian and gay Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

SUPPORT THE HOUSTON BLACK TIE DINNER!!!

Ticket Sales and Silent Auction Donations Needed

The Houston Black Tie Dinner will be held on November 8th, 1997 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Houston. This wonderful event benefits Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and ten local non-profit organizations, including PFLAG Houston. In fact, PFLAG Houston receives a major portion of our annual funding from the Black Tie Dinner proceeds. The amount we receive depends on our level of support for this event and WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION! Ticket sales and silent auction donations are the two ways you can help.

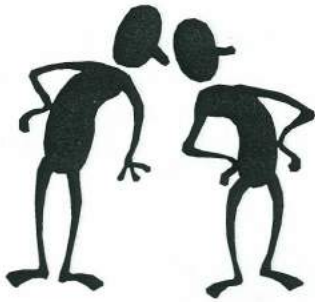
This is a fun event serving causes that are important to us and it as one person said "it's a lot better than doing bake sales" Please support our PFLAG chapter by buying tickets, getting your friends to buy tickets, get corporations to buy a table of tickets or you can make a donation to the silent auction. Over one third of the donations come from the silent auction! Silent auction donation forms are available from Don or Susan Upchurch and they must be submitted by Friday, October 31, 1997. Please make your plans to attend and give the Houston Black Tie Dinner and PFLAG Houston your much needed support. Thank You!



FRIENDS AS HEALERS

Old Friends are Good for You, Physically, Mentally and Emotionally

From Modern Maturity, Sept-Oct 1997



The hunger for friendship begins in childhood and stays with us throughout our lives. Close friends are particularly important because they know our assets and our flaws and think we're just great anyway. Often these friendships are highly dynamic, moving through the years from tranquillity to occasional discord, from intense support to lesser involve-

ment, and back again.

"People who maintain a safety net of friends can protect themselves against the losses that come with age," says gerontologist Rosemary Blieszner of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. "The qualities that people mention in studies — confiding problems and needs, building trust, addressing problems that come up — are foundations for friendships that contribute to physical and mental health."

Confiding in someone may offer big payoffs in terms of health, experts say. A Stanford University School of Medicine study, published in 1989, compared two groups of women with metastatic breast cancer: those who attended regular support meetings, and those who toughed it out on their own. The pain levels among those who attended meetings were significantly lower than their counterparts'. The meetings also helped alleviate stress and depression. The best news? Survival rates for the supported women were nearly twice as high.

"The willingness to disclose our deepest feelings to another person has an effect on the central nervous system that affects the cardiovascular and immune systems," says Blair Justice, associate dean of academic affairs and professor of psychology at the University of Texas — Houston School of Public Health.

When we don't confide our problems, Justice says, the body and brain work overtime to suppress emotions. Disclosing our feelings is an act of release, which reduces stress hormones that dampen immune response and hike blood pressure. "It's very stressful on the body to constantly repress feelings," says Justice.

How many friends do you need before your health improves? "Much benefit can be had from a warm close relationship with just one other person," Justice says. "Quality is more important than quantity..."

After three decades of research, the evidence is clear: Good friends are critically important to successful aging. Friends can be "more important to the psychological well-being of older adults than even family members are," according to Blieszner's research. She notes that older adults

can more easily receive moral support from people their own age. Although family relationships are meaningful and family members provide important support such as health care, relationships that are built from scratch, rather than ascribed, retain more importance in terms of mental and emotional health.

"With families, old power relationships are still there, and old baggage," says Blieszner. "But friends are age peers. They're chosen relationships." And what could be more valuable than a hand-picked support network of friends to enrich your life? "The bottom line is: 'Friends are essential to everyone's life,' Blieszner says. 'Everyone needs friends.'" -R.D.F.

Editor- I'm not going to say how I came to see Modern Maturity magazine. A "friend" must have subscribed for me; in any case many of the thoughts in this article spoke to me about my PFLAG friends. Caring is great medicine!!

(Continued from page 1)

the last ten years.

- **PFLAG Mohawk Valley** for developing two workshops with supporting materials for school personnel. The workshops have been favorably reviewed by school personnel and the schools have initiated an expansion of the program and follow-up training. The chapter has prepared a comprehensive kit of materials for distribution to interested PFLAG chapters including a video of college students in New York talking about their experiences in high school.
- **PFLAG Montana** for their outreach to schools including distributing brochures and holding a workshop at a "Families in Crisis" state conference.

ADVOCACY

- **PFLAG Greenville** for their fight against an anti-gay resolution. Although the resolution passed, the chapter received media coverage and achieved a new profile in their community.
- **PFLAG Houston** for posting 11 billboards with positive images about gays and lesbians following the launch of Project Open Mind in Houston.
- **PFLAG New Hampshire** for their work to pass the state's non-discrimination bill. The State Council conducted the first survey of non-discrimination policies among major employers in the state, used the results to lobby state legislators and educate the public, and mobilized countless PFLAG members over the two year campaign.

As you can see there is a lot of activity in PFLAG chapters all over the country. PFLAG Houston remains a leader in promoting the mission of PFLAG and is honored to be included in this outstanding group of nominees.

PFLAG NAT'L BOARD CRITICIZED

Internal Differences Dampen Annual Meeting in Orlando

By Don Upchurch

A recent article in the Washington Blade and a follow-up article in the Texas Triangle publicized an internal dispute involving the PFLAG National Board, Board President Nancy McDonald, Executive Director Sandra Gillis and the Regional Directors Council. The dispute centers around the management of the national office and includes personnel and financial issues. Board critics also expressed concerns that the national organization was not placing adequate emphasis on the well being of the local chapters. These criticisms were reportedly voiced on several occasions over a long period, but never addressed sufficiently to resolve the issues. Recently the criticism reached a peak with calls for the replacement of McDonald and Gillis.

During a lengthy Board meeting in August, the Board reaffirmed its support of Nancy McDonald and Sandra Gillis, renewing the employment contract of Ms. Gillis. Subsequent to this meeting a dissenting board member released confidential PFLAG information which resulted in the Washington Blade article. The issues remain unresolved however Mrs. McDonald stated that the Board was taking positive steps to address the situation.

Mrs. McDonald assured those attending the annual meeting that the support of the grassroots PFLAG organization remains a high priority for the national board and staff. The reported financial condition of the national organization is weak however and low attendance at the annual conference threatens to make it worse. Auctions at the annual meeting did raise some funds and pledges were received from individual and corporate supporters, but additional funds will be needed to restore the financial health of the national organization.

While the local chapters will continue to address the needs of their communities, it is unfortunate that the PFLAG reputation has been tarnished by this dissension in the national organization. We need a unified and responsive national organization to provide support to the local chapters and to speak with the strength of our collective voice. The PFLAG national organization can most effectively liaison with other organizations, provide timely updates on relevant issues, provide educational materials/workshops and facilitate networking between chapters and other organizations that will make the local chapters more successful. It is important that the PFLAG national organization remain strong and active. The PFLAG national board of directors is a dedicated and caring group of individuals who believe strongly in our mission and who want every PFLAG chapter to be a success. They have solicited the support of the local chapters and have pledged to honor that support. PFLAG is a very special organization providing a unique and vital service to our communities. We provide a car-

ing and supportive network for many who may feel they have no other place to turn. We believe in the value of education to foster understanding and change negative attitudes. We advocate for equal rights for our gay, lesbian and bisexual family members and friends, and call for an end to discrimination against them. PFLAG is dedicated to making our communities safer and better places to live. PFLAG needs and deserves our support at the local and national levels....especially now!

Editor- This started out to be a "news" article but turned into more of an "editorial". I have tried to convey the situation at national objectively but admittedly I have limited first hand information about many details. I am saddened, disappointed and yet encouraged by this situation. Saddened that PFLAG gets a "black eye", disappointed that the issues were not managed to consensus, and encouraged by the spirit and concern for PFLAG expressed by those who addressed the Board at the annual meeting. That concern will keep us focused and that spirit will keep us motivated.

VOTE UPCOMING ON BY-LAWS

Term of Office Change Proposed

The PFLAG Houston Board of Directors is recommending that the term of office for Board Members and Officers be changed to run from June 1st to May 31st instead of the current calendar year term. This change will allow the transition of officers to occur at a less busy time of year and will be much better for the scholarship committee efforts which need to work with the school year vs. the calendar year. The current officers and Board would continue to serve until May 31, 1998, (to be confirmed with each officer and board member) The fiscal year for our chapter would remain on a calendar year basis.

In accordance with our by-laws this change must be approved by a two-thirds majority of members attending the general meeting when the vote is taken. We will vote on this change at our October 5th meeting. Please give this issue your consideration and support your Board with your participation and feedback.

Your Board invites you to consider serving PFLAG Houston as a Board Member and Officer in the future. Our strength is in the active participation of many individuals with vision and talents that compliment each other. Please give serious thought to accepting a leadership position in YOUR PFLAG chapter.

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER:

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, nor touched....but are felt in the heart.

Helen Keller

**NOVEMBER MEETING TO
BE AFFIRMATION DAY**
*Share Your Feelings About
PFLAG*

★ Our November meeting will be your opportunity
★ to tell the chapter what you feel about PFLAG.
★ Many of you have expressed a desire to talk
★ about what PFLAG has meant to you so this is
★ your chance. Norma and Dick Graves, our chap-
★ ter Vice Presidents and Program Chairs are
★ planning this program now. If you would like to
★ share a positive PFLAG experience, call Norma
★ at 713-467-4105 to get on the list.
★



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-

Susan and I attended our first PFLAG National Conference this year and we had a very good time. The programs were varied and informative, and the planning was excellent. We saw a lot of old friends and met some new ones. We heard words of encouragement from community and business leaders and shared ideas with other chapters. We agonized with the turmoil in the national organization and were encouraged by the progress we have made. We were honored to represent PFLAG Houston as a Chapter Award nominee. It is always an honor for me to say I'm a member of PFLAG, especially PFLAG Houston!

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the November newsletter is October 15th..

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Name(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Phone/Fax _____ / _____

Other Information: _____

☐ Check here if this is for address/phone/fax change only.

☐ Check here if you prefer PFLAG mail come in a sealed envelope.

☐ Check here if you do NOT want 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

Dec. 1997

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

BISHOPS CALL ON CATHOLICS TO EMBRACE GAY CHILDREN

WWW.DATALOUNGE.COM

New York - In a stunning move, a pastoral letter issued by U.S. Catholic Bishops (yesterday) called upon the parents of gay children to put their love and support of their sons and daughters above church doctrine that condemns homosexuality.

The pastoral letter, a copy of which was circulated by the *Associated Press*, is by far the most significant step ever taken by the Catholic church to acknowledge that sexual orientation is a naturally occurring phenomenon in the human experience and not inherently sinful.

"Generally, homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen," the bishops wrote. "By itself, therefore, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for morality presumes the freedom to choose."

The church document, titled "*Always Our Children*", was approved by the Administrative Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops early in September and released to the public for the first time (yesterday).

While virtually every other Christian denomination has struggled with the issue of how much, if any, acceptance to grant lesbian and gay men, the Roman Catholic Church has, until yesterday, been resolute in its teaching that homosexuality was morally wrong.

Bishops, for years besieged by parents and other faithful torn between religious dogma and love for their children, friends, and family, requested guidance from the bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family in 1992. After five years of discussions, the committee issued its groundbreaking reply.

While not forswearing official church doctrine that sex is acceptable only within the confines of marriage, the bishops make very clear that church rules should not be enforced at the expense of the family.

The bishops noted "a shocking number" of children are rejected by their parents and that rejection coupled with discrimination and hostility placed gay and lesbian youth at a greater risk for drug abuse, suicide, and a host of other social ills.

The document also urges priests to welcome gay men and lesbians into their parishes, to establish and promote support groups for parents of gay children and to be open to parishioners about the need for honest discussion on the subject.

"This child," says the letter, "who has always been God's gift to you, may now be the cause of another gift: your family becoming more honest, respectful and supportive."

RELIEF GREETES CATHOLIC BISHOPS' LETTER

Boston - The pastoral letter on homosexuality issued Tuesday by U.S. Catholic bishops has been received with expressions of relief and grati

(Continued on page 5)



Next Meeting December 7th

Winter Party

Our December meeting will be our annual Winter Party. We will have small groups FIRST from 2:00 to 3:00 and then gather in the Great Hall for food and celebration. This year we are asking everyone to bring your favorite "party" food and we will furnish the drinks, plates, etc. Don't forget to bring any serving utensils required for your dish. This is always a fun time to visit, make new friends and enrich existing friendships. The PFLAG Family is important to each one of us and it is great to have this time to celebrate with each other.

We meet from 2:00pm - 4:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral, 1115 Texas Avenue at San Jacinto in Downtown Houston. REMEMBER this month our small groups will meet first at 2:00pm. 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. If you have announcements for the monthly meeting, please contact Susan Upchurch with the announcement by Friday, December 4th at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

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PFLAGer Shares	6

WINTER PARTY -

Join us to CELEBRATE!

The Membership Committee is seeking one or two volunteers who have experience with and access to survey data management and analysis software. This would involve entering the data from various member and non-member surveys and creating graphical reports (pie charts/bar graphs/trend charts, etc.) which summarize the results of those surveys. If you are interested, please contact Jim Bianchetta at 281-242-4335.

♥ THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

♥ The first step toward unconditional love
♥
♥ is to accept others just as they are.

HEALING THE HURT '97 CONFERENCE IS BIG SUCCESS

Area Educators and Counselors Asking For More

On October 30th PFLAG Houston hosted "Healing the Hurt '97 - An Educator's Conference" at the University of Houston. This one day conference was attended by 159 educators, counselors and administrators from thirteen school districts, one private school and three universities. Attendees also included social workers and professional counselors in private practice. They came from as far as Austin and Victoria and based on comments and evaluations they were glad they made the trip! Keynote speakers, Kevin Jennings, M.A., Executive Director of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and Robert McLaughlin, Ph.D., Ass't Professor at Baylor College of Medicine gave outstanding presentations and led two of the four interactive workshops. Karen Holmes, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School of Social Work at U.of H., Diana Storms, LMSW-ACP and Kyle Young, MSW led the other two workshops.

We received 74 evaluations on the conference and the feedback was very positive. Among the evaluation questions were six that related especially to the content and effectiveness of the conference.

- Increased understanding of G/L students feelings of isolation, rejection and fear? — 84 % rated 4 or 5
 - Increased understanding of need to create safe school settings for ALL students? — 89 % rated 4 or 5
 - Did conference make a difference in attendee's personal attitudes? — 78 % rated 4 or 5
 - Did conference make a difference in how attendee will perform their work? — 72 % rated 4 or 5
- (Ratings were from 1 = Not at all, to 5 = Very Much)
- Would you recommend a similar conference to colleagues? — 100 % said Yes
 - Would you attend another conference of this kind in the future? — 96 % said Yes

We consider these results and the many requests for more conferences the most meaningful vote on the success of this very special event. We owe Blake Weisser, Norma Graves and Carrie LaPorte a tremendous vote of thanks for organizing and executing this conference. Many others gave much to the success of the conference and we once again say Thank You to everyone who demonstrated the giving and loving spirit of PFLAG at Healing The Hurt '97. Gordon, Dick, Richard, Jane, Irv, Marge, Jim, Sherry, Sarah, Sue, Joan, Alan, Kyle and those I've missed.

WELL DONE, VERY WELL DONE!!!

PFLAG EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESIGNS FROM POST

October 16, 1997 - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) President Nancy McDonald has announced that PFLAG Executive Director Sandra Gillis is resigning from her post.

"Sandra has made tremendous contributions to PFLAG," McDonald said. "We were very pleased with her leadership and are sad to see her go."

McDonald praised Gillis for making PFLAG a formidable force for change during her four and a half years at the helm. Gillis' accomplishments include tripling the PFLAG membership to 70,000 households and expanding the grassroots network to 400-plus chapters serving communities in all 50 states, Washington, DC and eleven countries.

Under Gillis' leadership, PFLAG's revenue rose from \$700,000 in late 1992 to more than \$1.7 million on September 30, 1997, the close of this fiscal year, McDonald continued. When Gillis took over, PFLAG was within two weeks of closing its doors because of financial problems.

A staff-initiated fund has been set up in Gillis' name to build further PFLAG's powerful, activist grassroots network of parents and family members who support their gay and lesbian loved ones.

PFLAG is also more accessible than ever, with its award-winning web site, six new publications and increased national visibility.

Further, PFLAG launched its most ambitious campaign, Project Open Mind, an historic national media effort and public education campaign based on a project Gillis proposed in 1993. The first television ads gained unprecedented visibility for PFLAG, with an estimated \$3 million in earned media publicity alone.

Project Open Mind changed the six U.S. pilot communities forever. National press coverage - coupled with local library displays, cable TV shows, billboards, print ads and speaking engagements - enabled PFLAG to deliver the message to Americans that hate speech which creates a climate of violence against gays and lesbians, must be stopped. This campaign opened new doors for PFLAG, enlisting as allies religious and education institutions, civic and community groups and thousands of fair-minded Americans.

PFLAG's increased credibility has brought the group to the table with national political leaders, including President Clinton, Attorney General Janet Reno and officials in the federal Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, among others, this spring. PFLAG was the only gay-identified group to present at the President's Summit on America's Future. Gillis has agreed to serve as a resource for the PFLAG Board of Directors during the organization's transition period and its search for a successor, McDonald noted. Gillis, herself a lesbian, is the mother of three children, one of whom is lesbian.

VISIONS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE ECHO AROUND THE WORLD

NGLTF focuses on Coretta Scott King

By Kerry Lobel, NGLTF Executive Director

As NGLTF's executive director, I have the opportunity to meet many interesting people. Some of them are cultural workers like Melissa Etheridge, Kevin Kline and Tom Selleck. Some are political figures like President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and Senator Ted Kennedy. Others are local, state and national gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered political activists like my colleagues that attended a recent round table organized by the Task Force Policy Institute.

But I have to say that a recent NGLTF event, Honoring Our Allies, provided some life-changing moments for me and those that attended. The honorees were the AFL-CIO's John Sweeney, the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer and Coretta Scott King. Linda Chavez-Thompson, the highest ranking woman as well as a woman of color in the labor movement, accepted for Sweeney. Her remarks emphasized the important relationship between the labor movement and the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. Beverly Baker, the director of the Mautner Project, gave a moving tribute to lesbian cancer survivors.

The night, however, belonged to Coretta Scott King. Mrs. King has stood shoulder to shoulder with us as we work to envision and create a world based on social justice. She embraces the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people as part of the continued legacy of Dr. King's brave work. Her progressive vision of peace and justice echoes around the world.

In her acceptance remarks Mrs. King said, "I accept this award as a reaffirmation of my commitment to carry forward the unfinished work of my husband, Martin Luther King, Jr. My husband understood that all forms of discrimination and persecution were unjust and unacceptable for a great democracy. He believed that none of us could be free until all of us were free, that a person of conscience had no alternative but to defend the human rights of all people." She continued, "I want to reaffirm my determination to secure the fullest protection of the law for all working people, regardless of their sexual orientation...it is right, just, and good for America."

Mrs. King also acknowledged the contributions gay men and lesbians have historically made to the civil rights movement. "Many of these courageous men and women were fighting for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own, and I will always remember and honor their contributions," she said. "It has been encouraging to see the growing participation of people of color in the leadership ranks of the lesbian and gay freedom struggle, and I urge you to continue making this movement a model of diversity."

Remarking on the criticism she receives for speaking out against discrimination based on sexual orientation, Mrs. King said, "I still hear from people who claim to be followers of Martin Luther King, Jr., but who think I should be silent about the human rights concerns of gays and lesbians. All I can do is tell these folks that the civil rights movement that I believe in thrives on unity and inclusion, not division and exclusion." She continued, "all of us who oppose discrimination and support equal rights should stand together to resist every attempt to restrict civil rights in this country."

The Right continues its attempts to pit people of color against the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. As we witnessed during Honoring Our Allies, efforts to drive a wedge between us do not work. We stand united in our efforts to move forward a progressive agenda based on our shared values of justice, fairness and inclusion.

New Southern Regional Director

Pat Stone Brings Commitment and Experience

Pat Stone has been in leadership roles in the Dallas PFLAG chapter for several years and she is now our new regional director. She is very aware of how we at the grassroots of PFLAG work to *support, educate, and advocate* for our GLB family and friends. One of her goals is to reach out and help set up chapters in smaller towns in Texas. We can help her by getting contacts for new chapters in East Texas, like maybe Tyler. She can be reached at pflagpat@aol.com

TV-H: HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HYPOCRISY

Warning Label on "Ellen" Insulting

By Robert Dawidoff

The Los Angeles Times 10/19/97

The one surprise about ABC's pinning of a false and misleading child warning label on the hit comedy "Ellen" is the possibility, against all evidence, that the network poobahs have imagination. It takes imagination to preface this season's episodes of Ellen DeGeneres' Emmy-winning show with a warning: "Due to adult content, parental discretion is advised." In a world where words still meant what they mean, of course, this would be correct, because adult content--if adult means mature, human, funny, heartwarming, professional, innovative and real--is what distinguishes "Ellen." But of course that isn't what "adult" means on TV.

Last season, the character Ellen Morgan "came out" as a lesbian. And this season's shows have made affecting and brilliant comedy of the consequences. The concerns that last season's hoopla would result in a preachy, unfunny show have vanished. Millions are laughing along with Ellen and her friends, because her own truth has made her funnier and connected her to shared experience.

"Ellen" is a situation comedy, like "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "Taxi," "Cheers" and "Roseanne." These shows sharpen the interactions of real people in plausible situations into comedy. We are learning along with the unpredictable Ellen about what it means to be a lesbian and what a funny, bewildering experience that can be. What is so marvelous about Ellen is how she keeps having to confront her own internalized version of society's narrow mindedness. You don't have to be a lesbian to identify with her, although you may risk having to transcend being scared or intolerant of a different sexual orientation.

What is so offensive about the transparent attempts to censor DeGeneres is not only their hypocrisy and craven submission to imagined threats to the profits of the network's owners. What really stinks is what the network is advising parents. ABC is censoring the rare show that is sexually reticent and tender. The shows that require no cautions are routinely lewd, vulgar, blatantly and exploitatively sexual as well as pointless. Do you want your children to learn about their desires and about love by watching babes and dudes? Shouldn't we be worrying about what it does to people to be told one thing in church or at home about morality and responsibility, while their bodies and fantasies are being manipulated by for-profit sexual pandering and merchandizing?

The ABC censors apparently don't watch their own shows. "All My Children" has been featuring a story line about Kevin, a young man who has to deal with being gay and encounters the hostility of his family and the kinds of quacks who still claim they can "cure" homosexuality. Last time I tuned in, Kevin had found some support from his would-be girlfriend and some sympathetic adults. As I was watching,

however, I was terrified that he would end up being another one of those statistics, gay young people who still kill and hurt themselves because the desires that are natural to them are called unnatural by others. That is the kind of truth that kills. "Ellen" is the kind that heals.

Maybe ABC should warn parents this way: "Caution, don't let your kids watch this show, it might prove hazardous to your hypocrisy."

Robert Dawidoff is a Professor of History at Claremont Graduate School and Co-author, With Michael Nava, of "Created Equal: Why Gay Rights Matter to America."

(Continued from page 1)

BISHOPS' LETTER

tude by Catholics long divided between their faith and their love of gay family members.

Though there were strong voices within the church that said the letter did not go far enough in addressing the needs of gay and lesbian Catholics, there is no denying that the bishops' assertion that sexual orientation is not freely chosen and therefore cannot be condemned is a monumental step forward.

"I have always hated the idea that I somehow have to choose between my son or my church because my church would always lose," the *Boston Globe* quotes Helen Moore, a devout Catholic whose son is gay. "But I love my church and I want to be faithful. This letter is wonderful because it says to me that I don't have to choose."

The *Globe* also spoke with the Rev. Robert Nugent, a priest from Baltimore who has spent two decades ministering to gay Catholics and their families. "It is a profoundly important recognition by the American bishops that people don't choose to be gay or lesbian and that they must be recognized for who they are. There are still those in the church who treat homosexuality as a condition. This letter squarely puts the bishops on the other side."

Gay Catholics, while heartened by the bishops' pronouncement, feel the church's insistence on separating gay sexual orientation from sexual activity is untenable. Blocking gay and lesbian access to marriage, while prohibiting sex outside that institution, demands celibacy of every "good" gay Catholic - a sacrifice very few are willing to make.

Marianne Duddy, a former president of Dignity/USA, a gay and lesbian Catholic organization, told the *Globe*, "We believe that family support of the wholeness of gay and lesbian children includes acknowledging (the sexual) part of their lives as well."

A PFLAG VOLUNTEER SHARES Rewards Overcome Hesitancy

By Sarah Beauchamp

I compare being a volunteer with PFLAG to Christmas time. The gifts are endless, the love is abundant and the celebration is awesome. Yet, unlike Christmas which is contained to a once a year celebration, the gift of being a PFLAG volunteer just keeps on going and going, not unlike the Energizer Bunny, every day all year long.

I also consider being a member of PFLAG a gift. The gift is the honor of being a volunteer. It enables me to represent a fine organization to the general public as a volunteer at workshops and conferences held in this city such as AIDS, Medicine & Miracles where I talk about PFLAG to parents of gays and lesbians who have just learned about their child and need to know their city probably has a PFLAG chapter. I have had the honor of speaking as a parent on panels, received a cheery response regarding the billboards while individuals attended the POZ conference in our city, having the honor of appearing on the John Bradshaw show this past spring where he had a program with gays and lesbians and we were invited to be the audience, attending a class and becoming a facilitator for the small groups held each month after the General Meeting, and greeting and talking with educators and counselors at the Healing the Hurt workshop this past month. There was also the Gay Pride Parade, manning the booth during the Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce Empower '97 and last but not least being on the board as Recording Secretary. WOW is that ever fun. I get so many hugs and am told so many times how we are loved and "thank you for being there" that the buzz lasts nearly the entire year, which means I always go back to participate each year to get that buzz!

The bonding that is created as a volunteer as well as a participant at PFLAG is such a terrific learning experience, the gifts of tons of friends and the love shared and the wellness of the soul and the healing of the heart and soul; there really is not a single word I can think of to use to describe the feelings.

There are many volunteer positions in PFLAG aside from those I mentioned that are important, the telephone committees, greeting new-comers, advertising, public speaking, advocacy, mail-outs, the list goes on and on. Some place in this organization YOU are needed and I can promise you the rewards can be much greater than any fear or hesitancy you might feel.

We all have gifts to share, and deep down we all know what our special gift is. Won't you please consider sharing your gift with us, and at the same time recognize it as being a form of support to your child, friend, or family member as well as oneself? PFLAG is not only for parents, family and friends of lesbians and gays, but is also for the lesbians and gays whose gifts help those

of us who seek PFLAG to learn and have an opportunity to understand and to be supportive of you.

Thank you Sarah for caring in so many ways. -Ed.

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston Introduces 1997-98 Concerts First Concert December 6th

The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston begins their 1997-98 season with "Travel for the Holidays" on Saturday, Dec 6th at 8pm. This concert will also be performed on Sunday, Dec 7th at 7pm. Your holiday ports of call will include the South Pacific, Hawaii, West Africa, Europe, Israel and North America. Future concerts will include "Songs of Love", and "Time Travel" - GMCH's salute to American popular music. The chorus has a new concert venue this year, Lambert Hall on Heights Blvd at 17th. Tickets are \$12 and \$14 at the door with a reception following each performance. Call 713-521-7464 for additional information.



LOVE IS FAMILY

By Duncan Zenobia Saffir

We are shopping
a woman walks up to my mom
hugs her

Will you be my mother she asks
Yes, she answers

My mom is wearing her pin,
"I Love My Gay Son
PFLAG is family"
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

My mother collects children in grocery stores.

SALUTE TO PFLAG PARENTS

"What astounds me about PFLAG parents is that they are making huge inroads in the battle against hate and intolerance, but they are just moms and dads. Just folks like you and me. This is where the battle lines are drawn and where the real fight happens. Even though you're not my parents, you touch me deeply when you care so much about your children that you are willing to endure pain and persecution just to make sure they know they are not alone, and they are worth protecting. I love and salute you all."

By Steve Schachlin, Composer/lyricist for "The Last Session", an off Broadway musical.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR-

I hope you missed your November FLYER! They got "lost" in shipment from the printer and by the time we located them we decided it was too late to mail them. Those of you who read it on our Website will see I have repeated much of the November issue in this December issue. My apologies for being lazy.

Speaking of the Website, Mike Kelley, our webmaster, has spent a lot of effort in updating it and you should check it out. We get hundreds of "hits" on our website every month, from all over the world. This is another way we let the world know PFLAG Houston cares about our G/L/B family and friends.

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Don or Susan Upchurch at either 713-995-9777 by phone, to the PFLAG P.O. Box by mail, or pflagwww@insync.net by e-mail! The deadline for the January newsletter is December 14th..



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!*

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Name(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Phone/Fax _____ / _____

Other Information: _____

☐ Check here if this is for address/phone/fax change only.

☐ Check here if you prefer PFLAG mail come in a sealed envelope.

☐ Check here if you do NOT want 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]