

PFLAG Flyer

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

Mar. 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

LOVE MAKES A FAMILY: LIVING IN LESBIAN AND GAY FAMILIES a photograph-text exhibit

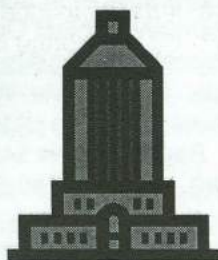
In March and April, our PFLAG chapter is sponsoring a photo-text exhibit that has appeared in numerous cities across the country. The exhibit features 20 diverse families with lesbian or gay members. Many of the families are gay couples with children.



The exhibit opens at Stages Repertory Theater on Tuesday, March 3, and moves to Montrose Library in April. You are cordially invited to the opening reception, hosted by PFLAG at Stages Repertory Theater, 3201 Allen Parkway, on Tuesday, March 3, 5:30 - 7:30 PM.

You're also encouraged to invite others to this event!!!! Please help spread the word to other organizations and individuals. No tickets to sell, no long hours to commit — just a friendly, festive gathering showcasing families like ours to the community.

MAYOR SIGNS ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ORDER *City policy bans bias based on sexual orientation*



Houston's Mayor Lee Brown has signed an executive order banning discrimination in city government based on sexual orientation. Mayor Brown said "I have issued this order because I believe that the city of Houston should not discriminate against anyone," he added "This is the right thing to do." The mayor's action has created the usual "churning" over such issues with talk show commentary and many calls and e-mails to City Hall.

In the end, the majority of the comments to City Hall were supportive of Mayor Brown's action and all but one speaker at the following city council meeting expressed positive support and appreciation to the mayor. Thanks to all of you that made calls, sent letters and went to speak to city council. It is not too late to express your appreciation for our mayor's positive action in support of fairness for all. Call or write the mayor and city council and let them know this issue is important to you and that you support Mayor Brown's order.



Next Meeting March 1st

"Towards A Biblical Theology on Homosexuality"

Reverend Clark Chamberlain, Pastor of the Central Congregational Church, 1311 Holman, will be our speaker for the March 1st general meeting. Rev. Chamberlain is a member of the Presbyterian Supreme Court and is a Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Synod in our area. Rev. Chamberlain was a very popular speaker at our chapter last year and we are fortunate to have him coming back to share his outstanding knowledge and insights. Don't miss this opportunity!

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, February 27th at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

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Maine Repeals Law	6

Schedule of Events

- Mar 1** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- Mar 3** Love Makes A Family Opening and
Reception, 5:30-7:30 pm, Stages
Repertory Theater, 3201 Allen
Parkway.
- Mar 6-8** PFLAG Regional Training
Conference, Tulsa, OK
(See article for information)
- Mar 8** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- Mar 15** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- Mar 17** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet
- Mar 19** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,
7:00-9:00 pm, Christ Church
Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave.

NEXT MONTH

- April** Love Makes A Family Exhibit
Montrose Library
- Apr 5** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- Apr 12** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
- Apr 19** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
- Apr 21** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday March 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 meeting will be held on the third Tuesday of every month! All are welcome. For directions or more information, contact the PFLAG Helpline.

THANKS FOR A GREAT PARTY!

A belated but sincere thank you to everyone who helped with our Winter Party last December. It was a great party with LOTS of wonderful food and the ABSOLUTE BEST people to share it with. Tim Curfman did his usual outstanding job of planning and coordinating, and Susan Upchurch's decorations made the party tables very festive. We owe a special thank you to Alan and Jane Montgomery for providing the Carolers who sang many holiday favorites. If you were not there you missed a good time and we hope you can join us this year. Thanks again to all and here's wishing each of you a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

PFLAG REGIONAL TRAINING CONFERENCE SET FOR MARCH 6-8

PFLAG is offering several regional conferences this year instead of one national gathering. The conference for our region will be held in Tulsa, OK on March 6-8 at the Best Western Trade Winds Central. A student public hearing on safe spaces in schools will be held on Friday, Mar 6th from 7-9 pm at the Schusterman/Benson Library. On Saturday and Sunday, workshops on Safe Spaces in Schools, Strategic Planning, Chapter Development, Project Open Mind, Transgender Issues, Safe Spaces in Religious Communities and HIV/AIDS will be available. Rev. Dr. Mel White will speak at PFLAG Tulsa's Annual Dinner on Saturday night. Make plans to attend NOW! Registration is \$40 per person (Includes 4 meals - Sat & Sun). Call 918-749-5561 for room reservations.

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

Our hearts often know quickly what
our minds find out eventually.

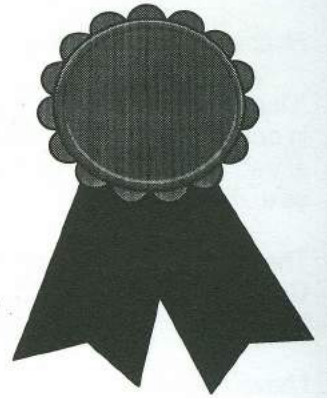
KYLE YOUNG WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Article on Ex-Gay Ministries Wins Top Honors

Press Release from Vice Versa, David Bianco

A Houston magazine's in-depth report on ex-gay ministries won the top prize, and publications in San Francisco and Baltimore won the most awards in their divisions in the first-ever Vice Versa Awards for excellence in the gay and lesbian press, which were announced today.

The Randy Shilts Award for Outstanding Achievement - which comes with a \$250 cash prize and the opportunity for the piece to be reprinted in publications all over the country - was earned by Kyle Young of Outsmart Magazine in Houston, whose piece "The Ex Files: A former follower sheds light on ex-gay ministries" illustrated the struggles of Christian gays and lesbians who join the ex-gay movement.



In awarding "The Ex Files" the top honors out of more than 450 submissions, one Vice Versa Awards judge wrote: "Young showed a willingness to dig for facts and experience beyond the surface. The piece provided fresh insight into a critical area of gay life."

The San Francisco Bay Times won the largest number of awards in Division A (weekly and biweekly publications) with 11 - including three first-place awards (best news article, best health article, and best review). In Division B (monthlies and quarterlies), the Baltimore Alternative won the most awards with seven - including a contest-leading four first places (best health article, best entertainment feature, best review, and best illustration or cartoon).

Other publications winning first-place awards in Division A were Echo Magazine (best comprehensive coverage or investigative report), Metro Weekly (best interview or personality profile), the Washington Blade (best op-ed piece or column), Xtra West (best humorous piece), Frontiers (best entertainment feature) the Gay People's Chronicle (best editorial) and IN Newsweekly (best illustration or cartoon).

Division B, other first-place winners were Outsmart Magazine (best comprehensive coverage or investigative report, best interview or personality profile, and best op-ed piece or column), Our Own Community Press (best op-ed piece or column and best news article), and ACCESSline (best editorial).

One theme that stood out among the top winners was religion. In addition to the Randy Shilts Award winner about ex-gay ministries, a two-part investigative report on the Mormon Church in Echo Magazine took top honors in Division A's best comprehensive coverage or investigative report category and a Metro Weekly interview about homosexuality with an Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox rabbi won Division A's best interview or personality profile.

Other notable winners include the humor pieces "Are Bert and Ernie Gay?" from Xtra West and "Singing a Different Tune" from Our Own Community Press. Of the latter, one judge credited author Michael Thomas Ford's "superb writing, pacing, and emotional/political pull" - calling the piece "one of the best single pieces of gay writing I've ever seen."

Several individual journalists won multiple awards for their work including Randy Shulman of Metro Weekly (six awards), Jeff Ofstedahl of Echo Magazine (four), Ann Rostow of the San Francisco Bay Times (four) and Bruce Mirken of the same publication (three).

The Vice Versa Awards contest was established in 1997 to honor the 50th anniversary of Vice Versa, North America's first lesbian or gay publication (a mimeographed lesbian newsletter produced in Los Angeles by the pseudonymous Lisa Ben). The response to the first-ever contest was extraordinary, with 452 submissions from 52 publications in 25 states, two provinces, and the District of Columbia. Winning publications and contributors will receive certificates, and the Randy Shilts Award winner will receive a \$250 cash award.

The Vice Versa Awards are coordinated by Q Syndicate, the nation's largest content provider to the gay and lesbian press. Judges were drawn from the ranks of talented gay thinkers, mainstream journalists, and journalism professors. They included NLGJA founder Roy Aarons, author and activist Torie Osborn, publisher Barbara Grier, community historians Martin Duberman and Joan Nestle, and journalism professors Larry Gross (Penn), Lisa Henderson (U Mass), and Bob Jensen (U Texas). For categories such as best humorous piece and best illustration, judges included specialists

(Continued on page 5)

"CHOOSING A GAY SON OVER CHURCH"

View Point By Carolyn Martinez Golojuch

Honolulu Star Bulletin, Insight Section, January 10, 1998

"During a recent sermon at St. Andrew Episcopal Cathedral in Honolulu, the Rt. Rev. Richard S.O. Chang addressed fear in our lives, referring to the biblical theme of 'Be Not Afraid.' As I sat in the pew listening, I thought of the new year ahead. Could it be that 1998 will be when everyone in Hawaii is respected and treated with dignity regardless of their sexual orientation?"

The night I sat in the Episcopal church, I remembered why I wasn't sitting in the church of my childhood, a Roman Catholic cathedral. A couple of years ago, I chose love for my gay son over love for the catholic church of Honolulu headed by its current bishop, Francis X. DiLorenzo.

I have no regrets for choosing my son over a church that demands that I sacrifice my son. If I had sacrificed him and my love for him, I would have destroyed the very fiber of our family. In my eyes, I chose love over rules dictated by men who have lost sight of the greatest commandment of all, "Love one another."

I guess that Catholicism taught me about love better than it taught me about hate. For that I am grateful. I have no regrets for leaving the church Bishop DiLorenzo heads. My family is more important than the acceptance of a church or a man in vestments.

Later, in the Episcopal service, during the Prayers of the Faithful, I was touched by the prayer that "there be peace and justice on earth." This prayer was speaking to my hopes for many families in our community and around the world. These families are too many in number, who are fragmented by trying to follow the dictates of misguided churches and segments of our society that mandate hatred for gay relatives. Even when these dogmatic instructions are incased with sugar-coated words, the true meaning is hate and non-acceptance.

The old saying that 'pretty is as pretty does' has much to say when it comes to the double talk that is currently playing into the family dramas related to their relationships with their gay relatives. No matter how many times it is said that they love their relatives, it is meaningless, if their actions aren't loving. If there is silence in the families after relatives share the information that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, then what is really happening in this family is denial.

Silence is not golden when a person's sexual orientation is ignored. This leads to ignoring one element in the makeup of the whole person. The very creation process is also being denied. When families ignore a relative's sexual orientation, we free ourselves to not only deny part of their identity but their equal rights. The silence surrounding a person's sexual orientation also gives some people the freedom to discriminate. Discrimination has nothing to do with traditional marriage or family values.

At the same time that rights are denied to any minority, we send out the message that they as persons are non-existent, not deserving of our respect, and thus, we can deny their rights. To deny rights is to oppress people.

When we consider the oppression of any minority, we are then able to understand the fear they live in.

This fear can be understood when we reflect on the closets people are forced to live in when fear surrounds them.

The time that stands in front of us, gives us the opportunity to create families of love and acceptance. As we face the end of one millennium and the beginning of another, we have a wonderful opportunity.

We live in this unique time in history to unseat fear within our families and work for true love and family values based on love. The choice is ours.

May Bishop Chang's words guide each family struggling with fear to love each of their relatives and overcome fear so they can live in love. May there be peace and justice for all in 1998!

Carolyn Martinez Golojuch is the mother of a gay son and member of PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays."

BARBARA WINSTON TO BE HONORARY GRAND MARSHAL FOR HOUSTON'S 1998 PRIDE PARADE

The Pride Committee of Houston has selected Barbara Winston as the Honorary Grand Marshal for Houston's 1998 Pride Parade. Barbara was nominated by PFLAG Houston and we are pleased to report she was selected. Barbara has been a very active and enthusiastic member of PFLAG Houston for many years and an equally enthusiastic advocate for the civil rights of GLBT individuals.

She was instrumental in the organization and development of our Speakers' Bureau which has touched thousands of people with personal stories of GLBT individual and family experiences. Through Barbara's efforts our Speaker's Bureau has met with businesses, government agencies, churches, social service organizations, universities, teachers and counselors. Barbara has worked tirelessly to keep our speakers trained and available to serve at Exxon Chemicals, Shell Oil, Texas Commerce Bank, Texas A&M, University of Houston, Prairie View A&M and many others.

She also helped organize and implement the "Moms and Dads Go To Washington" trip to lobby for passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), and was an integral part of the "Claiming America's Promise" video which documented this trip. Barbara was also the motivating force to get the gay positive billboards displayed in the Houston area.

Most of all, Barbara is always ready to share with everyone she meets how truly wonderful and special it is to have GLBT family and friends. As the mother of a gay man, she truly celebrates the gift of diversity in her family and is a wonderful example to our community. She has always been a "leader of the parade" for PFLAG Houston and we are PROUD that she has been selected as Honorary Grand Marshal of Houston's 1998 Pride Parade.

NEW FIELD ASSOCIATE FOR PFLAG CENTRAL REGION

Melisa Casumbal Welcomed to New Position

Melisa Casumbal is the new Central Field Associate at the PFLAG national office. Melisa has been a civil rights advocate for over ten years and has focused on Filipino, Filipino American, Asian Pacific Islander, women's and GLBT communities in Washington D.C., New York city and Amherst, Massachusetts. She will work with the Heartlands, Central, Northern Plains, Southern and Great Lakes regions. PFLAG Houston is in the Southern region and our Regional Director is Pat Stone, who lives in Dallas. Welcome Melisa!

(Continued from page 3)

such as comics Robin Tyler and Jason Stuart and Disney animator Andreas Deja.

Award to Kyle Young-

Next year's contest will be expanded to include a division for publications with a national distribution and new categories will be added such as best layout, best special issue, and best photo. The deadline for submissions for the 1997-98 Vice Versa Awards is tentatively set for July 10.

For more information, contact contest coordinator David Bianco at 1-888-383-7911 or Vice Versas@aol.com.

Editor's Note: Congratulations Kyle on this outstanding award! PFLAG Houston is very fortunate to be able to share your time and talents and we are elated that you have received this well deserved national recognition.

MAINE VOTERS REPEAL GAY RIGHTS LAW

By Francis X. Quinn

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) - Maine voters' decision to repeal the state's gay rights law confounded its defenders, who thought opinion polls were in their favor.

One expert said that shows the risks of taking such surveys. "You can't get people to admit on the phone truthfully that they're for discrimination," said Bowdoin College professor Christian Potholm, a pollster who serves as an adviser to Gov. Angus King.

Tuesday's narrow decision made Maine the first state to repeal a gay rights law. Calls trickled in to King's office Wednesday from upset tourists vowing not to come back. Eight left similar messages, "saying ... because of the vote, they no longer feel safe," King spokesman Dennis Bailey said.

But three times as many callers kept up an anti-King barrage, critical of the governor's prominent role as a champion of gay rights. Repeal advocates had urged the rejection of favoritism for what they called an undeserving group. "I think people were concerned about the phrase 'special rights,'" King said.

The law struck down by a "people's veto" would have barred discrimination because of sexual orientation in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit. It was similar to legislation in 10 other states.

In unofficial returns from 634 of 663 precincts, 137,903 voters or 51 percent favored repeal, while 129,925 or 49 percent endorsed the law. Voter turnout was close to 30 percent, higher than officials had anticipated for a single-issue midwinter election.

Just over two years ago, Maine voters rejected an anti-gay rights referendum proposal by 53 percent to 47 percent. And since last May, when King signed the bill that was repealed Tuesday, independent polls had pegged public support for it at about 2-1.

National advocates on both sides portrayed the Maine vote as one battle in a continuing struggle.

"It's a milestone because Maine is a liberal state now and the feeling is if you can do it in Maine it can happen anywhere," said Robert Knight, director of cultural studies for the Washington-based Family Research Council. Knight predicted repeal efforts in other states.

Gay rights proponents brushed off the Maine vote as a temporary setback. "The right wing again used a divisive campaign to sell the lie of 'special rights' at the ballot box," said Kerry Lobel, executive director of the Washington-based National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "We will continue our

efforts to secure civil rights in every state."

At the oceanfront Cliff House in York, hotel owner Kathryn Weare said it was too soon to say whether the vote would affect tourism. The southern Maine coast has "a long history in the performing arts and because of that a great many very fine gay people have come here for a long time," she said.

"Obviously, like the governor, I think that this referendum vote is a step back."

Editor's Note: The vote in Maine was a disappointment for us but it highlights the importance of not portraying our cause as seeking "special" rights. Kerry Lobel said it right when he said "civil" rights. The struggle goes on!

POZ LIFE EXPO AND AM&M WORKSHOP COMING TO HOUSTON *Volunteers Needed*

The POZ Life Expo will be held Friday, April 24th at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel in Houston from 11:00am to 7:00pm. Numerous exhibitors representing products and services that are aimed at improving the lives of people living with HIV will be on hand. Additionally, several educational workshops will be presented including topics on treatment, nutrition, spirituality, and complementary therapies.

On Saturday, April 25th, AIDS, Medicine & Miracles, a national non-profit organization, will present an informative experiential institute entitled "What Holds Promise". The day long workshop will feature a holistic approach to living long and well with HIV. The institute will be held from 10am to 5pm also at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel.

Both programs are free of charge and open to the public.

For more information call 1-800-875-8770

If you can volunteer to help with these activities please contact Sarah Beauchamp through PFLAG Houston at pflagwww@insync.net or through the helpline at 713-867-9020.

THANKS TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED OUR FUND RAISER AT THE OPERA

We had a good showing at the performance of "Billy Budd" by the Houston Grand Opera and enjoyed great desserts and coffee after. Thanks to all of you who bought tickets and to the Houston Grand Opera for making it possible. And once again, a very special thank you goes to Alan Montgomery for planning and implementing this very nice occasion.

PFLAG HOUSTON NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS BEGINS SOON

The term of office for current PFLAG Houston officers will end on May 31, 1998. We are forming a Nominating Committee for candidates for the next year and we need your support. If you have an interest and would like to serve, please let it be known. If called by our Nominating Committee, please say YES. The need is great and the rewards are even greater, even though you don't get paid!

We will continue to grow with new ideas and "fresh batteries" so join us and get "charged-up" for a new year.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR-

I want to thank each of you for supporting me and my family over the last couple of months. Your many expressions of love and concern were more comforting than you will ever know. It was an incredible joy to feel the warmth of the PFLAG family as you shared in the loss of my mother. You have honored her memory and for that I will be eternally grateful.

I regret that I was unable to get out the Flyer in January but thanks to the "award winning" Kyle Young the February issue was completed. Thanks Kyle!

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 April newsletter is March 13th.



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]

March 1998
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KINDNESS OVERCOMES HYPOCRISY

By Stacy Masiero

The Houston Chronicle
Feb. 22, 1998

It happened the year I was saved. Like many saved in their adult years, I was zealous to pay God back — something I could not do and he didn't want me to try to do.

I was living in the Montrose, in a little garage apartment in back of a two-story house. I was in the active business of making a snap analysis of every person I met, only to pronounce him or her woefully lacking when stacked up against what the Bible instructs. The house at the front of the property was home to a gay couple who never missed an opportunity to confirm it.

One of the men, Mark, introduced himself when I moved in and then proceeded to greet me every day after work with a huge grin and a lively discourse on something or other. My response was always just above the level of rudeness. When he was undaunted by my almost overt contempt, I started returning from work an hour later so as to avoid him. Then there he was, standing on my doorstep, inviting me to come by for coffee or to the party he was throwing to celebrate Quebec's attempted secession from Canada or asking me if he could pick up anything for me at the grocery store.

One evening I was trying to figure out how to change a flat tire on my car when Mark materialized within seconds and without hesitation began to replace the bad tire with the little baby spare. He excitedly informed me of his upcoming Independence Day barbecue and pool party and invited me to be his guest. I told him I had a church function

(Continued on page 3)

HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY TO ADD BOOKS FROM PFLAG HOUSTON READING LIST

PFLAG Houston Donation Funds Purchase

On April 9th, in conjunction with the *Love Makes A Family* exhibit at the Montrose Branch library (see page 2), PFLAG Houston will hold a reception from 5:30 - 6:30 pm and present a check to the Houston Public Library. This significant donation by PFLAG Houston will allow the library to place approximately twenty different books from our recommended reading list in ALL thirty-four branch libraries. While the Downtown library has some of these books, the branch libraries do not, and that is where many with questions will first search for information. The Board is very excited about this opportunity to provide these resources to our community. Thanks to Gail Rickey for spearheading this effort and thanks to you who support PFLAG Houston for making these funds available! YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS RECEPTION TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THIS IMPORTANT INITIATIVE.



Next Meeting April 5th

"Annise Parker - More Than a Political Face"

We are extremely fortunate to have City Councilwoman Annise Parker as speaker for our April meeting. Annise was recently elected to an At-Large position on Houston's City Council, campaigning openly as a lesbian. She is an outstanding person and will represent our community well on the city council. Please come to hear her message and express your support and appreciation. Don't miss this opportunity.

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.

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Downtown Houston
- Apr 9** Library Donation Reception
5:30-6:30pm Montrose Branch -
Houston Public Library
4100 Montrose
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2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- Apr 16** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,
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Health Merchant at 27th and
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PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

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MENTORS NEEDED Make Visitors Welcome

If you would like to be a mentor for PFLAG Houston, please sign the mentor sheet when you arrive at the monthly meeting. As a mentor you will greet a first time visitor, show him/her the library, sit with him/her as you feel the need, and attend the small group session with the visitor. You can make a follow-up phone call prior to the next meeting. If you have any questions please call Joan Friedrichsen at 713-473-6030.

LOVE MAKES A FAMILY EXHIBIT Moves to Montrose Library

The *Love Makes A Family* photo and text exhibit will be moving to the Montrose Branch Houston Public Library on April 5th. This exhibit, which is being sponsored locally by PFLAG Houston, features 20 diverse families with lesbian or gay members, many of whom are gay families with children. The exhibit has been on display since March 3rd at Stages Repertory Theater, 3201 Allen Parkway. This exhibit is traveling all over the USA educating the public and supporting the wonderful diversity of humanity. Don't miss it!

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

If you would be loved,
love and be lovable.

Benjamin Franklin

PFLAG OPTIMISTIC CREECH DECISION WILL PAVE WAY FOR MORE DENOMINATIONS TO REACH OUT

PFLAG Mom Testified at Pastor's Historic Trial

PFLAG National Press Release-

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is predicting that more denominations will become open and inclusive of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in the wake of the historic decision in the church trial of Rev. Jimmy Creech, the senior pastor who performed a commitment ceremony for a lesbian couple.

"It's a beacon of hope that more faith communities will reach out to all people, including gays and lesbians," National PFLAG President Nancy McDonald said.

She pointed out that a greater number of families are beginning to ask their church leaders to welcome their gay and lesbian loved ones. One earlier encouraging step, she said, was the U.S. Catholic Bishops' statement last fall urging pastors to support families with gay children.

"Moms, dads, grandparents and others increasingly are looking to their pastors and rabbis to show greater sensitivity to the fact that our gay and lesbian kids deserve to be treated with love and respect," said McDonald who heads the 70,000 household national group.

PFLAG'S Betty Dorr was one of a handful who testified on Creech's behalf at the closed trial in Kearney, Nebraska. A grandmother and parent, Dorr, has a gay son and is a longtime member of the First Methodist pastor's church in Omaha.

Under a new initiative, PFLAG members —across various denominations— are taking creative steps to open dialogue with church leaders countrywide. First-person stories from families who have struggled with the issue in their congregations are available in a new PFLAG booklet, *Beyond the Bible: Parents, Families & Friends Talk about Religion & Homosexuality*. **McDonald can be reached at 918-742-8565; Dorr is also available.**

(Continued from page 1)

to attend that day, making a point of telling him I did not drink, so his having two kegs was not enticing.

Only after he had finished and I was safely back in my apartment did I reflect on the fact that there was no pool on the property we shared.

On July 4, I awoke to voices outside my window, and peeking through the blinds, I saw Mark and his roommate inflating a little pool. I writhed inside. I had plans to go to a picnic, but it wouldn't start until much later.

After I had showered and dressed, I again glanced outside, and Mark's party was already rockin' — the grill was fired up, keg Numero Uno was tapped, and guests were lounging in and around the little blue Smurf pool.

Great. I was trapped. I would be forced to walk right through the middle of his party to get to my car. I was already filled with dread. I decided to leave then, rather than waiting till later, when more people might show up to impede my path.

I slipped out my front door and was surprised to see the elderly woman who lived next door sitting in the stairwell. She was an extraordinary woman whom I liked a lot. I wondered what she was doing on my steps. Surely she was not there for Mark's party. I asked her. She said: "Mark is such a wonderful man. He has been mowing my lawn for as long as I can remember, and he and Greg are always doing repairs on the house for me since my husband died."

Before I could reflect on her statement, I recognized a woman I knew from my aerobics class, leaning against the side of the house farther along my path to my car. She called out to me, and as I approached, I expressed my surprise at seeing her there.

She said: "Oh, John and I have known Mark for years. He tended bar at the place John's band used to play. In fact, we've been driving Mark's car for the last three weeks because we can't afford to get ours fixed right now!" Apparently Mark had been taking the bus to work and back.

I started feeling kind of sick inside, and I didn't know exactly why. At the end of the driveway, as I shoved the key in the car door, I couldn't help noticing someone had washed my car and cleaned its windows. I vaguely recalled seeing Mark with the hose earlier. My sickness turned to sorrow as I began to sob big salty tears that couldn't be stopped. It was the only response I had to the message God was communicating to me.

The Bible teaches many things - what to do, what not to do, hundreds of exhortations on how one should live right. But among the many lessons between its covers, one stands out from the rest, clearly differentiated in its importance to all of us who read, discuss, know and live the Bible: We are told to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. That day, I didn't need to speculate about who was guilty of the sins Jesus hated most of all: hypocrisy and self-righteous pride.

I will never forget that day and the humility I felt as I saw myself for what I really was and saw Mark for what he really was. I was too ashamed to stay there that day, and it's too bad I didn't, because, as he has a reputation for doing, Jesus dropped by that party. I think he was hanging out by the pool with Mark.

FAVORABLE COURT RULINGS CONTRAST WITH LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

WASHINGTON, DC - March 2, 1998 - Recent court rulings in favor of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) rights provided a welcome contrast to the recent disappointing repeal of Maine's civil rights law and slow-going progress in state legislatures. In less than a week's time - February 27 to March 4 - three important court rulings have come down in favor of equality for GLBT persons.

"The courts have once again proved an important safety net in ensuring basic constitutional and human rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people," stated National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) executive director Kerry Lobel.

Today the NGLTF released its latest Legislative Update. The Legislative Update tracks GLBT-related and HIV/AIDS-related bills in state legislatures throughout the country for the 1998 legislative year. This update documents well over 100 pieces of GLBT and HIV/AIDS related bills in 33 states. Attacks against GLBT families in the form of anti-adoption/foster care, anti-marriage and anti-domestic partnership measures were numerous. In addition to legislation, in other state news both the California and Kansas Republican parties adopted virulent anti-gay resolutions. The California resolution goes so far as to equate homosexuality with "incest, sexual child abuse, bestiality and pedophiles."

On the judicial front, on February 27 and Alaska Superior Court rejected the state's request to dismiss a lawsuit filed by two men for the right to marry. Similar to the way the Hawaii marriage case progressed, the judge ruled the State of Alaska must show a compelling interest to prohibit same gender couples from marrying. The state will likely appeal the ruling to the State Supreme Court. If the lower court ruling is upheld, a trial would be held where the state would be made to demonstrate a state interest in order to discriminate against same-sex couples. Also like Hawaii, there is now a measure in the state legislature calling for a state constitutional amendment to restrict marriage. The Hawaii measure passed that state's legislature last year and is set to go before voters this November.

Days later, after the Alaska decision, a New Jersey court came down with a ruling that put yet another dent in the armor of discrimination. On March 2, a New Jersey state appeals court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America prohibition against gay men was a violation of the state's civil rights law which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Then on March 4, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that federal sexual harassment law includes same-sex harassment. This is an important victory as harassment against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons often occurs as a form of sex harassment where men are ridiculed for being "too feminine"

or women for being "too masculine."

These rulings are stark relief to the repeal last month of Maine's civil rights law. The measure was passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Angus King last May. Right wing groups secured signatures to put the issue to a public vote, employing Maine's rarely used people's veto provision. The law was repealed by less than two percentage points on February 10.

The invoking of New Jersey's civil rights law in the Boy Scouts decision highlights the necessity of anti-discrimination laws and the disappointment in the repeal of Maine's law. "These recent decisions further underscore the importance of civil rights laws for our community. Without the law in New Jersey, the court may not have ruled as it did," said Kerry Lobel.

Ten states have laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. They are New Hampshire (1997); Rhode Island (1995); Minnesota (1993); California, Vermont and New Jersey (1992); Hawaii and Connecticut (1991); Massachusetts (1989); and Wisconsin (1982)

The full text of the legislative update with accompanying charts and maps is available at <http://www.NGLTF.org>

PFLAG REGIONAL CONFERENCE *Mel White Speaks to Overflow Crowd*

The Southern Regional Conference of PFLAG was held in Tulsa on March 6-8 and was attended by over 100 chapter members and leaders. The keynote speaker was Mel White who encouraged a crowd of over 200 attending the Saturday night dinner to promote "truth and love relentlessly". White, a gay man, was a ghost-writer for Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell before he came out but he now works for Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a Christian denomination with a primary outreach to the GLBT community. White said "We should see Pat and Jerry ... as victims - victims of misinformation - not as enemies...(and) reach out to them as friends, bringing them truth and love, relentlessly."

The conference included several workshops including a session on starting satellite chapters which was led by our own Jeanne Edmonds. Other workshops included safe spaces in schools and churches, Project Open Mind, legislative advocacy, communications, strategic planning, membership, homophobia, human sexuality, HIV/AIDS issues and transgender issues. The PFLAG National staff organized the conference in cooperation with the Tulsa PFLAG chapter. Thanks to both for all their efforts,

Nancy McDonald spoke to attendees and encouraged everyone to join together as we strive to achieve the mission of PFLAG. Nancy commented that only four chapters had requested information from PFLAG National following the release of the financial audit, noting that she encourages constructive comments from the local chapters and members. She stated that several revisions to the PFLAG By-laws have been proposed and she is hoping that ALL of the PFLAG membership will consider these revisions carefully and express your opinion by voting on these revisions.

GAY RIGHTS SUPPORTERS REGROUPING IN MAINE

By Robert George, Boston Globe Correspondent, 03/07/98

FALMOUTH, Maine - In what was billed as a rally to "speak out against fear and violence," nearly 200 people crowded into a small rural church here this week to denounce the results of a Feb. 10 referendum overturning the state's gay rights law.

The meeting was the first of what gay leaders say will be dozens across Maine in anticipation of an effort to pass a new gay rights law in 2000. They also plan to hold revival-style meetings in favor of gay rights this summer and to lobby for local gay rights laws in towns.

By 51 percent to 49 percent, Maine voters in February repealed a law that would have made it illegal for landlords to deny apartments to gay people, for employers to deny jobs, and for banks to deny credit.

"The Jews weren't the only victims of the Holocaust; gays were, too," Governor Angus King told the crowd at the Falmouth rally, which twice gave him a standing ovation. "This is an ancient and deep-seated fear, and it can only be reversed by education, tolerance, and love."

"The movement is as solid as it ever was," said Mark Sullivan, a board member of the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance, which lobbied lawmakers to pass the gay rights law last spring. But, he added, it needs to focus on getting the average heterosexual Maine resident to know the average gay Mainer.

"We're businessmen, we pay our taxes, we keep our yards mowed," he said. "We take the trash out like you do."

Since the vote, the gay movement's leadership has come under attack, even from supporters. Political observers such as Christian Potholm, a professor of government at Bowdoin College who has worked as a consultant in state gay rights campaigns, said the latest campaign depended too heavily on King.

Gay rights supporters spent nearly \$500,000 on ads showing the governor sitting behind his desk calmly espousing the need for gay rights. What they needed, Potholm said, was a person rural Mainers could relate to, "a gun rack kind of guy."

"We've been dragged down all across the country into the mire of what a horrible, homophobic state this is," Potholm said. "But it isn't our fault, it's the fault of the people who ran this campaign."

The next campaign will have to face the same Christian movement that defeated the law in February. The Christian Civic League headed the petition drive last year that forced a referendum on whether the state's gay rights law should stand.

The rally Thursday night also was held to support Charles Mitchell, a gay psychiatrist who was attacked and beaten recently while jogging in Falmouth. Michael Heath, director of the Christian league, said he thought that aspect of the rally was positive.

The event, he said, would help people realize that all violence is wrong. However, he added, the core issue isn't violence against gays but whether they face discrimination and need special laws to protect them.

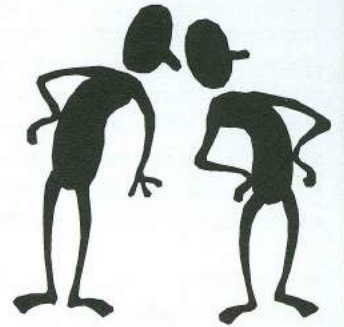
"They are holding a rally for a jogger who was beaten up," he said. "He wasn't fired, he wasn't thrown out of his home, he was beaten up."

But at the rally, a half-dozen speakers said violence and discrimination exist side by side in Maine. Mitchell described his broken jaw and cheekbone and his resulting inability to identify his attackers. One gay man told of having his car vandalized, others of being called "faggot."

Margery Clement of Falmouth explained how her son faced threats and abuse at high school because he is gay. "When I heard about Charlie, it made me feel the heartache all over again," she said. "And I think some things haven't changed."

Jonathan Lee, head of the Maine Speakout Project, which organized the rally at the Falmouth Congregational Church, said more people need to hear from gay men like Mitchell and mothers like Clement. And like many at the rally, Lee sees 2000 as the time for the state to pass another gay rights law. It's an election year, when turnout is likely to be much higher than the 31 percent who cast ballots last month.

Said King: "Ultimately for a law to be successful, the law has to be written in the hearts of the people. What we've learned this past month is that we've got some work to do to write in people's hearts."



This story ran on page B01 of the Boston Globe on 03/07/98.
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NOT SUCH AN ORDINARY PARTY

Sue Null Shares An Experience

For some time now, I have taken time in my adult ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to explain homosexuality to my foreign students, many of whom have little or no idea of the concept. They often respond that they don't know gay people. So I invite these straight students to come to a PFLAG meeting with me. One young woman attended all last fall, hoping to learn information to help her mother in Taiwan understand her other daughter, who is lesbian.

In December, I thought I might pick up 2-3 students to attend; instead, there were eight! Without fail, they all said that everyone they met seemed so ordinary, just like other people...amazing! And they all admitted that their visit had definitely changed their former negative opinions into something more neutral, or even positive.

Here are some of their written comments:

1. (Korean man) "When I was going to the party, I was very afraid of meeting gay people...[snip]...If all of you have prejudice about homosexual person, let's take away it. I really had a good time last Sunday. I will never forget that day."

2. (Korean man) "Before I went to that meeting, I thought that the lesbians and gays looked very different and acted unusually. But I was wrong. They were not different from ordinary people or even me. It was a really good experience in my life."

One Korean girl was also stunned at how "ordinary" everybody was at such an "ordinary" party when she told the class about the visit. A Venezuelan girl took a different approach and responded, "No, they were not ordinary. This was not an ordinary party. At most parties, people talk about superficial things and don't really care about each other. At this party, people expressed their feelings. They cared about each other."

Those who went all said they'd like to come back and one will bring her mother, not because they have gay people in their family, but because they socialize with some. They encouraged the more timid ones to go the next time.

Each of these students may stop and think in the future when someone makes a disparaging remark and perhaps say, "Wait a minute! I have met gay people and they are the same as us!"

Ed. Note: I think "very special" is more appropriate than "ordinary", but in this context "ordinary" is great! Thanks Sue.

SPECIAL APPRECIATION

PFLAG Houston depends on the generosity of our members and friends. The following individuals have recently given special donations for which we are very grateful.

Richard C. Graves (son)

Stephen F. Melcher

Gary Teixeira

Richard J. Bielec

Steven Lambert

Fred and Rosemary Wilson

Richard C Cortez and Thomas M. Archer
In Memory of
Bernie Pelkey

POZ LIFE EXPO AND AM&M WORKSHOP COMING TO HOUSTON

Volunteers Needed

The POZ Life Expo will be held Friday, April 24th at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel in Houston from 11:00am to 7:00pm. Numerous exhibitors representing products and services that are aimed at improving the lives of people living with HIV will be on hand. Additionally, several educational workshops will be presented including topics on treatment, nutrition, spirituality, and complementary therapies.

On Saturday, April 25th, AIDS, Medicine & Miracles, a national non-profit organization, will present an informative experiential institute entitled "What Holds Promise". The day long workshop will feature a holistic approach to living long and well with HIV. The institute will be held from 10am to 5pm also at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel.

Both programs are free of charge and open to the public.

For more information call 1-800-875-8770

If you can volunteer to help with these activities please contact Sarah Beauchamp through PFLAG Houston at pflagwww@insync.net or through the helpline at 713-867-9020.

PFLAG HOUSTON NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS TO BE ANNOUNCED

The term of office for current PFLAG Houston officers will end on May 31, 1998. The Nominating Committee has completed their work and will announce the nominees for our new officers at the April General Meeting. In accordance with our by-laws, voting will take place at the following general meeting in May.

A big Thank You to the Nominating Committee, Blake Weisser (Chair), Pat and Gail Rickey, Gail and Dale Adcock, Kyle Young, Norma Graves, Jim Bianchetta and Susan Upchurch.

And a special THANKS to those who have agreed to serve as our new leaders.

Committees are being formed which can use your talents. Please express your interest and share.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR-

My days as editor of the Flyer end with this issue. It has been a learning experience for me and I have gained a new appreciation for those who do this sort of work regularly. I want to thank all of you for helping me, especially those of you who have prepared articles. This newsletter is read by thousands of people all over the world via our website and it is a privilege to participate in this part of PFLAG's mission. It is my hope that one day people all over the world will celebrate the diversity of our humanity and that unconditional love will guide our thoughts and actions. Please give Stephen Carleton your support as he takes on the Editor duties.

Please send your newsletter ideas and articles to Stephen Carleton, preferably by e-mail to pflagwww@insync.net or by regular mail to the PFLAG P.O. Box. 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: _____

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☐ 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.

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<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]

April 1998
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PFLAG Flyer

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

May 1998

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PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

"IT'S ELEMENTARY" UNDER ATTACK

By Debra Chasnoff & Helen S. Cohen

Parents, educators, administrators, counselors, and policy makers have been sharing copies of "It's Elementary" with their colleagues and community members in the thousands of diverse settings, both nationally and internationally. Since its world premiere nearly two years ago, "It's Elementary" has had a phenomenal impact, creating a tidal wave of activism and public dialogue about dealing with gay and lesbian issues in schools.

But right-wing groups and media, including Traditional Values Coalition, the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America have initiated fundraising drives and anti-gay organizing campaigns, using the film as their call to action.

There have been telethons featuring pirated clips from the film and even a phone-banking campaign by James Kennedy Ministry in Coral Springs, Florida to raise \$400,000.00 to stop "It's Elementary." Most troubling is that we've heard from school district officials who are receiving calls demanding to know if "It's Elementary" is in their libraries or if it is being used for teacher training.

This has obviously caused PFLAG to become very concerned. Information will be available at the next meeting on what steps PFLAG is going to be taken to support the film and also what you can do.

RECORD NUMBER OF GAY DISCHARGED FROM U.S. MILITARY

By Jamie McIntyre & Associated Press

Washington (CNN)- - The Pentagon discharged a record 997 service members for homosexuality last year, officials say. But in a soon to be released report, the pentagon argues that its "don't ask don't tell" policy is working.

The policy allows for gays to serve in the military as long as they keep their sexual orientation private, but punishes those who engage in homosexual acts or take actions that call attention to the orientation.

"There are some indications that there has been an increase as far as some of the people who have declared themselves to be homosexual and have opted of getting out of the military," Defense Secretary William Cohen said Monday. "But in terms of the policy itself, I think it's working."

(Continued on page 3)



Next Meeting May 3rd

Speaker's Bureau Member's Tell
Their Story

Come and hear some of member's of the speaker's bureau tell the story of their own personal journey.

This is an excellent opportunity for people to see and hear the speaker's bureau's presentation that is used to educate the public. It will also provide the perfect setting for new comers to learn what PFLAG is all about.

So if you know someone who has thought about coming to PFLAG or you have been wanting to ask someone to go to a meeting with you. Then this program should prove to be ideal.

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 1st at 12 Noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

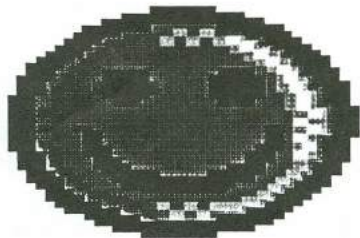
Officer Nominations	2
Thank you to Annise Parker	3
PFLAG-Houston Donation	4
Coretta King Gives Support	4

Schedule of Events

- May 3** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- May 10** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- May 17** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and Broadway in Galveston
- May 19** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet
- May 21** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting, 7:00-9:00 pm, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave.

NEXT MONTH

- June 7** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- June 14** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
- June 16** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting
- June 21** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting



PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday May 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.

MENTORS NEEDED Make Visitors Welcome

If you would like to be a mentor at the monthly meetings, please sign the mentor sheet when you arrive at the monthly meeting. You will greet a first time visitor, show him/her the library, sit with him/her as you feel the need, and attend the small group session with the visitor. You can make a follow-up phone call prior to the next meeting. If you have any questions please call Joan Friedrichsen at 713-473-6030.

PFLAG HOUSTON NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

The term of office for current PFLAG Houston officers will end on May 31, 1998. The following is the current nominations for officer's of PFLAG:

Co- Presidents-	Jeanne Edmonds & Susan Upchurch
Vice President-	Jim Bianchetta
Treasurer-	Gordon Weisser
Secretary-	Sue Null

Nominations are still taking place so if you would like to nominate someone you may do so by Contacting Blake Wisner.

Elections will take place at the May 3 general meeting. During the business portion of the meeting.

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"Those you have loved deeply become a part of you. The longer you live, there will always be more people to be loved by you and to become part of your inner community. The wider your inner community becomes, the more easily you will recognize your own brothers and sisters in the strangers around you." ~ Henri J. M. Nouwen

(Continued from page 1)

He did not elaborate.

The "don't ask, don't tell" policy was hammered out in a 1993 compromise after President Clinton tried to enact his campaign promise of ending the ban on gays in the U. S. military.

But since the policy went into effect in 1994, the number of discharges has climbed: 597 in 1994, 772 in 1995, 850 in 1996, and 997 in 1997, according to the latest Pentagon statistics.

"That's a highly significant number," said Michelle Benecje of the Service Member Legal Defense Network. "Nine hundred ninety-seven discharges under the gay policy would be the highest number of discharges since 1989."

Gay rights groups say the number shows that the military gays remain the targets of "witch hunts" and the improper investigations by overzealous commanders, despite repeated Pentagon assurances.

But the Pentagon says that while there may be isolated cases of commanders going too far, the majority of discharges follow voluntary statements by gays, who are no longer asked about sexual orientation during recruiting.

Dismissal on grounds of homosexuality involves an administrative discharge, which does not carry a bad-conduct stigma.

Sources say that more than half of those discharged declared they were homosexual soon after entering the military. Pentagon officials theorize some may simply have wanted to leave the military.

"We intend to continue to emphasize the fact that this policy should not be abused, there should be no attempt to hunt or seek out those who may be homosexual, and that we intend to strictly enforce the "don't ask, don't tell" policy," Cohen said.

However, sources say the Pentagon plans to issue additional guidelines for gay investigations when it releases its review of the policy later this month.



GOD WITH US

Come celebrate in pride on June 21 at the Wortham Center downtown for the musical *God With Us*. This musical worship event, in its second year, is part of the community outreach ministry of Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection (a Christian church ministering to the gay and lesbian community). There are two services for this event; 11:00 and 2:00. The guest speaker for this event is the riveting and inspiring **Rev. Mel White**, human rights activist and author of *Stranger at the Gate*. More info call MCCR at (713) 861-9149. See you at the Wortham June 21, 1998!

May 1998

DONATION'S TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for the generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate there support.

Dr. and Mrs. J.D. Black
Jennifer Dial
Edward Woo
Dalia Stokes

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects through out the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation, please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

Annise Parker An Inspiration!

PFLAG Houston would like to offer our appreciation for your most recent discussion at our monthly meeting. Your story was one of bravery, truth, self awareness, and love. Many felt their own journeys in the telling of yours. You are an inspiration to us all and a positive gay role model. We are proud to have you on city council and as a friend. We send you and yours many thanks. From our hearts to yours-peace.

TANQUERAY'S® TEXAS AIDS RIDE®

By Sally Shapiro, Rider Representative

Tanqueray's® Texas AIDS Ride® is a seven day, 575 mile bicycling event, expected to raise more than \$6 million, with the net proceeds supporting AIDS related services at 44 AIDS service providers throughout the Lone Star State. The event will bring together 1,800 bicyclist riding from Austin through Houston to Dallas, October 5th to 11th, 1998. Registration of riders, crew and volunteers is currently taking place. For mor information call 713/521-RIDE

PRIDE PARADE

The Pride Parade is fast approaching and once again PFLAG is planning to show there support and pride by participating in the parade.

PFLAG is currently looking for idea's for a float and of course help in design and the building process. This is an important project that gives not only PFLAG members an opportunity to see how much they are loved and appreciated by the gay and lesbian community. It also allows the gay and lesbian community to see parents that do care and love not only there own children but all gays and lesbians.

If you would like to take part or take charge in the design and construction of the float please contact Don or Susan Upchurch at 713/995-9777 or contact a board member.

Page 3

WANTED: PFLAG BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATES

PFLAG Flyer

The Officers of PFLAG are seeking candidates to fill several new and continuing board positions. If you interested in any of the following positions (or if you know of anyone who would be interested), please contact Susan Upchurch at 713/995-9777 or via email at: SusanUp44@aol.com or Jeanne Edmonds at 281/367-6059.

The following positions needs someone, possibly like yourself to take charge.

MEDIA-

This position is responsible for managing various media needs of PFLAG-Houston (e.g., maintain a list of media contacts; establish and maintain rapport with key media representatives' issue press releases; promote PFLAG as a credible source of information, as a resource for interviews and quotes on current topics; etc).

2ND HOUSTON GAY AND LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL

The Museum of Fine Arts will host it's the premiere presentation of Jeff Dupre's documentary, "Out of the Past." Dates for the festival are June 5-7. Call 713/639-7531 for more information.

KING'S WIDOW SPEAKS ON GAY RIGHTS

CHICAGO, March 31 (Reuters) - Coretta Scott King, speaking four days before the 30th anniversary of her husband's assassination, said Tuesday the civil right leader's memory demanded a strong stand for gay and lesbian rights.

"I still hear people say that is should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick tot he issue of racial justice," she said. "But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther king Jr's dream to make room at the table of brother- and sister-hood for lesbian and gay people," she said.

"Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery (and) Selma (Alabama), in Albany Georgia, and St. Augustine, Florida, and many other campaigns of civil rights movement," King said.

She said she saluted the contributions "of these courageous men and women" who fought "for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own.

ADVOCACY-

Review PFLAG-Houston's current advocacy activities, develop (or update) and coordinate the implementation of the chapters advocacy plan.

FUNDRAISING-

Plan and coordinate fundraising events and projects for PFLAG-Houston. Establish short and long-term strategies to maintain secure financial base for the organization; write (or coordinate the writing of) all grants for PFLAG-Houston.

INTERNET COORDINATOR-

Identify credible sources of the internet-based information for PFLAG; oversee the maintenance of PFLAG-Houston's website; identify and foster ways to use the internet to support the achievement of PFLAG-Houston's educational, support, and advocacy goals.

Please let us know if you feel you can contribute to the organizations success by filling any of these openings. By taking on any these task, you will be providing a great service to PFLAG-Houston. Which in turns allows PFLAG-Houston to provide a valuable and needed service to the community.

PFLAG Houston Makes Donation To Houston Public Library System

On Thursday April 9th during a reception at the Freeman Memorial Library, PFLAG Houston made a donation in the amount of \$5,000.00 to the director of the Public Library system. This money will be used to purchase books on gay and lesbian issues for all thirty-six (36) Houston public library locations.

The books were chosen after carefully comparing what the public library currently has available and what PFLAG's own library entails. After much research, each Houston Public Library branch will receive twenty (20) new books dealing with gay and lesbian issues. Until now only a few library branches had limited resources on homosexuality. Some of the branches had no resources available at all. Patrons of the library system will now have available to them accurate and factual information about homosexuality.

This generous act of kindness has taken PFLAG-Houston's mission statement of educating the public, to new heights. The Houston Public Library system is now ready to battle the forces of ignorance and hate with truth and fact about homosexuality. Many praises to the Houston Public Library management team and PFLAG members who made this all happen.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S-

Well as you probably read in last month flyer Don Upchurch is no longer the editor for the new letter. He has dedicated a lot of time into the news letter, but due to the work load involved he asked if we could take over the responsibility.

In case you are wondering who the "we" are my name is Stephen Carleton and the other editor is Jeffrey Raymer. We have taken up the challenge to do the newsletter and are learning quickly all that is involved.

So knowing what we know now, we would like to ask if anyone can assist in contributing articles or passing along information, please do so. There are a lot of articles that come to the chapter via email; sorting through them all is time consuming in itself. We would like to have several people who would like to read these arti-

cles and decide if it is something that we could put into the news letter.

If you are interested in helping us with the news letter or have something you wish to contribute, please call us at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676. You may also email Stephen personally at stephenmc@flash.net. If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd.
Apt # 2938
Houston, TX 77007

Well we hope you enjoyed the first newsletter; we will strive to continue its excellence in the future.

Stay in peace and Grace to you,

Stephen Carleton & Jeffrey Raymer



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: _____

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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.

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<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]

April 1998
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PFLAG Flyer

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

June 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

"UNIFIED, DIVERSIFIED, ELECTRIFIED" 1998 PRIDE PARADE

By Jeffrey Raymer

Yep, it's that time again! We are taking PFLAG's message of support and love to the streets of Houston in the annual Pride parade. PFLAG will have a float in the parade, but we need your help to make our presence known.

Last year in November, I shared the following thoughts at our monthly meeting. I am including those thoughts in this newsletter to help motivate all people, especially parents, to be a part of this fabulous event.

"My name is Jeffrey and I am a gay man. These thoughts that I will be sharing with you today have fluttered around in my mind and heart for many months now. I am so honored to be able to express them to you

(Continued on page 3)

PFLAG HOUSTON ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The annual election of officers took place during the May meeting. The position of Co-Presidents went to Susan Upchurch and Jeanne Edmonds. The position of Vice-President went to Jim Bianchetta, Treasurer went to Gordon Weisser and the Secretary to Sue Null.

Along with the new board member there were also changes and additions to committee chair positions. Both the Board and the Committee Chairpersons will be meeting later in May to plan the new year. Everyone is looking forward to another productive and creative year.

Jeanne Edmonds wanted to relay the following to everyone, "The growth of Houston PFLAG has been phenomenal. To continue the momentum, our membership must be actively involved in our goals and initiatives. We want to place emphasis on reaching more parents and minority groups and continuing to offer educational opportunities for school personnel. We ask our members, friends, and allies to feel free to voice their concerns and to be a part of Houston PFLAG's accomplishments.

We want to thank all the outgoing Board members and Committee chairpersons for their valued time and effort they gave to the chapter. Without their commitment and the dedication of others before them, PFLAG Houston would not be where it is today. They devoted a large amount of time to their positions and helped the chapter make numerous strides. We know they will continue to support PFLAG and assist the new board during the transition phase.



Next Meeting June 7th

At this time the program for the meeting has not been announced. We apologize for this but since this is the start of a new year for PFLAG, changes are taking place within the organization.

One of the changes is that Norma Graves has stepped down as the Programs chairperson. She did a superb job over the past year and we all thank her for that.

In case you are wondering who will be taking on this huge job, it is Bill Littell. Since Bill hasn't had much time to prepare, the program will be a surprise. You can rest assure it will be a worthwhile program, like all of PFLAG's programs.

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, please attend one of our small groups. The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone 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, June 5th, at 12:00 noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Message from the Heart	2
Gay Pride Symbols	3
PFLAG Houston Honored	4
New Board Selected	6

Schedule of Events

- June 7** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- June 14** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- June 21** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- June 16** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet
- June 18** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,
7:00-9:00 pm, Christ Church
Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave.

NEXT MONTH

- July 12** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- July 19** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
- July 26** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
- July 21** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves."

-Henry David Thoreau

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday, June 16th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

Gordon & Blake Weisser
Naurice Grant Cummings Martin
Jon Kevin Gossett
Lisa Marie Singerman
A. G. Ainsworth, JR.

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation, please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEART

For some time, I have felt the prodding of the Holy Spirit to share an experience that I have had of the boundless love of God for each and every one of us.

Several years ago, we lost a dearly loved young man to AIDS. Watching him suffer and die from this most horrible virus was a life-changing experience in itself, but the gifts his life and suffering and death brought to me personally and to our family were life-changing events. However, I felt unwilling at the time to share with my church family the agony we were all going through. Whether I misjudged or not, I do not know; but I do know that I was unwilling to risk the possibility of any more pain at that time. I fear that as a church, we have failed to provide the love and support that God wants us to have towards homosexual men and women in our midst and their families.

I am not a Biblical scholar. I have no knowledge of genetic research other than what I read in papers and magazines. I am nobody special except to those few who know and love

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 1)

Today.

I came to PFLAG three years ago, seeking information for my mother. Little did I know that on that day my life would be forever changed. My emotions were high that first PFLAG meeting. I, for the first time, heard the word "love" and felt the emotion and care behind it when used in reference to a gay person. I could feel the warmth and loving embraces. I tried holding my tears but lost that battle when I heard a mother openly admit, with much conviction, her love and devotion to her gay child. I left that first meeting feeling alive. The love that I felt stayed with me on my long drive home and gave me much comfort. I was moved by all the sharing and honor everyone seemed to express. I knew then that I had found a place where I could be "me", a gay man, and still be respected and most importantly loved. I had found my home, a place and a people I could call my own. I had found a family.

When Moms and Dads went to Washington to lobby for ENDA, I was so taken by the task they were about to do. I was a nervous wreck that whole week. I was concerned for their personal safety. Those courageous people took many risks by going there, but they were on a mission, a mission that their voices would be heard. I am still amazed that those people, my PFLAG Moms and Dads, went to Washington and spoke out for me, Jeffrey Raymer, and others like me. I want to thank you for that generous act of courage, kindness and love. I am forever thankful to all of you. I would like to end by borrowing lyrics from a song sung by Celine Dion, a pop music singer:

PFLAG HOUSTON

- You were my strength when I was weak
- You were my voice when I couldn't speak
- You were my eyes when I couldn't see
- You saw the best there was in me
- You lifted me up when I couldn't reach
- You gave me faith because you believed
- I am many things....BECAUSE YOU LOVED ME!
- You gave me wings and allowed me to fly
- You, PFLAG Houston, are the wind beneath my wings.

STAY IN PEACE AND GRACE TO YOU!"

PFLAG Houston has made a tremendous difference in my life, and I feel that my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and their parents need to know we're here. So put on your best walking shoes and join us at the Pride parade. The parade begins at 9 p.m. on June 27th. Participants should meet at Bering United Methodist Church at 8:00 in the church parking lot. See y'all there!

FACILITATOR TRAINING

If you are interested in being a small group facilitator please contact Enrod Gray at 713/522-7014 or 713/665-1878. A training class is scheduled for mid July.

GAY PRIDE SYMBOLS

This article comes from the Little Rock, Arkansas PFLAG newsletter. It was something that we feel is appropriate during pride month. It was taken from the book, How To Make The World A Better Place For Gays And Lesbians, written by Una Fay.

"BE VISIBLE: DON'T BE AFRAID TO DISPLAY THE SYMBOLS"

"People use symbols as a way of demonstrating unity within a group or to bring attention to causes. In the past, gay and lesbians used symbols, known only to the group, as a means of communication to inform each other without stating it openly (which could have been dangerous) that they were 'in the life.' Fortunately, today many gays and lesbians do not have to rely on such cryptic measures to meet others, but symbols still play an important role. In 1993, I made my first trip to Provincetown, which is a predominately gay town on Cape Cod, and I remember feeling great satisfaction, solidarity, and pride when I saw the rainbow flag displayed throughout the town.

Symbols help generate visibility and represent unity in the struggle for gay and lesbian civil rights. Some people prefer not to display; others feel comfortable displaying symbols that represent their beliefs, affiliations, and commitments.

Rainbow flag: The flag represents unity and has become the dominant symbol for gay and lesbian liberation. Many people find it more appealing than the pink triangle because of the positive connotations. (Red=light, orange=healing, yellow=sun, green=harmony with nature, blue=art, purple=spirit).

Pink Triangle: Gay men in Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear the pink triangle with one point downward to indicate inversion. Activists reclaimed the symbol to bring attention to oppression.

Black Triangle: Lesbians in Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear this symbol.

Freedom Rings: Six rings with the rainbow colors and usually worn on a chain.

Merged gender symbols: The universal gender symbols, two circles each with an arrow for gay men and two circles each with a cross for lesbians.

Lambda: This Greek letter symbolizes the reconciliation of opposites and change. It is used by both gay men and lesbians.

Red ribbon: Although the red ribbon is not associated with homosexuality, many people, including heterosexuals, concerned about AIDS like to wear it.

PFLAG HOUSTON TO BE HONORED

This year at the Eleventh Annual Robert Schwab Awards, an evening benefiting the Texas Humans Rights Foundation, PFLAG Houston will be honored along with seven other Houston individuals and organizations.

These individuals and organizations are being given awards for their dedication to equal rights for the gay, lesbian and HIV community.

PFLAG Houston will be the recipient of the "Outstanding Community Organization Award" for all their hard work and dedication in educating the public, advocacy on gay and lesbian issues, and also for their support by showing unconditional love to all gays and lesbians.

The winner of the Robert Schwab award is Jackson Hicks who will be the guest of honor. The "Community Activist Award" is going to Janine Brunjes & John Michael Gonzalez. The Honorable Annise Parker will be receiving the "Political Leadership Award". "Business Leadership Award" is going to Suzanne Anderson, "Community Health Award" is going to Amigos Volunteers & Education Services. The final award is the "Community Business Award", which will be going to the Greater Houston Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Texas Human Rights Foundation works through high impact litigation to eliminate discrimination in Texas based on sexual orientation or HIV status. THRF has sponsored two legal challenges to the Texas State Sodomy Statute, Baker v. Wade and Morales v. Texas.

2ND HOUSTON GAY AND LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL

By John Kellett

Landmark Theatres, Diverse Works Art Space, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Rice Media Center and Southwest Alternate Media Project are please to present the 1998 Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, an official event of the 1998 Houston Gay and Lesbian Pride Celebration which has a Film Festival summary listed in the Pride Guide.

Movies that may be of particular interest to PFLAG members and friends are:

- "Out of the Past" (MFAH, 6/5, 7:30 pm and 6/6, 1:00 pm) It is the story of a teenager's effort to form a Gay/Straight Alliance at her Utah high school.

(Continued on page 5)

June 1998

PRIDE PARADE FLOAT

In case you haven't heard the parade is, June 27th at 9 pm. Like last year, PFLAG will be meeting at Bering Church prior to the parade to get set up. Before then, the parade float must be built.

PFLAG needs your help in the design and construction of this years float. This is an important project that gives not only PFLAG members an opportunity to see how much they are loved and appreciated by the gay and lesbian community, but also allows the gay and lesbian community to see parents who do care and love not only their own children but all gays and lesbians. It is a perfect way to spend time with your friends and something that will be rewarding.

If you can take part in the design and/or construction of the float or want to participate in the parade, please contact Don or Susan Upchurch at 713/995-9777. We need all the help we can get to make this another successful year.

A PFLAG MOM AT PRIDE PARADE

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

They screamed and they shrieked
and they cheered us as we passed
yelling thank you, it's great that you care!

Loudest of all and clearest of all
were the screams that emerged from the eyes
of the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them who
watched as we marched down the street.

I carried a sign that stated most clear
my love for my son who is gay.

She stared at my sign, piercing my heart with her pain.
I left the parade and moved to her side.
I held her in both my arms.
Her sobs were intense and I tightened my grip
As she whispered her secret to me.

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

There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
looking for parents they'd lost.
There were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them
but only a handful of us.

Author unknown: San Diego Pride Day 1992

Page 4

(Continued from page 4)

- "American Cowboy" (MFAH, 6/6 7:30 PM and 6/7, 5:00 PM) A highly personal documentary about Gene Miku- lenka, a prize-winning gay professional rodeo cowboy liv- ing in the Houston area. Gene and others involved in making the film are expected to be present.

- "Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End" (Rice, 6/13 and 6/14 7:30 PM) A documentary of the late gay author and poet whose autobiography, "Becoming A Man", won the National Book Award. The filmmaker, Monte Bramer, will be at both the screening and the closing party.

For further information visit the festival website at: www.neosoft.com/~travism/filmfest.htm You can also call the Festival Hotline at 713/914-5037.

GOD WITH US



Come celebrate in pride on June 21 at the Wortham Center downtown for the musical, *God With Us*. This musical worship event, in its second year, is part of the community outreach ministry of Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection (a Christian church ministering to the gay and lesbian community). There are two serv- ices for this event; 11:00 and 2:00. The guest speaker for this event is the riveting and inspiring **Rev. Mel White**, hu- man rights activist and author of *Stranger at the Gate*. For more info call MCCR at (713) 861-9149. See you at the Wortham on June 21, 1998!

GLSEN'S FOURTH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE

GLSEN is currently planning its Fourth annual Leadership Training Institute (LTI). It is set for July 12-18 at Emory University's Atlanta, GA campus. They are expecting 100 GLSEN chapter organizers to attend.

This is the fourth year GLSEN has held the LTI and they consider it by far their most important event. The LTI fac- ulty will consist of about a dozen GLSEN staff members, chapter leaders, past participants, experienced activist in the LGBT movement, private industry consultants, and faculty from the nation's top business schools.

If you are interested in attending, the deadline is June 11th. Financial aid is available but must be requested in advance. If you would like to apply or wish to receive more information, please contact Deidre Cuffee-Gray, Deputy Field Service Director at (212)727-0135 extension 110 or via email at dcuffee-gray@glsen.org

TANQUERAY'S® TEXAS AIDS RIDE®

By Stephen Carleton

I spoke with Eric Epstein, Ride Service Manager here in Houston about the ride. He told me that as of May 8th there were close to 900 riders registered, of which 200 are from Houston. Mr. Epstein sent me the following information outlining the ride itself and a little background on the AIDS Ride.

Tanqueray's® Texas AIDS Ride® is a seven-day, 575 mile bicycling event expected to raise more than \$6 million, with the net proceeds supporting AIDS-related services at 44 AIDS service providers throughout the Lone Star State. The event will bring together 1,800 bicyclists riding from Austin through Houston to Dallas, October 5th to 11th, 1998. We are currently registering riders, crew and volunteers.

Tanqueray's® Texas AIDS Ride® is a bicycling ride, not a race. Each rider will travel at his or her own pace throughout the Texas countryside. Riders will pass by streams and fields, through country towns and downtown Houston, and past miles of farmland before arriving in Dallas for a moving Closing Ceremony.

The ride is fully supported with catered meals, five daily water and snack stops, hot showers, comprehensive medical and mechanical services, and tents for camping. The AIDS Ride "mobil city" which supports not only the 1,800 bicyclists but also hundreds of volunteers that make the Ride possible, includes more than 100 support vehicles and 1,500 tents. The "mobil city" travels with the riders and is erected every day before the riders arrive at camp and is torn down every morning after the riders depart for their day's journey.

The riders, most of whom are not athletes, are committed to not only training to complete the ride, also to meeting their fund-raising goal. To participate, each rider agrees to raise a minimum of \$2,700 in donations before the ride. Once they register, to assist them in meeting their goal, special fund-raising packages are provided that include fund-raising tips, sample fund-raising letters and a step-by-step guide on how to host a fundraising "house party."

The ride is not easy. For most participants, it is an opportunity to explore personal limits, to learn that they are capable of accomplishing more than they ever dreamed possible, just as ending the AIDS crisis will require us to dream, then accomplish, the impossible.

In just four years, 13 American AIDS Rides® have grossed \$70 million, with more than \$40 million returned to our beneficiaries to provide services directly to people living with AIDS. This makes the American AIDS Ride® the most successful AIDS fundraising event in history. We are excited and proud to bring this

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

event to Texas.

For more information call 713/521-RIDE."

There are also opportunities to be a supporter of this event without riding. Here are just a few things that someone can do locally. They would like people to give just five hours a month to help make the AIDS Ride a success. Some of the areas that might be appealing to you are, making phone calls to riders with information on upcoming events, and the Speakers Bureau, (yes, like PFLAG they to have a speakers bureau and need members.) The bureau speaks at fund-raising parties and helps riders meet their pledge goals. If you like planning things, then you can be a Training Ride Leader. This requires you to be a cyclist but not a professional. For those who like to meet new people, you can be a HOV (Houston Outreach Volunteer) HOV's criss-cross Houston to find fresh faces who want to ride.

If you want to help make the AIDS Ride a huge success, give them a call and offer your talents and support. Again the number to call is 713/521-RIDE.

(Continued from page 2)

me. I am just another mother, and one trying very hard to be a good Christian. But One who knows me very well and loves me very much has shown me that we are All his children, and that we are All acceptable to him just as we are.

My father taught me, while he lived, not to judge anyone. That was God's job, he said. He also taught me that the Bible was written by plain, very ordinary men, just like himself, who were trying their best to convey God's message as they understood it. And he taught me that it was not wrong to question what I had read and heard about God, but to go to God directly for guidance.

My Heavenly Creator continues to teach me the same thing.

—Nita Heard – a PFLAG mom



NEW BOARD AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Joining the new officers and anxious to make their contributions to the cause is a fresh new team of PFLAG Board members and Committee Chairpersons. They are:

Board Position/ Committee Chair	Candidate	Board Position/ Committee Chair	Candidate
Membership	Jim/Marge Bianchetta	Helpline	Jane Smith
Support Groups	Enod Gray	Mentors	Joan Friedrichson
Library	Bob/Paula Long	Programs	Bill Littell
Community Publicity	Roger Donley	Media	Kyle Young
Scholarships	Sherri Stevens	Youth Advocates	Blake Weisser
Advocacy	Open	Internet Coordinator	Cindi Murphy
Newsletter Production	Stephen Carleton Jeffrey Raymer	Speakers Bureau	Mary K Jones Barbara Winston
Fundraising/Grants	Open	At Large:	Dick/Norma Graves
Volunteer Coordinator	Open		Alice Wilson
Database Management	Tim Granger		Charlie Haynes
Newsletter Distribution	Nancy Camp		Ninh Dao

Thanks
of you

your time and energy to PFLAG. It is the hard work and creativity of the various PFLAG volunteers that makes our organization as strong as it is.

to each
for giving

If anyone is interested in any of the "open" positions or if you know someone who might be interested, please contact any of the officers or call the helpline.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

We hope you are "glowing" with pride by now, after reading your Pride newsletter. We both are very proud of doing this newsletter. The personal satisfaction that comes from, knowing we have made a difference in someone's life, by the words we share. We hope you are proud too! June is pride month and what an exciting time it is! There are many events going on in the community, but to many too mention here. Please check the Pride guide for more fabulous events. If you are interested in helping us with the newsletter or have something you wish to contribute, please call us at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676. You may also e-mail Stephen personally at stevenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey



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!

Names): _____

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

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<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

THOUGHTS OF PAST PRIDE PARADES

BY KATHY WHITMIRE

I have been privileged to be able to be a part of the Pride Parade for 6 wonderful years. I must say that it was with great trepidation and much mustered courage that I went to my first. But from that first day when Henry (my husband) dropped me off at Dr. Sinclair's I was hooked (Dr. Sinclair's house was the rallying place for the marchers). Everyone was so friendly and helpful. Everyone that we met was smiling and the air was just electric. I had no idea what to expect, and I must admit that my mind was conjuring up all sorts of things. Much to my surprise everything would go off without a hitch.

We all walked together to the area that we were scheduled to start from. That year we were right in with the first few groups. We all had signs and wore our PFLAG T-shirts. I think someone like our angel in residence Barbara Winston (who was this year's grand Marshall) brought us some noise makers and we piled into a huge truck and we were off.

It was one of the most thrilling experiences I have ever had. As we slowly moved down the street the faces of the people I saw were so varied it was really moving. They were happy and holding hands, some with arms around each other. Some on tops of buildings, others in lots sitting on their cars. There were people everywhere! Some smiling, some crying as we passed. Many in our group that were marching before us went into the crowd and hugged them. They invited them to PFLAG.

(Continued on page 2)

SAFE SCHOOLS SUPPORT GROUP STARTED AT PFLAG

A new support group for people trying to deal with school related issues began meeting on Sunday June 7, 1998.

This group is for anyone who is in need of support on issues related to schools and education and for anyone who wants to provide support. The group's focus will be to "Making Schools Safe" for both students and educators, including issues of discrimination against people who are different.

The objectives of the group will be to:

(Continued on page 4)



Next Meeting July 12th

Guest Speaker: Dr. Robert McLaughlin

The new program director, Bill Littell, was delighted to announce that Dr. Robert J. McLaughlin has agreed to present a program for this month's meeting. He will be speaking on *Dimensions of Coming Out: Process and Family Responses*.

Dr. McLaughlin is a Clinical Psychologist who has given much time and energy to PFLAG. His previous presentations have been thorough, well-documented, informative AND-more importantly-**HELPFUL!**

This will be another great program and we hope to see you there.

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, please attend one of our small groups.

The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone 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, June 5th, at 12:00 noon. She can be reached at 713-995-9777 or via email at SusanUp44@aol.com.

Here's what's inside...

Adoptions by Gays Attacked	3
Sen. Lott Shows Ignorance	3
Famous People With Gay Sons	4

Schedule of Events

- July 9** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,
7:00-9:00 pm, Christ Church
Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave.
- July 12** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- July 12** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite
Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- July 19** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- July 21** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet

NEXT MONTH

- August 2** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- August 9** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite
Meeting
- August 13** PFLAG Board Meeting
- August 16** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
- August 18** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

*"Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle
with yourself. You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees or the stars; you have
a right to be here."
~from Desiderata*

July 1998

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday, July 21st, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

William Gilmer, M.D.
Barbara & John Paige

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

(Continued from page 1)

As the group made its way down the parade route, I began to recognize people that I knew and loved from various places in my life. They seemed so thrilled to see me there; and I too was thrilled to be there. One young girl chased the truck and handed me a silk rose with tears rolling down her cheeks. All because I came and showed them that I and all of PFLAG understood and cared for them.

I still have that rose and I haven't missed a parade since! All those things that my mind conjured up never did happen, nor did they happen the next time. The next year Henry decided he'd like to go with me.

Each time has been a great thrill for us. I know from the love (that I feel) from the crowd that it means the world to them for us to be there. They love those vivid, wild and crazy floats every year, but we (PFLAG) get the loudest and longest cheers. I encourage all of you whether it is your first meeting or your fiftieth to join us. Even working on the float in the hot sun was fun last year. We had a great time and it was beautiful. We (also) won a huge trophy. So, come on out and join us (next year). The larger our group is the more we show the gay community and society at large that we support and defend our kids. They are our PRIDE!!!

THANK YOU KATHY!

Page 2

Adoptions by Gay's Under Attack

By Rosemary Wilson

Jane Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian/ Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, held a meeting May 2nd in Austin to address Rep Warren Chisums' upcoming legislation.

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The Senate Majority leader, Trent Lott (R-MS), showed how an utter lack of knowledge can be a dangerous political thing.

During an interview with the Conservative cable TV talkshow host, Armstrong Williams on June 15. Senator Lott was asked if homosexuality is a sin. "Yes, it is," Lott responded, "... in America right now there's an element that wants to make that alternative lifestyle acceptable. You still love that person and you should not try to mistreat them or treat them as outcasts." In my opinion the last sentence sounds like political fluff in an vain attempt to not come off as a completely insensitive person. I will also sleep so much easier knowing Sen. Lott doesn't consider me an outcast. As his response continues, he allows more of true colors to be seen.

Lott continues, "You should try to show them a way to deal with that problem, just like alcohol [a problem for his own father, as he described] ... others have a sex addiction or are kleptomaniacs. There are all kinds of problems and addictions and difficulties and experiences of this kind that are wrong. But you should try to work with that person to learn to control that problem." I was amazed the Sen. Lott did not go on to compare gays and lesbians to drug addicts and child molesters. The interview will be broadcast on the America's Voice network.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC, the largest national gay and lesbian advocacy organization) was quick to note that such beliefs might explain Lott's continued unwillingness to schedule the Senate debate on confirming openly gay James Hormel to serve as ambassador to Luxembourg. After making such comments one has to wonder if it will ever come to a debate. Hormel has been approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (in the absence of its chair Jesse Helms) in November, and by Luxembourg itself even earlier. Yet even with these approvals Sen. Lott is preventing the governmental process from taking place by not allowing the issue to go to the floor for a debate and vote.

On June 16 Hormel supporter Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) called for immediate debate on the Hormel nomination in order "to clear the air with honest discussion," Wellstone is concerned that if a delay continues, "the climate will become increasingly polarized, increasingly poisoned."

Planet Outs gives an example of the polarization Well-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

stone is concerned about by using Texas's very own Dick Armey (R) who is the House Majority Leader. Armey is one of several leading Congressional Republicans that met with religious right leader Pat Robertson after Robertson gave warning that a display of rainbow flags would bring down hurricanes and other disasters on Orlando, Florida. Armey--told reporters that the Bible considers homosexuality a sin and that, "My faith is very important to me."and " ... I do not quarrel with the Bible on this subject."

After learning of Lott's remarks, HRC immediately wrote to his office asking for a chance to give him some education about gay issues. HRC political director Winnie

Stachelberg said his "comments are out-of-step with the American people and prevailing medical and mental health opinion," citing polls finding a majority opposing discrimination, the 25 years since the American Psychiatric Association ceased to consider homosexual orientation per se a mental disorder, and last year's American Psychological Association resolution refuting the efficacy of therapies designed to change sexual orientation, and a growing body of medical evidence suggesting a biological basis for sexual orientation. Stachelberg further described Lott's remarks as "in-step with James Dobson and his extreme right-wing rhetoric." Dobson is the leader the religious right group known as Focus on the Family, based in Colorado.

Lott's statements regarding homosexuality are surprising more for their frankness than for their content. Lott has never been a supporter of gay rights. He actively opposed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act when it came to the Senate floor in September 1996, describing it as "part of a larger and more audacious effort to make the public accept behavior that most Americans consider dangerous, unhealthy or just plain wrong" The measure was defeated 50-49. For something that is supposedly consider wrong by most American, then why was the vote so close?

I conclude with the following statement Nancy McDonald, President of PFLAG National released, "As a mother, as a grandmother, as a proud American I would like to say one thing plain and simple: it is remarks by Sen. Lott that reflects the kind of attitude that feed the harassment -- and physical violence-- of our gay and lesbian loved ones.

My family, and tens of thousands of other families nationwide who belong to PFLAG, would like to remind Sen. Lott that he represents not only the people in his state, but all of us in America.

We strongly urge Sen. Lott to care about all citizens, including our sons and daughters, who are entitled to all rights, privileges and protections that this great country offers.

29 FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO HAD GAY OR BISEXUAL SONS

- 1 Lady Nancy Astor (1879-1964), British stateswomen
- 2 Marcus Aurelius (121-180), Roman emperor and philosopher
- 3 Josephine Baker (1906-1975), U.S. singer and dancer
- 4 Catherine de' Medici (1519-1589) queen of France
- 5 Anthony Eden (1897-1977), British prime minister
- 6 Edward I (1239-1307), king of England
- 7 Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204), queen of England
- 8 Frederick Wilhelm I (1688-1740), king of Prussia
- 9 Elliot Gould (b. 1938), U.S. actor
- 10 Robert Guillaume (b. 1937), U.S. actor
- 11 Henry II (1133-1189), king of England
- 12 Laura Z. Hobson (1900-1986), U.S. writer
- 13 Russell Johnson (b. 1925), "The Professor" on TV's *Gilligan's Island*
- 14 Stanley Kramer (b. 1913), U.S. film director
- 15 Alfred Krupp (1812-1887), German munitions manufacturer
- 16 Tommy Lasorda (b. 1927), U.S. baseball manager
- 17 Roy Lichenstein (b. 1923), U.S. painter
- 18 Louis XIII (1601-1643), king of France
- 19 Robert Macneil (b. 1931), Canadian-U.S. television news anchor
- 20 Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587)
- 21 Joseph Papp (1921-1991), U.S. theatrical producer
- 22 Phillip II (382-336 B.C.) Macedonian king
- 23 Ptolemy III (266-221 B.C.) king of Egypt
- 24 Oral Roberts (b. 1918), U.S. evangelist
- 25 Edmond Rostand (1868-1918), French playwright
- 26 Phyllis Schlafly (b. 1924), U.S. conservative activist
- 27 Barbara Streisand (b. 1942), U.S. entertainer
- 28 William the Conqueror (1027-1087), king of England
- 29 Loretta Young (b. 1913), U.S. actress

(Continued from page 1)

1. Provide support to anyone: parent, student, or educator (teachers, counselors, coaches, health professionals, administrators, etc.) who are dealing with issues which are not making the Houston area schools safe for all, whether student or educator.

2. Provide support for those who are dealing with their own issues with the schools, not advocacy or outreach.

The group meets on the same Sunday PFLAG-Houston holds their monthly meeting, immediately following the general meeting and break. Please refer to the calendar for the next meeting.

A trained PFLAG-Houston facilitator is responsible for seeing that this support group remains focused on support. Resource and informational material will be available.

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(Continued on page 4)

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

We hope all of you had a fabulous PRIDE month and a birth of July celebration like no other. We all have a lot to celebrate. The August newsletter that is being planned will focus on "back to school" and reflections on the PRIDE PARADE. We are asking any parent, student, educator or friend to write their personal stories of what it was/is like to go through school or their experience of the pride parade. We get articles from other chapters, but would really like to spotlight our own members and friends. Your story could just be a huge blessing to someone else!

To all our PFLAG Dads, a belated heartfelt wish for a Happy Fathers Day. If you are interested in helping us with the newsletter or have something you wish to contribute, please call us at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676.



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.

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

Join us in our mission and...

...Be a part of Our Rainbow!

You may also e-mail Stephen personally at stevenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey

Be a Part of Our Rainbow!

Names): _____

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
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BREAK OUT THE BLACK TIE!

By Tim Curfman

P-FLAG Houston does one major fundraising event a year, the Black Tie Dinner. This is one of the most fun annual events around, and also provides the majority of the annual operating budget for P-FLAG Houston. The Black Tie Dinner will be on Saturday, November the 7th, from 7:00 PM until midnight, at the J. W. Marriott Hotel Ballroom. Cocktails start at 7:00 PM. Dinner starts at 8:00 PM. There is a silent auction, live entertainment, and dancing until midnight. It is truly a celebration with your P-FLAG family.

This year, other fund-raising organizations have almost completely bought out the Black Tie dinner. The Black Tie Dinner organizers fully expect to be sold out in the next couple of months. I have reserved seven tables by the end of August to be able to hold them. Last year, we sold 84 tickets and raised over \$13,800.00 through the Black Tie dinner. We could easily lose the opportunity to raise this amount again if we do not get orders in for our tables.

Your 1997 Black Tie contributions enabled us to do some very worthwhile projects. We made a \$5,000.00 donation to the Houston Public Library System to place constructive books on homosexuality in all of Houston Public Library branches. We used your donations to underwrite "Healing the Hurt '97 - An Educator's Conference", which was attended by 159 educators, counselors, administrators.

I will be taking orders for tickets at the August 2nd P-FLAG monthly meetings. Tickets are \$150.00 apiece. You can also purchase

(Continued on page 3)

HATE CRIMES HURT FAMILIES

Planetout Staff

Saying, "hate crimes hurt families," Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Executive Director Kirsten Kingdon urged the U.S. Congress to support the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998 (HCPA). This act would make a crime motivated by a victim's sexual orientation a federal crime.

"As a mother of two sons - one gay and one straight - I am painfully aware that our gay family members and friends are especially at risk to be victims of a hate crime," said Kingdon, who heads the 400-plus chapter group.

"What parent wants a child to suffer that way?" she asked. "What parent wants to receive a call in the middle of the night - as PFLAG moms and dads do - to hear that their child has been attacked, or even murdered, due to their sexual orientation?"

(Continued on page 4)



**Next Meeting August
2nd**

SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATION

PFLAG Houston in conjunction with HATCH, will be officially awarding this years college scholarships to the lucky recipients.

This year PFLAG Houston will be giving out more scholarships than they ever have, not only in the number of scholarship but also in dollar amounts. This was due to the joining of HATCH in the program, plus a very large private donation to the scholarship program.

The recipients of the scholarships will also be sharing their own personal stories of what it is like being openly gay at their age and while still in high school.

So please come and be a part of the wonderful event and show your support to these gifted young people.

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, please attend one of our small groups.

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Here's what's inside...

Anti-Gay Billboards	2
Ex-Gay Newspaper Ads	3
Victory In High School	4
Unexpected Friend	5

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- Sept. 15** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting
- Sept. 20** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"To behave with dignity is nothing less than to allow others to freely be themselves."

~ Sol Chaneles

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ANTI-GAY BILLBOARDS

Planetout Staff

Four Wisconsin cities will observe G/L/B/T Pride this month with message that the fight for liberation is far from over writ large over their heads.

"Homosexuality is not a family value. Homosexuality is a sin!" is the message of five billboards scheduled to be posted June 17 in the Wisconsin cities of Beloit, Madison (which gets two), Middleton, and Monroe, paid for by the Monroe-based Wisconsin Christians United (WCU), the vehicle for longtime anti-gay activist Ralph Ovadal. The billboards were timed specifically to counter Lesbian and Gay Pride Month, "to reverse the tide of evil that's infiltrated our country," in Ovadal's words. He said, "We're hoping this will embolden people who believe, as we do, that homosexuality is a perversion and a sin against God. We're also hoping homosexuals will see the signs and turn from their wicked ways.... These are dark times that we live in. Christians need to battle against evil, so that we can live in a world that's not taken over by these sexual perverts." WCU's goals include re-criminalizing homosexual acts -- an uphill battle in Wisconsin, which in 1982 became the first state to

(Continued on page 3)

PUPPIES FOR SALE

~ AUTHOR UNKNOWN

A store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read "Puppies For Sale". Signs like that have a way of attracting small children, and sure enough, a little boy appeared under the store owner's sign. "How much are you going to sell the puppies for?" he asked. The store owner replied, "Anywhere from \$30 to \$50." The little boy reached in his pocket and pulled out some change. "I have \$2.37," he said. "Can I please look at them?" The store owner smiled and whistled and out of the kennel came Lady, who ran down the aisle store followed by five teeny, tiny balls of fur. One puppy was lagging considerably behind. Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy and said, "What's wrong with that little dog?" The store owner explained that the veterinarian had examined the little puppy and had discovered it didn't have a hip socket. It would always limp. It would always be lame. The little boy became excited. "That is the puppy I want to buy." The store owner said, "No, you don't want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I'll just give him to you." The little boy got quite upset. He looked straight into the store owner's eyes, pointing his finger, and said, "I don't want you to give him to me. That little dog is worth every bit as much as all the other dogs and I'll pay full price. In fact, I'll give you \$2.37 now, and 50 cents a month until I have him paid for." The store owner countered, "You really don't want to buy this little dog. He is never going to be able to run and jump and play with you like the other puppies." To his surprise, the little boy reached down and rolled up his pant leg to reveal a badly twisted, crippled left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the store owner and softly replied, "Well, I don't run so well myself, and the puppy will need someone who understands!"

(Billboard's continued from page 2)

enact civil rights protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation. The group has for years regularly protested gay pride events, openly gay legislators, and gay-friendly clergy, primarily by means of distributing pamphlets.

Billboards have rarely been posted with gay-friendly messages, and when they have, have often become targets of vandalism. Famed guerilla artist Robbie Conal helped West Hollywood, California activists place a "Freedom to Marry" sign at the beginning of this year. The Houston, TX chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays was able to post tolerance messages in their city in 1996, which had originally been used in San Diego, California to catch the eyes of delegates to the Republican National Convention. Their messages included, "Someone You Know and Love is Gay," "Gay. Not Gay. Does It Really Matter?" and "Millions Can't Share in the American Dream, Just Because They're Gay." (www.planetout.com)

EX-GAY NEWSPAPER ADS

A series of three ads placed in U.S. national newspapers at a cost of \$200,000 by a coalition of 15 Christian conservative organizations to promote the idea that gays can go straight through prayer is now complete. The first ad in the so-called "Truth in Love" campaign appeared in the "New York Times" on July 13; the second appeared in the "Washington Post" on July 14 and the third in the sports section of "USA Today" on July 15. The effort marks a new level of cooperation among the religious right groups involved, and at least some have coordinated anti-gay fund-raising mailings with it.

Although the largest of the sponsoring groups, the Christian Coalition, denies that any political partisanship is involved, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) is praised for having declared homosexuality a sin in a televised interview, and most observers believe that the ads are designed in part to support Republicans campaigning on anti-gay platforms. Openly gay U.S. Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA) said, "Homophobia is losing the cultural war, so they are doing this to try to pump up their side in the political arena."

It's also probably no coincidence that the timing of the ads leads up to the anticipated introduction by Congressman Joel Hefley (R-CO), of an amendment to the major Treasury Postal Appropriations bill, which would serve to undo Democratic President Bill Clinton's recent executive order prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in civilian federal employment.

Under the headline, "Standing for the truth that homosexuals can change," the July 14 ad in the "Washington Post" featured a photograph of a crowd of presumed "ex-gays" saying they are now heterosexual thanks to "God's healing love." The text has them saying, "We're standing for the truth that homosexuals can change" and thanks Lott, football star Reggie White (who insulted not only gays and lesbians but every racial group in the course of a recent address to the Wisconsin state legislature, but apologized to everyone ex-

(Black Tie continued from page 1)

tickets over the phone with a VISA or MasterCard by calling me at (713) 869-1890. You can also send a check made out to "The Black Tie Dinner" to :

Tim Curfman
1139 Allston
Houston, TX 77008

Please include any seating preferences that you might have. We should have no problem getting people seated with their friends at this early stage. Thank you for your support of P-FLAG Houston.

HISTORIC VICTORY INVOLVING ANTI-GAY HARASSMENT AT HIGH SCHOOL

By Melisia Casumbal (PFLAG)

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is hailing the historic agreement between the U.S. federal government and an Arkansas public school system as an important step towards protecting lesbian and gay youth in schools across the country.

The agreement-between the U.S. Education Dept.'s Office of Civil Rights and Fayetteville Public Schools says that, the Arkansas school district must take specific steps to handle various forms of sexual harassment, including "sexual harassment directed at gay and lesbian students". According to the agreement which was sent to the family's legal counsel, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, on June 17.

It came in response to a complaint brought by an openly-gay Fayetteville student, Willi Wagner, and his parents who charged that the local school system had failed to act after he was harassed repeatedly and beaten up by a gang of students.

"I see this as a very powerful tool to help parents, just like us, ensure there is a safe school environment for our children". Willi's mother, Carolyn Wagner, who with her husband Bill, worked closely with PFLAG (of which they are members) since 1996 to meet with federal officials on the issue.

"A mother has certain dreams for her children, and they always include that they be happy, healthy and safe," Wagner said. "Now, parents of gay and lesbian children have some kind of recourse."

Under the agreement, the Fayetteville public school system must overhaul its policies and procedures as well as train staff and administrators.

This is the first time that new Title IX guidelines, issued last year, have been applied to sexual harassment directed at a gay or lesbian students. Title IX, of the Education Amendments of 1972, is a federal statute that bars sex discrimination, including sexual harassment. Schools must be in compliance with Title IX to receive federal funding.

"We are relieved to hear that the U.S. Department of Education is now making it clear to schools that they have an obligation to protect all of our children," said PFLAG Executive Director Kirsten Kingdon.

As a parent and community-based group, PFLAG fills a special niche in the work to make schools safer for gay and lesbian youth. Many of PFLAG's 400-plus chapters are engaged in "safe schools" activities at local high schools. These activities include teacher training on gay and lesbian youth and providing scholarships to gay and lesbian students.

FROM THE HEART

By Paulette Goodman-DC chapter

(This speech was given on April 18, 1998 in Washington D.C. for Youth Pride Day.)

"I am really honored to be here today and to honor Youth. It's such a wonderful thing to do. They're our Future—they are our children and our grandchildren, and I am very happy to have an opportunity to speak with you today. "

"I have to you a little background about myself so that you have an idea about what makes me tick. I grew up during the Nazi occupation in France as a Jewish child, and I was in the closet as a Jewish child. I was made to feel ashamed of my family, my ethnicity—feel ashamed of who I was. I didn't even know what that meant. To me, I was like everybody else. When I came to the United States, I thought 'Freedom at last!' Unfortunately I was still in the closet as a young Jewish woman because where I worked, at the French National Railroads in New York City, there were some anti-Semites. They would say some pretty nasty things about Jews. I swallowed my pride and my hurt and I kept on working and I felt very upset most of the time. So, when I found out that I had a gay child, it did not take me long, just a few months, to see the parallels. I had been there, and closets are not for people—closets are for clothes."

"The thing is that NO ONE, NO ONE should be forced to be in the closet, to not be affirmed as a human being, as a Jewish child, a Gay child, a Black child... However, if you are a Black and you are gay, then you have a double whammy, right? The thing is this, no one, ABSOLUTELY NO ONE, and especially children, should be made to feel ashamed of who they are, regardless of who they are. It took me many years to come to a good place about who I was. I can tell you now that I am Jewish and a PFLAG Mom and I am proud of my gay child."

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 1)

"Reported anti-gay violence is escalating - more than any other category of hate crime - and parents like myself live with the real fear that it may strike our gay children next," Kingdon said in a written statement for today's Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the hate crimes legislation.

PFLAG works to battle hate crimes through:

- * A highly successful public education campaign - Project Open Mind -, which underscores the link between, hate speech and violence. PFLAG expects to expand Project Open Mind, already launched in six cities including Tulsa, OK; Atlanta, GA; and Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN; to additional U.S. cities over the next few years; and

- * A second nationwide initiative to create more supportive "safe spaces" for gay youth and their families in response to violent hate crimes.

(From The Heart continued from page 4)

"Now I know it took me a long time to try to get over the hurdle of all the negatives about Jewish people, all the things that I heard as a youngster. I grew up and I went to catechism and I knew a lot more about Catholicism than I ever knew about my own faith. Eventually it came to me that there were a lot of people, Jewish people, who contributed to the world; great scientists, great musicians, great everybody and I can tell you that there are just as many gay and lesbian people who were and still are great scientists, great musicians, great people. So I want you to be proud of who you are, just as I am proud of who I am. The important thing to remember is that you have to be the role model for others who are struggling about their sexual orientation. There is nothing wrong with any of us, any of you, and I think the gay issue, as I see it, should no longer be an issue. People should be respected for who they are, they should be respected for whom they love. I think that the fact that they can love is the most wonderful thing that can happen to any human being. So what's the big deal?"

"There is one more thing I want you to know. Your parents may not know this yet, they may not appreciate it fully, but you are a Gift. You are special people and someday, and I hope it's soon, they will fully appreciate you for the wonderful person you are. And so with all my best wishes and with all my heart, I wish you well."

10 THINGS ONE KID WOULD SAY TO ANOTHER ABOUT P-FLAG PARENTS

By T. A. Vo

- P-FLAG Parents are great! I get my hugs once or twice a month and they don't get to tell me what to do.
- It's the only place where you can come together with your mom, separate into a small group, and leave feeling closer to each other.
- When I grow up, I want to be a parent just like them.
- If my mom knew your mom, she'll like you.
- I know who your parents are and what they have shared about "where" their at.
- I had expectations when I was growing up that I would change the world and make it easier for my parents to live in, but the 20th century is a little bit different than I thought. They got organized and beat me to it.
- Stop it — I don't want to know...if you tell me what my mom thinks, I'm going to tell you what your dad said about you! I swear I will!
- For them it is about gay and lesbian issues, for me it is just who I am and my life—I just happened to be one of those issues.
- My mom is in one room and my dad is another, and they both are talking about me behind my back to other people—Isn't that great? I think things will be ok now!
- They're not here! Where are they? Hope they're just late...Have you received your hugs yet? I want mine.

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

By David Purgason

The first week of July, I went to a retreat sponsored by an organization called Life Training, also known as the Kairos Foundation. It was a weeklong retreat in a wilderness resort outside of Atlanta. The retreat was designed to help people get in touch with their feelings, what they wanted out of life, and what was holding them back. It was the best investment I ever made in myself, and the experience will last a lifetime.

There were, however, some unexpected things that happened on the retreat. I hadn't planned on doing it, but I stood up in front of 100 people and outted myself. The reason I did so was in response to an article that was read about some anti-homosexual remarks that Congressman Trent Lott had made a few weeks earlier. Enraged and angry, I had stood up and expressed my displeasure with listening to such remarks as Mr. Lott's.

Well, needless to say, my anger and determination to object to the material presented, surpassed my fear of being outted and people knowing I was gay. After all, these were 100 people from all around the world; almost none of whom I knew. Standing up and speaking out about how I feel, as a gay man listening to such diatribes was very affirming for me. The trainers leading the retreat helped me to get in touch with my anger, and we talked it out. The experience was really good for me because I learned to control my anger in healthier ways. Little did I know how much my "announcement" would affect others in the room.

Afterwards, a woman from England came up to me and said, "I want you to know how touched I was by what you shared, but it goes against what I believe in, and I don't agree with being gay, but I want to try to understand." I thanked her for having the courage to approach me and her desire to learn more about homosexuality and my experience as a gay man. The next day she stood up, like I did the day before, and told the trainers that she wanted to be more open-minded and understand things that she was uncomfortable with, like homosexuality. The trainer discussed it with her in front of the whole group and me. The trainer said, "I want you to understand that you believe that homosexuality is wrong. Someone in your life, your childhood, told you that. That is not fact. That is a belief you have about homosexuality and you choose to believe that to be true. You don't know for certain that is a Truth." He continued to explain to her about her beliefs and how people in her life used the Bible to support those beliefs, but that it wasn't necessarily true. The discussion was very profound for me as well as for her.

The English woman and I agreed to have lunch together that day. While she ate, she listened to my story of how I struggled with my homosexuality in my life and how I

(Continued on page 6)

(Unexpected Friend continued from page 5)

came to terms with it. My being gay is a gift from God, as are my blue eyes, my two legs, my two arms, etc. I told her how I stayed in my clothes closet, in my bedroom, for nearly two hours with the lights off, huddled in a fetal position, crying continuously while I prayed and begged God to have mercy on me. I prayed for God to "change" me to be straight...and how it didn't work. I told her about coming out to my family, going to therapy for two years, and finally that through all of this, I learned to love and accept myself as a gay man.

She listened patiently as I talked to her. I told her that my intentions were not to change her mind, but that I simply wanted to talk with her in a space of understanding and a willingness to learn about something that was foreign to her. She told me that before I announced that I was gay, she had a few days to talk and listen to me. She thought I was a very nice person with a genuine heart. When I announced I was gay, she was very troubled with this information. She said she had grown to like me as a person; and who I am went against her beliefs and stereotypes of homosexuals. She questioned the validity of her beliefs. In turn, I learned from her that I can talk peacefully with her about this issue, and that it is ok if she doesn't necessarily agree with me on homosexuality. At least we both had the opportunity to share our views, and give each other something to think about. And that is a wonderful thing!

By the end of the retreat, we had virtually become inseparable. I loved her personality and openness. She shared her life with me, as I did with her. We said good-bye each other, with the promise to always keep in touch.

Since then, I've received numerous letters from her. I feel that God really gave us to each other to teach one another about tolerance, love, and understanding. I'm glad I made the decision to stand up for myself that day and say "No!" to Trent Lott; because I found a gift in a new found friend.

Many Thanks!

We want to take the time to give a **HUGE THANK YOU** to all the individuals who helped with this years Pride float. These people in different ways helped produce the PFLAG float for this years parade.

Please join us in thanking these individuals: Jane and Alan Montgomery, Jim Rolewicz, Tim Curfman, Charlie Haynes, Ninh Dao, Steve Carleton, Jeffrey Raymer, Craig Stephens, Matthew West, Jim Bianchetta, Bob Litke, Cathy and Henry Whitmire, Don and Susan Upchurch and all of those who marched with P-FLAG in the parade. Also, all of the individuals who helped after the parade to disassemble the float. Everyone pat yourselves on the back for a fabulous job well done!

PROUD PARTICIPANT IN PRIDE PARADE 1998

By David Purgason

When my friend, Jeffrey Raymer, asked me if I wanted to march in the Pride Parade with him and P-FLAG, I hesitated. After all, I had never marched in the Pride Parade before, and I had only been to two previous Pride Parades. Questions came to me, such as; Am I ready to be "out" there, marching in front of Thousands of people? What will people think of me? Will I make a fool of myself? How does my hair look?

Then I realized who I would be marching with: my best friend, Jeffrey! In addition, to that I would have the comfort of being with my extended family of P-FLAG. After all, it was a chance to show how truly proud I was that God made me the way I am; a loving human being...and gay. So I saw through all my questions and self doubt and got the confidence, peace, and PRIDE to say to Jeffrey, "Yes, I would love to march with you."

So we wine and dined together and then headed over to meet P-FLAG at the float site. It started to rain, but our spirits were high. We practiced our cheers, sang songs, and line danced while we waited to enter the parade. It was wonderful being in the company of such loving parents, children, and friends. Our energy together was amazing!

When we finally started marching, I was a little nervous. Not everyday that you have thousands of eyes on you, when you walk down the street. However, my fears were quickly put to rest when I gazed at the crowds. I don't remember seeing so many smiling faces and cheering people before in my life. Everywhere I looked people were waving at us, yelling with excitement, and that gave me strength.

When I saw and felt all the love from the onlookers, it truly made me Proud to be part of such a wonderful diverse community. It goes to show that we can come together as ONE, to celebrate our existence and our God given right to be happy. We truly are a community that cares about one another. I know that for a fact, because I saw that time and time again reflected on the faces of all the people that night.

When we were finished, I sat and watched the other floats pass by and reflected on once again, how diverse our community is. The beauty of all the different floats, when put together, connected to be one spectacular and beautiful parade.

As I made my way home for the evening, I thanked God for allowing me to be a part of something that celebrated our love for each other. I truly had FUN! I can't wait for next year's parade!

David, I truly thank you for your friendship and your magic presence at the Pride Parade. Jeffrey

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

We truly hope that all of you are staying cool this summer as it has been so HOT! Speaking of hot, if you have not already purchased your ticket to the Black Tie Dinner we highly recommend it. It will be one HOT evening. We went last year for the first time and had a very magical time. As Tim Curfman says everyone looks good in a tux! We are always looking for "newsletter" items. So if you have a story, poetry or just want to say hello, or to tell us what you think of the newsletter, drop us a line or two. We can be reached at 713/863-2674 or 713/868-2676. You may also e-mail Stephen at stephenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then

stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey



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!

Names): _____

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

September 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

THE NAMES ON THE BOARD

JEFF CATHY
ERIC HUCK
JERRY JEFF

The original lesson plan for my 11th grade American literature class was straightforward enough. Following a discussion of the Transcendentalists and utopian societies and after reading excerpts of Emerson's essay "Nature", the students were to break into groups and design their own utopias. Since this was generally a cooperative and diligent class, I wasn't concerned about leaving Friday morning's lesson in the hands of a substitute.

That afternoon, as I read the substitute's note, I felt sick. She reported that most groups did well, but one group of boys could not move past the point of wondering what to do with gays.

I pictured the boys-boys I adored. They are the type of students who smile when they see you and gesture exuberantly in trying to get your attention. They are thrilled that you're their teacher, and, as I found out, they are anti-gay.

Besides being faced once more with the reality that my idea of a perfect world is a long way off, I found my sense of well being for myself and

(Continued on page 4)

BREAK OUT THE BLACK TIE!

By Tim Curfman

P-FLAG Houston does one major fundraising event a year, the Black Tie Dinner. This is one of the most fun annual events around, and also provides the majority of the annual operating budget for P-FLAG Houston. The Black Tie Dinner will be on Saturday, November the 7th, from 7:00 PM until midnight, at the J. W. Marriot Hotel Ballroom. Cocktails start at 7:00 PM. Dinner starts at 8:00 PM. There is a silent auction, live entertainment, and dancing until midnight. It is truly a celebration with your P-FLAG family.

This year, other fund-raising organizations have almost completely bought out the Black Tie dinner. The Black Tie Dinner organizers fully expect to be sold out in the next couple of months. I have reserved seven tables by the end of August to be able to hold them. Last year, we sold 84 tickets and raised over \$13,800.00 through the Black Tie dinner. We could easily lose the opportunity

(Continued on page 3)



Next Meeting September 13th

This month's news and today's church is filled with *unholy smoke* about gays and lesbians. The situation is billed, by the Christian Right as a conflict between liberals and conservatives. Wrong! The issues between Bishop Spong and Rev. Pat Robertson, for example, reflect basic theological disagreements going all the way back to St. Paul vs. the Jerusalem Church. The real conflict is nothing less than opposing visceral convictions about *both* the nature of God and the nature and mission of the Church.

In this month's program, our speaker, Father Wes Seeliger, will sketch these ancient contrasting theological positions fueling today's fire. Father Seeliger is the Executive Director of the Foundation For Contemporary Theology, an organization of both clergy and laity, dedicated to dialog, discourse, discovery, and possibly debate on the most compelling theological issues of our day. He is also and Episcopal Priest, author, and—of importance to us, a strong and visible supporter of P-FLAG!

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, please attend one of our small groups.

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

Here's what's inside...

Facilitator Training	2
In Defense of Marriage	3
"America The Beautiful"	4
Why I March With PFLAG	6

Schedule of Events

- Sept. 13** **PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting**
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- Sept. 13** **PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting**
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- Sept. 17** **PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,**
7:00-9:00 PM, Christ Church
Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave
- Sept. 20** **PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting**
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- Sept. 15** **Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-**
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet

NEXT MONTH

- October** **PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting**
- October** **Board Meeting**
- October** **PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting**
- October** **PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting**
- October** **PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting**

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"The current attacks on homosexuality are not about faith, truth or healing. They are attempts to reshape the nation into a narrow fundamentalist image, and our public officials are falling prey to this manipulation."

~ Rev. Dr. Mel White

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday, September 15, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation, please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR TRAINING FOR SEPTEMBER 19TH

Training for small group facilitators is scheduled for Saturday, September 19th, from 9:00 AM till 2:00 PM. We will meet in the Bride's Room at Christ Church Cathedral. Lunch and materials will be provided. Anyone still interested in volunteering, please contact Enod Gray at 713-522-7014 before September 13th. Thanks to all of you who have already volunteered and we look forward to seeing you.

THE ART OF GIVING

"Remember to be gentle with yourself and others. We are all children of chance, and none can say why some fields will blossom and others lay brown beneath the August sun. Care for those around you. Look past your differences. Their dreams are no less than yours, their choices in life no more easily made. And give. Give in any way you can, of whatever you possess. To give is to love. To withhold is to wither. Care less for your harvest than how it is shared, and your life will have meaning and your heart will have peace."

Kent Nerburn, *Letters to My Son*

"THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME"

POP Publishing and Communications will be releasing a new book entitled, "There's No Place Like Home - A Unique Collection of Recipes and Stories from the Gay and Lesbian Community." Recipe and story submissions are being accepted through September 15, 1998. Reservations for copies can be made beginning July 1, 1998. Books will go on sale in December 1998.

"There's No Place Like Home" is a compilation of favorite recipes and thoughts gathered from celebrities, artists, writers, performers, elected officials, organization members, restaurants, vacation spots, Moms, Dads, athletes, church members, activists, musicians, actors, filmmakers and so many others from within the global gay and lesbian community. Included are stories, memories, and thoughts about home, food, traditions, sharing and celebration as well as quotes and historical notations.

"This book is a celebration of what home and family is to us and what we've brought with us through the years. It's not about "gay cooking" but, rather, about our feelings about home and family which so often include memories about cooking and gatherings around a meal. There are recipes that have been passed down, stories about our connection to family, memories about special meals, and thoughts about traditions....some told with humor, others told with deep emotions, and some simply offered casually and eas-

(Continued on page 4)

PEACE

By Amanda Bradley

Peace will come when people live
In friendship side by side,
And cherish understanding
More than hatred, greed and pride.

Peace will come when people see
All people as the same,
And no one has to live in fear,
In ignorance or shame.

Peace will come when people
Who are needy can reach out
For shelter, food, or love,
And no one has to do without.

Peace will come when people
Learn to listen and to care
About the rights and dignity
Of people everywhere.

Peace will come when love and trust
And kindness know rebirth,
And on that day all people
Will rejoice in peace on earth.

IN DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE

By Alan A. Brown, Ph.D.

As a survivor of the Holocaust in which my parents, grandparents, and most of my relatives were killed, I passionately oppose prejudice and hatred. It was anti-Semitic prejudice and hatred run amok that forever barred my parents and relatives from joyful family celebrations, like weddings, childbirth's, bar/bat mitzvahs. If my parents had survived, they would have shared my pleasure, watching their grandchildren grow and mature: Fern, my daughter, and Steve and Dennis, my sons. Thanks to the victory of America and her Allies, basic rights of Jews and other minorities are now legally protected against persecution not only in America. But the struggle for civil liberties continues even in America.

Let me take, for instance, the right of two people to get married and share the benefits of marriage. My two sons are married: Steve's wife, Mary, is Greek Orthodox, while Dennis' wife, Heidi, is Jewish. In the 1930's and 1940's, under the anti-Semitic laws of Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia, my Steve could have not married Mary. Things are better today for Steve but not for Fern, who has been living with Ginny for 15 years in a similarly committed union. Fern and her life-partner are still denied the basic socioeconomic rights of a civil marriage. This, I greatly hope, will soon change not only in Hawaii but also in Massachusetts.

Is it strange for me, as a Holocaust survivor, to connect my abhorrence of Nazi-inspired prejudice and hatred with today's curtailment of civil rights? On the contrary, survivors of the Holocaust have added responsibilities to oppose prejudice, including homophobia. There are many Holocaust survivors who feel compelled to speak out in support of gays and lesbians fighting for their civil rights. We have, for instance, an account of two Holocaust survivors who were recently honored with Humanitarian Awards from the Human Rights Campaign Fund: "At the head table, Paulette [Goodman, national

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to raise this amount again if we do not get orders in for our tables.

Your 1997 Black Tie contributions enabled us to do some very worthwhile projects. We made a \$5,000.00 donation to the Houston Public Library System to place constructive books on homosexuality in all of Houston Public Library branches. We used your donations to underwrite "Healing the Hurt '97 - An Educator's Conference", which was attended by 159 educators, counselors, administrators.

I will be taking orders for tickets at the September 13th PFLAG monthly meetings. Tickets are \$150.00 apiece. You can also purchase tickets with a check, VISA or Mastercard by calling me at (713) 869-1890.

TWO WOMEN'S LOVE MADE AMERICA BEAUTIFUL

By Deb Price Detroit News 7/4/98

"Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain."

For generation after generation of Americans, the gentle grandeur of Katherine Lee Bates' lyrics has captured the love we feel for the country she taught us to call America the Beautiful. An English professor at Boston's Wellesley College, she penned the verses after a trip out West to Pikes Peak in 1893. Both then and when she revised the song into its present form in 1904, Bates was in the midst of a "quarter century of joy," as she later described it. Like water from a clear mountain spring, Bates' joy flowed from her relationship with Katherine Coman, a Wellesley history professor. When, as schoolchildren, we sang Bates less known second verse about taming America's wilderness, we never knew we were giving nod to her partner's research on the early settlers.

Bates felt "broken by grief" when death claimed her "beloved," her "darling" at 57 in 1915. For the next seven years, Bates poured her pain into a deeply moving 111-page collection of love poems about Coman.

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ily", explains Veronica Matthews, editor and publisher of "There's No Place Like Home."

"We're receiving submissions from California to New York to Germany to Australia. The recipes and anecdotes are coming from individuals, business owners and organizations and include everything from the simplest of dishes and the funniest stories to amazing culinary creations and the fondest memories. It's a wonderful snapshot of our community, however open and fluid that might be. We all have a connection to family in common and this is a beautiful picture of that. I encourage everyone to submit a little something to be part of this project."

Submissions can be made via email to LoopPUBL@aol.com or through the submission form at the website at: <http://www.tcfb.com/community-cookbook> or via postal mail to:

LOOP Publishing and Communications
109 Chatsworth Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14217

Additional information including advertising specs for "There's No Place Like Home" can be found on the website. Advertising info can also be obtained by sending email to LoopPubl@aol.com Attn: Veronica Matthews.

(Continued from page 1)

those I love threatened. Not by some unknown force, but by young men I wanted to continue to like. The "gay issue" is not one that I feel safe discussing in a classroom. My emotions run too high I have a gay brother whom I love dearly. When students make any type of homophobic remarks, my usual response is to squelch the issue by explaining that such comments "aren't allowed." This time I wasn't there to stop the rumblings. This time, I realized, my continuing silence on the issue was unacceptable.

Monday morning, I knew I had to speak up. I feared that I was about to ruin my week, along with the good impression my students had of me, and open myself to hostile reactions from parents (and, soon after, administrators.) I decided my brother's dignity was worth the risk of making a few waves. I greeted the class: "How was your weekend? Before we go any further with today's lesson, we need to deal with something that has been troubling me all weekend."

I told them I wasn't sure what to do about the matter. Then I turned to the board and began to write names: Jeff, Eric, Jerry, Cathy, Larry, Huck, Jeff. "You already wrote Jeff," someone called out. "There are two Jeff's," I said.

After writing about 20 names, I began to put stars by some of them. "The ones with stars must be special," a student said. I nodded.

By this time, the class was silent, intent on my intentions. When my list was complete, and I was ready to face the students, I turned around. "The names on the board are people I know and love. They are friends of mine and they are gay." "One of them is my brother. The stars are for ones who have AIDS or who have already died. One star is next to a person who cut my hair for eight years. He won't be cutting my hair anymore because last summer someone who did not like gay people killed him. My friend would never have hurt anybody. He was one of the nicest, most gentle people you could ever know. More hate crimes are committed against gay people in this country than against any other group except African Americans."

"In my mind, a utopian society is one where everyone belongs. I don't care if you think it's wrong for someone to be gay. Or if you don't like gay people. I can promise you that someone in this class may be gay or have a gay relative or a gay friend. If you say that homosexuals should be excluded from society or call someone a "fag" you will hurt someone. No one has the right to hurt another human being. None of these people whose names are on the board would hurt anyone. That's all I want to say about it. There will be no discussion."

Everyone was listening. No one said a word. This was not the time for me to debate gay issues or to hear student viewpoints. I already knew some of them anyway. I wasn't interested in hearing if their opinions have changed. All I wanted was to get the sick feeling out of my soul and to let these students know that sometimes what is said in class does not

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touch on the personal and sometimes the teacher does need to speak from the heart.

Emerson speaks of an ideal society where individuals respond to the world around them without egotism. I have discovered in teaching that egotism can serve a larger purpose. Sometimes, by offering the guidance of our unique personal perspective, we can help students expand their own visions of Utopia."

By Jaime Rhein of Columbus, Ohio
Originally published in TEACHING TOLERANCE
Spring 1998

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president of P-FLAG] sat next to Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace laureate and world renowned chronicler of the Holocaust... Both were there that night largely because the persecution of lesbians and gay men evoked memories of that horrible era. In his keynote speech, Wiesel noted that gays shared with Jews the fate of Nazi death camps—that he personally had seen gays "in those places of darkness, silence, and fire." [R. A. Bernstein, *Straight Parents Gay Children: Keeping Families Together*.]

Bernstein quotes Elie Wiesel further explaining why he feels solidarity with gays and lesbians, his orthodox religious background and his involvement in Judaic studies notwithstanding. Or, as Paulette Goodman who survived in Nazi-occupied Paris said: "I know how stifling it is to be in the closet."

To approve same-sex marriages you certainly need to be neither a Holocaust survivor nor the parent of a homosexual son or daughter. You can be any believer in the American ideal of equal rights. After all, it is etched in our collective memory that the United States of America was founded to promote not only life, but also liberty, and even the pursuit of happiness. In practical terms, these majestic words also imply that gays and lesbians have a right to share in the socioeconomic benefits of a marriage.

In sum, it is a basic human rights for two adults who love each other to marry. This country stands for freedom and that should extend to all citizens.

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Graced by a photo of Coman as a young woman and a synopsis of her life, *Yellow Clover: A Book of Remembrance* reads like a powerful by a little-known forerunner of Paul Monette's 1988 *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog*, his lamentations for a lost lover.

Because of Bates, I feel a special pride as a lesbian whenever I hear America the Beautiful at a Fourth of July celebration. Her life reminds me that gay people have always been an integral part of this country—helping to build its cities, fight its wars, write its songs. (...) When we pause to honor America, we salute a nation built by many different kinds of hands. Gay gifts have helped make this country great!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Author unknown

It bothered Ben every time he went through the kitchen. It was that little metal container on the shelf above Martha's cookstove. He probably would not have noticed it so much or been bothered by it if Martha had not repeatedly told him never to touch it. The reason, she said, was that it contained a "secret herb" from her mother, and since she had no way of ever refilling the container, she was concerned that if Ben or anyone else ever picked it up and looked inside, they might accidentally drop it and spill all its valuable contents.

The container wasn't really much to look at. It was so old that much of its original red and gold floral colors had faded. You could tell right where it had been gripped again and again as the container was lifted and its tight lid pulled off. Not only Martha's fingers had gripped it there, but her mother's and grandmother's had, too. Martha didn't know for sure, but she felt that perhaps even her great-grandmother had used this same container and its secret herb. All Ben knew for sure was that shortly after he'd married Martha, her mother had brought the container to Martha and told her to make the same loving use of its contents as she had. And she did, faithfully.

Ben never saw Martha cook a dish without taking the container off the shelf and sprinkling just a little of the "secret herb" over the ingredients. Even when she baked cakes, pies and cookies, he saw her add a light sprinkling just before she put the pans in the oven.

Whatever was in that container, it sure worked, for Ben felt Martha was the best cook in the world. He wasn't alone in that opinion—anyone who ever ate at their house grandly praised Martha's cooking. But why wouldn't she let Ben touch that little container? And what did that "secret herb" look like? It was so fine that whenever Martha sprinkled it over the food she was preparing, Ben couldn't quite make out the texture. She obviously had to use very little of it because there was no way of refilling the container.

Somehow, Martha had stretched those contents over 30 years of marriage, to date. It never failed to effect mouthwatering results. Ben became increasingly tempted to look into that container just once, but never brought himself to do so. Then one day Martha became ill. Ben took her to the hospital, where they kept her overnight. When he returned home, he found it extremely lonely in the house. Martha had never been gone overnight before. And when it neared suppertime, he wondered what to do—Martha had so loved to cook, he'd never bothered to learn much about preparing food. As he wandered into the kitchen to see what might be in the refrigerator, the container on the shelf immediately came into view. His eyes were drawn to it like a mag-

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net—he quickly looked away, but his curiosity drew him back. Curiosity nagged. What was in that container? Why wasn't he to touch it? What did that "secret herb" look like? How much of it was left? Ben looked away again and lifted the cover of a large cake pan on the kitchen counter. Ahh... there was more than half of one of Martha's great cakes left over. He cut off a large piece, sat down at the kitchen table, and hadn't taken more than one bite when his eyes went back to that container again. What would it hurt if he looked inside? Why was Martha so secretive about that container, anyway? Ben took another bite and debated with himself—should he or shouldn't he? For five more big bites he thought about it, staring at the container. Finally, he could no longer resist. He walked slowly across the room and ever so carefully took the container off the shelf—fearing that, horror of horrors, he'd spill the contents while sneaking a peek. He set the container on the counter and carefully pried off the lid. He was almost scared to look inside!

When the inside of the container came into full view, Ben's eyes opened wide—why, the container was empty...except for a little folded slip of paper at the bottom. Ben reached down for the paper, his big rugged hand struggling to get inside. He carefully picked it up by a corner, removed it and slowly unfolded it under the kitchen light. A brief note was scrawled inside, and Ben immediately realized the handwriting as that of Martha's mother. Very simply, it said: "Martha—To everything you make, add a dash of love." He swallowed hard, replaced the note and the container, and quietly went back to finishing his cake.

Now he completely understood why it tasted so good.

WHY I MARCH WITH P-FLAG

BY Laura Siegel, 1994

Our son came out to us 9 years ago at age 19. It took 3 years before I attended a P-FLAG meeting. My husband, on the other hand, called P-FLAG two weeks after our son came out. He marched in the San Francisco Pride Parade one month later, carrying one end of the 9 foot long purple and white banner.

My husband began his struggle at P-FLAG to get closer to our son. P-FLAG became a bridge for him to try and know Stuart better. My son and I had fairly good communication. I stayed away because I had no such struggle. I also didn't march with the P-FLAG contingent in the Pride Parades because I hated crowds. My son said he understood and it was perfectly okay. I had no "problem" after all.

But one sunny June day, I got tired of being left out. I put aside my fear of crowds, hopped on Bay Area Rapid Transit with my husband and we joined the P-FLAG contingent for my first Gay/Lesbian Freedom Day Parade.

I'll never forget the look on my son's face as my husband and I walked down Castro Street with P-FLAG. He was standing on a balcony with friends. "Hi mom, hi dad," he shouted. His smile was brighter than the sun. He turned to his friends, shook them by the shoulders, pointed down to us and said, "THERE ARE MY PARENTS!" That was a moment for me that epitomized "family". Family meant support, acknowledgement and being there.

We walked down Castro and turned the corner onto Market Street. The applause, screams, tears, when P-FLAG passed was thunderous. Gays and lesbians shouted "thank you." One person screamed, "It should be my mom and dad." People were sobbing; arms reached out. I knew then that I was marching for more than my son. I was marching for all the sons and daughters whose parents were not there for them. I felt my heart open to them all. It was at that moment that I knew I would also begin coming to P-FLAG meetings.

Everything around us is a call to love. When I hear a speech by the religious right or when I am tired and want to give up, I am reminded to love. When I tell the story of my son's coming out or of my own process. I hope I remind someone else to love. I remember my fear of crowds and my reluctance to dive in. I now know that marching with P-FLAG is one of the most spacious places for me to walk.

THE UNIVERSAL RX

BY Shel Silverstein

No moving parts, no batteries.
No monthly payments and no fees;
Inflation proof, non-taxable,
In fact, it's quite relaxable;

It can't be stolen, won't pollute,
One size fits all, do not dilute.
It uses little energy,
But yields results enormously.

Relieves your tension and your stress,
Invigorates your happiness;
Combats depression, makes you beam,
And elevates your self esteem!

Your circulation it corrects
Without unpleasant side effects
It is, I think, the perfect drug:
May I prescribe, my friend,...
The hug!
(and, of course, fully returnable!)

It is well known fact that we each need at least 7 hugs a day for good health, most of us never reach that goal

HAVE YOU HUGGED A FRIEND TODAY?

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

As this newsletter goes to the presses Stephen and I are both gearing up to start school. I as a full time student and Stephen as a part-time student at night. Yes we still are going to do the newsletter, but we both want to stress that if the newsletter is shorter in the future or delayed for any reason, please bear with us as we adjust our schedules. Please keep us in your thoughts.

We are always looking for "newsletter" items. So if you have a story, poetry or just want to say hello, or to tell us what you think of the newsletter, drop us a line or two. We can be reached at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676.

You may also e-mail Stephen at stevenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey



PFLAG Houston helps families understand their gay family members) 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!

Names): _____

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

October 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

LIFE LESSONS FROM LOVEBIRDS

By Vickie Lynne Agee

Recently, my husband and I were walking through a local mall near closing time, when we decided to stop and take a look around the pet store. As we made our way past the cages of poodles and Pomeranians, tabby cats and turtles, our eyes caught sight of something that immediately charmed us: a pair of peach-faced lovebirds. Unlike many other lovebirds we encountered there, this particular pair looked truly "in love." In fact, they snuggled and cuddled next to each other the whole time we watched them. Throughout the next few days, my mind returned to the image of those two delightful birds. I admired their devotion, and felt their very presence inspiring.

Apparently, these birds had the same effect on my husband, because he showed up late from work one night shortly thereafter, clutching an elegant birdcage that housed those two precious creatures, and introduced them as new additions to the family. For days we wrestled with names of well-known couples, coming up with everything from Ricky and Lucy and George and Gracie to Wilma and Fred. But finally we decided on Ozzie and Harriet—a gentle reminder of a simpler day when love and togetherness between couples were not only a commitment, but a way of life.

And so it is with this in mind that I have watched these lovebirds and made the following observations about life and love:

1. If you spend too much time looking in the mirror, it's easy to lose

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CAMPUS ANTI-GAY VIOLENCE STUDY

NewsPlanet Staff

SUMMARY: A shocking number of community college students not only admitted committing homophobic harassment and violence, they saw absolutely nothing wrong with it - and would probably do it again.

"Indeed, assaults on gay men and lesbians were so socially acceptable that respondents often advocated or defended such behavior out loud in the classrooms while I was administering my survey," wrote forensic psychologist Karen Franklin of her pioneering study of campus perpetrators, presented at the convention on August 16. Franklin administered questionnaires to a general group of 500 students at several unnamed San Francisco Bay area community colleges with shocking results: of the men in the sample, 18% reported having physically assaulted or

(Continued on page 3)



Next Meeting October 4th

Several of our members have seen and recommended the delightful and award winning documentary, *Its Elementary Talking about gay issues in school* for the October 4th PFLAG meeting.

Ellen Bettmann (director of research and development for the Anti-Defamation League's a World of Difference Institute) said; "I preview lots of tapes for our diversity training programs and IT'S ELEMENTARY was really the BEST film I have seen in ages."

See you there!

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, please attend one of our small groups.

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

Here's what's inside...

Life Lessons	6
Legislation - Stop Adoptions	4
Seeing	5
Letter to Jerry	4

Schedule of Events

- October 4** **PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting**
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- October 8** **PFLAG Houston Board Meeting,**
7:00-9:00 PM, Christ Church
Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave
- October 11** **PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting**
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- October 18** **PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting**
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- October 20** **Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-**
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany,
9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet

NEXT MONTH

- Nov. 1** **PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting**
- Nov. 8** **PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting**
- Nov. 12** **PFLAG Board Meeting**
- Nov. 15** **PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting**
- Nov. 17** **PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting**

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?"

~Jean-Jacques Rousseau

PFLAG HOUSTON HOLDS MID-MONTH DISCUSSION GROUP

On Tuesday, October 20, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

Henry and Kathy Whitmire

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation, please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

HELP NEEDED

One of PFLAG's key goals for this next year is to increase the level of member involvement in the activities of PFLAG. During our recent Planning Meeting, it became painfully clear to all of us that it would be impossible to implement even a fraction of the wonderful ideas that people had, without the involvement of more members. The thirty or so current officers, Board members, committee chairpersons, and committee members simply do not provide the resources we need. Please review the following list of specific types of support we are currently seeking, and call the contact person listed.

Board Positions: In general, Board members are expected to recommend policy positions for their area of responsibility, ensure that the task work associated with this area of responsibility is completed (by either effectively delegating the work to others or doing the work themselves), and to participate in monthly Board meetings.

Committee members: Most committees are chaired by Board members and have ongoing responsibilities. Think of them as "standing committees". The responsibilities of the

(Continued on page 3)

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR GAY'S

The Walt Whitman Community School for sexual minority students in Dallas, Texas began its second academic year on August 31. It's believed to be the first and only private school of its type in the U.S.

Last year Whitman opened with seven students and ended the year with 15; although only six of those are returning (and some of them may participate in the school's first-ever graduation at the end of the year), enrollment is still expected to reach 15 within the first two weeks.

To accommodate the increased enrollment, Whitman opened this year at a new location at the Samaritan Institute, a seminary affiliated with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The unusual amount of individual attention students receive means a cost of \$7,000 per student, but generous community support is helping both the school and individual students to defray those costs.

Whitman will apply for accreditation through the Southwestern Association of Colleges and Schools during its 1999 - 2000 school year, the first year it can do so.

(Campus Study Continued from page 1)

threatened someone they believed to be gay or lesbian, and another 32% admitted to verbal homophobic harassment. When women, who reported much less violence and harassment, were included, the overall figures were brought down to 10% and 24%.

This may be the first systematic empirical study of perpetrators not only of homophobic hate crimes, but of any kind of hate crimes. Most of the attackers "do not fit the stereotype of the hate filled extremist. Rather, they are verge young people who often do not see anything wrong with their behavior," Franklin wrote. Those who attacked or taunted gays and lesbians fell roughly into four groups. The largest described their behavior as "self-defense," based on the perception that gays are predatory and therefore even a friendly gesture from one is sexual and a legitimate reason for violence. A second group felt a duty to enforce social norms, a third group was described as thrill seekers, and the fourth group simply went along with their homophobic peers.

Across all four groups, wrote Franklin, "almost half the assailants reported a likelihood to assault again in similar circumstances. That is, they either lacked remorse or did not see anything wrong with their behavior." Even those who had never assaulted or harassed gays and lesbians were not so much more tolerant as they were concerned about getting in trouble or experiencing retaliation.

Franklin concluded that, "The reason they don't see anything wrong is simple -- no one is telling them that it is wrong." She called for "a national policy of pro-active intervention against school-based harassment and violence," with anti-bias activities beginning as early as possible, even kinder-

(Help Needed Continued from page 2)

members of these committees vary according to the charter of the committee.

Project Teams: Project teams are short-term task forces that need volunteers to help with the completion of the task, and then they disband.

Type of Help Needed	Name of Position/ Committee/ Project	Contact Person	Phone No.
Board position	Volunteer Coordinator	Jeanne Edmonds	281-367-6059
Board position	Advocacy	Susan Upchurch	713-995-9777
Committee members	Membership	Jim/Marge Bianchetta	281-491-3114
Project team members	Pride Parade	Don Upchurch Alan Montgomery	713-995-9777 713-529-7722
Miscellaneous help	Back-up person for newsletter distribution	Nancy Camp	713-748-4448

IDENTITY

From Gifts from a Course in Miracles

There is no conflict that does not entail the single, simple question, "What am I?"

Every decision you make stems from what you think you are, and represents the value that you put upon yourself.

Only an illusion stands between you and the holy Self you share.

You who perceive yourself as weak and frail, with futile hopes and devastated dreams, born but to die, to weep and suffer pain, Hear this:

All power is given unto you in earth and Heaven. there is nothing that you cannot do.

You will identify with what you think will make you safe. whatever it may be, you will believe that it is one with you. Your safety lies in truth, and not in lies. Love is your safety. Fear does not exist.

Identify with love, and you are safe. Identify with love, and you are at home. Identify with love, and find your Self.

*Let me not forget
Myself is nothing,
But my Self is all.*

*I was created as the thing I seek.
I am the goal the world is searching for.*

STATE LEGISLATION TO STOP ADOPTIONS

By MARY ALICE ROBBINS, Morris News Service

AUSTIN - Legislation being drafted by state Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, would prohibit children from being placed in the homes of gay or lesbian couples for adoption or foster care in Texas. "It will be a hot issue, but clearly will be in the best interest of the child," Chisum said of his proposal. He said research shows that the best situation for a child is in a family with a father and mother. Dianne Hardy-Garcia, director of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, said most same-sex couples don't seek to adopt children. When they do adopt, she said, it usually involves the child of a family member. "This bill would stop us from being able to do that," Hardy-Garcia said.

Two states - Florida and New Hampshire - have passed laws that expressly prohibit adoptions by homosexuals. The proposed Texas legislation, which is being drafted for consideration by the legislature next year, would prohibit the adoption of children or their placement in foster care in a home. If the state's Department of Protective and Regulatory Services determines that any offense under the Texas Penal Code or drug offense under the Texas Health and Safety Code is occurring or reasonably likely to occur. "Clearly, in this state homosexual activity is a violation of the penal code," Chisum said.

Chisum said he became concerned about the adoption and foster-care issue after a children's protective service supervisor in Dallas was reassigned for violating DPRS policies because she removed an infant from the foster home of a lesbian couple.

(Continued on page 5)

A LETTER TO JERRY

David Ellison-Eighth grade teacher
From One Teacher in Ten

Dear Jerry,
I've tried to forget about you, how I let you down, leaving you utterly alone. But the gift you gave me—a clay statue of an Aztec king—still haunts me, denouncing me from atop my bookshelf, even as I write you this letter.

At the time, the statue seemed an appropriate Christmas gift for me, your high school Spanish teacher. Now I realize that nothing then was as it first appeared.

For example, nearly everyone considered you the most fortunate, enviable kid on campus. You were, after all, captain of our school's state champion football team.

(Continued on page 6)

Lessons

Author unknown

Around the corner I have a friend
In this great city that has no end,
Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone

And I never see my old friend's face,

For life is a swift and terrible race,
He knows I like him just as well,
As in the days when I rang his bell,
And he rang mine.

If, we were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men.
Tired of playing a foolish game,
Tired of trying to make a name.

"Tomorrow" I say "I will call on Jim"
"Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes, and
Distance between us grows and grows.

Around the corner!—yet miles away,
"Here's a telegram sir—"
"Jim died today."

And that's what we get and deserve in the end.
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

If you love someone, tell them. Remember always to say what you mean. Never be afraid to express yourself. Take this opportunity to tell someone what they mean to you. Seize the day and have no regrets. Most importantly, stay close to your friends and family, for they have helped make you the person that you are today and are what it's all about anyway.

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY OFFER BENEFITS

Illinois State University announced September 4 that it will now extend some spousal benefits to employees' domestic partners, regardless of gender. Although the campus senates of all three University locations had voted to extend health insurance benefits, medical and dental insurance benefits were not included because the University was advised that it would violate state law to do so.

Couples who attest that they are each other's sole domestic partner and intend to remain so indefinitely. Couples who have lived together for at least 12 months, and who can present evidence of shared financial obligations, will qualify for bereavement leave, sick leave for family medical emergencies, tuition waivers, and use of recreational facilities and various counseling programs; their biological and adopted children will also qualify.

HARASSMENT AWARD FOR GAY STUDENT

A federal jury on September 4 awarded \$220,000 in damages to Alma McGowan for harassment she experienced for four years in the Spencer County, Kentucky school system; the system has not yet determined whether it will appeal.

The harassment began her second day in school at age 11 and continued on almost a daily basis, including lesbian-baiting and taunts for her status as a German national with U.S. residency. The most dramatic incidents included a rape threat in a classroom the teacher had left unattended and shouts of "lezzie" at a school assembly. Perpetrators never suffered any consequences, and at 15 McGowan left for home schooling after one boy's threat to burn down her house.

Hers is believed to be the first case to meet the higher "deliberate indifference" standard established for public schools in a Supreme Court ruling this past session. Stephen Vance, another student who had filed along with McGowan over harassment, which was also primarily homophobic in nature, did not meet that standard of notification of school personnel, and his case was dismissed; he has left the state to receive special services for autism. Now 17, McGowan is reportedly doing well at Jefferson Community college.

*"Just be... Being is sufficient. Being is all.
The cheerful, sunny self you are missing will return, as it always does, but only being will bring it back."*

By Alice Walker—"Living by the Word"

(Adoptions Continued from page 4)

DPRS spokeswoman Marla Sheely said the agency doesn't screen foster-home applicants based on sexual orientation. The first concern in making a placement, she said, is to meet the needs of the child. "We like to cast a wide net when recruiting foster parents," Sheely said. Sheely said DPRS currently oversees foster care for about 17,000 children in Texas. Of that number, 213 are in Potter County and 46 are in Randall County, she said. Hardy-Garcia said only two same-sex couples were providing foster care in Dallas County when the controversy arose there and that she sees no need for a bill to deal with the issue.

"It's an easy issue to grandstand over," she said. Chisum said he is "extremely confident" the House will pass the bill if it makes it to that chamber for debate. "We will need to leave no legislative stone unturned to make sure this bill happens," he said.

SEEING

By Kathe Neyer

Barkley came to me when he was three years old, from a family who just didn't want him anymore. They had badly neglected the big golden retriever and he was in ill health. After attending to his physical problems and spending some time bonding with him, I found he had a very sweet temperament. He was intelligent and eager to please, so we went to basic and advanced obedience classes and to a social therapy workshop to learn everything we needed to know for Barkley to become a certified therapy dog.

Within a few months, we began our weekly visits to the local medical center. I didn't know what to expect, but we both loved it. After I made sure a patient wanted a visit from Barkley, the dog would walk over to the bed and stand waiting for the person in the bed to reach out to him. People hugged him tight or simply petted him, as he stood quietly wagging his tail with what seemed a huge laughing grin on his face. His mellowness made him a favorite with the staff, patients and even the other volunteers.

I dressed Barkley in something different every week. He had costumes appropriate for each holiday—he wore a birthday hat on his birthday, a green bow tie for Saint Patrick's Day and a Zorro costume on Halloween. For Easter was everybody's favorite: Barkley wore bunny ears and a bunny tail I attached to his back end. Patients were always eager to see what Barkley was wearing this week.

About a year after we began visiting, I noticed Barkley was having trouble seeing—he sometimes bumped into things. The vet found he had an eye condition caused in part by his lack of care when he was young. Over the next year, this condition worsened, but Barkley was remarkably good at functioning with his failing eyesight. Even I wasn't aware how bad it had become until one evening when Barkley and I were playing with his ball out in the yard. When I threw the ball to the dog, he had a lot of trouble catching it. He had to use his nose to sniff it out on the ground after he repeatedly failed to catch it in his mouth. The next day I brought him to the vet and they told me that surgery was necessary. After three surgeries in an attempt to save at least some of his vision, Barkley became totally blind.

I was very concerned about how he would adjust to such a terrible handicap, but he acclimated to his blindness rapidly. It seemed that all his other senses sharpened to make up for his loss of sight. Soon he was completely recovered and insisted (by standing at the garage door and blocking my exit!) that he wanted to go along with me to the hospital and visit his friends. So we restarted our weekly visits, much to everyone's great joy—especially Barkley's.

He maneuvered around the hospital so well, it was hard to tell that he was blind. Once after Barkley became blind, someone asked me if Barkley was a seeing-eye dog. I laughed and told them that it was Barkley who

(Continued on page 6)

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needed a seeing-eye person.

He seemed to develop an uncanny ability to perceive things that were beyond the senses. One day, we went into a patient's room and to my surprise, Barkley went over to the patient's visitor, who was sitting in a chair by the bed, and nudged her hand with his nose. Barkley never made the first contact like that, and I wondered why he did it now. As I came up to her chair, it was only by the way the woman interacted with Barkley that I realized the truth. I don't know how, but the completely blind Barkley had sensed that this lady was blind, too.

It was strange, but after Barkley lost his sight, his presence seemed even more precious to the patients he visited. When Barkley received an award for performing over 400 hours of volunteer service, everyone told me, "It's amazing what a blind dog can do!"

They don't understand that Barkley wasn't really blind. He could still see. It's just that now, he saw with his heart.

Love is a language which the blind can see and the deaf can hear.

Donald E. Wildman

(Continued from page 4)

You excelled in all your classes too, especially mine.

Nonetheless, behind your easy success and your captivating smile, Jerry, you hid a dark secret: you were gay.

You never told me, of course, at least not with words. Yet, in many other not-so-subtle ways, you revealed your desperate longing for acceptance, for companionship.

I recall the day you first sought me out. It was after I had admonished a classmate for jokingly insulting another with the epithet "Faggot!"

"Pardon me," I chastised. "That is very offensive, even in fun. It's just as bad as any racial slur—expressing prejudice against people who are different. I won't tolerate it in my class."

At the end of period, you lingered, Jerry, to tell me I was the first teacher you'd met who had ever defended homosexuals. After that, you stopped by often during lunch to chat, your questions becoming ever more personal. Was I married? Was I presently dating anyone? You seemed pleased when, distracted, munching on my sandwich, I shook my head.

At Christmas you timidly presented me with the statue. "I really like your class...and you, Mr. Ellison." Then you grasped me in a clumsy hug.

I was flattered. But I still didn't get it. Perhaps I was too young, too naïve. Or maybe I just didn't want to comprehend.

One evening a few weeks later, you came running up to me at a varsity basketball game. You insisted eagerly that I sit next to you in the bleachers. When I introduced you to the attractive woman at my side, though, you were stunned. You stared at me wide-eyed, shaking your head in disbelief and betrayal. Then, after muttering a choked "Pleased to meet you, miss," you fled the gym. At that awkward moment, I finally understood.

Jerry, I wish I had followed you, or reached out to you at some other time. I should have broached the taboo subject, assured you that you were not evil or weird and, above all, that you were not alone. But I was afraid. What teacher wouldn't be in a small, Catholic, homophobic high school in Texas?

I tried to laugh off the incident, to convince myself that I had misinterpreted your behavior. You made it easy for me. You retreated obediently back into your murky closet, and never approached me again. Indeed, you even went on to become a prom king! But your gift, the Aztec king on my shelf, still whispers otherwise, Jerry. And he reminds me bitterly that, in the end, I didn't deserve him.

(Continued from page 1)

your balance.

2. Always keep a pleasant look on your face, even if your cage needs cleaning.
3. If your mate wants to share your perch with you, move over.
4. The real treats in life usually come only after you've racked a few hulls.
5. It takes two to snuggle.
6. Sometimes your mate can see mites you didn't even know you had.
7. Singing draws more affection than squawking.
8. It is only when your feathers get ruffled that your true colors really show.
9. Too many toys can be distracting.
10. When you have love in your heart, everyone around you will find joy in your presence.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

Wow, could it actually be getting cooler? We think that it might be! We don't know about anybody else, but we are looking forward to some cooler temperatures. We started school and so far we both like our classes. Jeffrey is still looking for a part-time job, but hasn't been too successful. We hope everyone is enjoying life, having many real moments and allowing the blessings to be revealed. Most importantly, love, love, love!

We are always looking for "newsletter" items. So if you have a story, poetry, just want to say hello, or to tell us what you think of the newsletter, drop us a line or two. We can be reached at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676.

You may also e-mail Stephen at stevenmc@flash.net

or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey

PS: Give yourself a hug today.



PFLAG Houston helps families understand their gay family members) 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!

Names): _____

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

November 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

GRUESOME ATTACK ON GAY IN WY

NewsPlanet Staff

Matthew Shepard, a 22-year-old openly gay political science major at the University of Wyoming (UW) who had hoped to become a human rights advocate for society's underdogs. Is in critical condition (Matthew passed away after this article was written) after being abducted, beaten unconscious, burned, tied to a fence, and left to die sometime October 6 or 7. He suffered massive blood loss and irreparable brain damage from a blow with a blunt instrument that smashed his skull; he has not regained consciousness and may not survive. When first seen by the two cyclists who found him outside Laramie, Wyoming on the evening of October 7, some 12 to 18 hours after he was tied to the fence, they thought Shepard, who is only 5'2" tall and weighs 105 pounds, was a scarecrow. Even 25-year veteran Police Commander Dave O'Malley was shocked by the brutal assault, saying he'd seen some hate crimes "but nothing anywhere near this." So-called "overkill" is a common feature of anti-gay murders.

Shepard had recently experienced two other beatings he had said were homophobic assaults. Laramie police and Albany County sheriffs are investigating the degree to which the current attack was also hate-motivated, although Shepard was robbed of his wallet and shoes. However, as all the major national gay and lesbian groups were quick to note, Wyoming does not currently have a hate crimes law including sexual orientation as a basis for bias; a bill to that effect was killed in the

("Attack" Continued on page 4)

FEELINGS

By Stephen Carleton

As I sit here and work on the newsletter I feel especially sad, overwhelmed, and somewhat defeated. Unfortunately, one of the negatives that comes along with being an editor on the newsletter is having to read all the different articles and e-mails in search of items to use in the newsletter. The articles include not only local events, but events worldwide, and there is an overwhelming number of items that are not positive regarding gays and lesbians.

This month it was especially true. It started off with the political issue of equal rights for gays and the upcoming election, which has brought out the best and the worst in our leaders. Then you have the "religious right" spreading their rhetoric from newspapers to television in their new offensive in the battle against gays. All this has culminated in the bashing/murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming which was a devastating event for everyone, including myself. I was left staring at article after article, outlining the events that took place that night. I cannot explain what I have felt for the past few days.

("Feelings" Continued on page 3)

November 1998

Page 1



NEXT MEETING NOVEMBER 1st

HOW GAY LIBERATION CAN LIBERATE AMERICA

Robert Schaibly presents and expands his observation that the liberation of gays and lesbians who have come out of the closet provides a model of courage for a society which tends to be comfortable with (or stuck in) conformity.

So please come and join us in what is surely to be a wonderful program.

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, please attend one of our small groups.

The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone 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 Sue Null with the announcement by Friday, October 29th, at 12:00 noon. She can be reached at 713-664-1083 or via email at Suenull@rice.edu

Here's what's inside...

Mother of PFLAG Honored	2
24 Hour Youth Hotline	3
Vote-Make Difference	4
Worth	6

Schedule of Events

- Nov. 1** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- Nov. 8** PFLAG Woodlands Monthly Meeting
2 PM at Northwoods Unitarian
Church, 1370 N. Milbend Dr.
- Nov. 12** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting, 7:00-
9:00 pm, Christ Church Cathedral,
1117 Texas Ave.
- Nov. 15** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- Nov. 17** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-
9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600
S. Gessner at Bissonnet

NEXT MONTH

- December 6** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
- December 13** PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting
- December 20** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
- December 15** PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

*To affect the quality of the day, that is the
highest of arts.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday, November 17th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

Hank Whitmire

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation, please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

PFLAG HOUSTON FOUNDING MOTHER HONORED

By Jeanne Edmonds

In June 1978 a woman stated before the Houston City Council during Gay Pride Week, "I am a proud parent of a gay son." In October she called to order the first meeting of Families and Friends of Gays." Subsequently, she appeared as a panel member on Channel 13 and was the subject of radio interviews and newspaper articles. She led a conference workshop on "Parenting Gays" and was in Washington, D.C. to help form the PFLAG National Organization. June 1980 found her marching in Houston's Gay Pride Parade, carrying a sign that read, "I am not a closet mother." PFLAG Houston honored its founding mother, Annella Harrison at the October 4th, 1998 meeting. When asked what propelled her tireless work throughout the years, she answered, "Anita Bryant made me do it!" Our gratitude and admiration to Annella, and thanks Anita!

24 HOUR HOTLINE FOR GAY YOUTH

Stephen Carleton

The following article is about a wonderful project that was started to help gay youth who are depressed and or suicidal. When I decided to include this article in the newsletter I gave the 800# a call just to see how things operate and to gather more information for this article.

The number is answered by counselors out of the Los Angeles suicide prevention center. The number is a separate number from that of their main suicide prevention hotline number. This allows the staff there to be aware that caller is calling the Trevor Hotline and therefore is likely concern a gay youth.

The counselor will talk to the youth and at the same time gather information about their location so they can check their database for resources near the caller. They do this by zip codes. PFLAG Houston phone number is listed in their database along with the mailing address. Other resources they have listed for the Houston is HATCH and the Gay Switchboard.

The counselor I spoke to told me that the thing she has the most trouble with is in area where there are not resources near the caller. She said this was very true for Texas where she has apparently had several calls from the west Texas.

From what I heard, this sounds like a wonderful project that is very much needed. My main concern is that the funding needed to maintain this setup is always there. It would be a shame to get something started and utilized and then have it go away leaving youth at a loss once again.

From PFLAG National; On August 11, The Trevor Project launched The Trevor Helpline, the first round-the-clock national toll-free suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth. It's open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Teens with nowhere to turn can call 800-850-8078, where they can talk to trained counselors, find local resources and take important steps on their way to becoming healthy adults. All calls are free and confidential.

The Trevor Helpline, which can be reached by calling 800-850-8078, is a national 24-hour toll-free suicide prevention hotline aimed at gay or questioning youth. The Trevor Helpline is geared toward helping those in crisis, or anyone wanting information on how to help someone in crisis. All calls are handled by trained counselors, and are free and confidential.

The Trevor Project established the Trevor Helpline in August 1998 to coincide with the HBO airing of TREVOR, hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. TREVOR is the award-winning short film about a 13-year old boy named Trevor who, when rejected by friends and peers as he begins to come to terms with his

("Helpline" Continued on page 5)

("Feelings" Continued from page 1)

I wanted to put everything down on paper to let it out in hopes of finding some type of resolve, but I couldn't. So, instead, I have decided to include the letter from Matthew Shepard's family that was addressed to the public prior to Matthew's death:

"First of all, we want to thank the American public for their kind thoughts about Matthew and their fond wishes for his speedy recovery. We appreciate your prayers and good will, and we know they are something Matthew would appreciate, too.

"Matthew is a very special person, and everyone can learn important lessons from his life. All of us who know Matthew see him, as he is, a very kind and gentle soul. He is a strong believer in humanity and human rights. He is a trusting person who takes everybody at face value and he does not see the bad side of anyone.

"His one intolerance is when people don't accept others as they are. He has always strongly felt that all people are the same regardless of their sexual preference, race or religion.

"We know he believes that all of us are part of the same family called Humanity, and each and every one of us should treat all people with respect and dignity, and that each of us has the right to live a full and rewarding life. That is one lesson, which we are very certain he would share with you, if he could.

"Matthew also feels strongly about family. He is a loving son, brother and grandson who has made our own lives much richer and fuller than what we would have experienced without him.

"Matthew's life has often been a struggle in one way or another. He was born prematurely, and he struggled to survive as an infant. He is physically short in stature but we believe he is a giant when it comes to respecting the worth of others. We know that he thinks if he can make one person's life better in this world, then he has succeeded. That is a measure of success which Matthew has always pursued.

"Matthew very much enjoys the outdoors and camping, and he has always loved acting in the theatre; he started acting in community theatre at the age of 5. Acting and the theatre arts are skills at which Matthew excels.

"He knows he's not the best athlete in the world but he has a very competitive spirit. One time he participated in the Wyoming State Games. He had a respectable finish in a running competition and then he decided to compete in a swimming event. He did this even though he knew he would likely finish last, which he did. Afterwards, he acknowledged to us that he knew his chances of winning were far from good but he wasn't going to let that stop him from trying. That's Matthew's lesson for all of us—it's

("Feelings" Continued on page 4)

("Feelings: Continued from page 3)

a lesson that we hope everyone takes to heart.

"Matthew has traveled all over the world. He speaks three languages: English, German and Italian. He loves Europe, but he also loves Laramie and the University of Wyoming. We feel that, if he was giving this statement himself, he would emphasize he does not want the horrible actions of a few very disturbed individuals to mar the fine reputations of Laramie or the university.

"Finally, we would like to thank the sheriff's department of Albany County, Wyoming, and Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins for their very professional efforts on Matthew's behalf.

"We also have a special request for the members of the media. Matthew is very much in need of his family at this time, and we ask that you respect our privacy, as well as Matthew's so we can concentrate all of our efforts, thoughts and love on our son.

"Thank you very much."

YOUR VOTE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Plane Out

"Out and Voting is a wake up call to the major parties, to congressional candidates, and to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community itself. Our vote can make a difference. The voting booth is not the closet it once was."

—Kerry Lobel, NGLTF executive director.

WASHINGTON, DC—September 16, 1998—The gay, lesbian, and bisexual electorate in America is sizeable and growing and could be especially influential in mid-size city congressional elections. An off-year election, combined with the Clinton crisis, portend a very low turn out in November - adding even greater potential significance to the GLB vote. Today, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) released "Out and Voting: The Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Vote in Congressional House Elections, 1990-1996." The report is an in-depth profile of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) voting block and the first-ever analysis of the impact of this emerging constituency in national congressional elections.

"Out and Voting is a wake up call to the major parties, to congressional candidates, and to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community itself. Our vote can make a difference," said Kerry Lobel, NGLTF executive director. "The voting booth is not the closet it once was," she added.

The GLB vote receives far less attention from the major

("Vote" Continued on page 5)

("Attack" Continued from page 1)

state legislature in February. Opponents had argued it would create "special rights" for gays and lesbians. Four suspects have been arrested and two were arraigned October 9. Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney were both charged with attempted murder, kidnapping, and robbery and each held on a \$100,000 cash bond. University of Wyoming student and employee Chastity Pasley waived her arraignment and is being held on a \$30,000 cash bond, charged as an accessory after the fact to attempted murder. Kristen Price is also expected to be charged in the coming week as an accessory after the fact to attempted murder.

As reconstructed by police, Shepard was at the Fireside Lounge, a UW student hangout, on the evening of October 6. Henderson and McKinney told him they were gay to convince him to join them in McKinney's truck. The suspects drove off and beat Shepard in the truck. After tying him to the fence, they beat him some more, and took his wallet and shoes. The temperature dropped into the thirties as Shepard was abandoned on the fence. Henderson and McKinney reportedly used anti-gay epithets in describing the situation to the women, whose alleged role in the crime was to assist with disposing of the men's bloody clothing.

Shepard is hospitalized in Fort Collins, Colorado and had recently lived in Denver; he is well-known among gays and lesbians in both those communities. The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Community Services Center of Colorado is organizing a candlelight vigil for Shepard on the steps of the Colorado State Capitol Building in Denver on October 12 at 6pm.

Also in Fort Collins this very week, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), the right-wing Citizens for Constitutional Freedom ran a series of advertisements opposing inclusion of sexual orientation in that city's Human Rights Ordinance. In urging voters not to support "special rights" for gays and lesbians; meanwhile another group held a forum with an "ex-gay" spokesperson to support the notion that sexual orientation should be omitted from the ordinance because it can be changed. NGLTF believes it has documented a link between increased anti-gay rhetoric in political campaigns and increased anti-gay violence, citing ballot initiative campaigns in Colorado in 1992 and in Oregon in 1995. "Anti-gay rhetoric and anti-gay violence go hand-in-hand," said NGLTF communications director Tracey Conaty. "The right wing is creating the most hostile atmosphere for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender people in recent memory. Hate violence is a logical extension of these rhetorical, legislative, and electoral attacks."

If you would like to make a donation to the Shepard family for legal and medical expenses you may send them to:

Fund for the Benefit of Matthew Shepard

c/o First National Bank

P.O. Box 578

Fort Collins, CO 80522

Account No. 1926083

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS HOMOPHOBIC BALLOT INITIATIVE

On October 13, 1998 the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling upholding a 1993 anti-gay ballot initiative in Cincinnati. The Court refused to hear the case Equality Foundation of Greater Cincinnati v. Cincinnati, thereby allowing homophobic Issue 3 to take effect.

Cincinnati's ballot measure Issue 3 amended the city's charter to prohibit civil rights laws banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It was approved by voters in 1993 after a divisive campaign. When the Court struck down a similar Colorado provision in *Romer v. Evans*, it sent the

("Supreme Court" Continued on page 6)

("Helpline" Continued from page 3)

sexuality, makes an unsuccessful attempt at suicide.

When TREVOR was scheduled to air on HBO, the film's creators began to realize that some of the program's teen viewers might be facing the same kind of crisis as Trevor, and they began to search for a support line to help them. When they discovered that no national 24-hour toll-free suicide hotline existed that was geared toward gay youth, they decided to establish one and began the search for funding.

Thanks to a generous startup grant from The Colin Higgins Foundation, The Trevor Helpline was born, and the search for funding continues to maintain the site on a permanent basis.

The film's creators were also lucky enough to secure the services of Dr. Jay Nagdimon, an expert in the area of suicide prevention, to manage the hotline. Dr. Nagdimon is director of the Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) in Los Angeles. Prior to his tenure at the SPC, Dr. Nagdimon founded the Lambda Youth Network, a nonprofit organization providing outreach and HIV education to gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. In addition, he supervised the Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project for the Family Service of Los Angeles, and he authored Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project, a teacher's guide for presenting suicide prevention material to youth. Dr. Nagdimon is also a past contributor to Oasis Magazine, an online publication for sexual minority youth.

The Trevor Helpline was designed to help those in crisis and, like the film, give hope where it's needed.

If you wish to make a donation to the hotline you may do so by sending a check to: The Trevor Helpline
P.O. Box 6010-751
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

MY THOUGHTS FOR ALL OF YOU

By Jeffrey Raymer

I hope that you will have many real moments.
I hope that all you search for ultimately ends with you finding yourself.
I hope that each night when you lay down your tired head that you will sleep with angels and create peace.
I hope and pray that you will not block the blessings, but allow them to flow,
and the wisdom of your spirit, will grow and bloom.

With love, stay in peace.

("Vote" Continued from page 4)

parties, candidates, and the media as compared to other voting blocks. Yet, the report demonstrates, at five percent the GLB vote is as significant as other definable segments of the electorate (Latinos 4.5 percent, Jews 3.4 percent, and Asian Americans 1.1 percent.). In addition, the report shows the GLB vote to be growing over time. Self-identification among GLB voters jumped from 1.3 percent in 1992 to five percent in 1996.

The report was authored by Dr. Robert Bailey of the Rutgers University School of Public Policy and Administration and produced by the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Among the report's findings is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the strength of the GLB vote is most significant in medium sized city congressional districts. Bailey shows rates of voter self-identification to be highest in medium sized cities (8.9 percent in 1996).

"Out and Voting" also shows the GLB vote to be bipartisan. More than one out of four (28 percent) GLB voters in the 1996 election voted Republican. According to Vaid, director of NGLTF's Policy Institute, "Such electoral diversity and fluid loyalty should send a signal to Democrats that they should not take the GLB vote for granted and to Republicans in swing districts that they dismiss this vote at their own peril."

Along with an important message to Democrats and moderate Republicans that the GLB vote should be considered seriously, the findings of Out and Voting also sound an alarm to GLB voters themselves. According to Urvashi Vaid, "The GLB vote is just beginning to be harnessed by our movement. The Bailey report sends the important message that the votes we cast add up -- but we must take our power at the polls seriously."

The "Out and Voting" report is free to the press and can be obtained by contacting NGLTF communications director Tracey Conaty at (202) 332-6483 ext. 3303. The report is also available to the public for \$10. Calling (202) 332-6483 ext. 3327 can make orders. The report can also be accessed from NGLTF's web site at www.nglftf.org.

WORTH

It is not what the world gives me
In honor, praise, or gold.
It is what I do give the world,
So others do unfold.

If by my work through
Life I can
Another soul unfold,
Then I have done what
Cannot be
Made good, by praise or gold.

One tiny thought in a tiny world,
May give a great one birth
And, if that thought was
Caused by me
I lived a life of

Worth.

Richard F. Wofe

("Supreme Court" Continued from page 5)

Issue 3 case back to the Sixth Circuit for reconsideration. The Sixth Circuit disregarded the Romer decision and upheld Issue 3. Today, the Court refused to hear an appeal to that decision, allowing the discriminatory measure to take effect.

The following statement is attributable to Kerry Lobel, executive director of NGLTF:

"Today the U. S. Supreme Court allowed equality to take a back seat to homophobia. It is unconscionable that the Court would allow this ruling to stand and refuse to act on behalf of all Americans.

We extend our deepest sympathies to our allies in Cincinnati. For decades, they have worked hard to create a community to extend opportunities to all of Cincinnati's citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation. Standing together, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their allies spoke out eloquently and passionately about fairness and their vision for justice. We have confidence that they will work hard to bring justice to their community. We stand ready to assist them in passing new laws that will repeal Issue 3.

All Americans deserve to live free from violence and discrimination. We will ultimately defeat the right-wing's broad anti-democratic agenda that seeks to deny basic rights for GLBT people."

UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS ISSUES

On the religious front there are several different actions occurring, not only in the United States, but also abroad. The first deals with the United Methodist Church and Reverend Jimmy Creech.

Reverend Creech made headlines after he presided over the celebration of a lesbian couple's union. This created a wave of emotions, both pro and con, over his involvement with the union and it eventually led to Reverend Creech being brought up on charges before the church court.

Reverend Creech, along with other United Methodist Church members and clergy, has petitioned its leaders to lift the ban on blessing same-gender marriages. This ban was recently established as church law and is grounds to dismiss participating clergy. In the letter, Reverend Creech included the statement: "Our church is adrift, buffeted by forces that seek to steer our course away from the prophetic, just and compassionate course of Christ." Creech also made reference to the murder of Matthew Shepard by saying, "As long as the church remains silent, it is responsible for the violence it breeds."

Also in the U.S., the Evangelical Lutheran Church held an unprecedented conference on gay and lesbian clergy. Although the church expects its clergy who are gay or lesbian to remain celibate, a researcher with North Carolina finds things to be different. Of 35 gay and lesbian ministers she surveyed, 21 were in long-term relationships and, in some cases, their partners lived with them in the church parsonage.

Finally, in Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church could be the first Anglican Church to officially celebrate same-gender weddings. The church's liturgy committee has organized a series of congressional meetings to discuss the matter. The final decision will be in the hands of the church Bishop and General Synod. The liturgy committee chair admits the issue is likely to be controversial as it was with other churches. The question for the church is being included as part of a review of all Anglican marriage rituals.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

In dreams he comes to me.

"I am well, if you need me,
I am here."

I wake feeling loved,
more whole than before.

Last night he said,
"Tell us your story."

His hands gentle on mine.

There is peace in his eyes.

My father returns from death,
bearing gifts life denied both of us.

~ Mitzi Chandler

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

I am sitting in front of the computer with the television screaming for attention, as the desk lamp heats my stack of notes. I am feeling very saddened. No, more like outrage at the loss of my brother in life, Matthew Shepard. I learned of Shepard's passing via electronic mail. I sat and stared at the computer screen, as grief crept into my soul. I am at a loss for words. I would like everyone who reads this to stop whatever he/she maybe doing and allow a moment of silence, in memory of our brother who now sleeps with angels. May the Creator of all life be with us all, especially Matthew's family and friends.
Jeffrey

We are always looking for newsletter items. So if you have a story, poetry, or just want to say hello, drop us a line or two. We can be reached at

713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676. You may also e-mail Stephen personally at stevenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:

Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Raymer
201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938
Houston, TX 77007

We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting, until then stay in peace and grace to you,

Stephen and Jeffrey

Give your loved one a hug and tell them you love them.



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!

Names): _____

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

December 1998

<http://www.pflaghtx.org>

Helpline: 713-867-9020



PFLAG Houston
PO Box 53796
Houston, TX 77052-3796

SODOMY LAW ENFORCED IN TEXAS

Planetout

The 119-year-old law that makes homosexual oral and anal sex a misdemeanor worthy of a maximum \$500 fine in Texas will be put to the test by two men who were arrested in the apartment of one of them. Houston police officers were responding to what turned out to be a false report of an armed robbery September 17, when they came upon Tyrone Garner and John Geddes Lawrence engaged in sex. The pair were taken to jail and later released on \$200 bail. Now Garner and Lawrence plan to challenge the law with exactly the kind of case state gay and lesbian activists have been waiting for.

Prosecutions for private consensual sex acts are so rare that the laws are difficult to challenge, although their impact is frequently felt when they are cited in regards to other issues, such as discrimination, employment and adoption. Texas activists tried to raise a civil challenge to the sodomy law in 1994, but the state Supreme Court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction in the case because the plaintiffs had not been prosecuted under the sodomy law. In fact, only two or three sodomy cases have been prosecuted over the last 30 years in the state, and all

("Arrest" Continued on page 3)



HOLIDAY PARTY



The December meeting of PFLAG Houston will be a holiday party for everyone. The format of the meeting is changing for this occasion. We will have the small groups first with the party following.

We would like for people to bring drinks, side dishes or deserts. We hope to see everyone there to enjoy the company of all.

PFLAG WOODLANDS NOTICE

The Woodlands group will not be meeting in December due to the holidays. Instead everyone is asked to attend the holiday gathering/party at the main meeting in downtown. The Houston chapter will be meeting as usual on the first Sunday of the month.

The Woodlands group has also changed its regular meeting time effective January. Beginning in January, the Woodlands group will meet on the third Sunday of each month. The time and location has not changed. So please make sure to mark your calendar with the new meeting date.



NEXT MEETING DECEMBER 6th

PARTY, PARTY, PARTY!

We will not be having a general meeting program this December, instead we will be having a HOLIDAY party. So bring a favorite dish and your family—come on down and celebrate.

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, please attend one of our small groups.

The small groups are the heart of our monthly meetings. These groups provide everyone 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 Sue Null with the announcement by Friday, December 4th, at 12:00 noon. She can be reached at 713-664-1083 or via email at Suenull@rice.edu

Here's what's inside...

Helping us	3
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Schedule of Events

- Dec. 6** PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting
2:00-4:30pm
Christ Church Cathedral
1117 Texas Ave.
Downtown Houston
- Dec. 10** PFLAG Houston Board Meeting, 7:00-9:00 pm, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave.
- Dec. 20** PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting
Health Merchant at 27th and
Broadway in Galveston
- Dec. 15** Mid Month Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner at Bissonnet

NEXT MONTH

- January 10 PFLAG Houston Monthly Meeting**
- January 17 PFLAG Woodlands Satellite Meeting**
- January 17 PFLAG Galveston Monthly Meeting**
- January 19 PFLAG Houston Mid-Month Meeting**

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER

"What you bring forth out of yourself from the inside will save you. What you do not bring forth out of yourself from the inside will destroy you."

—Gospel of Thomas

PFLAG Houston holds Mid-Month Discussion Group

On Tuesday, December 15th, PFLAG Houston will hold a mid-month discussion group for those of our members who 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.

DONATIONS TO PFLAG

PFLAG would like to thank the following people for their generous donation to the chapter. We truly appreciate their support.

David A. Coupar
Richard C. Graves in honor of his parents

It is through donations that PFLAG is able to fund the many different projects throughout the year. A recent example of this is the donation to the public library system by PFLAG.

If you or someone you know would like to make a donation please contact a board member or call the help line, 713/867-9020.

THE HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA

PFLAG Atlanta newsletter

We've all wondered what it was, and I found it. Here it is:

1. Get dressed
2. Walk the dog. (or hug the cat)
3. Go to work
4. Go grocery shopping.
5. Go home.

HELPING US HELP

At any given point in time, PFLAG-Houston is likely to have several short-term projects underway, in addition to the myriad of day-to-day, ongoing efforts. There is one thing they all have in common--they need people to make them work.

If you are interested in any of the following projects, call the designated person and check it out.

Board Positions: In general, Board members are expected to recommend policy positions for their area of responsibility, ensure that the task work associated with this area of responsibility is completed (by either effectively delegating the work to others or doing the work themselves), and to participate in monthly Board meetings.

Committee Chairs/Members: Some committees are "committees of one"; others are groups of 2 or more individuals with a chairperson and have ongoing responsibilities. Think of them as "standing committees". The responsibilities of the members of these committees vary according to the charter of the committee.

- (1) The Support Group board member oversees the small group discussion sessions at General Meetings - ensures that facilitators are available, handles logistics, etc.
- (2) Marketing is a new Board position. This person would be responsible for coordinating any marketing initiatives of PFLAG-Houston (e.g., brochures, posters, billboards, advertising, etc.)
- (3) The Scholarship Chair oversees PFLAG-Houston's annual effort to award scholarships to needy and deserving gay or lesbian youth.
- (4) We will be sponsoring another Healing the Hurt conference in 1999. This person would coordinate the effort, with a team of volunteers.
- (5) Nancy Camp and Mary Egert have helped us get the Flyer into the mail for several years now. The job is getting big enough that back-up is needed.
- (6) Don and Susan Upchurch are using part of their garage to store PFLAG materials. Does anyone have extra garage/warehouse storage space or an extra bedroom that we could use to store PFLAG materials?
- (7) This person would be responsible for the preparation and follow-up in connection with requests we make for grants.
- (8) If you just want to volunteer, but don't have anything in particular in mind, call Cheryl Francois, PFLAG's member Involvement Chairperson.

Type of Help	Name of Position/Committee/Project	Contact Person	Phone No.
Board position	Support Groups (1)	Norma Graves	713-467-4105
Board position	Marketing (2)	Jim Bianchetta	281-491-3114
Board position	Scholarship (3)	Gordon Weisser	713-776-1227
Board position	Grant Writing (7)	Gordon Weisser	713-776-1227
Committee Chair	Healing-the-Hurt III (4)	Susan Upchurch	713-995-9777
Miscellaneous	Back-up for newsletter distribution (5)	Nancy Camp	713-748-4448
Miscellaneous	Storage space (6)	Susan Upchurch	713-995-9777
Miscellaneous	Any kind of volunteering (8)	Cheryl Francois	281-320-1199

("Arrest" Continued from page 1)

those involved sex acts that took place in public jails in view of witnesses. Ironically, the infrequent enforcement of sodomy laws has also been used to justify leaving them on the books. Attorney for Garner and Lawrence Mitchell Katine, can now say, "For all those people who have said over the years that this statute is never enforced need to realize that that's not true."

So Texas activists, while outraged about the circumstances of the case, are enthusiastic about its potential. "We certainly hope to move this forward, and we'd love to see it move all the way up the ladder and be declared unconstitutional," said Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus president Clarence Bagby. "We need to get this [sodomy law] off the books." Harris County District Attorney John B. Holmes Jr. agrees with the strategy. Although he intends to prosecute Garner and Lawrence under the presumption that the law is constitutional, he said, "But I've always said that the best way to get rid of a bad law is to enforce it."



HUMOR IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Nancy invited her mother over for dinner. During the meal, her mother couldn't help noticing how beautiful Nancy's roommate was. She had long been suspicious of Nancy's sexuality and this only made her more curious. Over the course of the evening, while watching the two women interact, she started to wonder if there was more between Nancy and the roommate than met the eye.

Reading her mom's thoughts, Nancy volunteered, "I know what you must be thinking, but I assure you, Marie and I are just roommates."

About a week later, Marie came to Nancy and said, "Ever since your mother came to dinner, I've been unable to find our silver gravy ladle. You don't suppose she took it, do you?" Nancy said, "Well, I doubt it, but I'll write her a letter just to be sure."

So she sat down and wrote: "Dear Mother, I'm not saying you 'did' take a gravy ladle from my house, and I'm not saying you 'did not' take a gravy ladle. But the fact remains that one has been missing ever since you were here for dinner."

Several days later, Nancy received a letter from her mother which read: "Dear Nancy, I'm not saying that you 'do' sleep with Marie, and I'm not saying that you 'do not' sleep with Marie. But the remains that is she was sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the gravy ladle by now. Love mom"

NOW THAT WE ARE COOL...

By Tommie Kasnick

Today I discovered that I am cool, groovy and down with all that. Why? Because and solely because I am gay. Wow! Its in because I was born this way. In even though folks are dying because of it.

A whole population of children will now experiment with same sex partners like the newest drug simply because their parents disapprove. They can't buy it at the drug store or on the street corner. You can't nip it from your mother's purse or your daddy's wallet or the locked cabinet in the dining room. You can't beg someone of age to give it to you. You have to be born that way.

But this group of kids is everything our generation has been fighting against. Fighting to convince HETs that we were born this way. That we didn't choose. That, with the harassment and pain, no one would willing choose to live this way. On the verge on winning a battle, a new flag is presented.

These children have role models and hope. They have homes and support groups and t-shirts. They have safe neighborhoods and bars. They have safety in numbers. And some of them do choose. In a quick fix society, anything that feels good is game. Like the lollipop, gay is temporarily glam.

And when these kids move on, some actually gay. Perhaps their friends and family will retain some understanding. And when we come down from our high. When the tidal wave of publicity from a wrongful death subsides. When the party is over. What have we accomplished? Our opportunity is now. While glam is good. To slip in some eternal truths that don't fade with the television's picture tube. Gay is good. HET is good. Family is good. Let us issue in the age of self-love and societal heart.

HOUSTON LESBIAN & GAY COMMUNITY CENTER

The Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, located at 803 Hawthorne, is looking for volunteers to work at the Center. Volunteers staff the reception desk, answer the telephone, and help keep scheduled events running smoothly. All volunteers go through an orientation program, and the work is light and fun. (As an additional incentive, groups that volunteer for staffing two or more shifts a month can get a discount on meeting room rental.)

To sign up, please contact Phillip Knowlton, the Center's volunteer coordinator, at 713-874-1460

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Tips For A Happy Holiday*

If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

1. Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation-you may be surprised.
2. Realize that your family's reaction to you may not be because you are gay. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
3. Remember that "coming out" is a continuous process. You may have to "come out" many times.
4. Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday.
5. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a gay child. It took you time to come to terms with your sexual orientation, now it is your family's turn.
6. Let your family's judgments be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
7. Create your own holiday gathering with friends and loved ones, if it is too difficult to be with your family.

Before the visit...

1. Make a decision about being "out" to each family member before you visit.
2. Discuss in advance with your partner how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
3. Don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. If you bring your partner home, make plans in advance.
4. Have alternate plans if the situation becomes difficult at home.
5. Find out about local g/l/b/t resources.
6. If you do plan to "come out" to your family over the holidays, have support available, including a Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) publication and a phone number of a local PFLAG chapter.

During the visit...

1. Focus on common interests.
2. Reassure family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
3. Be sensitive to your partner's needs as well as your own.
4. Be wary of the possible desire to shock your family.
5. Remember to affirm yourself.
6. Realize that you don't need your family's approval to sustain an excellent relationship with your partner.
7. Connect with someone else who is gay-by phone or in person-who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.

("Holidays" Continued on page 6)

IMAGINE TOLERANCE; EFFECT CHANGE

By Jeff Slutzky Cavalier Daily 10/21/98

(U-WIRE) CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. -- IMAGINE a child sitting in front of the TV. On the screen are two men kissing. "Look at those fags," the boy says to his parents, laughing. His parents' faces turn purple with anger; the boy, surprised, immediately loses his smile. "You know, my sister is gay," his mother says, and his father sends him to bed without supper.

Imagine an elementary school classroom where a teacher talks about mothers and fathers. One girl raises her hand and says she has no father, but two mothers. The children titter with laughter. The teacher asks them why they're laughing and what the big deal is. "My child has two fathers," he explains. Imagine a middle-school classroom where a boy gets a crush on another boy. He nervously tells two friends. One of them laughs his head off and calls him a sissy; the other friend glares at the first friend and asks him what his problem is. The nervous boy feels his chest muscles relax, and he exhales for the first time in an hour.

Imagine an ordinary church where every Sunday evening, a different family invites the pastor and his male partner over for dinner. Imagine a high school hallway where a girl puts a rainbow sticker on her locker door. The next day, she finds the sticker torn down and the word "DYKE" spray painted across her locker. A big group of students washes it off that afternoon; the following morning, the girl comes to school to find that 10 students have put brand-new rainbow stickers on their own lockers.

Imagine a press conference where a U.S. senator stands up and says that gay people are like alcoholics and kleptomaniacs. His fellow senators call for his censure; in his home state, a grass-roots movement grows, calling for his resignation. Imagine a town in Wyoming where a male college student goes up to another male and asks him out. The guy turns him down; minute's later, outside the bar with his friends, the guy seethes with anger. "Just relax," one friend tells him. "So he thought you were gay. What's the big deal?" He responds, "I wanna kick that queer's ass." Another friend says, "If you don't stop it, we're gonna kick your ass."

Imagine the same town in Wyoming where the same college student is beaten repeatedly with a pistol and then strung up on a fence. He is discovered the next day, and soon, in a hospital, he dies. But Fundamentalist Christians condemn the attack. "I don't know what kind of people would do such a thing," a preacher in Topeka, Kansas says. "A man gets attacked just because he likes other men. Everyone knows that God doesn't tolerate such hatred. Why should we?"

("Imagine" Continued on page 6)

("Holidays" Continued from page 5)

... And if you are the friend or family member of someone gay...

1. Set up support for yourself. It is important to realize you are not alone. Find the phone number of the nearest Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) chapter.
2. Take your time. Acceptance may not come instantly, but be honest about your feelings.
3. Don't be nervous about using the "correct" language. Honesty and openness creates warmth, sincerity and a deeper bond in a relationship. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask for help.
4. Realize that the situation may be as difficult and awkward for your gay loved one as it is for you.

Before the visit...

1. Practice in advance if you are going to be discussing your family member's sexual orientation with family and friends. If you are comfortable talking about it, your family and friends will probably be more comfortable too.
2. Anticipate potential problems, but do not assume the reactions will always be what you expected.
3. Consult with your gay loved one when coordinating sleeping arrangements if he or she is bringing home a partner.

During the visit...

1. Treat a gay person like you would treat anyone else in your family.
2. Take interest in your family member's life. He or she is still the same person.
3. Don't ask your gay family member to act a certain way. Let them be their natural selves.
4. Acknowledge your gay family member's partner as you would any other family member's partner.
5. Include your gay family member's partner in your family traditions.
6. Ask your gay family member about his or her partner if you know they have one.
7. Connect with someone (a friend or a spouse) with whom you can talk openly about your concerns or feelings.

*Some tips excerpted from Mariana Caplan's book, *When Holidays are Hell...! A Guide to Surviving Family Gatherings*, published by Hohm Press (Prescott, AZ 1997) 1-800-381-2700.

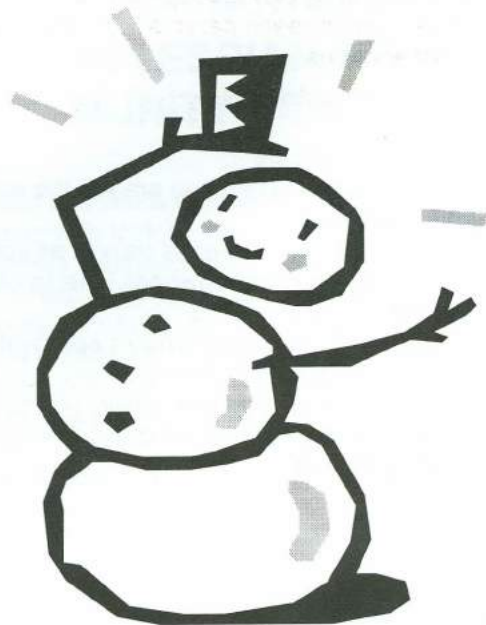
("Imagine" Continued from page 5)

Imagine a college fraternity bid night celebration. One brother puts his arm around a pledge's shoulder. "Get that off me, you fag," the guy responds. Suddenly the room is silent. The pledge finds 50 pairs of eyes glaring at him. "What?" he says. The next day he gets a call from the fraternity's president saying they've retracted their bid—they don't want people like him in their brotherhood.

Some of this sounds crazy, you might say. These are the thoughts of a dreamer. But why? Because it's just not the way the world is today, you say. Because people just don't think that way, you say. Because my politicians don't think that way. Because my religious leaders don't think that way. Because my parents don't think that way. Because my friends don't think that way.

But do you think that way? Are you willing to stand up for something when people might laugh at you? Perhaps they'll laugh. But perhaps they secretly agreed with you all along. It's hard for a young, straight person to stand up for gay tolerance. But imagine how hard it can be for a young gay person to stand up for himself. Attitudes are not made of stone. They can change when people see change around them.

The events with the greatest capacity to change us are personal and concrete. A story is stronger than a statistic. All the speeches in the world won't have nearly as great an effect on your brother's attitudes towards gays as you will by coming out to him. A gay-rights rally will not humble a homophobic half as much as his friends' condemnation of him will. People beat up gays because they think it's OK. People make fag jokes because they think nobody cares. Well, I care, and some of your friends care, and maybe you care, too. And if more of us would open our mouths—not just on television, but in kitchens, living rooms, classrooms and dorm rooms—then attitudes might slowly, ever so slowly, begin to change. And I bet the world wouldn't fall apart, either. Imagine a world like that.



NOTES FROM THE EDITORS-

Thank you Judith Light! Those of you who missed the Luck Tie Dinner, you missed a fabulous celebration. We want to personally thank Ms. Light for her wonderful presence. We were honored to spend a delightful evening with one so enlightening. Grace to you, Ms. Judith Light. Whatever you are celebrating this Holiday season we pray for your safety, joy, and blessings. We hope you have many real moments and continued peace in the New Year.

It's official! My name was officially changed on October 26th, 1998 @ 9:35 am. My official new name is Jeffrey Mikael Sion-Austin. (Sion sounds like Shawn) You can send birthday gifts and cards to the address on the next column. Hehehe. There are several people I want to thank publicly for all there support: Sarah Beauchamp, Vic Sardessa (sp) David Purgason, Kathy and Henry

Whitmire, Barbara Paige, my sweetie, Stephen Carleton and the Almighty Creator for giving me life. Many thanks to all of them for they have been a huge blessing and a mountain of support through the whole name change process. To all the rest of you that I have not listed here, many blessings and thank you.

We are always looking for newsletter items. So if you have a story, poetry, or just want to say hello, drop us a line or two. We can be reached at 713/868-2674 or 713/868-2676. You may also e-mail Stephen personally at stevenmc@flash.net or Jeffrey at jsionaustin@hotmail.com.

If you would like to mail us any information the address is:
Stephen Carleton and Jeffrey Sion-Austin

201 South Heights Blvd. Apt. #2938

Houston, TX 77007

Stay in peace and grace to you, Stephen and Jeffrey



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:

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