



Little Bits of Advocacy?

By Barb Klein

Advocacy. What does it mean? I looked it up in the Webster's Online Dictionary, and found it means, "the act or process of advocating or supporting a cause or proposal." When I looked up advocate, I came up with, "1 : one that pleads the cause of another;

specifically : one that pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court" or "2 : one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal." I asked around, and found that for many people, advocacy is something done by a large group or community, an effort that includes an active combination of support and education regarding a cause. (Now there is a definition!) I thought about the

definitions I have found, and they don't seem to be enough. PFLAG already has support and education as two of the three main vehicles for accomplishing our mission of promoting "the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends." If advocacy is basically support, then why put it in the mission statement? And, more importantly, what does it mean to me?

'If advocacy is basically support, then why put it in the mission statement? And, more importantly, what does it mean to me?'

I decided to tackle this question a few months ago. I had been thinking about how to deal with ignorance and bigotry in people I routinely see in my life. When I have thought of advocacy (for GLBT) in the past, I did think mainly of organizations such as PFLAG, or large groups of people who stand up and speak out in numbers that will be heard above the cries of the self-righteous who display their ignorance through their arrogance. Of course, I was aware of the fact that there are those extraordinary individuals who are also advocates; Famous people, mostly, who speak out for animals, saving the environment, gun control, etc.

I never really thought of individual advocates, though. Not until I met Alec and Gabi Clayton (and the rest of the members of Olympia PFLAG). I had seen Gabi's page and Bill's Story. I wanted to meet her, but I figured I probably wouldn't, because she seemed to have, in my mind, some celebrity status. Now I see her and those around us at the meetings, and I see advocates, advocates-in-training, and possible advocates in all of



▽ SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2-4:30 PM

Super Support

The part of our meetings set aside for support and discussion have proven so successful that the board decided to extend it to a "Super Support" session after we come back together following the break-outs. There will be some "check-in" type exercises that should be stimulating and informative for all.

▽ SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 1-5 PM

Annual Picnic

Once again our annual picnic will be held at Priest Point Park — on the water side of the park this year. It will be a pot luck with discussion and socializing and fun in the sun. Bring goodies, eating utensils/plates and yard chairs — and feel free to bring guests. **Note the change in schedule. We start at 1 p.m. and go till 5 p.m.**

David Tseng PFLAG's new Executive Director

We want to welcome David Tseng, PFLAG's new national Executive Director.

Tseng is the first gay man and first person of color to serve in this position. He is a former White House senior policy advisor, and staff director for the National Economic Council.

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A letter from Jen's Mom

This message was received by the PFLAG chapter in Phoenix AZ.

www.pflag-phoenix.org

If anyone would like to respond, that chapter is serving as an electronic post office for Jen's mom (who prefers to go by that moniker at this time so that her focus remains on her beloved daughter, Jen). They will be happy to forward your message directly to her. Simply address your message to "Jen's mom" and send to:

info@pflag-phoenix.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Jen's mom

I almost attended the Central Phoenix meeting last night, but I couldn't. I needed to say "thank you," but it's too hard just now. You gave me an incredible gift, and you need to know.

A year and a month ago I attended my first PFLAG meeting, in tears, just days after our only daughter shared with me, and then her dad, that she is gay. I located the meeting by calling the hotline and talking with Boot Reed, who steered me toward the meeting that very night, and who made me promise that I would call back, even if I chose not to

attend. I went, and picked up some materials, including [your PFLAG pamphlet] "Our Daughters and Sons," and went to the "first timers" break out and couldn't say a word (too many tears), and read the materials cover to cover. On pages 14 and 15 were three letters that talked to me:

1. "I hit a point where I was feeling sad and thinking about what would I say when people asked, "How is Gary?" And then it occurred to me: Gary's fine. I'm the one who's not. And once I reached that point, it was easier...as we met Gary's friends, we found them to be wonderful people and realized that he's really part of a pretty

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Queer women's support group

Are you a queer woman looking to join a safe and confidential support group? We are interested in starting a monthly meeting where we could have discussions, provide support and share resources. If you're interested, please contact Casey at 357-4329 or Nikki at 866-7868.

HeartBeat is a free publication of the PFLAG chapter in Olympia, Washington, published six times a year. The editors are Alec & Gabi Clayton.

Unsolicited articles are welcome and are due by the 15th of even-numbered months. The editors reserve the right to reject or edit material.

The deadline for the next issue is 8/15/2002

Mail submissions to:

HeartBeat

P.O. Box 12732

Olympia, WA 98508-2732

Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org

NEW or RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP

Please check the membership types you prefer:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Educator \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student/Low Income \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate \$500 |

New Renewal

Active (attend when I can) or Supporting (seldom attend)

Membership \$ _____

Add this amount as my tax -exempt gift \$ _____

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP AND GIFT \$ _____

I want Olympia's bi-monthly newsletter HeartBeat (which is mailed in an envelope with no identified return address).

I want the national quarterly PFLAGpole newspaper (which is not mailed in an envelope).

DATE: _____ PHONE: _____

Signed _____

PRINT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PFLAG Olympia, P O Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

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us. I see how each person can make a difference. We don't have to be famous, rich, or powerful. We just have to care and be willing to stand up and speak out.

For me, it is getting easier to speak up when someone unknowingly makes a comment that is derogatory. In fact, I had an opportunity to do that just recently when a man remarked almost proudly that he is homophobic. I simply piped up, "Well, you're talking to me." He skipped one half a beat and told me it was different because I posed no threat to him. The opportunity for further discussion was there, staring me in the face. Sometimes I take the opportunity. This particular time I did not. Did I act like an advocate? If so, perhaps I was like a subtle baby advocate, giving the man something to think about. He has been speaking to me on and off for months, and I think that by speaking out, although I certainly could have said much more, I provided a face for his homophobia, and the two did not jibe. Where might he go with such knowledge?

I have noticed many people, whether they talk to me or not, have decided they "don't need to learn any more" about homosexuality and/or alternative lives, and are determined to keep their points of view. (This makes me think a bit of my father, who always has refused to discuss my lesbianism.) Fortunately, with these people, we can live proudly and without apology. I don't "shove it up" his "left nostril" as he so eloquently put it once. I simply live and act and talk like anyone else I know. Isn't that, in a way, a form of quiet advocacy? I do not exude the terrible qualities he may have feared when I came out to him.

Unfortunately, some people know so little about GLBT people, and are so afraid of us, they don't even come close to us, let alone talk to us. They only talk about us, sharing their uninformed worries about us with others of like mind. When practicing active and stubborn disparagement, such people are not likely to voluntarily provide us opportunities for their education. Even our presence is not enough. A person can condemn us all he/she wants, but until that person gives us a chance by getting to know us, our lives will not become richer, and we will not become more accepted. If people are uncomfortable in our presence, yet continue to be in our presence (like

the Christian man with the cross above his door who lives in our apartment complex), can the door to acceptance be knocked upon? Can there be some sort of advocacy taking place by the simple act of being present?

It can also be difficult to know when we should speak out. Sometimes, I find myself with friends who may be semi-out, closeted, and/or straight, who are not yet fully comfortable with being associated with someone as out as I am. When I am with those friends, where there are also others around who look at me with disgust or disapproval, I find it harder to speak out. I feel I need to respect friends various levels of comfort. Are my friends known by these people? How might my friends be effected? Yet I also have to be true to myself. How can I be a sensitive, yet strong, advocate for my own rights?

*Note: the man in the above story was later asked by his son, "What would you do if a gay guy hit on you?" The response given back was, "No thank you. I am not that way"



MEETS at 2PM on the second Sunday of each month in The Gathering Place parlor of First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, at Boundary Street, Olympia. It is handicap-accessible.

DIRECTIONS: From Sylvester Park on Capitol Way and Legion Way, go 1 2 blocks east on Legion Way to Boundary Street. Turn left around the church. Park in side lot at 5th Avenue and Boundary, and enter upper front door. Meeting place is across the lobby.

Letters, articles and requests for literature are welcome.

Mailing address:

PFLAG Olympia; PO Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

For information or to discuss personal matters with an understanding parent and experienced PFLAG member, CALL the PFLAG Olympia

HELPLINE: (360) 866-0511

E-mail:

info@pflag-olympia.org/

Website:

http://pflag-olympia.org/

A letter from Jen's Mom

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terrific community. So what's the problem? It's society's problem. That's when we figured we were over the hump."

2. "I was teary-eyed for three months off and on. But we've always had a pretty good relationship. It has never changed from that. We never had an instant's question of our love for him, and we both assured him immediately that we loved him. And since then, our relationship with our son is strengthening because we have a bond simply because we know what he is up against in our society."

3. "I have to tell you, there are so many pluses now. You begin to recognize what an incredible child you have to share this with you and to want you to be a part of their lives...[Look at] the trust that has been placed in your hands and how much guts it took to do that."

I didn't realize until January 28th how valuable that gift, the gift of comfort, of acceptance, of no more crying for Jen's gayness, was. That's the date our beautiful, talented, passionate, happy 27-year-old daughter passed away from a rare seizure disorder.

For a year we laughed and enjoyed and treasured her, in all her facets, and now we treasure her friends and their memories and pictures and laughter.

And I took her [picture] with me to the Gay Pride festival and walked in the sunshine among the beautiful people and looked, unsuccessfully as it turned out, for a "Mom Knows" button, which I didn't pick up at that first meeting...

Thank you. You never know the lives you touch, and how important the touch may be.

Jen's mom

"The world is before you, and you need not take it or leave it as it was before you came in."

James Baldwin

New support group for ex-spouses of gay, lesbian and bisexual people

The first meeting of the PSSS (Puget Sound Spouse Support) was held June 29th at a private home in Bellevue. An on-line discussion group (same name) has also been formed to support the straight spouse between the bi-monthly meetings.

PSSS (Puget Sound Spouse Support) is a group designed to lend support to current or ex-spouses of gay, bisexual and lesbian people. It is open to both female and male straight spouses/partners. Membership is restricted, so you must send an email requesting to join (mail to: donnanolan@earthlink.net). This is done to provide a safe place where women and men can talk about their experiences in having a husband or wife come out late in life.

For more information, please contact:

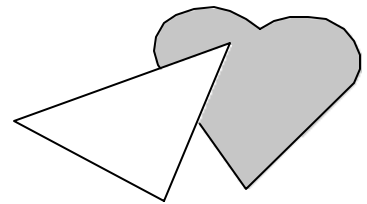
Donna Nolan
425-643-4422
donnanolan@earthlink.net

The PFLAG Mission

To promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends through:

- ▼ support, to cope with an adverse society;
- ▼ education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and
- ▼ advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.



**Let them know where
the money comes
from -- and support
PFLAG!**

You can now order beautiful PFLAG checks in rainbow colors, checkbook covers and return address labels from Message!Products in Minnesota. 10% of your purchase comes back to PFLAG to support our programs.

Call 1-800-243-2565. To see the items and order on-line, go to <http://www.messageproducts.com/default.asp?Org=pflag>