



Heart + Beat

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



PFLAG Olympia, Washington

Issue 53

Sept.-Oct. 2002

ADOPTION TRIBULATION

By Jeff and David Walddon

First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes (YOUR NAME HERE) pushing a baby carriage.

For Gay and Lesbian couples this little nursery rhyme was something we could not insert our name into. In our childhood, it was used as a taunt. It called attention to would-be lovebirds and their love nest to be. It also suggested that the final outcome of love was marriage and a family. But for some of us our love was dismissed by the straight world, our partnerships were not recognized by the state and our families were little or non-existent.

We have come a long way with organizations such as PFLAG that not only recognize the love we have in our relationships, but support and care for us in ways we could only dream of even a few years ago. We are making strides in legal recognition of our partnerships, if not in full marriage status, at least in partner benefits and some state

recognition of our commitment to each other. And finally we are starting to create families of our own. The GAY-BY Boom is here.

The decision to have children is not an easy one, especially for Gay and Lesbian couples. It becomes a very intentional act. We are after all infertile and go through the same grieving process as our straight friends who cannot reproduce.

After much discussion over the last few years we decided that we wanted to have a baby (or two, or three or . . .) We wanted the challenge, and joy, and love, and frustration, and life changing amazing experiences that come with raising children.

We are fortunate to live in Washington State, not Florida, because the opportunity to adopt as a couple is available to us in this state. In fact, both our names will appear on our child's birth

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▽ SUNDAY, SEPT 8, 2-4:30 PM

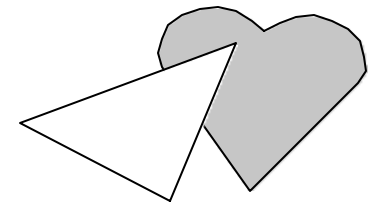
GLBT Adoption

Families Like Ours and other adoption advocates will give an overview of gay and lesbian adoption and will lead a discussion and question-and-answer session.

▽ SUNDAY, OCT. 13, 2-4:30 PM

Growing up Gay

Video and discussion of the film "Growing up Gay" by Brian McNaught.



Elections coming up

The election of new board members is coming up quicker than you might think. OK, it's not until the November meeting, but there are only two meetings between now and then, and in the meantime we need to form a nominating committee and get busy looking for candidates for board positions. If you would like to serve or know someone who would be good, please let a board member know. And remember, board meetings are open to all PFLAG members. We meet every second Monday following the general meeting on the second Sunday. You're welcome to sit in on a meeting to see if you'd be interested in joining the board.

Buy PFLAG-Olympia Gear

printed with the "Been Out Lately" graphic from the billboard campaign

- t-shirts
- sweat shirts
- coffee mugs
- mouse pads
- BBQ aprons
- tile coasters
- canvas tote bags
- boxer shorts



Buy yours now on the web

http://www.cafeshops.com/pflag_oly

From the director of *Licensed to Kill* & *Coming Out Under Fire*



Family **Fundamentals**

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have *children* who
“become homosexual?”



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an ARTHUR DONG film

www.deepfocusproductions.com



Starts Friday Nov. 1

Exclusive Seattle Engagement

Daily: 7:00pm, 9:00pm
Plus Fri-Sun: 12:50, 2:50, 4:50

Adoption Tribulation

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certificate. Adoption law varies widely from state to state so you need to check carefully before rushing forward in another state.

Once we decided to adopt there were many different adoption options available to us.

We first considered open adoption in which the birth parents continue to have some contact with the child. This could be in the form of: visitations, school photos, phone calls, letters or whatever was agreed upon between the parties. Dan Savage discusses this option in depth in "The Kid: What happened when my boyfriend and I decided to get pregnant". A formal contract is written which we would be required to abide by. We could later agree to more contact, but not less contact. However, the birth parent(s) may choose to not exercise those rights. Washington and Oregon have excellent open adoption laws and agencies. And we heard extremely positive stories.

Another option we explored was International adoption. We visited a gay couple in Seattle who had three children from Cambodia. They had had wonderful experiences with each of their adoptions. The more research we did on all types of adoption, but especially on International adoption, the more we learned that success depends quite a bit on which agency you use and how many questions you ask them. In the end we decided that International adoption was not for us. Only one of us could adopt and then we would have to do a second adoption later. Furthermore, some countries have certain restrictions on single parent adoptions—we couldn't adopt as openly gay, or we couldn't adopt a girl. We did strongly consider this option, but it was rather expensive and we wanted to adopt as a couple not as individuals.

We then looked at private adoption. One extremely expensive choice was surrogacy, but from a financial and philosophical standpoint this just wasn't for us. We did consider local private adoption. We would hire an attorney and write our own personal bio's explaining why we would make great parents for someone's child. Expectant mothers/parents would then review a number of these and hopefully choose us. This is still an option for us in the future if our current plans do not work out.

The adoption option we finally decided to pursue was the foster-adopt program through Children's Home Society. This agency works with the state to place children of all ages who are in the system with families that will adopt them. We checked this agency out carefully before choosing them. We interviewed two couples, one straight and one lesbian, and decided that this was the agency for us. In order to adopt this way we would need to complete the state approved training for our foster license. Unfortunately

we had to wait almost 7 months for a class to come around because we were planning on going on our honeymoon during the first available class. Finally this January we went to three weekend and two weeknight classes, approximately 20 hours of classes. Topics included: abuse and neglect, placement issues, cultural considerations, separation, grief and loss, disabilities, drug impact, care-giving, attachment and bonding, play, role of state agencies, etc. We also had to have our first aid, CPR, baby CPR and blood born pathogens certification. Plus letters of reference, a TB test, a doctor's health certification, references from our employers and other things I am sure I have forgotten. You know we needed all the same things that EVERY prospective parent needs to needs before they have a baby! Then there were stacks of papers to complete. Some of this was unique to this program and our agency. Others are required for all adoption options. We also needed to have a home study done, which included a detailed questionnaire about each of us individually, our relationship, and our family. As well as a three-hour interview with each of us individually and then two hours together. A safety check of the house was made and a fence was built. All-in-all it sounds worse than it actually was.

Now that we are licensed the hard part comes. We wait. We don't know how long it will be until we get that phone call and our adoption tribulations will change to parental ELATIONS.



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/>

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

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. 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.

An on-line discussion group has been formed to support the straight spouse between the bi-monthly meetings.

For more information, please contact:
Donna Nolan 425-643-4422 donna.nolan@attbi.com

PFLAG-Olympia Alert

PFLAG-Olympia Alert is a new service of PFLAG Olympia designed to inform members of upcoming events, programs, etc. Alerts will be sent out following each board meeting, prior to each meeting, and whenever something comes up that members need to know about. Signing up for the alert is your chance to make sure you don't miss anything important. You can subscribe to the alert at the regular second Sunday meetings or by sending an email to newsletter@pflag-olympia.org. With "Subscribe Alert" in the subject line or in the message. Sorry, we do not mail out alerts. This is available only through email.

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.

NEW or RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP

Please check the membership types you prefer:

Individual \$25 Supporter \$100
 Household \$40 Educator \$250
 Senior/Student/Low Income \$15 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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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 10/15/2002

Mail submissions to:
HeartBeat
P.O. Box 12732
Olympia, WA 98508-2732
 Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org