



HeartBeat

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



PFLAG Olympia, Washington

Issue 70 July-August 2005



PFLAG out in Olympia

PFLAG folks march in the Pride Parade in downtown Olympia (above). Judy and Don Murphy take their turn at running the PFLAG booth at Super Saturday at Evergreen College (right). Both events provide tremendous opportunities for community outreach for our chapter. Plus they are great fun and we sell a lot of buttons and bumper stickers.



What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.
~ Pericles

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.



▼ SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2-4:30 PM

The Stonewall Youth Speaker's Bureau Panel Presentation

Stonewall Youth supports, informs, and advocates for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer and Questioning youth ages 21 and under.

The Stonewall Youth Speaker's Bureau is a panel presentation of youth participants that share their experience strength and hope as LGBTQ youth. Our goal is to eliminate the disparities of homophobia and heterosexism by reaching out to our community partners, schools and organizations to share our stories as people build relationships with each other. www.stonewallyouth.org

▼ SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 1-5 PM

Annual PFLAG Picnic in Priest Point Park

Once again it's time for our annual picnic. It's potluck. Bring food to share and drinks. The board will provide some essentials. You're more than welcome to invite friends and relatives.

We'll be at Shelter #2 in Priest Point Park. To get there from I-5, take the "City Center/ Port of Olympia" exit. That will put you on Plum St. Plum crosses 4th Avenue and then State Avenue. At State it changes to East Bay Drive. Follow East Bay along the water and watch for signs to the park on your right. Look for the PFLAG banner. Note that we start an hour earlier than our regular meeting time

PFLAG-Olympia meeting format

2:00-2:30 p.m.	Introductions
2:30-2:40 p.m.	Announcements
2:40-3:15 p.m.	Support
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Social time/snacks
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Program (see above)

A matter of choice

... or not

By Stacy Tittsworth

Choice. Lately it seems that every discussion, news report, celebrity comment or political speech involving homosexuality and equal rights for the GLBT community centers around this one word. We argue about whether people are "born that way" or gay relationships or a "thing to do" or "lifestyle". On the one hand, I understand the desire to have the evidence looked at and be accepted for that which we cannot control---on the other I feel strongly that there is something inherently wrong with even discussing the matter of choice.

Someday we as a people (not gay people or straight people or bi-people, just people...citizens of the world, human beings) need to reach a point where this question of choice is irrelevant and unworthy of our consideration in terms of affording equal rights. We must evolve to a higher level of understanding in which whether or not someone is born gay is not on the table. Not being born Jewish or disabled is certainly no good reason to demonize or deny rights to people in these communities... why so acceptable in the GLBT? The whole argument assumes that whether or not sexuality is a choice makes a difference---as if this "sin" is excusable or okay if people "can't help it". POPPY COCK!!!

I refuse to give up this ground and let those who would be intolerant force me to discuss gay rights on the premise that homosexuality is somehow dirty, unethical or needs to be justified. Do we ask if people who choose a childless "lifestyle" are born that way? Do women who choose to work have to argue that they "just felt the compulsion to get a job from a young age"? Those who want to believe homosexuality is evil and wrong have a right to hold to their beliefs/religion/theology. I won't try to convert them or take away their rights. Is it really so much to ask reciprocation? But I also won't try to justify something to them that doesn't need justification---it presupposes that I buy into the core of that intolerance and I don't---I *choose* not to. I want people to understand, not whether homosexuality is a choice, but that there is nothing wrong or evil or sinful with it (or that if they *choose* to believe there is, that this is merely a *choice* they are making to believe in something for which there is no or contradictory evidence). Frankly my dears, I don't give a darn whether GLBT is a choice or not. Why should I?

I guess I'm tired of trying to use logic against irrational arguments based on beliefs grounded outside of science and reason. Also---I hate the sort of apologist perspective the choice question forces us into. I'd rather just hold my ground and say that there's nothing wrong with it and refuse to address the choice issue. I'm getting a flash to the movie *The Contender*---one of my favorites---where the nominee refuses to answer a question about her personal life because it is not relevant and because it would not be asked of a man. Even when she had opportunity to destroy the other side with evidence of their own hypocrisy, she chose not to. I wonder if I...if we can have the same courage to face bigotry, ignorance and intolerance with the same diligence, perseverance and integrity. I wonder if we can make the one choice that really matters---the choice to be unapologetically proud of ourselves for what we are...by birth and by choice.

Note: This article was submitted by Jeff Loyer. It was written by a co-worker of his at Intel in response to a posting on the IGLOBE (Intel Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender Employee) reflector, which talked about the "choice" issue. Reprinted by permission.

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).

DATE: _____ PHONE: _____

Signed _____

PRINT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

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

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shorts



Buy yours now on the web at

http://www.cafeshops.com/pflag_oly

Why was I heartbroken when HB 1809 and HB 1515 died ?

By Julianne Wasilausky

I worked 12 years in an automotive repair shop. I thought I was a valued employee, and indeed, by any measure, I was a valuable one. Then one day that all ended.

Of course, that was when I was trying to present myself to the world as some kind of macho guy. I was married with two children, an avid outdoorsman, and worked hard to fit the role society tends to expect of its menfolk.

Most of us reach certain turning points in our lives, where we have to look long and hard at how things have been going, and make a decision about how we're going to proceed from here.

My decision to enter therapy, and grapple with gender dysphoria issues, was one of those stepping-stones that led me to where I am today.

After six months of therapy, I got my letter saying that I am indeed a male-to-female transexual, meeting the criteria in the DSM-IV which describe gender dysphoria/gender-identity disorder.

Things progressed from there in a natural flow, accelerating like a toboggan down a hill.

The Letter was my key to be prescribed hormones, and with that I was on my way to becoming the woman I always felt myself to be, inside. Of course this meant that sooner-or-later, I'd have to let my employer know about all this.

I wore girl jeans and tank tops to work, let my hair grow long enough to pull back into a bun, had my ears pierced, and when I wasn't wearing the heavy twill coveralls auto technicians

wear, you could see that my breasts were developing. I practiced feminizing my voice when answering the phone and dealing with customers to the point that I got asked, "Can I speak to a mechanic?" Obviously, a female who answers the phone isn't one. Men who hadn't dealt with me before this transition started would say things like, "Thank you, dear" when I'd given them a repair estimate. My therapist helped me realize, that it was time to let my employer know his #1 diagnostic technician was becoming a girl. It was a tense, anxiety-laden, sweaty-palms time the morning of December 1, 1998. I asked my employer if I might schedule some time during this day to discuss "a personal matter." He agreed, and we made an appointment to meet right after 5 when the shop closed, and no one else would be present.

All day long I had that lump-in-the-pit-of-your-stomach, lightheaded feeling you get when you're going to do something scary. I had that feeling while standing in line to dive off of the high board for the first time when I was 13.

The time came, and I told him I was going to change my gender. His response was, "That's a BIG change!" Long pause. "I'll have to think about how that will affect my business." He then excused himself to go into the bathroom. Maybe he really did have to go. Maybe he just wanted to absent himself from the situation for a few minutes, to think about what I'd just told him.

I was relieved I'd finally shared this thing I'd been dreading. That he didn't fire me on the spot made me hopeful that things would work out.

Thirteen days later, on December 14, 1998, I arrived at work and was handed a two-week's pay severance check. My employer told me that he'd have to cut expenses, and perhaps go back to "putting on coveralls" himself. He helped me load my boxes into my truck, and I was out the door and down the road.

Why can this happen?

Well, Washington IS an "at-will" state, meaning an

(Continued on page 4)



Julianne Wasilausky



PFLAG

Olympia, Washington

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

MEETS at 2PM on the second Sunday of each month at First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia. It is handicap-accessible.

DIRECTIONS: From Sylvester Park on Capitol Way and Legion Way, go 12 blocks east on Legion Way to Boundary Street. Turn left around the church. Park in the lot at 5th Avenue and Boundary and enter through the glass doors.

Letters, articles and requests for literature are welcome.

Mailing address:

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

Email: info@pflag-olympia.org
Website: <http://www.pflag-olympia.org>

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 10th of even-numbered months. The editors reserve the right to reject or edit material.

The deadline for the next issue is 8/10/2005

Mail submissions to:

HeartBeat

P.O. Box 12732

Olympia, WA 98508-2732

Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org

employer can fire you at any time for any reason. If they don't like the color of your eyes, or if you're too tall, or they don't like the way you walk, you're history. If you're in a protected class, such as being of a racial minority or between the ages of 45-65, they can't fire you because of that. Unless.

After a day of sitting on the couch, numb, I mobilized myself and started to move my life forward again. An unemployment claim was the first thing, this time under my new name. Previously, I'd arranged with my bank to be able to cash my paychecks made out in some guy's name by the centuries-old addition of AKA (also known as) on my account.

The Washington State Human Rights Commission told me that even though I was part of a protected class (the 45 to 65 age group) they weren't inclined to enforce the provisions of the Federal age-discrimination statutes against employers of fewer than 8 persons. No matter that ostensibly I was fired because my health care costs, pension costs, and salary level (due to my tenure and seniority) were cited as reasons for my dismissal.

So I spent 16 months trying to find a source of income. The other repair shops in this tiny town who knew me personally, of my qualifications and abilities, and who used to bring tough cases to my employer for me to solve, weren't interested in hiring someone who was transitioning from male to female.

The dealership where a year before I was being avidly courted as a diagnostic technician, wouldn't even deign to offer an interview. The dealership where I'd turned down a position out of misguided loyalty likewise was no longer interested.

They didn't have to say it was because I am a transexual. And even if they had said so, it isn't illegal to discriminate on that basis.

I created over 300 resumes and job applications, before I was able to land an interview or two.

One was for an entry-level customer-service job where you do some minimal data-entry. From them, I got the coldest rejection letter I've ever read. "There is no place in our organization for you." Brrr.

Why am I concerned with Equal Rights? Why was I heartbroken when HB 1809 died without going to a vote last year? Why was I angry when HB 1515 met a similar fate this year? Why am I going to vociferously advocate that my State Senator NOT be re-elected next term? If you have to ask, you haven't been paying attention.

I was annoyed when the distinguished legislators from the self-righteous realms East of the Cascades spouted that granting equal rights to folks was just a ploy, a stepping-stone toward wreaking total havoc on the fabric of our society, Gay Marriage. Not only did I NOT see the logical connection between granting GLBT folks the same rights to nondiscrimination in housing and employment, but I failed to see how that was somehow a Trojan Horse (excuse the metaphor) for allowing that which they most feared: equal rights of survivorship, inheritance, medical insurance, and (goddess-forbid!) community of estate.

Lecture's over. Class is out. See you in the Fall. Turn in your textbooks as you leave.

LOCAL RESOURCES

from Capital City Pride program 2005 (edited for this newsletter)

The Pride Foundation connects, inspires and strengthens the Pacific Northwest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community in pursuit of equality. We accomplish this in rural and urban areas by awarding grants and scholarships and cultivating leaders.

<http://www.pridefoundation.org>

Black Hills Pride engages in fundraising activities in order to provide financial support to local organizations and individuals endeavoring to enhance the LGBT communities quality of life. Black Hills Pride encompasses Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Grays Harbor, and Pacific Counties. For more information on how you can be a part of this noble cause contact the Pride Foundation at

<http://www.pridefoundation.org>.

Gender Variant Healthcare Project hosts a weekly peer support group for all gender variant people to discuss their lives, share support, and build connections. For more information and the meeting location, email: G_V_H_P@yahoo.com

Free At Last - A Gay/Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting on Mondays and

Wednesdays from 7 pm to 8 pm in room #5 (Downstairs) at United Churches located at 11th and Capitol Way.

Rainbow Center - Olympia and Thurston County - a Virtual Community Center created to facilitate the critical element of networking the many people, events and groups of our thriving and diverse GLBT & allied communities.

<http://www.rainbowcenteroly.org>

Safe Schools Coalition - The mission of the Coalition is "to help schools - at home and all over the world - become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation." Information, research and resources.

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org>

Stonewall Youth - Olympia - dedicated to providing peer support, information and advocacy for bisexual, gay and lesbian youth and youth who have questions about their orientation, age 21 and under.

<http://www.stonewallyouth.org>

Triangles - Thurston County - a Unitarian Universalist club providing emotional and

spiritual support and a safe social environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the greater Thurston County community.

<http://rainbowskies11.tripod.com/UUtrianglesgroup/index.html>

United Community AIDS Network

(UCAN) - Olympia - dedicated to providing a broad range of support services to people living with and at-risk for and HIV/AIDS, as well as education and prevention services.

<http://www.ucan-wa.org>

The Olympia Men's Project is a local group for all gay, bi, trans and queer men ages 18-29. Our main focuses include providing community building activities and events using gay-positive approaches, personal and community empowerment, diffusion of new behaviors by peer influence and support as well as making safer sex and harm reduction community norms in stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and STD's. If you have any other questions or would like more info, please give either John or Joseph a call at 352-2375 or e-mail us at

mpowermentoly@yahoo.com