



Caution to the Wind

by Gabi Clayton



PFLAG's mission is a three legged stool of support, education, and advocacy. In many ways they are hard to separate. Right now I want to focus on advocacy. Our next program speaker is Josh Friedes, Advocacy Director for Equal Rights Washington (<http://www.equalrightswashington.org/>), who will talk to us about upcoming legislation in Washington that is related to the GLBTQ community we are a part of.

Advocacy is the act of working for and speaking on behalf of persons or issues. I need to note that because PFLAG has federal non-profit status as a 501(c)(3) organization there are rules we must follow about how we work in any political context. We think those are important to understand because while there are restrictions on what we can do, there are also many things we can do as an organization. It is acceptable for us to educate about candidates, but only in ways that do not suggest - even inadvertently - that one is better or worse than the other.

For more information about how this works and what we are allowed to do and not, you can read these documents from Alliance for Justice: "Permissible Election Activities Checklist" at <http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/resource1/Electoral-Activities-Checklist.pdf> for more information as to how this relates to candidates, and see "When Does Your Activity Become Lobbying?" at <http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/nap/prepworkcounts.pdf> and "Public Charities Can Lobby: Guidelines for 501(c)(3) Public Charities" at <http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/nap/guidelines-for-501c3-public-charities-lobbying.pdf> as to how it relates to lobbying on issues. (Ask us for a copy if you don't have access to the Internet.) If you are not sure about how this works, ask us - the PFLAG-Olympia board. If we don't know, we will help you find out, which will also educate us.

And remember that when you are not speaking for or acting as PFLAG, those restrictions do not apply.

So what about caution?

Self care is so important. Burnout is palpable and it is to be avoided. I experienced it once - before moving to Olympia and long before Bill's death. But what I went through was complex, and it is defined both with the word burnout and with a word I didn't know at the time: compassion fatigue. What's the difference? Burnout is from working too hard and with too little - sleep, money, etc.. Compassion fatigue is from caring too much. It has been said it is the cost of empathy, but that casts empathy in a bad light which it does not deserve. Rather I believe it is a possible effect of losing too much of yourself to a cause - to the point where you don't know when to say no, and you misplace other parts of what makes you whole. In doing so, while you probably do this believing it is necessary and a good thing, you lose sight of the fact that it means you bring less to the cause you are working for.

Why did I call this "Caution to the Wind?" While the wind can be frightening, it is a powerful and renewable source of energy, as are we. We need to take care of ourselves - AND each other, and sometimes we may need to pick up each other's pieces. We need to know it is okay to say no sometimes so that we are able to also say yes, and so we can be in this for the long haul because while the changes we strive for are happening, it is not going to be a short sprint to reaching our goals.

(Continued on page 2)

▼ SUNDAY, MAY 11 2-4:30 PM

Equal Rights Washington—Josh Friedes, advocacy director for Equal Rights Washington will talk about upcoming legislation in Washington that is related to the GLBTQ community.

▼ SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 2-4:30 PM

Ex-gay ministries—Dr. Patrick Chapman, anthropology professor at SPSCC, will be speaking on ex-gay ministries. Included in the discussion will be whether one can change his or her homosexuality, as the ministries suggest, and how the ministries define change. Dr. Patrick Chapman is author of the forthcoming book, *Thou Shalt Not Love: What Evangelicals Really Say to Gays* (Haiduk Press: 2008).

▼ SUNDAY, JULY 13, 2-4:30 PM

It's STILL Elementary—We will show and discuss the new documentary film *It's STILL Elementary*. This is a wonderful follow-up film to *It's Elementary*. (We may start the film early and dispense with some of the regular meeting agenda.)

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

Note: This meeting format may change depending on the program for any given meeting.

(Continued from page 1)

It can be scary to take a stand and be vocal and visible on the issues PFLAG works on. Absolutely. And I am quite aware that 'even' for allies there can be safety concerns.

However, doing nothing is what really scares me.

When talking to people about this work, they say to do self-care you should "pick your battles" but I prefer to use words that don't have a war connotation. So pick your strivings. Yes, do something!

Remember that none of us are acting alone. We have an amazing community to strive with, and we can lead and carry each other along the many paths to our goals.

And while we are doing that we should take the time to celebrate each other and our accomplishments, no matter how small they might seem, because they all add to the better world which we are still imagining.

Take Action with PFLAG!

See: <http://community.pflag.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=211&srcid=210>

Be a PFLAG 5-Minute Advocate. You can help PFLAG move equality forward in just 5 minutes! That's all it takes to learn about an issue and send a letter to Congress or the media. See: <http://capwiz.com/pflag/home/>

Always in the woods when you leave familiar ground and step off alone into a new place, there will be along with the feeling of curiosity and excitement, a little nagging of dread. It is the ancient fear of the unknown, and it is your first bond with the wilderness you are going into. What you are doing is exploring. You are undertaking the first experience not of the place, but of yourself in that place. It is an experience of our essential loneliness, for nobody can discover the world for anyone else. It is only after we have discovered it for ourselves that it becomes a common ground and a common bond, and we cease to be alone.

~ Wendell Berry

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The PFLAG-Olympia Alert is a one-way announcement e-mail listserv designed to inform our members and friends of upcoming events, programs, and more. Email updates are sent out prior to each of our the regular meetings and whenever something comes up that we think that our list subscribers might want to know about. Since this newsletter is published only every other month, the alert list provides an opportunity for more timely announcements. To subscribe, go online to: <http://lists.pflag-olympia.org/listinfo.cgi/alert-pflag-olympia.org>



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- I want Olympia's bi-monthly newsletter *HeartBeat* (which is mailed in an envelope with no identified return address.)
- I want the national quarterly newsletter *PFLAGpole* (which is not mailed in an envelope).
- I want to be added to the PFLAG-Olympia email alert/announcement list (include your email address.)

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Mail with your check to: PFLAG Olympia, P O Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

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PFLAG

Olympia, Washington

MEETS at 2PM on the second Sunday of each month at First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia (except in August when we have our annual picnic at a local park.) 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, phone numbers are on our website.

Email: info@pflag-olympia.org

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