

The HeartBeat

Olympia Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1993

COME JOIN OUR EXTENDED FAMILY



SUPPORT, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY

Welcome to the PFLAG extended family!

Olympia PFLAG began in January of 1993 when a group of concerned parents, friends, and citizens got together and decided that there was a role that PFLAG could play in our community. Beginning in February, we held monthly meetings, and our membership has continually grown.

With this first newsletter, we begin an outreach to fulfill our mission. Straight from our national mission statement, here's what we are about: "Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their families and friends..." All of us fall somewhere within this group, and we simply seek health and well-being for all of us.

How? Our first means is "through SUPPORT, to cope with an adverse society." Our Support Helpline, 866-0511, is always available for anyone who needs understanding, information, or to talk with a friend. Our Support Group is an open, confidential session, which meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Olympia.

Our second means is "EDUCATION, to enlighten an ill-informed public." We offer literature, a free lending library of books, tapes and videos, speakers,

tapes, and videos, speakers, classes for groups, and informed leaders ready to share their understanding with individuals.

Our third means is "ADVOCACY, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights." We provide expert testimony for legislative hearings, team up with other gay and gay-friendly groups, and provide articles and letters to editors.

In summary, our group "provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and acts to create a society that is healthy, and respectful of human diversity."

We hope you will join us and participate as soon and as often as you find it helpful.

OLYMPIA PFLAG OFFERS EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES



by Evonne Hedgepeth

An education committee was formed in late spring of this year and has been involved in a number of activities to inform our members and our community.

Monthly support meetings have each begun with an educational program on a wide variety of engaging and informative topics. Program topics this year have included, "Loving a Lesbian or Gay Family Member," "Sexual Preference, Lifestyle, or Orientation?," a Mother's Day panel of moms of GLBs, "Biblical views on homosexuality, the process of coming out as a GLB, and coming out as

parents, friends/family. Other educational activities for PFLAG have included staffing resource tables at various community events, providing a literature table at support meetings, and gathering resources for a lending library of books and videos for members.

The education committee meets once a month and could use more help to expand our activities. If interested in serving on the committee, please contact Evonne Hedgepeth,

*(GLB = Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

November 14:

"Guess Who's Coming to Thanksgiving Dinner"

Co-president and parent, Betty Beeman, will facilitate role plays she has designed to explore key questions many GLB people and their families face during the holidays: Should the partner be invited? How do we tell Grandma and the nieces and nephews? What if a partner arrives uninvited? How to deal with an added holiday stress.

December 12:

"Holiday Celebrations and New Traditions"

Creating new traditions can be an effective way of letting go of old illusions and finding new ways to celebrate with GLB family and friends. Bring goodies, music and decorations for this festive gathering!
January 9, 1994:

"GLB Civil Rights: What 1994 May Bring"

Guest speaker from the Hands Off! Washington campaign will update the group on upcoming advocacy issues and how we can help.

INSIDE..... BOARD ELECTIONS (PAGE 3)

My Journey Out of the Closet



by an Anonymous Father

Discovering that my adult child is homosexual has led me through a series of actions and reactions like nothing else in my life. Perhaps my journey can help others in facing their own journey. I am still closeted a bit, since my child is not fully "out" at work, and I honor that choice.

When my child first admitted to being homosexual, my reaction was surprise and shock. I needed someone to talk with, but who could I trust with such a revelation? Next, came profound feelings of shame and sometimes blame. This was coupled with the frantic feeling that my child needed to get "fixed" or cured.

Negative questions followed: Whose fault is it? Mine? How did we fail as parents? Will my child corrupt others? Are all my parental dreams lost forever? I experienced a brief period of grief at what I feared was the loss of my child. At that time, I confided in my pastor. Fortunately, he sent me to a local PFLAG group.

I went to my first meeting in fear and trembling. But my embarrassment soon gave way to tears, then relief, at finding a group of truly understanding people. My experience was theirs, too, and we could learn and grow together. I soon came to realize that I wanted to relate to my homosexual child in our traditional open ways and get used to the fact that s/he is the same good person I have always known. Only one small factor is different than I had known.

Next, I had to face my own ignorance regarding homosexuality. I began reading all of the sound literature I could find and avoiding the homophobic trash. This led me to reinterpret the homophobia within myself and throw out the distorted public rhetoric surrounding homosexuality.

Beyond that, other questions remained: Am I clear about my own sexuality? How do I relate to his/her partner? Shall we invite them both for

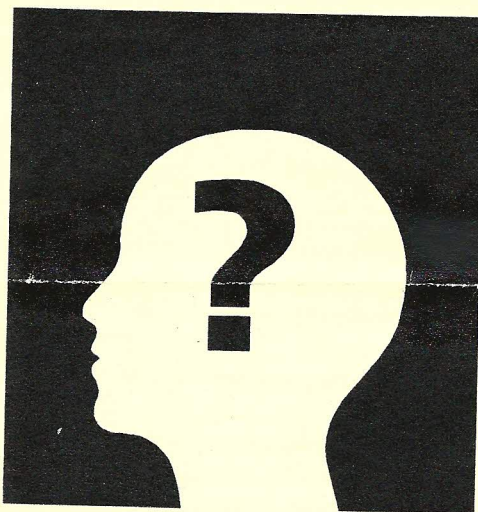
Thanksgiving dinner? How do we tell Grandmother, our close family friends, and our neighbors?

Finally, with these issues behind me, I began to meet more and more lesbian and gay people. I found them as normal as my own straight friends. In fact, I found many to be among the most loving, creative and socially responsible people I have ever known. I have come to want to relate to the local gay community, and now I find myself sharing in the larger gay rights movement.

At each stage of my coming out, my fellow PFLAG members have been supportive. I could speak openly and be guaranteed total confidentiality. Their excellent programs have guided my thinking.

PFLAG may not have all the answers, but we (I'm part of it now) stand ready to offer both support and education for each new participant as others seek their own answers.

- a Father



The HeartBeat.....

co-edited by
Kim Knutson & Bob Mitchell
.....is a bi-monthly publication
.....welcomes articles from you (which should be submitted by the 15th of the month preceding each publication. Mail to the PFLAG P.O. Box - ATTN: Editor.)
.....reserves the right to accept or refuse any article at the Editor's discretion.



BUTTONS, BUTTONS, BUTTONS

We are still selling PFLAG and other gay-friendly buttons at local bookstores, etc. and have already sold many. Call PFLAG to find out where to get yours!!!

SPRING FUNDRAISER

Please start saving all of your household items for spring sale!!

As our local PFLAG services increase, including publication and distribution of this newsletter, our costs increase as well. Therefore, your contributions, whether in the form of personal donations or ideas for other fundraisers, are always welcome and appreciated.

Why do I Need to Come Out to You?

- Mostly because I love you
- mostly because the greatest gift I can give you is the TRUTH
- mostly because I want to share my story with you
- mostly because I don't want to be just another illusion for you
- of what you want me to be
- mostly to provide a great face for you to put with the word Homosexual
- mostly to break down myths and false beliefs
- mostly to provide a positive role model
- mostly because I want you to say with PRIDE, "I know a woman who is Lesbian"
- mostly because I need you to walk with me in my struggle for equal rights
- Why do I need to come out to you?

Mostly because I love you.
-Mary C. Dispenza

(Reprinted from *Bridges*, 9&10/93 edition.)

**Board Elections
Coming Soon**



Elections for the PFLAG Board of Directors will be held at the annual PFLAG membership meeting on November 14, prior to the regular support group meeting at 2 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church. Each PFLAG member will have the opportunity to vote for seven board positions at this meeting.

Anyone wishing to vote in the election, but who is not currently a member of PFLAG, may join prior to or at the meeting.

The Board of Directors is responsible for directing the business of the organization and each director will serve a two year term. Currently, PFLAG has a provisional board made up of volunteers who originally worked on starting the organization in early 1993. Most of the members of the provisional board have expressed a willingness to run for a formal board position.

The following individuals are running for board positions:

Position #1 - Betty Beeman. Betty currently serves as Co-president and is very active in support issues.

Position #2 - Paul Beeman. Paul is the other Co-President and has been active in support and advocacy issues.

Position #3 - Kathryn Ford. Kathryn is the current Scribe and has served as liaison with other organizations.

Position #4 - Evonne Hedgepeth. Evonne is the current Education Chair and has been very active in fundraising.

Position #5 - Ron Hertel. Ron has served as the Support Committee Chair.

Position #6 - Andy McMillan. Andy is the current Treasurer and has served as the Advocacy Chair.

Position #7 - Stella Warner. Stella has been the backup Scribe and is our liaison with the Olympia AIDS network.

New Orleans Hosts 12th Annual P-FLAG FEDERATION Convention



by Betty Beeman

The 12th Annual Convention of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays met in New Orleans, LA over the Labor Day weekend. Paul and I represented the Olympia chapter, joining some 550 other parents and family members from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

From more than 40 workshops we chose only 4 each, mixing themes on improving local chapters with those that dealt with the broader issues of support and understanding in homes and schools. Neither of us could resist hearing Deb Price, the lesbian columnist carried by *The Olympian* and 80 other newspapers across the country.

In addition to the workshops, we were inspired by outstanding keynote speakers: Larry Bagneris, Jr., the first openly gay delegate from Texas to the Democratic National Convention in 1980; and Representative Gerry E. Studds (D-MA), the first openly gay Member of Congress and a strong advocate for gay and lesbian issues, choice and women's health programs. He

publicly affirmed his homosexuality on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1983 and has since been re-elected five times.

Two business meetings during the weekend allowed delegates to make important decisions regarding the Federation by-laws. The name of the organization was changed to "Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays," reflecting our wider commitment to all family members. The acronym P-FLAG will remain the same. Other changes refined and restructured the national organization to ensure a more efficient operation. We can provide copies of the revised by-laws.

Two very full days were lightened by an outstanding performance by Lynn Lavner, a lesbian comic/musician, Dixieland jazz during lunch breaks, a contemporary worship service on Sunday morning, and a party to end all parties, Mardi Gras style, complete with real Mardi Gras costumes.

Pervading all was the incredible sense of "family" we experienced with the other participants. We're already looking forward to meeting in San Francisco, Labor Day weekend, 1994 and hope some of you can be there as well.



"This place will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in."

- Theodore Roosevelt



Membership Application

- New
- Renewal
- Change of Address
- Please contact me for volunteer opportunities
- Individual membership (\$15.00)
- Household membership (\$25.00)
- Student/Senior/Low-income membership (\$10.00)
- National PFLAG organization membership & National Newsletter (\$5.00)
- I would prefer that my name not be sent to the National organization.
(Our mailing list is kept strictly confidential.)
- Donation

payment attached

payment on the way

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE AND MAIL TO:
Olympia PFLAG, P.O. Box 6123, Olympia, WA 98502

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

OCTOBER

Friday through Sunday, 10/22 - 10/24
Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment at Pacific Lutheran University. Call 206-333-9136 for more information.

Thursday, 10/28
Hands Off Washington Thurston County Chapter general membership meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the United Churches on Capitol Way, Olympia.

Saturday & Sunday, 10/30 & 10/31
Hands Off Washington Thurston County is hosting a two-day speaker's training, including guest trainers, to prepare those who wish to speak out against anti-GLB legislative measures. Call 786-6608, the local Hands Off chapter, for more information.

NOVEMBER

Tuesday, 11/2
Election Day!!! Be sure to vote!

Sunday, 11/14
PFLAG members meeting.

Thursday, 11/25
Happy Thanksgiving!
- - - RELATED MEETINGS - - -

Wednesdays
STONEWALL YOUTH, a Bisexual, Gay, and Lesbian peer support group for people 21 and under meets weekly. Call 705-2738 for more info.

CAPITOL CITY PRIDE meets every other week, call 943-4164 for more information.

Thursdays
HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUP meets 7-8:30 p.m. For more info. call 786-5581, ext. 6971.

OLYMPIA PFLAG meets....

at 2:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month in the Parlor of the First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way, S.E., (at Boundary Street), Olympia, WA. It's handicap-accessible.

Directions: From Sylvester Park in downtown Olympia, go 12 blocks east on Legion Way. Park in back and enter at office door.

CALL the PFLAG HELPLINE:
(206)866-0511

or WRITE: OLYMPIA PFLAG
P.O. BOX 6123
OLYMPIA, WA 98502