



Buffalo / Niagara

P. O. Box 617
Buffalo, NY 14207

716-883-0384

pflag@bfn.org
www.pflag-buffalo-niagara.org

We meet because we have learned that someone very close to us is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgendered.

We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner.

Although we do not agree at all times, we try to be understanding.

We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others.

We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable for all of us.

We encourage all to attend meetings for their own benefit as well as that of the group.

It is our hope that when each of us reaches a point of understanding and acceptance, we realize that this is when others need us the most.

Buffalo Monthly Meeting

Sunday, April 20, 2008
2:30 – 5:00 PM

The April meeting will include the showing of *Daddy and Papa*. "From surrogacy, foster care, and interracial adoption, to the complexities of gay marriage and divorce, to the battle for full legal status as parents, DADDY & PAPA presents a revealing look at some of the gay fathers who are breaking new ground in the ever-changing landscape of the American family." As always, newcomers will be offered the alternative of meeting privately with a PFLAG parent.

Heritage Room, Westminster Presbyterian Church
724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209

Use the driveway to left of the church to reach the church parking lot. Walk behind the church to other side of the building (through the nursery school) and enter through the kitchen entrance.

New Parents Meetings

Wednesday, April 9, 2008
Wednesday, May 14, 2007
7:00 PM

If you plan to attend, you must notify us by calling the helpline.

Christ United Methodist Church Library
350 Saratoga (corner of Harlem Road), Snyder, NY
North of the Harlem Road exit of Route 33

Enter through door closest to the lighted parking lot.
This self-help one-on-one meeting deals with the concerns of parents and family members who have recently learned that a loved one is Lesbian or Gay.

For Niagara satellite meeting details, call 297-5785.

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Buffalo/Niagara, is a non-profit, all volunteer, community-based organization not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic, or political group. Membership is open to all. PFLAG membership lists are kept confidential; and mailings are sent in plain envelopes.



Local News

Queer Journeys Programs

Queer Journeys is a cable access program sponsored by PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara and coordinated by Camille Cox and Babs Conant. The programs are based on documentaries on GLBT issues. This program only airs in Buffalo, on Mondays at 6:30 pm and Tuesdays at 1:00 am on Adelphia Channel 20.

The schedule for the next two months is:

- Apr 7: An Unexpected Journey
Apr 14: All God's Children
Apr 21: Claiming America's Promise
Apr 28: The Families We Choose
May 5: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?
May 12: Reading between the Labels
May 19: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...
May 26: Straight from the Heart

A short description of the storylines and a full schedule can be found on our website at: www.pflag-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml

A Successful Birthday

On March 1st, Mary Hewitt graciously opened her home to friends for a combination birthday party and fund raiser. Her friends came through, as friends do, donating \$820 to PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara in her honor. Our thanks go out to Mary and her friends for their generosity.

PFLAG North Atlantic Regional Conference

May 31st - Chautauqua, NY

The North Atlantic Regional Conference will be held just south of Buffalo at the end of May. There will be speakers from PFLAG National as well as others from around the country. The following are the details from the flyer for the conference:

Come to the conference to:

- Make connections with other chapters from NY, NJ, and PA
• Build skills to help your chapter
• Learn about important issues affecting GLBT people and their families
• Share stories of your own chapter's work and learn from others
• Hear about the exciting work going on at PFLAG National

This exciting conference will be held on Saturday, May 31st with optional events on Friday night and Sunday morning. Come for the day or enjoy an overnight stay at the historic Chautauqua Institute.

For a \$35 registration fee breakfast, lunch and dinner are included on Saturday! Coming early or staying late costs just a few dollars more.

Lodging at the Chautauqua Institute is also available for \$75 a night per room. To share the cost, the rooms may be shared by two people.

For more information contact Regional Director Carole Reeder at bcreeder@gmail.com. The registration form is included below.

Registration Form for the North Atlantic Regional Conference

Attendee 1 _____ 2 (if applicable) _____

Address _____

Email address _____ Phone _____

Chapter _____

I am coming to the conference! Registration fee \$35 x ____ = _____

_____ I will be staying for dinner on Saturday (included)

I will be there for dinner and events on Friday night \$13 x ____ = _____

I am staying for breakfast and events on Sunday \$7 x ____ = _____

I will be staying at Chautauqua Friday night \$75 per room

I will be staying at Chautauqua Saturday night \$75 per room

(Rooms may be shared by two people.)

Total _____

Mail this information and a check payable to PFLAG Chautauqua to: Paul Cawein, PO Box 282, Chautauqua, NY 13722



Education

Konica-Minolta terminates DP health insurance of 9/11 survivor

Out In Jersey press

Konica-Minolta has terminated the Domestic Partner health insurance of a 9/11 survivor after the couple moved out of New Jersey to Idaho. The New Jersey based company says that is the company's policy. When a domestic partner couple moves to another state they must re-register in a DP in the new state of residence. But the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) points out that many states have no way for same-sex partners to do so.

"I'm still working at the same company, doing the same job. Why shouldn't I be able to cover my partner in Idaho like I did in New Jersey? This would never happen to a married couple," said Ralph Martinelli. "Konica wants everyone to think they care about their gay employees, but the way Konica is interpreting its policy is so restrictive that many employees are shut out of the coverage."

Martinelli, a district sales manager for five years, was told that he would not be able to continue covering his partner when the couple moved from New Jersey to Idaho last year because there is no domestic partner registry in Idaho. Martinelli and his partner, Robert Ryan, have been registered domestic partners in New Jersey since 2005, and were allowed by New Jersey law to cover Ryan when the couple lived in New Jersey. The couple has been paying for COBRA coverage for Ryan since his insurance was cut off in October, 2007, but that coverage is very expensive and ends after 18 months - in March of 2009.

Ryan is working as a seasonal tax preparer and is looking for a full-time position. While he has recovered mostly from the trauma of being in the World Trade Center on 9/11, he still has mental and physical health needs that require regular medical care and expensive medications. He may have to go without the care that he requires if the company continues to prevent Martinelli

from extending benefits to his partner.

Typically, companies that wish to offer domestic partnership benefits to employees living in states that do not recognize same-sex relationships either accept a marriage, civil union or domestic partnership certificate from another state, or have the employee submit an affidavit attesting to the partnership.

"Konica Minolta wants all the good will that comes with providing domestic partner insurance, but they clearly don't want to have to provide the benefits. Otherwise they would never be interpreting its policy in such a restrictive way," said Jack Van Valkenburgh, Executive Director of the ACLU of Idaho. "Companies have been providing domestic partner coverage for many years now. The only possible reason for interpreting the policy the way that Konica does is to make it harder for employees to be able to provide coverage for their partners."

Martinelli and Ryan moved to Idaho so that Ryan, who experienced mental health trauma as a survivor of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, could find some relief away from the New York metropolitan area. Before he met Martinelli, Ryan managed the insurance licensing division at Morgan Stanley, and was in his office on the 74th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center when the first airplane struck the North Tower. While he was evacuating, Ryan became separated from the employees he supervised, and later was trampled by a crowd after the second airplane hit his office building, only four floors above where he was working that morning.

After the attack he was unable to work due to the trauma, went on disability for one year, and spent his retirement savings to stay afloat. He met Martinelli in 2004. The two lived in New Jersey and then moved to Idaho.

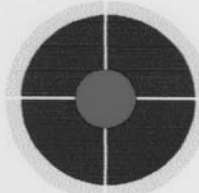
Ed Barocas, Legal Director the ACLU of New Jersey, said, "The confusion and mistrust engendered by terms like 'civil union' and 'domestic partnership' as opposed to 'marriage.' [makes it easy to] treat people unfairly."

Kay Patterson, LMHC

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Counseling for Change

5820 Main Street, Suite 203, Williamsville, NY 14221
 Phone: (716) 838-1236 Cell: (716) 583-4902
 Email: Pattersoncounsel@aol.com



Louis J. Moran, LCSW-R

Counseling & Psychotherapy

531 Linwood Avenue
 Buffalo, NY 14209

Services for adults, couples and families: relationship issues, depression, anxiety, life transitions, gay & bisexual concerns.

Sliding scale fee. Call: 881-5870 louthery@aol.com

Kentucky Legislature Kills Partner-Benefits Ban

The Advocate Staff

A bill that would bar Kentucky state agencies and schools from providing health insurance for domestic partners of employees was killed by a committee in the state House of Representatives.

The Health and Welfare Committee voted 9-6 to reject the bill from the Kentucky state Senate, the Courier-Journal in Louisville reported.

Committee member David Watkins called the legislation divisive and said the Senate is ignoring more prominent problems in health such as smoking, obesity and adequate mental health services.

"I am tired of the same petty issues coming before us when we've got major issues to address," he said, according to the article. He also criticized a supporter of the bill, The Family Foundation, for not being more concerned with larger health issues.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Vernie McGaha, said he would introduce the legislation again next year. He said he was concerned by the erosion of the sanctity of marriage by domestic partner benefits.

Openly gay state Sen. Ernesto Scorsone said he was pleased with the outcome.

"I think most Kentuckians believe if you are able to pay for the insurance you ought to be able to buy it," Scorsone told the Courier-Journal. "I really do think it's a great victory for fairness."



Advocacy

International Day Against Homophobia

From the www.homophobiaday.org web site

The *International Day Against Homophobia*, held on May 17 every year, is a rallying event offering an opportunity for people to get together and reach out to one another. Fondation Émergence promotes, mainly on a pan-Canadian level, the *International Day Against Homophobia* and encourages organizations and individuals to highlight this event in their environment.

Each year, worldwide campaigns against homophobia start on May 17 with the *International Day Against Homophobia*. As it traditionally does every year, the Fondation Émergence suggests that the new 2008 campaign puts front and centre one particular sector of human activity. This year, it will be healthcare.

The 2008 campaign highlights gay and lesbian health issues. Just like any other citizens, gays and lesbians need to receive health services free of discrimination.

Gay, lesbian, transgender and transsexual people must feel comfortable in consulting a healthcare professional. The *International Day Against Homophobia* for the year 2008 will be an opportune time to question current practices in the health and social services field, and to put forward new approaches.



The cause for the *International Day Against Homophobia*, its central topic of interest, the common theme that provides information for each of its endeavors remains a universal, multi-faceted and historical phenomenon: homophobia.

In Canada, recognition, for lesbian and gay communities, has been first and foremost a judicial acceptance brought about by the adoption of the Charter of Human Rights. However, judicial advances will remain only that until a complete, unlimited social acceptance of homosexuality is achieved and homophobia wiped out. To achieve this goal, the Fondation Émergence proposed in 2003, along with partners, to hold each year a special day dedicated to the social recognition of homosexual experience.

Philosophy of the Event

Few minority groups have been as discriminated against as the gays and lesbians. But major breakthroughs have occurred, and homosexual people are stepping out of the shadows. From the outside, it could be construed that all problems have been solved. The media are sympathetic, public personalities come out, television shows feature lesbian and gay characters in scenes of everyday life. Nevertheless, the reality is quite different. Many individuals are unable to live their sexual orientation, encounter difficulties if they do, or end up role-playing to protect themselves.

Despite these dire situations, the implementation of the *International Day Against Homophobia* should not rest on a "victimization" philosophy. In fact, the Day may be seen as a great opportunity to highlight positive

aspects of homosexuality and celebrate the contribution of lesbians and gays to society.

Target Audience

Homophobia is an insidious process that channels its effects through subtle, usually transparent ways. No one is safe from hostile manifestations to homosexuality. Quite surprisingly, many homosexual individuals themselves adopt homophobic behavior, hoping it would protect them against prejudice from their entourage. The *International Day Against Homophobia* aims to reach all groups of society, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Becoming Involved

An *International Day Against Homophobia* belongs to no one individual. It's about all people hoping for a prejudice-free world that can provide a place at the table for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation. Inspired by all world theme-days, the day set aside to fight homophobia needs to be appropriated by all of those actively involved in civil society: gay and lesbian community organizations, those organizations focusing on other types of sexual diversity, unions, employers, private businesses, governments, public administration, professional associations, and all individuals seeking equality.

More information can be found at the *International Day Against Homophobia* at www.homophobiaday.org.



Support

Guide to Being a Straight Ally – Part 2

The following is the second excerpt from the PFLAG brochure called Guide to Being a Straight Ally. The full brochure can be found at:

http://pflag.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Press_and_Media/S4E_Guide.pdf

Welcome.

Straight for Equality (www.straightforequality.com) is an invitation and opportunity for people who want to stand

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Connections

Friday, June 20th (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Saturday, June 21st (8 pm) - First Presbyterian Church
One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY

Sunday, June 22 (4 pm) - United Methodist Church
5681 Main St, Williamsville

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

up for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) equality but are not sure how. Through education, *Straight for Equality* will empower straight people in supporting and advocating for GLBT equality in their home, workplace and community.

The GLBT community cannot achieve equality without support from smart, energetic, compassionate, and dedicated straight allies... people just like you. We know that there are lots of barriers that may keep people from getting involved, and that's why we're here. This booklet is the first step to getting past them.

Got questions?

We'll answer them. Whether it is through our website, printed materials, in-person presentations, or suggested resources, we have answers.

Got concerns?

That's natural—and healthy! We'll do what we can to resolve your concerns and introduce you to people who have or had the same concerns as you.

Don't know how to get involved?

The Straight for Equality team has collected suggestions, both big and small, for how to stay informed, get involved and make a difference. You'll find some of those things in this guide.

Straight for Equality isn't about politics or politicians, Republicans or Democrats, radical activists or peacekeeping pacifists.

It is about creating a place where all people who care about equality can openly discuss and resolve the barriers they face to becoming an ally, get specific recommendations for action, and learn how to assist others—whether it is friends, family members, coworkers or community members—in becoming conduits for change.

Straight allies (and potential allies), your time has come.

Getting started is easy. Here are the first five ways you can start moving equality forward for your gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender friends today!

Equality guideposts

Here are some concepts to help identify things you might

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face on your journey to becoming a straight ally:

Stumbling Blocks: Caution with a twist. Read real-life stories from people about how they struggled to understand a situation, confronted a fear, or tried something new. They're good reminders that you're not alone in the "coming out" process as an ally.

Phone-a-Friend: Get quick access to great resources that can help you get past your stumbling blocks and back on the road, straight to equality.

Your Invitation: Learning more about how to be a powerful straight ally opens up a whole new set of opportunities for you to change your world. Take advantage of these invitations to try something new and help move equality forward.

(Note: The first three steps appeared in the March Newsletter.)

Step four: support equality.

The number of places where a straight ally can express his or her support in small but incredibly meaningful ways is limitless. Your workplace, house of worship, school, or civic organizations offer opportunities to introduce, support, or vote in favor of GLBT-inclusive policies.

Often, your voice as an ally can carry tremendous weight in these environments in ways that the voices of GLBT people cannot.

Why? Consider these two reasons...

First, many of these places still have policies or cultures that remain unfriendly or restrictive to GLBT people. But the one-on-one, honest and informed conversations that you have can help change this fact.

Second, as an ally, you bring a different perspective to the conversation. Your insistence on equality has a different ring. It isn't about you—it is about others, and about doing the right thing.

Stumbling block: "I thought it would be too political..."

Joe, 45, said, "I'm a teacher. One of the guidance counselors in my school expressed a lot of frustration and even some anger over a new policy that requires counselors to receive special training to help them work with GLBT youth. She was clearly agitated and didn't see why she should have to do it.

My first inclination was to let it go and keep politics out of work. But I thought about how her attitude could affect the kids. So I told her about all the newspaper articles I've read on GLBT youth getting bullied, how their fear and shame impacts their grades, and even how their suicide rates were higher. I realized that even though this was a small comment, it was a big help in changing the climate of my school."

As the old adage goes, change starts at home...and at work...and at school. We could go on, but the point is that small changes—like not letting something that sounds wrong go unchecked—matter. Sure, there's a chance that someone will push back on your opinion, but

that is just another chance to talk about different—and persuasive—perspectives.

Many workplaces, houses of worship, and organizations are considering policies that help protect GLBT people from discrimination.

But these changes can't happen without the active, open, and brave support from allies like you.

Unfortunately, there are people intent on making sure that these changes never happen, and they're also vocal and active. If you support your GLBT friends—and equality—you'll counteract their voices and make sure that fairness prevails. After all, if you don't speak up for what's right, how can you know someone else will? Fairness is best not left to chance.

Phone-a-Friend: Where do I get the facts?

How do you learn about the policies on GLBT inclusion that exist in your workplace, house of worship, school, or membership organizations? There are several great resources on the web:

- Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): pflag.org
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): glsen.org
- The Institute for Welcoming Resources: welcomingresources.org
- Human Rights Campaign (HRC): hrc.org/workplace

Once you've done some homework and know where the places that matter to you stand, get active. Join the Pride group at the office, get on a committee at your place of worship that is considering changes, or just be vocal in your social circles. All of your contributions as an ally make a difference, and as you witness positive change, doing it more becomes natural.

Your Invitation: Call for backup!

Concerned that you're not quite presentation-ready?

Contact the Straight for Equality team by going to our website, www.straightforequality.org and invite them to come to your school, workplace, place of worship, or organization to talk about the importance of equality and the critical role that straight allies can play in achieving it.

Step five: come out.

Ok. Now that you've gotten informed, spoken up, been honest, and supported equality, if you haven't already, it's time to come out.

You heard us: Come out...as an ally, that is. This isn't always easy. As allies we know that you have some fears, and that's totally natural. Fortunately, we have some answers...

What if people think I'm gay?

Yes. Some people may think you're gay. But you do have a voice. Simply clarify that you're a straight ally, or let people assume otherwise. The important point is just to speak up.

Am I welcome in this movement?

YES! You're certainly welcome in the equality movement. Not only are you welcome, but your help is very much needed—and appreciated.

I'm not ready to be an activist for all gay rights, all the time—is there a happy medium?

Yes. Being straight for equality doesn't mean dedicating every moment in your life to GLBT equality, but it means employing the ways that you can contribute. They're all valid, they all make an impact, and they help whenever you feel comfortable using them. Hopefully, as you learn more and become more comfortable with your role as a straight ally, you'll speak up more frequently, but every bit of help you give is moving equality forward, and that's what matters.

Stumbling Block: "What if people think I'm gay too?"

Jacinda, 30, said, "I debated for weeks if I should put a rainbow sticker up in my cubicle at work. I know it sounds silly, but I was afraid that I'd never get another date at work again. Would everyone assume I'm a lesbian?"

But once I did it, I realized that something so small made a huge difference—it started great conversations, several people told me that they have gay kids or siblings, and I can't even tell you how many people came out to me. I'm really glad that I did it."

Do you feel like your workplace is super-inclusive? Is your school very GLBT-friendly and already have a gay-straight alliance? That's great news, but everyone can still use a reminder. Little things like visual images (like our Straight for Equality postcards that you can order or download from straightforequality.org) or big things like your comments can help keep people paying attention to equality—and how it can be challenged. Until there's no need for a program like Straight for Equality, your contributions as a straight ally are needed and valued.

Phone-a-Friend: Resources for the Overachievers

Are you an A-student? Ready to take the next step and do more? Check out the Straight for Equality website at straightforequality.org where you can learn more strategies, find additional information, get Straight for Equality merchandise, and connect with other allies.

Once they're out and proud, some people want to take their voices as straight allies for equality to the next level. This isn't a requirement, but it is certainly a great help.

Remember that the way you vote in local and national elections makes a huge impact on GLBT equality. What happens in a county election, for example has an influence on what happens inside our churches, schools, and offices.

If you'd like to learn more about how to make a difference through advocacy, we encourage you to visit Straight for Equality's "parent" organization, PFLAG, at www.pflag.org and click on Advocacy, then Issues.

Your Invitation: Sign on!

One excellent way to demonstrate and formalize your commitment to equality is to sign the Straight for Equality pledge.

To get more tips, and to read the pledge and make the commitment, visit straightforequality.org/pledge today. When you sign the pledge, you'll receive updates, information on opportunities, and learn about more ways to get involved as a straight ally.

SO... What now?

All allied up and feeling like there's nowhere to go?

We've got some next steps for you.

1. Go to straightforequality.org and find out what's new.

While you're there, you'll be able to access the latest news and resources from the Straight for Equality team, tell us what you think about the program and how you're doing, and even invite us to come speak at your workplace, school, organization, or place of worship.

2. Tell a friend: Don't keep this info to yourself.

Being an ally gets easier—and we all get closer to equality—as we increase our numbers. Know someone who you think will be interested? Pass this booklet along or send them the link to the Straight for Equality website. Get them to sign the Straight for Equality pledge, too.

If you know someone with a GLBT family member remember, they can help too! Let them know about Straight for Equality and PFLAG as well. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a great source for support, education and advocacy for the family members and friends of GLBT people. We can all play a role, but getting the right resources to do it is critical. PFLAG and Straight For Equality are those resources!

3. Do something!

What more can we say? The first time can be hard, but we promise it will be rewarding. This is only the beginning.

Keep coming back to straightforequality.org to learn more about specific programs and resources that we're developing—like Straight for Equality in the Workplace—to help promote equality everywhere.

Stay connected and keep moving equality forward. We can't do it without you.

Annual Meeting Notice

On May 18, 2008 at 2:30 pm, Parents and Friends of Gay Men and Lesbians of Buffalo, Inc. (PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara) will hold its Annual Meeting in the Heritage of Westminster Presbyterian Church, 724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209.

This short meeting will include election of Officers and Board Members, as well as a Treasurer's report. If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors for PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara, please contact us via the Helpline at 883-0384.

**PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2007 – 2008**

Board of Directors

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 Homophobiaday.org web site
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 PFLAG National Staff
Duplication: Jeffrey J. McConnell
Distribution: Paula Jack and Michele A. Perry

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Wed 4/9 PFLAG New Parents meeting.
- Tue 4/15 PFLAG St. Catharines, Ontario monthly meeting. www.pflag.ca/StCatharines.htm
- Sun 4/20 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara monthly meeting.
- Wed 5/14 PFLAG New Parents meeting.
- Sun 5/18 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara monthly meeting.
- Tue 5/20 PFLAG St. Catharines, Ontario monthly meeting. www.pflag.ca/StCatharines.htm
- Sun 6/8 Buffalo Pride Parade.
- Wed 6/11 PFLAG New Parents meeting.
- Sun 6/15 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara monthly meeting.
- Tue 6/17 PFLAG St. Catharines, Ontario monthly meeting. www.pflag.ca/StCatharines.htm
- Fri 6/20 Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus Concert. See ad on page 5.
- Sat 6/21 Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus Concert. See ad on page 5.
- Sun 6/22 Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus Concert. See ad on page 5.

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Chapter – 2008 Membership

- \$25.00 – Full Membership (includes national membership)
- \$10.00 – Local Membership only
- \$____.____ – Tax Deductible Contribution

Name(s) _____ Date _____

_____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Return form to: PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara
 Membership Renewal
 PO Box 617
 Buffalo, NY 14207