



# Buffalo / Niagara

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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, November 16, 2008**  
2:30 – 5:00 PM

The November meeting will include a showing of the video *What's Morally Wrong with Homosexuality* presented by Dr. John Corvino, who describes himself as a "gay moralist." A description of the video is, "Is homosexuality unnatural? Does it threaten society? Are gays and lesbians 'born that way'--and does it matter either way? In this provocative program, Dr. John Corvino tackles these questions and more. Combining philosophical rigor with sensitivity and humor, Corvino examines the most common arguments against same-sex relationships - including those based on nature, harm, and religion. In the process, he invites people on all sides to rethink easy assumptions about homosexuality and morality."

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

**These meetings are scheduled as needed. Please call 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:

- Nov 3: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?
- Nov 10: Reading between the Labels
- Nov 17: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...
- Nov 24: Straight from the Heart
- Dec 1: Our Faces
- Dec 8: Silent Pictures
- Dec 15: Camp Lavender Hill
- Dec 22: Trevor / I Know Who I Am, - Do You?
- Dec 29: Maybe we're Talking About a Different God

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](http://www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml)

### Marc Adams Speaks to PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara



In October, Marc Adams from HeartStrong, visited Buffalo/Niagara PFLAG and spoke about persecution and abuse of GLBT kids in the name of religion. It is hard to believe, but in the 12 years that HeartStrong has been in existence, they have rescued 1020 kids. Marc comes from a deeply religious family in Eastern Pennsylvania. Growing up, television was not allowed, except in very rare instances. One of them

was on Sunday mornings to watch the Jerry Falwell choir. They were not allowed to watch Jerry Falwell himself, because he was considered too liberal! Marc was almost disowned by his family when he decided to attend Liberty University to be cured of his homosexuality. As Marc said, his parents believed in the verse "spare the rod, spoil the child" and being gay just was not allowed. So, without ever saying why, Marc left Pennsylvania for Virginia in hopes that he could be cured.

When he finally left liberty one semester shy of a degree and returned home, his family believed it was because Marc finally realized that they were right about Falwell. When Marc did come out to them, he left and was never able to return. The only member of his family to accept him was a grandmother, who was then disowned herself for having a relationship with Marc. It is through his own experience that HeartStrong emerged.

There are thousands of people in this country who have had similar experiences and are in need of family to love and support them. Anyone wishing to make a donation to HeartStrong can get information at any PFLAG monthly meeting or by calling the helpline. We will be happy to pass his information on to you.

### Meet The Board



Diane Covert is the mother of three kids, two sons and a daughter. I came to PFLAG nine years ago when our daughter came out to my husband John and I and told us that she was moving to California. I felt as though she dropped a bomb, then left. PFLAG has shown us that we can learn and accept even the things that seem to be

the hardest. Every month we would sign out a new book, sit in on the meetings, and learn. About three years ago I was elected to the board. With all of the kids grown and on their own, I spend my time doing paper crafts and visiting with my grandson.



## Education

### LGBT issues

From CNNPolitics.com

From the debate over same-sex marriage to the military's "Don't ask, don't tell policy," issues that affect the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community look to play a prominent role in this year's presidential election. Read the stances of candidates below.

#### REPUBLICANS

##### John McCain

Believes the institution of marriage is a union between one man and one woman. Voted for the Defense of Marriage Act but voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment. Says states and local governments should set their own marriage policies

Voted against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 1996. During an interview in 2000, McCain said: "I think that the present laws that clearly prevent discrimination of any kind certainly [apply] to gays and homosexuals as well. That's why I voted the way that I did. I think that enforcement of existing law could work rather than passing special laws for special categories of people."

When asked about the military's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, McCain said: "...I don't think there's any doubt that there are evolving attitudes in America about many issues, including this one, but every military leader that I talk to, I say 'Should we change it?' They say, 'It's working.' And right now we've got the best military we've

ever had -- the most professional, best trained, equipped and the bravest. And so I think it's logical to leave this issue alone. I really do."

The McCain campaign states that gay adoption is a state issue and does not endorse any federal legislation.

#### **Sarah Palin**

Stated on Sarah Palin for Governor Web site: "I believe that marriage should only be between a man and a woman."

Stated during the vice presidential debate October 2, "No one would ever propose, not in a McCain-Palin administration, to do anything to prohibit, say, visitations in a hospital or contracts being signed, negotiated between parties."

According to a New York Times report, she supported an amendment to the Alaska state constitution that would have banned same-sex marriage, but, during her tenure as governor, she vetoed a bill that would have denied health benefits to same-sex partners of public employees on grounds that it was unconstitutional.

#### **DEMOCRATS**

##### **Barack Obama**

Opposes same-sex marriage, but also opposes a constitutional ban. Says he would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment. As stated on the Obama campaign Web site, he supports full civil unions that "give same-sex couples equal legal rights and privileges as married couples, including the right to assist their loved ones in times of emergency as well as equal health insurance, employment benefits, and property and adoption rights."

Says the Employment Non-Discrimination Act should be expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Advocated legislation that sought to expand federal hate crimes law to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

Says the military's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy needs to be repealed.

##### **Joe Biden**

Opposes same-sex marriage. Voted against a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. Supports civil unions. Says he believes legal recognition should not be denied to same-sex couples. Advocates re-

examining federal laws, including the tax code, to ensure national laws are not unfair to same-sex couples and that committed adults who are adopting are not discriminated against because of sexual orientation. Supports letting states determine how to recognize civil unions and define marriage. Also supports ending the military's "don't ask, don't tell" Policy. Supports adding sexual orientation to the definition of hate crimes.

#### **PFLAG Lauds Marriage Decision**

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) heralded a decision from the Connecticut Supreme Court legalizing marriage equality for same-sex couples. Eight same-sex couples challenged the state's ban on marriage in 2004, arguing that their constitutional rights to equal protection and due process were violated when they were denied marriage licenses. The Supreme Court agreed with the couples, making the state the third in the country, along with Massachusetts and California, to officially recognize same-sex marriage.

"PFLAG congratulates our friends, and celebrates with our families, in Connecticut," said Jody M. Huckaby, the group's executive director. "The Connecticut Supreme Court has ruled in favor of families, in recognition of our fundamental right to marry the person we love and in the best interest of our core belief in liberty and justice for all. All families are stronger when every family is recognized and protected by the law. No loving couple should face discrimination and prejudice and today's ruling eliminates those barriers once and for all."

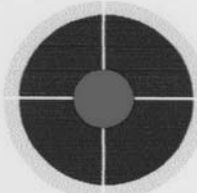
In its ruling, the court found that, "the institution of marriage carries with it a status and significance that the newly created classification of civil unions does not embody," and, as such, "the state's bar against same sex marriage infringes on a fundamental right in violation of due process and discriminates on the basis of sex in violation of equal protection."

"[O]ur conventional understanding of marriage must yield to a more contemporary appreciation of the rights entitled to constitutional protection," the court concluded. Doing so, it found, "leads inevitably to the conclusion that gay persons are entitled to marry the otherwise qualified same-sex partner of their choice. To decide otherwise would require us to apply one set of constitutional

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principles to gay persons and another to all others." The decision concluded by find that "same-sex couples cannot be denied the freedom to marry."

"Connecticut couples have won an essential victory in the struggle for basic legal rights and the dignity of all people," said Huckaby. "Tomorrow, and every day after that, all of us at PFLAG will remain vigilant in ensuring that those rights are never denied again and never taken away from those we love. Equality is moving forward, slowly but surely, in state after state. None of us must rest, however, until every state recognizes the rights of every citizen."

### CA Priest Ousted for Marriage Stance

Duke Helfand and Catherine Saillant, Los Angeles Times

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Rev. Geoffrey Farrow stood before his Roman Catholic parishioners in Fresno, Calif., and delivered a sermon that placed him squarely at odds with his church over gay marriage.

With California's Proposition 8 on the November ballot, and his own bishop urging priests to support the church definition of traditional marriage, Farrow told congregants he felt obligated to break "a numbing silence" about church prejudice against homosexuals.

"How is marriage protected by intimidating gay and lesbian people into loveless and lonely lives?" he asked parishioners of the St. Paul Newman Center. "I am morally compelled to vote no on Proposition 8."

Then Farrow - who had revealed that he was gay during a television interview immediately before church services - added a coda to his sermon. "I know these words of truth will cost me dearly," he said. "But to withhold them, I would become an accomplice to a moral evil that strips gay and lesbian people not only of their civil rights but of their human dignity as well."

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, Fresno Bishop John T. Steinbock removed Farrow, 50, as pastor of the St. Paul Newman Center, which primarily serves students and faculty at California State University, Fresno. "Your statement contradicted the teaching of the Catholic Church and has brought scandal to your parish community as well as the whole Church," Steinbock wrote in a disciplinary letter that also admonished Farrow against "using the Internet as a means of continuing your conflict with the Church's

teaching." The priest was stripped of his salary and benefits and ordered to stay away from all church communities he served in the Central Valley.

Farrow's comments at the end of the Oct. 5 Mass have left his congregation bitterly divided.

Over the weekend, some parishioners praised Farrow's courage for defending the rights of gays and lesbians, while others condemned him for challenging church doctrine without giving warning.

"It upsets me that we are allowing a ballot proposition to come into our church and divide us," Teresa Huerta, who teaches at Cal State Fresno, said Sunday. "We are going through changes right now in society, and the church needs to recognize that."

Frank Gallegos, a parishioner for 24 years, said he was dismayed that Farrow used the pulpit to deliver his message. "He ambushed us," Gallegos, 44, said while leaving the white concrete-block church with his wife and two children. "I don't wish him ill. I just wish he hadn't done it during Mass."

Parish leaders concluded two morning Masses on Sunday with an apology to parishioners. Farrow's statements, they said, were not in accord with church teachings. Also, the priest did not inform church elders about his plans before delivering his sermon, said Deacon John Supino, who read a letter from Steinbock reaffirming the Catholic Church's support for Proposition 8. Several parishioners inside the church applauded when Supino finished Steinbock's statement Sunday. A few rose and left as he was reading it.

Farrow became a priest 23 years ago and has worked in several California parishes. A graduate of St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, he served as an Air Force chaplain, stationed during the early 1990s at Edwards Air Force Base. Farrow, who said he realized he was gay in boyhood, never revealed his sexual orientation to anyone. He told his parents only four years ago. "This was the secret I was going to take to my grave," he said.

That changed when he received a June 30 "pastoral letter" from Steinbock's office in which the bishop condemned the California Supreme Court's ruling in May legalizing same-sex marriage, and supported the passage of Proposition 8. The bishop compared the court's action to efforts by Nazi Germany and the

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### Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

#### *Hope for the Holidays*

Friday, Dec 12<sup>th</sup> (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church  
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Saturday, Dec 13<sup>th</sup> (8 pm) - Trinity Episcopal Church,  
371 Delaware, Buffalo, NY

Sunday Dec 14<sup>th</sup> (4 pm) - Hamburg United Methodist  
Church, 116 Union, Hamburg, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

Communist regimes in Russia and China to alter family arrangements.

Farrow said he knew his comments would cause an uproar. He started to pack up his office the night before he was scheduled to give his address. Steinbock said in his disciplinary letter that he had no choice but to suspend Farrow, and he hinted that other penalties could follow, including defrocking him.

#### **The text of the homily:**

As most of you know, I was appointed pastor here at the Newman Center on April 15th of this year. When I arrived, I set out to address a series of various projects to repair our facilities. To date, most of these deferred maintenance items have been addressed.

In the middle of dealing with contractors, the parish finance committee, the building department of the diocese, neighbors, etc., I received a FAX from the bishop's office on the 30th of June. It was the bishop's pastoral letter for the month of July.

This single FAX threw my whole summer, and in fact, my whole life into a turmoil. Recently, I was speaking with some of our parishioners who advocate for the ordination of women. In the course of our conversation, a question arose which has haunted me: "At what point do you cease to be an agent for healing and growth and become an accomplice of injustice?"

By asking all of the pastors of the Diocese of Fresno to promote Catholics to vote "Yes" on Proposition 8, the bishop has placed me in a moral predicament. In his "Pastoral," the bishop states: "Marriage is much more than simply two persons loving each other. Marriage is naturally, socially, and biologically, directed to bringing forth life." Actually, there are TWO ends to marriage: 1) Unitive and 2) Procreative. The unitive end of marriage is simply a union of love and life. The Procreative end is, of course, to create new life. It is important to understand that the unitive end of marriage is sufficient for a valid marriage.

The Church sanctions, and considers a sacrament, the marriage of elderly heterosexual couples who are biologically incapable of reproduction. So, if two people of different genders who are incapable of reproduction can enter into a valid marriage, then why is that two people of the same gender, who are incapable of reproduction, cannot enter into a valid marriage.

The objections which are raised at this point are taken from Sacred Scripture. Scripture scholars reveal the problematic nature of attempting to use passages from the Hebrew Scriptures as an argument against same gender relationships. Essentially, these scriptures are addressing the cultic practices in which sex with temple prostitutes was part of an act of worshiping Pagan gods. With regard to the Pauline epistles, John J. McNeill, in his book: "The Church and the Homosexual," makes the following point: "The persons referred to in Romans 1:26 are probably not homosexuals that is,

those who are psychologically inclined toward their own sex--since they are portrayed as 'abandoning their natural customs.'" The Pauline epistles do not explicitly treat the question of homosexual activity between two persons who share a homosexual orientation, and as such cannot be read as explicitly condemning such behavior. Therefore, same gender sex by two individuals with same sex orientation is not "abandoning their natural custom."

In 1973, as a result of a greater understanding of human psychology, the American Psychological Association declassified homosexuality as a mental illness. In 1975, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Church's watchdog for orthodoxy) produced a document entitled: "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics." In this document, they made the most remarkable statement. They stated that there are "homosexuals who are such because of some kind of innate instinct." While these statements are hardly glowing affirmations of gay and lesbian persons, they represent a watershed in human perception and understanding of gay and lesbian people.

These new insights have occurred as a result of the birth and development of the science of psychology and understanding of brain development in the 19th and 20th centuries. The California Supreme Court cited and quoted an amicus brief filed by the APA in the Court's opinion issued on May 15, 2008 that struck down California's ban on same sex marriage. Specifically, the court relied on the APA's brief in concluding that the very nature of sexual orientation is related to the gender of partners to whom one is attracted, so that prohibiting same sex marriage discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation, rather than just imposing disparate burdens on gay people.

In directing the faithful to vote "Yes" on Proposition 8, the California Bishops are not merely entering the political arena, they are ignoring the advances and insights of neurology, psychology and the very statements made by the Church itself that homosexuality is innate (i.e. orientation). In doing this, they are making a statement which has a direct, and damaging, effect on some of the people who may be sitting in the pews next to you today. The statement made by the bishop reaffirms the feelings of exclusion and alienation that are suffered by individuals and their loved ones who have left the Church over this very issue. Imagine what hearing such damaging words at Mass does to an adolescent who has just discovered that he/she is gay/lesbian? What is the hierarchy saying to him/her? What are they demanding from that individual? What would it have meant to you personally to hear from the pulpit at church that you could never date?

Never fall in love, never kiss or hold hands with another person? Never be able to marry? How would you view yourself? How would others hearing those same words be directed to view you? How would you view your

life and your future? How would you feel when you saw a car with a "Yes on 8" bumper sticker? When you overheard someone in a public place use the word "faggot?"

I remember the first time I heard that word, faggot, I was hanging out with my cousins. They all played on the football team of the Catholic high school in our town. One of them spat out the word in the form of a curse. I was just a kid in the 5th grade, I'd never heard the word before, and so I asked: "What's a faggot?" A faggot is a guy who likes other guys, was the curt reply. Now pause. Think. What would those words mean to someone in junior high school who discovers that he/she is attracted to people of their same gender?

The greatest fear that he/she would have is that they would be rejected by the people they love the most--their family. So, their solution is to try to pass as straight, deceive, and in effect--lie. Of course, this leads ultimately to self loathing. It should come as little surprise that gay teenagers have elevated suicide rates. According to the Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1999), 33% of gay youth will attempt suicide.

The bishop states: "The Church has spoken out constantly that those with a homosexual orientation must be respected with the dignity of every child of God. Every individual is created in the image and likeness of God and should never be subjected to prejudice or hatred." A pious thought uttered by a cleric, robbed of any substantive meaning, as the executioner begins his work. Only a few select people actually read those documents. What most Catholics hear about being gay or lesbian at their parish church is-- silence. A numbing silence, which slowly and insidiously tells them, "You don't belong here, this is not for you, and you are not welcome." It is not the crude overt vulgarity of some churches. But rather, it is the coldness of a maitre d' who simply won't seat you, or the club which has put you on a waiting list with no intention of allowing you to join. And simply asks you to wait in polite almost, apologetic tones.

In effect, the bishops are asking gay and lesbian people to live their lives alone. Why? Who does this benefit? How exactly is society helped by singling out a minority and excluding them from the union of love and life, which is marriage? How is marriage protected by intimidating gay and lesbian people into loveless and lonely lives? What is accomplished by this? Worse still, is to intimidate a gay or lesbian person into a heterosexual marriage, which is doomed from its inception, and makes two victims instead of one by this hurtful "theology." This "theology," which is parroted by clerics in polished tones from pulpits, produces the very prejudice and hatred in our society which they claim to abhor.

When the hierarchy prohibited artificial birth control, most of the faithful in the United States, Canada and Europe scratched their heads in wonderment and proceeded to ignore them. There is an expression in theology: "the voice of the people is the voice of God." If

your son or daughter is gay/lesbian let them know that you love them unconditionally. Let them know that you are not ashamed or embarrassed by them. Guide them as you would your other children to finding true and abiding love. Let them know that marriage is a union of love and life and is possible for them too.

I do not presume to tell you how to vote but I do ask that you pray to the Creator of us all. Think and consider the effects of your vote on others, especially minorities in our society who are sitting next to you in church, and at work. The act of casting a vote takes you a few minutes but it can cause other human beings untold happiness or sorrow for a lifetime. It can grant them hope and acceptance, or it can cause them to lose civil rights. It can be a rebuff to bigotry and hatred, or it can encourage bigotry and hatred.

Personally, I am morally compelled to vote "NO" on Proposition 8. It is my hope that the people of California will join with those others around the world such as Canada, Europe and South Africa who welcome their gay and lesbian family members fully into society by granting them the civil right to marry.

I know these words of truth will cost me dearly. But to withhold them, would be far more costly and I would become an accomplice to a moral evil that strips gay and lesbian people not only of their civil rights but of their human dignity as well. Jesus said, "The truth will set you free." He didn't promise that it would be easy or without personal cost to speak that truth.



## Advocacy

### Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Bill Name: Responsible Education About Life (REAL)  
Act Bill Number: H.R. 1653, S. 972

#### What this bill will do:

Currently, states can only receive federal funding for sexuality education if they agree to teach abstinence-only-until-marriage, which routinely excludes critical information about the health benefits of contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Because of the marriage stipulation, the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals (GLBT) in the curriculum is virtually nonexistent. The REAL Act would authorize the first federal programs for comprehensive, honest sex education. It would provide funding for states to implement comprehensive approaches that include information about both abstinence and contraception and condoms, from both the values and public health perspectives.

#### What you need to ask for:

Ask your legislator to support this bill. If he or she is not currently a cosponsor of the REAL Act, ask that they become one. Contact members of the Health

subcommittee (House) or Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (Senate) to urge passage to full House/Senate for a vote.

#### **PFLAG Talking Points:**

- Since GLBT individuals are barred from marriage in every state except Massachusetts, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs completely ignore and dismiss the existence of GLBT youth, the realities of their lives, and their critical health information needs.
- Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have been shown to be ineffective and dangerously inaccurate.
- Educators must be allowed and encouraged to present programs that are based on effective, science-driven information, respect the diversity of values and beliefs represented in the community and complement the education children receive from their families.
- While there are three separate federal funding streams dedicated to abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, no federal funding currently exists specifically for comprehensive sexuality education.

#### **Notes:**

- Both bills were introduced on March 22, 2007, and were referred to committees. The Senate version was introduced by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and has 6 cosponsors. The House version was introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and has 17 co-sponsors.



### **Support**

## **Happy Holiday Tips for Families/Allies**

If you are the friend or family member of someone gay...

- Get support for yourself. It is important to realize you are not alone.
- Take your time. Acceptance may not come instantly, but be honest about your feelings.
- Don't be nervous about using the "correct" language. Honesty and openness creates warmth, sincerity and a deeper bond in a relationship. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask for help.
- Realize that the situation may be as difficult and awkward for your GLBT loved one as it is for you.

#### **Before the visit...**

- Practice in advance if you are going to be discussing your family member's sexual orientation or gender identity with family and friends. If you are comfortable talking about it, your family and friends will probably be more comfortable too.
- Anticipate potential problems, but do not assume the reactions will always be what you expected.
- Consult with your GLBT loved one when coordinating sleeping arrangements if he or she is bringing home a partner.

- If your family member is transgender, practice using the correct pronouns.

#### **During the visit...**

- Treat a GLBT person like you would treat anyone else in your family.
- Take interest in your family member's life. He or she is still the same person.
- Don't ask your GLBT family member to act a certain way. Let them be their natural selves.
- If your GLBT family member is bringing a partner, acknowledge him or her as you would any other family member's partner.
- If your GLBT family member is bringing a partner, include him or her in your family traditions.
- Ask your GLBT family member about his or her partner if you know they have one.

#### **Additional Resources:**

Some of these tips were adapted from Mariana Caplan's book *When Holidays Are Hell...A Guide to Surviving Family Gatherings*. To learn more about her book go to <http://tinyurl.com/5r2ul8>

## **Happy Holiday Tips for GLBT People**

The holidays can be a stressful time for GLBT people or families with GLBT members, but there are several strategies that you can use to help reduce stress and create a happy holiday this year.

If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

- Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised.
- Realize that your family's reaction to you may not be because you are GLBT. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
- Remember that "coming out" is a continuous process. You may have to "come out" many times.
- Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a GLBT child. It took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn.
- Let your family's judgments be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
- If it is too difficult to be with your family, create your own holiday gathering with friends and loved ones.
- If you are transgender, be gentle with your family's pronoun "slips." Let them know you know how difficult it is.

#### **Before the visit...**

- Make a decision about being "out" to each family member before you visit.

- If you are partnered, discuss in advance how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
- If you bring your partner home, don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.
- Have alternate plans if the situation becomes difficult at home.
- If you do plan to "come out" to your family over the holidays, have support available, including PFLAG publications and the number of a local PFLAG chapter.
- Find out about local GLBT resources.

**During the visit...**

- Focus on common interests.
- Reassure family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
- If you are partnered, be sensitive to his or her needs as well as your own.
- Be wary of the possible desire to shock your family.
- Remember to affirm yourself.
- Realize that you don't need your family's approval.
- Connect with someone else who is GLBT—by phone or in person—who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.

**PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA**  
2008 – 2009

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**Tentative Meeting Schedule**

- All meetings will include time for sharing.
- 12/21 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara holiday party
  - 1/18 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Gay Trivia Game
  - 2/15 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Families and Marriage Issues
  - 3/15 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: TBA
  - 4/19 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Gay/Straight Alliances and Gay and Lesbian Youth Services
  - 5/17 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Pride Planning
  - 6/21 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Father's Day and Post-Pride discussions
  - 7/19 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Annual Picnic

<p>Please circle item(s) ▾</p> <p>Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:</p> <p>▾ Lifetime Membership ..... \$ 500</p> <p>▾ Benefactor Membership ..... \$ 250</p> <p>▾ Sponsoring Membership ..... \$ 100</p> <p>▾ Supporting Membership ..... \$ 50</p> <p>▾ Household Membership ..... \$ 30</p> <p>▾ Newsletter Subscription Only ..... \$ 15</p>	<p><b>JOIN US!</b></p> <p>▾ New                      ▾ Renewal</p> <p>▾ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement \$100. Annually for 10 issues)</p> <p>▾ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities</p>	<p><b>PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA</b></p> <p>▾ Change of Address</p>
<p>Donations of \$50.00 or more can be included in the chapter newsletter.          Please circle. OK to publish ▾ Do not publish ▾</p> <p>Your National PFLAG membership is included in your local chapter dues. You will also receive the quarterly PFLAG-Pole Newsletter delivered to your home or by email from the national office. <b>Circle here if you don't want to receive the PFLAG-Pole Newsletter</b> ▾</p> <p>Make checks payable to <b>PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara</b> and mail to: P.O.Box 617 Buffalo, NY 14207  <i>PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is a non-profit 501(c)3 and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.</i></p>		
<p>Name (s) _____</p>		<p>Date _____</p>
<p>Address _____ City _____</p>		
<p>State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____ E-mail address _____</p>		

**Please write clearly**