



# Buffalo / Niagara

PO Box 617  
Buffalo, NY 14207

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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 18, 2010**  
2:30–5:00 PM

The April meeting will include a presentation on issues being address in NY by a representative of Stonewall Democrats and hopefully a representative of Log Cabin Republicans. After the presentation, there will be time for sharing. 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.

### Annual Meeting Notice

This is the official notice that PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara will hold its annual meeting on May 16, 2010 in the Heritage Room of Westminster Presbyterian Church 724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209 at 2:30pm. At the meeting, a slate of candidates will be presented for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as well as members of the Board of Directors. The Board is looking for people who are willing to serve on the Board. Please call the helpline if you would like to get involved. A Treasurer's report for the fiscal year running from April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010 will be presented.

### New Parents Meetings

**These meetings are scheduled as needed. Please call the helpline.**

Held at a location convenient to those involved.

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.

**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.**

## 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 5: An Unexpected Journey  
 Apr 12: All God's Children  
 Apr 19: Claiming America's Promise  
 Apr 26: The Families We Choose  
 May 3: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?  
 May 10: Reading between the Labels  
 May 17: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...  
 May 24: Straight from the Heart  
 May 31: Our Faces

A description of the storylines can be found at:  
[www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video\\_project.shtml](http://www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml)

## Can You Help With The Newsletter

It is time consuming to find interesting things to share with our members. We want to have a content filled newsletter but that's hard to do within the time available. You can help. When you're reading the news and you see something that would be interesting to our members, just send an email with the information to [pflag@bfn.org](mailto:pflag@bfn.org) and if you're reading on-line most sites have a button that easily allows you to share the article with us.

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## Revised Bill Limits Benefits

Brian Meyer, Buffalo News

A revised bill is being drafted to expand eligibility for domestic partner benefits to more City of Buffalo workers, but it would apply only to same-sex couples. Sponsors of a plan that would have given benefits to all domestic partners, including opposite-sex couples, are conceding they don't have enough support for the broader — and more costly — measure. Even if they could have mustered the five required Council votes, Mayor Byron W. Brown likely would have vetoed it. By restricting benefits to same-sex couples, Delaware Council Member Michael J. LoCurto and Niagara Council Member David A. Rivera, the bill's sponsors, say they believe it could pass. "I would still like to see everyone covered, but this is the bill that has votes at this point," LoCurto said. "And to me, we're dealing with the bigger injustice. Same-sex couples can't get married."

Kitty Lambert president of Outspoken for Equality, a gay rights group, described the lack of Council support for the original measure as unfortunate. While she agreed with LoCurto that the amended bill is a start, she also called it seriously flawed. "It will discriminate against straight families who, for all kinds of reasons, choose not to marry," she said. Some couples opt not to marry for religious, political, philosophical and other reasons, Lambert continued. She added that some people "cannot force marriage" on their partners.

The original bill faced opposition after Budget Director Donna Estrich issued projections on its fiscal impact. If only 4 percent — or nearly 100 employees — were to sign up for family health insurance, said Estrich, the city's cost would rise by \$830,000 as pension expenses are soaring and state aid is reduced.

In the worst case, she said, Buffalo would face \$4.8 million in additional costs if all single employees converted to family insurance to cover domestic partners.

LoCurto said the Council's research found that limiting benefits to same-sex couples typically reduces enrollment to less than 20 percent of what it would be if benefits included opposite-sex couples.

Lambert said the city shouldn't "quibble" over costs, noting that when employees are hired, the city must assume that they will receive family health coverage.

Bill supporters also note that labor contracts already make about half of all city employees eligible for domestic partner benefits. Only two employees have signed up so far, they said. City officials said the labor pacts are intended to provide benefits only for same-sex couples.

An earlier compromise was discussed that would have imposed a residency rule as a condition for obtaining domestic partner benefits. Employees who live outside the city—hundreds of police officers, firefighters and streets employees live in the suburbs—would not be eligible. Rivera said the measure was not pursued because the restrictions might have been struck down in court.

## Gay Seniors Come Out Late

Matt Sedensky, Associated Press

On his 75th birthday, Bill Farthing decided to be reborn. In the six years since he'd buried his wife of 45 years, he'd felt as he did long before: Lonesome, different, outcast. He wondered if he was going crazy; he contemplated suicide. Looking back, the clues leading to this day had been scattered throughout his life, but only made sense just now. So Farthing dressed in the most basic of blue wool skirt suits he could find on the Internet, with a white blouse and low-heeled, open-toed white shoes, and went shopping. Arms loaded with skirts and blouses from the clearance rack, Farthing approached the checkout. "Did you find everything you wanted, ma'am?" the cashier asked. Farthing looked over his shoulder, then realized she was talking to him. He had pulled it off. He had become a she.

Increased awareness and acceptance of varied sexualities and gender identities has led Americans to come out far younger, as early as middle school. A less noticed but parallel shift is happening at the other end of the age spectrum, with people in their 60s, 70s and 80s coming to terms with the truth that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

While no one tracks the numbers of the elderly who come out, those who work with older adults say the trend is undeniable, and a resulting network of support groups and services has cropped up. The decision can fracture lifelong relationships. Or it can bring the long-sought relief of an unloaded secret. "For the first time in my life, I'm not putting on a show," said Farthing, who eventually had sexual reassignment surgery and changed her first name to Chrissie. "It seems like I've been out on a cloud all my life and now I'm not. I'm me."

Outing yourself late in life can be complicated after having lived through times when being openly gay could get you arrested, put in an institution and given shock treatments. It's snarled in a lifetime of trudging along through society's view of normalcy and the resulting fear of being ostracized by children and grandchildren. And it's marked by a nagging doubt that all the heartache, all the potential for it to go wrong, may not be worth it with one's years numbered.

"When somebody comes out at the age of 20, they have their whole life ahead of them," said Karen Taylor, the director of training and advocacy for SAGE, a national group that works with LGBT seniors. "There's a real sense of regret and loss for somebody who comes out later in life, even when talking to them and they say the decision was the right one."

Still, many seniors have felt empowered by the growing presence of gays and lesbians in pop culture and some high-profile, late-in-life outings. Among the most notable, "Family Ties" star Meredith Baxter came out in December at 62; Richard Chamberlain, long the target of rumors, came out in 2003 at 69, decades after the height

## Kay Patterson

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

### *Counseling for Change*

5820 Main Street, Suite 203, Williamsville, NY 14221

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## Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

### *Once Upon a Time*

Friday June 18 (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church

695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Saturday June 19 (8 pm) - First Presbyterian Church

One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY

Sunday June 20 (4 pm) - Orchard Park Presbyterian Church

4369 South Buffalo Road, Orchard Park, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

[www.buffalogaymenschorus.org](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.org)

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of his career as a TV heartthrob. Those who've mustered the gumption to out themselves say they feel as if they've been given a second chance.

Carl Martin, 83, of Falls Church, Va., came out as gay not long after his wife died in 1997. He says he was happy in his marriage but had known of his feelings for men since he was in high school and revealed an unrequited crush to a friend. Coming out, he says, has changed him from a withdrawn, tense, reticent bystander to a vibrant social butterfly who even talks to strangers in the supermarket. "I would describe these as the happiest years of my life," he said. "I'm free to be who I am. I was not free to be who I was before."

The realization often doesn't come easily. Sue Pratt, 74, of Kirkwood, Mo., remembers having feelings for her high school English teacher, but she wasn't sure what to

do with them when she always dreamed of getting married and having a husband. She got her wish, but even when her husband left her, she still couldn't come to terms with the truth. "You would think I would say, 'I'm free now,'" she said. "But that thought never occurred to me. I was so deep in denial."

Eventually, in her 60s, she answered a personal ad and slowly began coming out to her loved ones as a lesbian. Not everyone has taken it well, as she feared would be the case, but she has no regrets. "I didn't want to have a secret," she said. "It doesn't matter if I lose every friend that I have, this is what I have to do."

Dr. Loren Olson, a psychiatrist in Des Moines, Iowa, who has studied late-in-life outings, said for most such seniors, there are losses, though they are typically less than they fear, and often vary greatly by socioeconomics. Olson himself was 40 before he came out. While it may seem incomprehensible to some, he said it makes sense that many can't face the truth for so long, even if some around them have surmised it. "We don't like disharmony in our thinking so sometimes we block out things that really are in opposition to really what we believe is true," he said. "It's like a child believing in Santa Claus: You just hang on to that as long as you can."

Farthing's life was sprinkled with hints. As a boy, his mother asked one day how he liked school. "It was OK," Farthing said. "But it would be better if I was a girl." He didn't want to do the things other boys did. Girls didn't want him around. He fought every haircut. "We've got a homo on our hands," he overheard his father say.

But with no sense what to do with his feelings of being different, life wore on. He served in the Air Force. He lived overseas. And then there was that girl he found at a pub in England. She felt different, too, always attracted more to women than men. But they got along so well. And they fell in love.

Sex was never a big part of their relationship, but a daughter was born. The marriage, Farthing says, was happy. Both of them thought they would die with their soul mate by their side. She did. He wasn't so lucky.

Afterward, he tried anything to keep busy. He got his pilot's license back. He bought a small plane; he built a hangar. One day, he needed a brass, elbow-shaped piece for his plane's fuel line. They call them male-to-female fittings, and he typed some such phrase into his computer. One of the search results that popped up was titled "The Male Lesbian Complex."

"That's stupid," he thought, moving along to find the part. But later, something drove him back. The description of the "complex" sounded just like him. Was he always meant to be a woman? Was he too old to accept this? "I read it and it was so close to me that it made the hair stand up on the back of my neck," Farthing said. The transformation that followed has not sat well with all, of course. A neighbor runs indoors now when Farthing comes outside of her Oakville, Mo., home. A brother-in-law and other relatives have cut her out of their lives. And her volunteer work at a nursing home had to end when her secret became known. But those who are closest have accepted her. And now, in life's twilight, she says she finally feels whole, finally feels normal. "For the first time ever my life feels like it's in the right place," she said. "I'm going to check out of this world the way I was meant to come into it."

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2009-2010

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