



Buffalo / Niagara

PO 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.

Faces and Facets of Transgender Experience

**Monthly Meeting
Sunday, November 20, 2011**

2:30–5:30 PM

Kenilworth United Church of Christ

The November meeting will begin with the short film *Faces and Facets of Transgender Experience*. After the presentation, there will be time for discussion and sharing. As always, newcomers will be offered the alternative of meeting privately with a PFLAG parent.

Kenilworth United Church of Christ
45 Dalton Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14223

The church is located two blocks west of Niagara Falls Boulevard at the corner of Decatur Rd and Dalton Dr. Decatur runs off of Niagara Falls Boulevard about 0.8 miles south of Sheridan Drive and about 0.8 miles north of Kenmore Ave.

Our monthly meetings are in the library, which is near the parking lot entrance. The October 26th meeting will be on the second floor in a large meeting space. The facility is handicap accessible.

New Parents Meetings are scheduled as needed at a location convenient to those involved. These self-help one-on-one meetings deal 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.

Time to Stop Bullying – Time to Take Action Recap

On October 26, 2011, PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara held a dinner meeting to develop a plan of action to help stop bullying in Western New York Schools. The following recap was prepared by Michele Perry.

SPEAKER # 1

Julie Loesch, an attorney with the Center for Resolution and Justice a division of Child and Family Services. In addition to the mediation services The Center for Resolution and Justice provides, that department of C&FS promotes a Bullying Prevention Program which is designed to meet the needs of the students, staff and parents at each school with the goals of decreasing the threats of bullying and improving peer relationships. Julie talked about the school-based programs C&FS has implemented at the Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence in Buffalo and the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in the Cheektowaga-Sloan Union Free School District. C&FS takes an activity-based approach to bullying issues (victim, bully and even bystander) and includes grades 3 through 6. In addition, the Bullying Prevention Program offers individual interventions that include mediation, Victim Offender Conferencing and Peacemaking Circles.

Julie said C&FS are not experts in bullying but they want to do more and are looking at peer groups and understand that parents want to get together with other parents or with school districts to discuss situations among their children.

SPEAKER # 2

Darleen Pickering Hummert, Artistic Director for Theater for Change spoke to us about her organization. They are an award-winning troupe of professional actors, writers and directors who use the power of theatre to address current social issues. Some of the topics Theater for Change has tackled include diversity, domestic violence, substance abuse, aging, sexual harassment, health care, violence in schools/conflict resolution, cyber bullying, body image/self-esteem/eating disorders, resistance to change and customer service.

Darleen said they are getting more calls to perform on bullying issues because live theater is empowering and powerful. Theater for Change will create a collaborative effort with a school, university, corporation, etc. and will develop a script with the input and approval from that organization. Theater for Change offers role-playing scenarios, including how a bullying victim's friend can safely "confront" or "react" to a bully and stand up for the victim.

SPEAKER # 3

Becky Ligman from the Dr. Jean M. Alberti Center for the Prevention of Bullying Abuse and School Violence at the University at Buffalo discussed their mission to research, identify, and disseminate resources to practitioners on

the topics of bullying abuse prevention and intervention. The Center will be a national resource on the prevention of bullying and other antisocial behaviors among school children and will provide research and information that address these behaviors. Becky explained that the Center is just getting off the ground and is currently assessing what resources are out there and what is lacking in the community. They are also working toward putting an entire resource library online that can be accessed by educators, by parents, by kids/teens and even by researchers.

Becky handed out a 2-page document entitled "Resources on Bullying and Violence Prevention for Educators and Parents."

Becky encouraged us to go to the Resources Tab of The Center's website (<http://gse.buffalo.edu/alberticenter>) to check out additional publications, videos and dates/times of future conferences and presentations.

After the speakers, we broke off into roundtables where people informally discussed what action we can take as a community and as individuals. The suggestions that came out of those roundtable discussions were listed on poster boards and included:

- Students and Parents Interact and Role Play – this idea will give kids and teens the tools to help them respond and confront a bully.
- Enact / Enforce Laws – get in touch with your local leaders to get them more engaged on this issue and enact legislation that will curtail and even end bullying.
- Share Your Knowledge / Talk to Others – Kristian Rickard, PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara President, challenged everyone in the room -- for one day – to speak up if they hear people bullying or speaking in a hateful way. "Hate is based on ignorance and fear."
- Attend Events / Get Involved / Join a Group
- Create a "Safe Place" or a "Safe Room" – particularly if you work in a school setting.
- Attend the PFLAG Train-the-Trainer Event – PFLAG could issue "teacher certifications" for those teachers or administrators who attend our Training Event in the upcoming months.
- Start a Media Blitz or Give a Public Service Announcement – maybe this is where Theater for Change could have an impact.
- Include Resources in School Orientation Packages – for students entering Middle and High School.
- School ID's To Include Resource Telephone Numbers
- Attend School Board Meetings and PTSA Meetings – to see what your school district is doing to combat school bullying and cyberbullying.
- Don't Lose Sight of Child Advocates – parents, teachers, all adults should offer positive reinforcement to those kids/teens who demonstrate the proper behavior against bullying.

- Form a GSA – these shouldn't be solely exclusive to high schools. Why not form a GSA at the middle school level?
- LISTEN TO KIDS! – Adults will see that kids are taking more ownership and responsibility if we enlist their help. Adults must talk to kids about bullying and develop programs with the kids, not just develop programs from the adult point-of-view.
- Share Tips on Cyberbullying
- Learn How to Deal with Difficult Parents

Vulnerable teens still at risk in cyberspace

By **Sandra Tan**, The Buffalo News

The kind of online hatred and harassment Jamey Rodemeyer experienced when he was in middle school was far from unusual. Danielle Mazziotti said she sees it all the time, particularly on the Web pages of friends who are homosexual or overweight.

"I have lots of friends — everything that's on their page, every time I see it, it's all insults," said the 15-year-old Clarence High School student.

Those friends have accounts on Formspring, one of the newer social networking sites that has grown rapidly in the past two years amid the proliferation of social media on the Web.

Formspring is the site where much of the cyberbullying directed toward Jamey occurred, but by no means does it have that market cornered. School counselors say they've seen cases of cyberbullying on other sites as well, including Facebook, which remains the most popular social networking site in the world.

It would be unfair to suggest that any one factor, including cyberbullying, led to the Sept. 18 suicide of Jamey, a 14-year-old student who appeared to have struggled with issues of sexuality both at school and at home and used the Internet as a way to find more social support.

But the vile comments left on his Web pages as part of his life legacy have led many frustrated parents and educators to question what they can do to limit cyberbullying in their own child's online world and to what extent their own child is at risk of being harassed or harassing others.

At the time of Jamey's death, he had an account on Formspring, posted dozens of You-Tube videos and kept a blog on Tumblr without his parents' knowledge even though they had installed computer-monitoring software and once forced him to shut down his Formspring account in seventh grade.

The answer depends on communication between parents and their children, which can be difficult to achieve, and awareness of their own child's emotional health, experts say. Teens often refuse to report cyberbullying to an adult because they're afraid the adult will make matters worse.

Kay Patterson

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Counseling for Change

5820 Main Street, Suite 203, Williamsville, NY 14221

Phone: (716) 838-1236 Cell: (716) 583-4902



Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Make the Yuletide Gay

Friday December 9 (8 pm) - Rivera Theater

67 Webster St, N. Tonawanda, NY 14120

Saturday December 10 (8 pm) - Westminster Pres. Church

724 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209

Sunday December 11 (5 pm) - Unitarian Univer. Church

695 Elmwood Ave, Buffalo, NY 14222

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

Gentle Moves

Dance Inspired Therapeutic Movement Classes

- Increase Your Flexibility • Tone Your Muscles
- Improve Your Posture and LIFT YOUR SPIRITS!

• Group Classes and Private Lessons Available

Suzanne Evans

716.574-5503

suz32dana@yahoo.com

St. John's Grace Episc. Church

51 Colonial Circle

Buffalo, NY 14222

Ohm Ultra-lounge

948 Main Street at Allen St, Buffalo, NY

- Huge patio
- Free parking across the street
- Open for lunches Mon thru Fri. 11am to 2pm.
- Have your special events with us

www.facebook.com/ohmultralounge

MARK J. PESZKO

Attorney at Law

515 BRISBANE BLDG.
BUFFALO, NY 14203

TEL (716) 855-1921
FAX (716) 854-7692

MJPESZKO@AOL.COM

"If it gets to the point where a child is telling an adult, it's a serious deal," said Justin Patchin, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center. "You might not think it is, but it is. Take it seriously and say you'll do whatever you can to make it stop."

Officials at Formspring said the site now has stronger content monitoring and security tools than it had a year ago to keep online harassment in check from anonymous users.

"We realize this is a very sensitive issue," said Ro Choy, the chief operating officer for the company, "and realize we have a lot of work to do."

Unlike traditional bullying, experts point out that cyberbullying can be a 24-hour experience that offers targets no respite. The perceived anonymity of the Internet can encourage bullying behavior. And the ability to spread malicious or humiliating information quickly through words and images, and to gang up on a victim is almost limitless.

The good news is that cyberbullying doesn't happen to every child, and even when it does occur, studies show, not all children are bothered.

The Cyberbullying Research Center, which has looked at 30 published studies regarding prevalence rates, uses a conservative estimate of about 1-in-5. The center also found this type of behavior tends to peak in middle school and is prevalent among girls, he said.

"It's not an epidemic," Patchin said. "It's not an issue where everyone is experiencing it, but it's certainly something we need to pay attention to."

The proliferation of social networks and blogs online can be mind-boggling.

Formspring, a social networking site that has grown significantly since its inception less than two years ago, encourages users to ask questions of other users to foster "authentic conversations" online.

It now boasts 26 million registered users, Choy said.

"The focus on the site is really authentic, playful, interesting conversations among friends," he said.

But the ability for site users to post anonymously has resulted in criticism from some online safety advocates. Jamey expressed deep regret in a YouTube video about creating a Formspring account.

"People would just constantly send me hate," he said.

Choy said Formspring allows anonymity because it can lead to more open, authentic questions and creates a comfort level for users. However, because a minority of users (Choy says half a percent) abuse Formspring's policies, the company has rolled out a wave of tighter security measures in the last eight months to keep inappropriate questions from anonymous posters in check.

Every question that now gets posted on Formspring is monitored, and every question reported or flagged is read by a Formspring staffer, he said. Some of the horrible comments that Jamey was subjected to a year

ago — like those saying he would be better off dead — would now be automatically flagged by Formspring, Choy said.

No user can delete any question they've sent, and accounts are disabled when violations are found. Users are also able to block anonymous questions.

Formspring has also partnered with other organizations, including MTV, to promote Internet safety, he said.

"I have no desire to see any type of negative experience coming from Formspring," said Choy, who noted that he has two young children.

He added that "aggressive" means are being employed to make the site safe.

"Believe me, I feel directly responsible for that," he added.

Experts say that keeping children safe online isn't as easy as forcing children to take down their social networking accounts, confiscating their phones, or installing computer monitoring software. In fact, a heavy-handed approach can backfire and push children toward more secrecy regarding their online activities.

"If they want private access, they'll just go to another computer," Patchin said. "If they want to avoid your technological control, they can easily do that."

Whether a child is at risk of being harmed by cyberbullying depends on the kid — the more troubled the child, the more reason to be concerned about his or her online experience, cyberbullying expert Nancy Willard said. The opposite is also true.

"Basically, being online isn't going to turn a child who is not at risk into an at-risk child," said Willard, director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use.

Getting kids to be honest about when they're experiencing personal problems online, such as cyberbullying, requires kids to believe that their parents won't fly off the handle, and will take the problem seriously and do something about it, Patchin said.

Depending on the nature of the problem, that can mean contacting the school, the parents of the offender, the Internet service provider and/or the police.

Parents are responsible for not only shielding their child from online harassment, experts said, but also keeping their children from engaging in malicious actions online. Studies show children who are cyberbullied sometimes retaliate online with similar behavior.

Whether parents should insist on direct access to their child's online accounts depends on the child's age and emotional health. Many experts recommend parents have full access to their child's online accounts when their children are young and first exploring social media.

When children get older and request more privacy, it becomes more important for parents and children to maintain a healthy dialogue about what their children are doing online.

"If every single time they interact with their child related to technology, they say one positive thing, then

that will open the lines of communication related to the use of technology," Willard said. "There's so much fear-mongering about technology with adults that kids are not going to share."

Internet safety and resources and cyberbullying resources

- Many Internet resources are available to help parents and their children understand and address cyberbullying, and set effective ground rules regarding Internet safety and good online citizenship. Here are a few:
- Wired Safety: wiredsafety.org
- Netsmartz Workshop (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children): www.netsmartz.org
- Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use: csriu.org/cyberbully
- Cyberbullying Research Center: www.cyberbullying.us/resources.php

Lady Gaga launches foundation with MacArthur, Harvard to focus on youth empowerment

By Associated Press

Lady Gaga is launching a foundation with the help of the MacArthur Foundation and Harvard University.

The Grammy-winning singer announced Wednesday that she is launching the Born This Way Foundation, a nonprofit focusing on youth empowerment and "issues like self-confidence, well-being, anti-bullying, mentoring and career development."

Gaga's partners include the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The California Endowment and the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University.

The foundation will be directed by the 25-year-old singer and her mother, Cynthia Germanotta.

"Together we hope to establish a standard of Bravery and Kindness, as well as a community worldwide that protects and nurtures others in the face of bullying and abandonment," Gaga said in a statement.

The multiplatinum singer is known for speaking out for others. She recently said she wanted to meet with President Barack Obama to discuss her concerns over bullying, and she visited Maine last year to support the repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays.

She has won Grammys, released three platinum efforts — including her latest album, "Born This Way" — and has a massive online presence: The singer has over 15 million Twitter followers and 44 million Facebook fans.

"Lady Gaga will help empower and give voice to young people who find themselves overwhelmed, undersupported, disconnected, isolated, bullied, or struggling," said Dr. Bob Ross, the CEO and president of

The California Endowment. "This brand of leadership is sorely needed in today's world."

The official launch for the Born This Way Foundation will be next year, and an advisory board will be announced soon.

<http://www.bornthiswayfoundation.org>

<http://www.ladygaga.com>

A gay old time at new senior center

By David Seifman, New York Post

Coming out soon in Chelsea is the nation's first senior center geared exclusively to gay men and lesbians.

Three years after making a commitment in his State of the City address to revamp senior centers, Mayor Bloomberg announced yesterday that eight super centers would begin operations in January, including one catering to gay seniors.

"A lot of people never really felt it was going to happen," said Catherine Thurston, senior program director at SAGE, the city's leading service organization for elder gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

"People said they didn't expect to see this in their lifetimes."

Thurston said some older gay people reported discomfort in traditional centers, where they felt they had to hide their sexual orientation.

Officials estimated that there are 100,000 LGBT seniors in the city. The SAGE center, which will operate out of its headquarters at 305 Seventh Ave., plans to serve 130 meals a day.

Other centers are planning such varied offerings as vegetarian meals, programs for seniors from East Asia and services for the visually impaired.

There are also plans to teach seniors how to communicate online via Skype and many wellness programs -- all open to anyone 60 or over.

"This is how New York City will remain the most age-friendly city in the 21st century," Bloomberg boasted at a press conference inside the Jewish Community Center on Staten Island.

"We need to abandon the one-size-fits-all approach that has shaped our senior centers for the last 50 years and begin re-imagining them anew."

The first center for gay seniors will draw from all five boroughs.

The city is setting aside \$3.5 million to fund the super centers in their first year, supplemented by philanthropic donations.

From the looks of it, demand will be heavy.

Bloomberg said 1.3 million city residents are 60 or older and that age group is expected to increase by 46 percent over the next 25 years.

"Somebody who is born today, their survival rate is expected to be 105 years," said Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, drawing gasps from the Jewish-center audience. "So our world is changing."

House Argues Gays And Lesbians Not Entitled To Same Protections As Minorities

By SUDHIN THANAWALA, The Associated Press

Gays and lesbians are not entitled to the same heightened legal protection and scrutiny against discrimination as racial minorities and women in part because they are far from politically powerless and have ample ability to influence lawmakers, lawyers for a U.S. House of Representatives group said in a federal court filing.

The filing Friday in San Francisco's U.S. District Court comes in a lesbian federal employee's lawsuit that claims the government wrongly denied health insurance coverage to her same-sex spouse. Karen Golinski says the law under which her spouse was denied benefits – the Defense of Marriage Act – violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

But attorneys representing the House's Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group counter that DOMA is subject to a lower level of court scrutiny because gays and lesbians don't meet the legal criteria for groups who receive heightened protection from discrimination. Under that lower standard, DOMA is constitutional, they argue.

"A spate of recent news stories only confirms the conclusion that homosexuals are far from politically powerless," the filing says, arguing that the court should deny Golinski's motion for summary judgment in her favor. "Accordingly, gays and lesbians cannot be labeled 'politically powerless' without draining that phrase of all meaning."

The filing cites a poll of Americans showing support for gay candidates, New York's decision to legalize gay marriage, and the lifting of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that prohibited gays and lesbians from serving openly in the armed forces.

Golinski's attorney, Tara Borelli, said in a phone interview Saturday, "We don't think that DOMA can survive a court review under any level."

A recent ruling by a District Court judge in Massachusetts supported that view, Borelli said.

Golinski's case has received support from the Obama administration. In a brief filed in July that urged the court to find DOMA unconstitutional, the administration argued that it reflected Congressional hostility to gays and targeted an immutable characteristic – sexual orientation – that has nothing to do with someone's ability to contribute to society.

The administration also characterized gays and lesbians as minorities with limited political power. It had previously said it would not defend the marriage act.

The House's Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group stepped in to defend it.

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2011–2012

Board of Directors
President: Kristian Rickard
Vice-President: Suzanne Evans
Secretary: Michele A. Perry
Treasurer: Jeffrey J. McConnell
Directors: Ann Carrier
 Brian Carrier
 John Covert
 Brian LaBella

Newsletter Staff
Editor & Design: Jeffrey J. McConnell
Duplication: Jeffrey J. McConnell
Distribution: Paula Jack

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