

**In this issue:**

- \* From a Different Perspective: PFLAG's Families of Color Network
- \* Spotlights on Events, Members and Chapters
- \* Legislation Outlook for 2006
- \* TNET Brings Trans Issues to PFLAG
- \* Scholarship Program Enters Third Year
- \* IBM: A PFLAG Hero
- \* Making News in the PFLAG Online Newsroom
- \* Life at the National Office
- \* News and Notes...and more!

## From a Different Perspective:

# PFLAG's Families of Color Network



PFLAG's Families of Color Network members at their first national meeting.

**P**FLAG's strategic goals have long included the inclusion of and service to diverse racial and ethnic communities. In late 1999, PFLAG worked with activists and members to form the Families of Color Network (FOCN) to fund and host a groundbreaking meeting. FOCN works with people of color to address gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) issues within the cultural context of African-American, Arab-American, Asian/Pacific Islander-American, Latino/a and Native American/American Indian communities. Too frequently, a lack of dialogue and understanding of cultural disparities have made outreach to communities of color less effective, and some of the heroes in PFLAG's FOCN community are hard at work to change that trend.

**B**eing an ally to the GLBT community is one thing, but being a person of color and discovering the double or triple minority status of your loved one (such as being gay and African-American or a lesbian and Arab-American) is a whole different reality that can change your approach to life completely.

Nila Marrone saw the importance of reaching out to families of color when her niece came out and her family was confronted with the issue of having a gay daughter. Seeing the unique challenges GLBT Latinos face, she reached out to a young gay man from Spain whose family has disowned him. She helped bring him to the United States to complete his education. Marrone also joined PFLAG to find ways to help her family work through their new relationship issues.

"The experience made me aware of how important it was to join an organization like PFLAG to provide support and education to families dealing with GLBT children," said Marrone.

After joining PFLAG, however, she realized that more had to be done to reach out to families of color, especially Latino

families for whom culture, religion, and language can pose challenges to the healing process not always addressed in more mainstream resources.

"Joining support groups has not been part of Latino culture," Marrone explains, "It is challenging persuading [Latino families] to speak about topics considered sensitive in front of strangers."

In response, Marrone took the lead and started a Latino group as part of PFLAG Hartford (CT), and when she moved to New York, started the NYC Latino PFLAG.

"Most Latinos attend meetings once or twice only, but some request additional support by phone," Marrone explains, "they are welcome (to attend the meetings) and are provided printed information in English and Spanish."

While there are steep challenges in reaching out to families of color, Marrone believes it's worth it when the effort pays off. Currently, Marrone volunteers at NYC Latino PFLAG,



**A**s you read this edition of the PFLAGpole, you will see that much of our focus is on the remarkable work being done by PFLAGers across the country.

From the Pacific Northwest to the Southeast, from the Northeast to the Southwest, and the heartland of the Midwest, with support from the National office, PFLAGers are working diligently to help change hearts and minds, moving equality forward through support, education and advocacy. We proudly showcase the work of some of the many PFLAG heroes who serve as tremendous role models for all of us.

## A Message from the Executive Director

In 2005, PFLAG National staff continued our work on implementing *Our House to the Statehouse*, our organizing campaign to help strengthen and unify PFLAG's unique voice in states across the country. We collaborated with PFLAG chapters as they organized state and regional conferences, and facilitated statewide conference calls for PFLAG chapter leaders to share ideas and develop strategies for addressing legislative challenges. And, for the first time, we provided training via conference call to equip PFLAGers with greater access to tools to build stronger chapters and increase chapter membership.

Our dedicated team helped members and supporters find ways to influence policy by telling their personal stories to their elected officials about why discrimination in all of its forms hurts our families. We celebrated when these efforts worked, like when the Indianapolis City County Council approved a non-discrimination measure to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, education, public accommodations, and housing.

With each day, 2006 provides us with opportunities to build and expand on these successes. Already, members are coming together to collaborate at state and regional conferences in Michigan, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, California, Texas, Wisconsin, the Pacific Northwest and the Northeast. In addition, Chicago will be the host site for

a 12-state Midwest Regional conference in November, which will also include our National Board and Regional Director's Meetings, annual membership meeting and a fundraising gala open to the whole community.

PFLAG National will build on the success of its programs by launching two new initiatives as part of our strategic goals to help advance the PFLAG mission. The first one aims at expanding outreach to our straight allies who are not already connected to PFLAG. We know that there are many straight people who don't have GLBT loved ones in their immediate circles, but who recognize the injustices that exist for GLBT people and see the inequities as a civil rights issue. We want to provide the tools and create an environment where these people who share our vision will feel welcomed to become actively involved in moving equality forward and provide them with the tools to speak up for GLBT equality.

The second initiative is focused on faith community leaders. For too long, messages related to religion have been dominated by vocal anti-GLBT messengers. However, for many years, PFLAG has attracted leaders of many faith groups into their local chapters and through membership as regional directors and national board members. We are gathering some of them together to focus on how PFLAG can work more closely at the local, state and national levels to address the gaps that exist in faith com-

munities that do not welcome and affirm our GLBT loved ones. We will be reviewing existing resources and creating new ones to ensure that PFLAG members and supporters have what they need to effectively reach out to their faith community leaders. We want to reclaim the messages about religion, making them ones of love and inclusiveness instead of what too many of us currently hear.

The most important thing that you can do in 2006 is to stay informed. If you haven't done so already, go to our website's homepage and sign up for our Weekly Alert. Bookmark our website and visit us often for updates. This is the best way for you to stay in the loop on what PFLAG is doing, with news and events that matter to you and your family. It will keep you updated on our new programs, events, and provide critical information and resources as we approach 2006 election cycles.

I am incredibly optimistic about 2006. True and full equality is the ultimate goal—we want it for our families because our GLBT loved ones deserve nothing less. Through support, education and advocacy, the power of PFLAG will be felt and heard at the local, state and national levels as we all work in partnership to help move equality forward! ♡♡

Jody M. Huckaby

# New Ways of Communicating Equality: The PFLAGpole, Weekly Alert and More!

Until last year, the PFLAGpole was usually published four times per year in tabloid format, two colors on newsprint. In some years a separate higher quality Annual Report was also published, though not widely distributed to all of our members due to cost constraints.


However, over time we've seen the advent of new ways for the national office to communicate and better achieve the purposes of the original PFLAGpole. Our enhanced website, the growing popularity of our e-mail PFLAG Weekly Alert, and several specialized e-mail discussion groups have the ability to bring you breaking news and information almost instantly. These new methods have also made us ever mindful of best uses for our limited resources and demands on staff time. So in an effort to sustain and improve all of these communications vehicles, the national office is announcing a re-tooling of the distribution cycle for the PFLAGpole.

PFLAG members and supporters will now receive two high-quality editions of the PFLAGpole in the upgraded, four-color format you have in hand right now. And as was the case last year, all members and supporters will receive a copy of our Annual Report. These publications will also exist in electronic form on the national website so that they are always available – and ready to be easily

forwarded to potential members and PFLAG supporters. (You'll find the last edition of the PFLAGpole and our 2003-2004 Annual Report are online now.)

The electronic PFLAG Weekly Alert has evolved over the past several years into an attractive and informative digest of timely PFLAG news, PFLAGers featured in local and national media coverage, a column by the executive director or national president, links to top news stories, information on new books and resources and more. Anyone – member or not – is welcome to subscribe and can sign themselves up on the homepage of the website.

The PFLAGall electronic listserv is a forum for chapter leaders and interested chapter members to share information, resources and successes; pose questions and discuss challenges, opportunities and strategies. The national field staff can assist those interested in signing up for this useful chapter resource.

It is exciting to have new ways to keep in touch, share news, successes, challenges and questions, and the national office is always interested in your feedback about how to continue to improve resources and services. Please let us know what you think of the new look of the PFLAGpole and the other amazing ways we are using to stay connected. 



Looking for the latest PFLAG news? All of our publications are available to you 24/7 when you visit [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

Want to get in contact with your **PFLAG Field Coordinator** or **staff member**? Names and contact information are on our website at <http://pflag.org/index.php?id=111>

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# Members Come Together in 2006!

PFLAGers across the Pacific Northwest region will be gathering in Portland, OR, in April. The 2006 Northwest PFLAG Regional Conference will be both a celebration of accomplishments and an opportunity to work together to build a stronger Northwest region. Many of the workshops will focus on enhancing the work that individual PFLAG chapters in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington are currently doing to ensure that GLBT loved ones are treated with respect in all aspects of their lives, whether in the classroom, the workplace, the courtroom, or the statehouse.

The conference begins with a special afternoon workshop on Friday, April 21 entitled “Solving the Personal Difficulties in Activism & Advocacy” by Bob Minor, a professor of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas, author, and speaker on a variety of GLBT issues, and the day ends with a social gathering. Saturday will include a full day of workshops and special evening entertainment. The conference wraps up on Sunday morning with brunch, a special plenary session and closing address.

The conference will also feature a “chapter tapestry” display, where each chapter in the region will contribute a panel in the tapestry, highlighting their unique chapter culture, events or contributions in the community they serve. PFLAG National staff will be on hand to present the workshops “Safe Schools 101” and “Chapter Member Recruitment and Retention.” It will be a full weekend of learning, sharing, and meeting with fellow PFLAGers in the Pacific Northwest region. For more information visit the conference website at <http://nwpflagconf.tripod.com/index.html>.

*Looking for something closer to home? Check out some of these upcoming conferences. Watch the PFLAG website for other meetings as they are scheduled:*

**Georgia – March (specific dates TBA):** The Georgia PFLAG chapters will be getting together for a day-long conference in late March, featuring workshops of interest to all PFLAG chapter members and supporters.

**Michigan – March 26 in Ann Arbor:** In conjunction with its new state coordinator, Kathleen Boyd, and the Regional Director, Mike Neubecker, Michigan is planning a statewide conference to enhance chapter leadership and assist members in establishing greater statewide communication and new projects.

**Wisconsin – Spring (specific dates TBA):** After their first statewide conference

call, members in Wisconsin are planning a statewide meeting to strategize on how to fight the anti-marriage equality amendment that will be on the ballot in November 2006.

**Ohio State Conference – April 29:** Ohio has scheduled a one-day state conference with workshops from GLAAD on working with the media and workshops from PFLAG National on

combating the upcoming legislation that would ban gay and lesbian adoption and foster care.

**New England – October (specific dates TBA):** The Northeast Regional Director, Roberta Barry, is in the initial stages of planning a New England Regional conference for the fall, with hopes of working with coalition partners in the region that already have events in the works. ♡♡



Joining PFLAGers in Portland (above)?

Find out about this and other PFLAG events around the country by visiting <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=93>

## Hold That Date!

**November 3–4, 2006 • Chicago, IL**

Hundreds of people are expected to converge on Chicago for the Midwest Regional Conference – a weekend of educational workshops, leadership training, networking and a Gala Banquet hosted by co-chairs Michael Leppen and Amy Maggio, well-known activists in the GLBT community. Corporate support and exhibit opportunities are available. More information is available by calling (202) 467-8180 ext. 231.

**March 4, 2006 • Houston, TX**

Dr. Bill Gilmer and Mr. Luis Alves will be opening their Houston, TX, home for a dual event – the 50th Birthday party for Bill and a meet and greet for PFLAG National and its Houston Chapter. Reservations are required. More information is available by calling (202) 467-8180 ext. 231.



**W**hen he attended his first meeting in 1995 looking for information that would help him come out to his family, Mike Crum couldn't have known that he was about to establish a connection with PFLAG that would go far beyond support group meetings. Eleven years – and several positions – later, Mike talks about his commitment to PFLAG and his own goals as Arizona State Coordinator.

## Member Spotlight: Meet Mike Crum

### *How did you get involved with PFLAG?*

I began attending in 1995 when I was searching for information that would help me 'come out' to my family. I kept attending and quickly saw areas that I thought could be improved upon. Next thing I knew, after making a suggestion to improve the chapter's library, I was handed the role of chapter librarian. I really threw myself into improving it – it grew in size so much so that it became almost unmanageable when I handed it off four years later!

### *What are your current and past positions within PFLAG?*

In official roles, I served for four years as chapter librarian, two years as treasurer, and co-president and state coordinator for a year and a half. I'm also starting my eighth year as webmaster.

### *What are your goals as Arizona State Coordinator?*

I'd like to see other chapters emerge around our state. Last year, I established a PFLAG Arizona website to draw attention to the existing chapters, and to publicly call for new chapters around the state. In the last several months, we've had promising inquiries from three Arizona communities. I happen to

know – thanks to our PFLAG state roster from PFLAG National – that we also have a concentration of PFLAG "at-large" members in Prescott, so I'd like to mail all of them and inquire about their potential interest in starting a chapter. I'm in continuing discussions with the three groups that have contacted us, so I hope to see one or more of them to take root in 2006.

### *What have you done to increase PFLAG's presence in Arizona?*

Locally, I've been building our website to be a powerful source for support and educational information, and I believe that is drawing many new people to us. I look for opportunities to get our name in the press by sending out press releases when time permits. We're advertising jointly with two other local youth-support groups in an ad in a mainstream coffee house magazine. In addition to the statewide website, I've also established a website for PFLAG Yuma, a chapter that does not yet exist, but where we anticipate strong interest based on past and recent inquiries. I also established a website for PFLAG Flagstaff to help them publicize their chapter and to help people in the area find them.

*Member, continued on p. 9*

## Chapter Spotlight: It All Started with a Night of TV



**A**fter watching an episode of "Queer as Folk" (a show that featured the character of proud PFLAG Mom Debbie Novotny), Gregory Syrone and his partner Bill Scott decided the best way to combat the bias and ignorance they experienced in their community was to start a PFLAG chapter.

"Mostly what got my attention to start the chapter was the discrimination I encountered from people like my family members when they found out that I was gay," says Gregory.

Portsmouth, a college town in southern Ohio that sits on the Kentucky state line and not far from the West Virginia boarder, was perceived as a tough place for members of the gay community, their families, and friends. Residents face challenges in this rural area that are fundamentally different from those that the GLBT community confronts in more metropolitan areas such as Columbus, OH, and Huntington, WV.

Gregory and Bill hoped that starting a PFLAG chapter would fill the void of support, education and advocacy groups in this part of the state. Within two short months of the initial discussion, they contacted PFLAG National, filled out all of the requisite paperwork and hosted the first meeting of PFLAG Portsmouth. The chapter members spread the word that the group now existed through chat rooms, a fantastic new website (<http://mysite.verizon.net/resq32i2/tristatepflag/index.html>) and an article in the local newspaper.

The first meeting was held in a local bar and consisted primarily of mem-

*Chapter, continued on p. 6*

This year is going to be a busy and critical time for state and local legislation aimed to limit or take away the rights of GLBT individuals around the nation – and for the PFLAGers that will fight these measures and move equality forward. While it is still too early to determine all of the states in which these measures will be introduced, these are a few of the early issues.

Supporters of these measures are already mobilizing, so it is key for us to continue to do the same. Check [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) regularly for up to date information on important legislation and tools to help you take action.

## PFLAG's Legislation Outlook for 2006



### Federal Marriage Amendment:

The Senate Judiciary Committee will vote the amendment out of committee this year. We expect it to be up for a vote by the full Senate around election time in Fall 2006.



### State Marriage Amendments:

In 2006, citizens in five states (AL, TN, SC, SD, and WI) will vote on amendments that have been approved by their state legislatures and only require approval by the voters to pass. Two states (IN and VA) have approved an anti-gay marriage amendment once in the legislature and must pass it again in the legislature in 2006 before it can go to voters. Citizen-initiated anti-gay marriage amendments in AZ, CA, FL, and MA and are expected and there is potential for similar measures in other states. In 2005, state legislatures failed to pass anti-gay amendments in AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, IA, ID, NM, MD, ME, MN, and RI. We fully expect these states to be facing similar amendments in their legislature in 2006 as well.



### State Initiatives to Ban Adoption and/or Foster Care:

Anti-adoption or anti-foster care initiatives are expected in many states in 2006. Some of the potential legislation will be explicitly anti-gay while others will prohibit adoption by unmarried parents. States that are expected to introduce anti-adoption or anti-foster care measures in 2006 are TX, AL, GA, KY, TN, OH, MO, IN, VA, AR, and KS. ♡

### Chapter, continued from p. 5

bers of the GLBT community. Gregory and Bill knew that this was a start, but not ideal. They moved the meetings from the bar and into various members' homes until they could find a permanent meeting spot and set out to diversify the membership.

Luckily, PFLAGers in Ohio already have a well-organized and enthusiastic group of chapter leaders who meet once a month by phone to discuss statewide advocacy opportunities and to share the struggles and triumphs of their individual chapters. Once they learned of the new chapter and its desire to attract more parents and friends, several participants volunteered to attend the meetings in Portsmouth to provide the ally perspective. Now, when parents attend the Portsmouth meeting for the first time they're met by PFLAG newbies, veterans and parents and GLBT members to support them.

In less than a year, the Portsmouth chapter has blossomed from an idea sparked by watching "Queer as Folk" to the

only organization dedicated to supporting the GLBT and ally residents of the tri-state area. With the help of dedicated PFLAGers in Ohio, the chapter continues to grow and fulfill its goals to "support and educate others and ourselves as well."

Learn more about the PFLAG chapters in your state by visiting <http://pflag.org/index.php?id=189>. Interested in starting a new chapter? Contact Brooke Smith, Senior Field & Policy Associate by e-mailing [bsmith@pflag.org](mailto:bsmith@pflag.org). ♡

### Looking for another way to show your PFLAG pride?

**Wear a "LOVE INCLUDES!" bracelet featuring the PFLAG logo!**



1-20: \$3.00 each (includes shipping)  
21-49: \$2.25 each • 50-100 \$1.60 each  
101-300: \$1.25 each • 301 or more: \$1.10 each  
*Shipping prices determined by quantity, at rate of \$8 per 100.*

**Place your order today! Go to ShopPFLAG at <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=134> to learn more!**



# TNET Brings Trans Issues to PFLAG



Joan, Rachel, and Dave Parker at the 2004 PFLAG National Conference in Salt Lake City, UT.

**T**NET, the Transgender Network, has long been a loosely structured network of trans folks and supporters that grew out of the PFLAG movement, but this is quickly changing. Find out more about the critical outreach its members are doing around the country.

When it comes to bringing PFLAG chapters and the national organization to get educated about trans concerns and issues, TNET has led the charge. Their efforts paid off at the 1988 Annual Meeting when the PFLAG

membership eventually – and overwhelmingly – voted to add transgender people to the PFLAG mission statement.

In 2005, TNET formalized their existence by becoming PFLAG's first official non-geographic affiliate. It means support, education and advocacy activities are conducted and coordinated largely online, by phone and through periodic opportunities to meet at conferences or other events. Many PFLAG chapters also have "T-Cords," or Transgender Network Coordinators, who stay in the loop on communications among network members, share questions and resources and plan activities. (TNET's aim is for every PFLAG affiliate to have a T-Cord.)


In the coming year, the TNET board is working to clarify longer term goals and plans for moving forward with their non-profit status now in place. Plans already include transforming their newsletter, *Transparent*, into an online publication to reduce paper and postage delivery expenses as well as embark on a wider promotion of the Spanish version of their signature publication *Our Trans Children*.

"We hope to better use funds to assist members with expenses for travel for more participation in regional and local PFLAG events," said TNET President and PFLAG National Board member Dave Parker. "A key event for us will be participating in the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia in March."

In the past year, TNET members staffed tables and booths at local and national events, conferences, and meetings. And, as do most of PFLAG's traditional chapters, members of this non-geographic affiliate also get books and films into libraries, provide training and advice for educators, medical personnel and students, and human resource professionals.

On the advocacy front, members are working with municipalities and states to develop trans-inclusive non-discrimination policies, working with law enforcement personnel with regard to sentencing of those who murder trans individuals and evaluating whether anti-trans bias played a role.

"TNET is always seeking individuals from PFLAG chapters who would like to be the T-Cord for their community," said Parker. "And training and resources will be provided!"

For information on how to become involved with this innovative PFLAG affiliate, contact Dave Parker at [pflagtnet@triad.rr.com](mailto:pflagtnet@triad.rr.com). Information and educational materials in English and Spanish are available by visiting [www.youth-guard.org/pflag-tnet/](http://www.youth-guard.org/pflag-tnet/). 

## PFLAG National Scholarship Program Enters Third Year

**T**he PFLAG National Scholarships Program will again be funded by the Palmer B. Carson Trust and other private donors in 2006, including the support of the employees group, Gays, Lesbians, and Allies at Dow.

The program offers six scholarships of \$2,500 and fourteen \$1,000 scholarships. This year, an anonymous donor has made an additional 13 scholarships at \$1,000 each available for students

wishing to pursue a career in math, science, engineering, or business management/finance.

"Given the response to our scholarship program in the past two years, and with the recent cuts to student loan programs by Congress, it is clear that there is a huge need for these resources," said Jody Huckaby, PFLAG executive director.

"Many GLBT students – as well as their supporters – face steep challenges in funding their education, so we are grate-

ful for the generous bequest and donations that make this program possible."

Judy Hoff, PFLAG's Safe Schools Coordinator and administrator of the program, commented on the need for such a program citing new research that reveals not much has changed in school climates around the country despite the growing awareness that GLBT students do in fact exist and often face significant hostility.

*Scholarships, continued on p. 9*



**I**BM is truly a hero to both PFLAG and the entire GLBT community.

With support that started in 1997, IBM is PFLAG's longest-running corporate supporter. The company has stood beside PFLAG and has been instrumental in our growth, providing much-needed resources such as outright grants as well as equipment and technical expertise to help build PFLAG's technology infrastructure, ultimately facilitating PFLAG's expansion to reach and support our chapters and families.

Corporate partnerships are critical to fulfilling the mission of PFLAG. Corporate support enhances our vital education, advocacy and support efforts and highlights your company to tens of thousands of GLBT consumers...plus their parents, friends and families!

For more information on becoming a corporate sponsor, contact Christopher Vance, Director of Development, at 202-467-8180 ext. 231 or [cvance@pflag.org](mailto:cvance@pflag.org).

## IBM: A True PFLAG Hero

For the current fiscal year, IBM recently made its largest cash donation to PFLAG ever, of \$50,000. Last year, IBM donated greatly needed equipment to the PFLAG National office, including a new server, personal computers and peripherals and portable LCD projectors.

"This equipment donation from IBM was a godsend," said PFLAG Executive Director Jody Huckaby. "Not only will the state-of-the-art equipment help the office be more productive, but the portable LCD projectors will allow staff to make more professional and effective presentations at workshops around the country without the costly expense of equipment rentals."

IBM was a Presenting Sponsor of the 2004 PFLAG National Conference in Salt Lake City, UT. The company provided a fully-staffed message center where attendees were given free access to computers to check e-mail to keep touch with family, fellow chapter members and work associates, and, in some cases, put finishing touches on workshop presentations.

Chris Whelan is Director of Intellectual Assets for IBM's global services businesses, as well as a co-leader of the IBM Executive Task Force that provides recommendations to IBM's senior management on matters GLBT community. He also serves as the task force interface to PFLAG and has served on the PFLAG Scholarship Committee since its inception in 2003.

"IBM is a company that drives innovation and we recognize that innovation comes from diversity of thought – which requires the broadest possible diversity of people, backgrounds, skills and talents," Whelan commented. "Companies that lead innovation cannot afford to exclude any talented individuals and we must create a workplace environment that is welcoming and

empowers all of our people. We appreciate the important work being done by PFLAG and were honored to provide this support."


As more than just a financial supporter to PFLAG and other GLBT organizations, IBM has been a leader in the business community in recognizing the value of the individual worker and embracing diversity.

In 1984 IBM was one of the first major companies in the country to forbid discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation. In 1997, the company extended domestic partner benefits to gay and lesbian employees in the U.S. And in 2002, IBM extended its non-discrimination policy to include gender identity and expression.

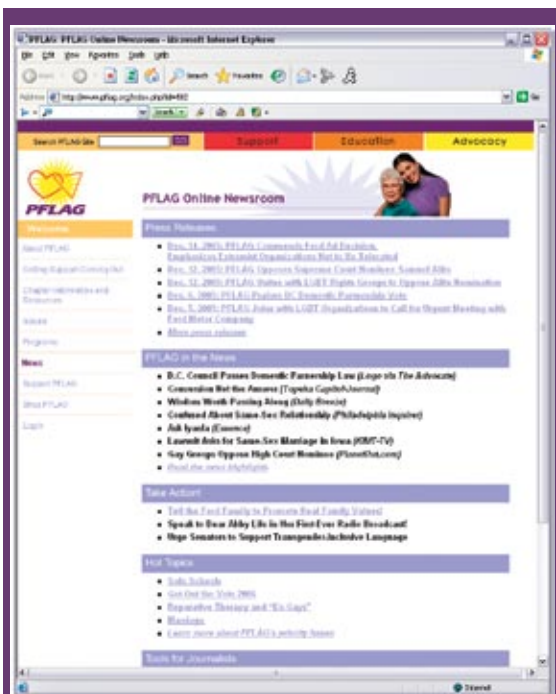
IBM has been recognized over the years as one of the best companies for GLBT employees, receiving a 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index. In pursuing diversity in their company, IBM has not only done the right thing for its workforce, but has created a competitive advantage for itself.

"At IBM, diversity is seen as the bridge between the workplace and the marketplace," Whelan said. "By embracing diversity, IBM increases its capacity to respond to its customer base and labor pool."

IBM's leadership in this area has not only impacted its own employees, but countless employees in other companies as well. As one of the most respected and watched companies in the world, IBM has made it not only acceptable for other companies to follow in their footsteps with similar policies, but in many cases a competitive necessity.

We are grateful for IBM's unwavering and long-standing friendship and support for PFLAG and the entire GLBT community. 





Getting PFLAG news – and getting PFLAG into the news – just got easier with the launch of PFLAG’s Online Newsroom.

You can access this resource today by visiting <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=582>

# Making the News with PFLAG

Now there’s another reason to visit the PFLAG website more than ever! In January, PFLAG launched its first PFLAG Online Newsroom, a comprehensive resource to give you news and tools to learn more about PFLAG and work with your local media.

When you visit the site, you’ll find:

- ✦ **PFLAG Press Releases:** The latest breaking news from PFLAG
- ✦ **PFLAG in the News:** Media reports about the work PFLAG staff and members are doing around the country
- ✦ **Take Action:** A list of the most recent PFLAG Action Alerts
- ✦ **Hot Topics:** Learn about some of the most asked about issues and programs from PFLAG
- ✦ **Tools for Journalists:** Links to basic information about the organization, its programs, and media contacts

Looking for tools to help you reach out to media in your area? Check into the new **Media Tools for Members** section in the Chapter Resources area. You’ll find templates for press releases and media advisories, suggestions for writing media materials and working with press, and links to resources to find local media and more!

PFLAG members have a unique story angle to contribute about the issues that our families face. If you’d like to get more involved in finding ways to tell these stories to the media, contact Jean-Marie Navetta, Media Relations Manager, by e-mailing [jnavetta@pflag.org](mailto:jnavetta@pflag.org) or calling (202) 467-8180 ext. 213. ♡

## Scholarships, continued from p. 7

“These students are still three times more likely to experience harassment in school, making their accomplishments and those of their straight supporters to foster a safe learning environment even more important and worthy of recognition.” Hoff said.

Schools are too often turbulent and unwelcoming environments for GLBT students and their allies. “These scholarships provide an encouraging acknowledgement of their resilience and the positive contributions of a group of young people often marginalized and subjected to harassment and discrimination. So many of the essays we’ve received in the past two years are as heartbreaking as they are inspiring,” Hoff added.

Nancy McDonald, former PFLAG National President and chair of the National Scholarship Committee, stated “My committee and our partnering Higher Education Review Committee all look forward to another year of compelling applicants and tough choices.”

While the closing date for applications is upon us – February 14, 2006 – tax-deductible contributions to the fund are always welcome, making the benefits available to more applicants every year.

For more information contact [schools@pflag.org](mailto:schools@pflag.org) or Judy Hoff, Scholarships Administrator, at (202) 467-8180 ext. 219. ♡

## Member, continued from p. 5

I’m proud whenever I hear someone at one of our support meetings say how much it helped them at their moment of crisis, or how they found such helpful information for themselves or for their family or friends. It lets me know that my efforts have truly helped people, and that is what the whole effort has been for. PFLAG people are absolutely the best, and I can’t imagine how dull my life would have been had I not gotten involved with them 11 years ago!

See some of Mike’s work on the PFLAG Phoenix website by visiting [www.pflagphoenix.org](http://www.pflagphoenix.org). Want to find a way to connect with PFLAG members to trade tips on what works for building membership and supporting chapters? Contact your Field and Policy representative and ask about joining the PFLAGall listserv. ♡

**Interested in member leader positions with PFLAG? Go online!**

Visit <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=561> for detailed descriptions of the responsibilities for PFLAG leadership positions.



Belinda Dronkers-Laureta (left) and Nila Marrone (right, in center with "daughters" Nuri and Elena) have been leaders in the development of FOCN.

which is now an independent group. She is also forming a Latino group as part of PFLAG Westchester, NY, and reaching out to Latino families across the United States (including in Puerto Rico) as well as collaborating with parent and family groups similar to PFLAG in Spain and Latin America.

Clear across the country, Belinda Dronkers-Laureta began her journey of reaching out to families of color when her son came out to her in 1993.

"Everyone in our family unit was comfortable except me. I was fearful," Dronkers-Laureta remembers, "Living close to San Francisco I had heard about riots and about gay bashing."

Her son sent her information on PFLAG and she and her husband began their journey into activism. After marching in a 1995 pride parade in San Francisco with the PFLAG contingency, a high school teacher asked her to begin a chapter in Fremont, CA, and Dronkers-Laureta became the chapter president.

During this time, she also worked with the San Francisco chapter in their efforts to reach out to Asian and Pacific Islanders (API). They created a group called the API Family Project to create a video titled *Coming Out, Coming Home*.

"The video was made specifically to help Asian families with their coming out process. People can take the video home and view it by themselves," Dronkers-Laureta explains, "It is not comfortable for an Asian person to talk to strangers and share personal information. Because Asians feel shame about having a gay child, they won't go to a support group."

Dronkers-Laureta continues to be a

hero in her community by volunteering with the API Family Project, which gained official nonprofit status in 2004 and is now called API Family Pride. With Belinda as its chair, members continue to demonstrate to the Asian community that they have allies – both straight and gay – within their culture. They're also working to create more resources tailored to helping API families find understanding and acceptance in having a GLBT family member.

As we become more aware of the challenges in overcoming cultural differences in the coming out process and develop new tools to help, you too can be a hero like Nila and Belinda. As our communities become more diverse, FOCN issues are PFLAG issues.

Some first steps for PFLAG chapters include:

- ✳ Have a native speaker of a different language as part of your helpline answering service
- ✳ Have literature available in different languages
- ✳ Invite a guest speaker to talk about their experience as being GLBT and of color. Ask questions and discuss the issues openly.
- ✳ Advertise in local ethnic newspapers to reach out to families of color

In 2006, FOCN is working on expanding its resources, improving the FOCN area on the PFLAG National website, and creating materials to better reach out to communities of color.

If you would like information about FOCN, contact Charles Cook at [ccook@pflag.org](mailto:ccook@pflag.org) or visit FOCN on the web at <http://pflag.org/index.php?id=106>. ♡



#### PFLAG's Vision:

We, the parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Only with respect, dignity and equality for all will we reach our full potential as human beings, individually and collectively. PFLAG welcomes the participation and support of all who share in, and hope to realize this vision.

#### PFLAG's Mission:

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: **support**, to cope with an adverse society; **education**, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and **advocacy**, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Learn more about PFLAG's work and find out how to join by visiting us on the web at [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

#### About The PFLAGpole:

Published twice each year, *The PFLAGpole* is the news magazine for PFLAG members. Articles are also available online. Visit [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) to learn more.

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#### Photo credits:

Page 4: Portland Oregon Visitors Association/Brent Bradley; page 5: Tina Rencelj; page 6: Scott Rothstein, Andrzej Tokarski, Wessel Du Plooy. Thanks to PFLAG members for submitting photos for other stories.

# Life at PFLAG National with Brooke Smith



Since she joined the PFLAG National staff a year ago, Brooke Smith has helped develop services for PFLAG members around the country. Learn a little more about this Senior Field and Policy Associate originally from Kansas City, MO and KS, and find out what she enjoys about PFLAG National.

## *What did you do before PFLAG?*

After graduating from Kansas University, I worked in Tallahassee promoting community citizenship to higher education students for an organization called Break Away, the Alternative Break Connection, Inc.

In between working at Break Away and PFLAG, I taught leadership qualities of United States leaders in Washington D.C. to high-achieving junior high students from all over the country in the Junior National Young Leaders Conference.

## *What does your job entail?*

Chapters work with me to reconcile membership information and I manage the affiliation process for new chapters.

## *What is an average day like at PFLAG?*

Most of the day is spent communicating with chapters by phone or e-mail. In the morning, I focus on requests from chapters. In the afternoon, I work on projects like the upcoming website designed specifically for chapter leaders or editing the chapter manual.

## *What is your least favorite part of the job?*

Rosters – there’s just so much paperwork that needs to get done.

## *What is your favorite part of the job?*

I love talking to anyone who wants to start a PFLAG chapter. Their enthusiasm about PFLAG fires me up.

The PFLAGall listserv is another favorite of mine. I like to read the news from different parts of the country and comments from chapter leaders. I have seen some passionate volunteers before, but none like chapter leaders for PFLAG.

## *What is the one thing you wish all PFLAGers knew about the national office?*

I wish everyone could see the buzz of excitement that flies through the office when we move one step closer to equality. E-mails zip around the office; everyone hurries into meetings to catch up on the latest news.

It is moving to work with colleagues who are passionate about working at PFLAG. ♡

## Faces and Names: PFLAG News and Notes



### **A New Place for PFLAG**

Paulette Goodman, a former national president and the founding mother of Metro DC PFLAG, and Milly Spector, an active member of the chapter since the early 1990s, have established a PFLAG support group for residents at their retirement community.

They held their first meeting in mid-February 2005 to determine if there was enough interest to establish a PFLAG support group. The response was so good that they’ve met once a month in a private meeting room in the Riderwood Village community in Silver Spring, MD, which houses 2,200 residents.

They’ve had the full support of the Riderwood staff, and had no problem promoting the new group. Their meet-

ing announcements are posted throughout the community common areas.

Goodman has also taken the PFLAG message to the airwaves! She’s given two interviews on Riderwood TV.

“The TV interviews have provided us with an opportunity to dialogue with staff and residents on many of the issues that confront our families and friends,” says Goodman. “We’re off to a good start. We are fortunate to live in a vibrant and supportive community where we hope we can help families and also educate to change hearts and minds – and that is our goal!”

While not the only PFLAG support group meeting in a retirement community (there is also one in Walnut Creek, CA at the Rossmoor Retirement Community), it proves that as the PFLAG family grows, there’s no end to where our message can go!



### **...And a New Generation for PFLAG**

The amazing results that come when a brave lesbian teen, her strong PFLAG mom, and dedicated Gay-

Straight Alliance (GSA) friends work together was highlighted when Kerry Pacer was named *The Advocate’s* Person of the Year.

Kerry made history as the youngest person to ever garner the honor. She and her friends challenged their Cleveland, GA school when they were denied the right to start a GSA. Following a series of challenges and going to court, the students triumphed.

Pacer and her friends are the face of the younger PFLAG generation who are learning that with the support of our families and friends, justice and equality can – and will – move forward. ♡



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