



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT

The Newsletter of PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter

Our twenty-third year. May 2018, Volume 23, No. 5

PFLAG MEETING
SUNDAY, May 20TH, 2:30 P.M.
CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

The meeting facilitator is Dan Smith and the discussion topic is:
Let's have a frank discussion about what "Transgender" is and is not.

Light refreshments provided by Christine Hammond and Sly Zelnys
Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting.
Email: info@PSpflag.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

— *Mike Balasa*

A few weeks ago, I heard about a young man who was missing at a church camp. He went out in a canoe at sunset and was never seen alive again. Searchers found his canoe intact, with his cellphone and jacket on the seat. It took nearly a week to find his body submerged in the middle of the lake. There was speculation that he fell in and was unable to swim the distance to shore. Another speculation was that he drowned himself. There was no suicide note or other indication of despair; although, one newspaper reported that a roommate said he was dealing with some emotional issues, but the roommate refused to elaborate.

Over the years, I have heard several stories at PFLAG meetings about young people destroying themselves; either by violence, drugs or alcohol. Often, they don't leave an explanation. Most often it is obvious that the victim was dealing with sexuality issues. Sometimes there had been intensive bullying involved or a falling out with parents. Sometimes, however, there was no indication what the problem was. The young person takes their secret struggles and misery to the grave. I remember years ago a situation where a popular young man, a star on the football team and a good student, committed suicide. There was only one close friend who admitted the teenager was dealing with being gay and couldn't bear to let anyone know.

Suicide rates of LGBTQI youth are extensively researched. Consistently, findings show up to 33% of LGBTQI youth have considered suicide and up to 10% have made a serious attempt. Researchers stress that it is impossible to know the real suicide rate because many of the victims never revealed their true identity; and that was a main contributor to their anguish - the fear of being found out and losing all the love and esteem of family and friends.

There are resources for LGBTQI youth: The Trevor Project, a 24-hour, toll free hotline 1-866-488-7386. Also, It Gets Better Project on You Tube; adults give encouraging messages to young people to endure, because, it does get better.

COLUMBUS, INDIANA: MORE THAN THE HOME OF MIKE PENCE

Columbus, Indiana, the home town of VP Pence, is surprisingly similar to Palm Springs. Populations are similar: Palm Springs is 47,000 and Columbus is 45,000. Columbus is also famous for its mid-century modernism architecture and public art.

This past month, Columbus had its first pride parade. The parade was the idea of a Columbus High School senior, Erin Bailey. Erin and her supporters wanted the country to know that Columbus is not a bigoted, anti-LGBTQI, rural village, but a town that values all people. "Most people would think that all of us here are also anti-LGBT, but there are plenty of us who very much support the LGBT community and are members of the community."

As governor of Indiana, Pence attracted nationwide attention when in 2015 he signed a bill that would have allowed businesses to discriminate against LGBTQI persons by excluding them from employee benefits such as health care or services. The backlash came unexpectedly from the business community. They saw the measure as detrimental to hiring and maintaining customer relationships, forcing the legislature to rewrite the bill. The city of Columbus is the home of Cummins Engines, a major employer and one of the major industries to oppose the legislation. During his dozen years in Congress, Pence had advocated for a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, opposed measures to protect LGBTQI people in the workplace and opposed any effort to expand the definition of hate crimes to include sexual minorities.

Columbus is in Southern Indiana, 45 miles south of Indianapolis on Interstate 65. The town is famous for its mid-century architecture and draws tourists who come to admire the many examples of that period. The town has problems similar to other Mid-West rural towns - the opioid epidemic is rampant in Bartholomew County where Columbus is located.

Despite the sordid Pence legacy, the Pride Parade in Columbus was held on Saturday, April 14th. Over 2000 people showed up for the event which included a parade and festival afterwards. A local catering company owned by Samantha Aulick and her wife, made rainbow s'mores for the festival. Aulick was asked about the town's connection to Pence and what people say about it, "They're like, Oh, that's where Mike Pence is from. Yeah, but it's not all like that." Actually, the city of Columbus is one of several Indiana cities that has added LGBTQI protection to city ordinances. A Pence spokesperson said, "VP Pence commends Erin Bailey for her activism and engagement in the civic process."

ANCHORAGE DEFEATS ANTI-TRANSGENDER BILL

In a close election, the voters of Anchorage, Alaska voted no on a bill that would have prohibited transgender persons from using the public restroom of their choice. A Christian political group called, Alaska Family Action, authored and financed the measure that would have scrapped the city's nondiscrimination ordinance. Also, on the ballot was a mayoral race, and the mayor who supported and signed the city's nondiscrimination ordinance was reelected.

Lillian Lennon, Field Organizer for Fair Anchorage wrote, "Anchorage voters rejected fear and intimidation to affirm that everyone in our city should have the same fundamental dignity and protection under the law. As a transgender woman, this victory is deeply personal to me and to so many of us in the transgender community. It means voters saw past misleading tactics by opponents of transgender equality in order to treat people like me fairly."

American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska which helped defeat the bill issued a statement celebrating the victory, "(This is)...the first time anywhere in our nation a standalone, anti-transgender 'bathroom bill' - Prop 1 - was defeated at the ballot box."

Similar bills to persecute transgender people are currently before legislatures in Iowa, Kentucky, and Missouri. In Massachusetts, the first statewide initiative addressing the issue of transgender rights will appear on the November ballot.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR – PRIDE SEASON EVENTS

Pride season, 2018, is beginning the Southern California PFLAG Region. Here is a list of the events:

Long Beach- May 19 to 20

Long Beach PFLAG is sponsoring a brunch on Sunday, May 20th at 8:00 A.M.

Jean Hodges, PFLAG President, will be guest of honor.

The parade will start near the home where the brunch is scheduled.

Call Gary Michovich at 562-477-1958 or Michovich@yahoo.com for more details.

Laguna Beach- June 1 - 3

Venice Beach- June 1 - 3

Los Angeles- June 9 - 10

Orange County- June 17 - 2

Central Coast Pride, San Luis Obispo-July 6 - 8

San Diego- July 14 - 15

Bakersfield- October 13

Honolulu, HI- October 20

Palm Springs- Nov 2 – 4

RELIGIOUS RIGHT GOING AFTER 4-H

The religious right, in its dogged pursuit of protecting little girls in public restrooms, has targeted a 4-H club at Iowa State University. The 4-H club issued a draft policy and asked interested parties for feedback before implementation, "Iowa 4-H does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability or status as a U.S. veteran." The religious right group, Family Leader, based in Urbandale, Iowa, sees nothing but sexual chaos in the 4-H proposal.

The ISU 4-H group further wrote, "At the encouragement of the USDA, Iowa 4-H is reviewing a preliminary draft guidance regarding LGBT youth and Volunteers". The proposed policy would match Iowa's civil rights laws and the Iowa Department of Education's guidance on transgender students. All comments will be considered with an emphasis on comments from youth who are most affected.

The Family Leader spokesperson issued a panic statement, "ISU is looking to implement a new policy for Iowa's 4-H that would dictate: 1. Men who claim to be women (without medical or legal verification) must be allowed to bunk with 4-H girls on overnight trips, 2. Men who claim to be women must be allowed access to girls' bathrooms and locker rooms and 3. Local 4-H clubs must overrule parental "objections or concerns" to enforce transgender policy."

The Family Leader statement was challenged by Facebook commentators to give examples of incidents where men posing as transgender persons assaulted children in public facilities. Of course, they were ignored. There is no incident anywhere in the country of a transgender person or a person posing as transgender trespassing and bothering children in a public facility. Still the Family Leader spokesperson insisted that such incidents were "widely reported when transgender policies are put into place".

KATE KENDELL RETIRES FROM NCLR

Kate Kendell sent out an announcement that after 22 years, she will step down as executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Kendall is a frequent visitor to Palm Spring and many of us have met her at NCLR fund raising events. She encouraged supporters to continue supporting NCLR under the new leadership.

HARVEY MILK DIVERSITY BREAKFAST

The annual event will take place on Friday, May 18th at the Palm Springs Convention Center. Registration begins at 8:45 a.m. and the program begins at 9:30 until 11:00 a.m. Cost is \$65 which includes a breakfast. To order tickets on line go to: <https://pspride.org/events-2> You may also donate a ticket to allow a student to attend the event. Cost is \$56. Proceeds benefit Coachella Valley youth through Gay Straight Alliance clubs and LGBT youth related programs.

STUDY TRACKING TRANSGENDER CHILDREN

"The Desert Sun" on April 14th reported on a long-term study tracking the physical and emotional health of transgender children as they mature. There are already some interesting results that need reporting. The researchers found that children who were supported by their families and allowed to live openly as the gender with which they identify, were healthy and well adjusted. Their rates of depression and anxiety were no higher than non-transgender children in a control group. The researcher concluded from the

initial finding that the key to the wellbeing of transgender children was family support. PFLAG has a role to play in helping parents of transgender children learn how to accept and support their children.

AARP CONDUCTS STUDY OF CARE FOR ELDERLY LGBT PERSONS

The American Association of Retired Persons conducted a study to determine the concerns and needs of elderly LGBTQI persons "Maintaining Dignity: Understanding and Responding to the Challenges Facing Older LGBT Americans." The report indicated many of the persons they interviewed were concerned when they entered long term care facilities they might face discrimination or harassment. The worry was especially prevalent for persons living in rural communities where services are limited or non-existent. Some 76% of LGBTQI seniors expressed a worry about having, "adequate family and/or social support to rely on as they age". Their present social network consisted mostly of straight and gay friends, rather than family. Many of the seniors were single and most had no children.

The most troubling finding of the study was that LGBTQI seniors are worried about their future. More than 60% of the persons surveyed expressed concerns that they might be refused services or would receive limited care. They also feared that in a long-term care facility they would be in danger of neglect, abuse or verbal or physical harassment. Many feared that in a care facility they would be forced into hiding or denying their LGBTQI identity.

The seniors overwhelmingly agreed that some visual sign or symbol indicating acceptance would be reassuring and comforting. Here in Palm Springs and neighboring communities many of the senior care facilities fly the pride flag.

I WILL VOTE FOR FDR

by Bob Warburton

No, I am not old enough to remember a time when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was President, but I do remember a time when some people remember Roosevelt being re-elected time after time. He was so good, he should always be President. I also knew those who hated Roosevelt and were so glad he was gone. But still in the latter 1950s most everyone had an opinion of the President who had served 3+ terms.

Therefore, as our Governor Brown nears the end of his 4th term, I am starting to have Edmund Brown withdrawal. Even though Brown has always won easily, and his last election was so lopsided very few people even remembered to or took the time to vote. It was a record low vote in 2014. Yet Brown has always had his detractors. In 2014 Brown had many protestors while running because he continued to support oil "fracking" in California, where regulation is sparse oil revenues were helping the economy. Yet Brown has recently received kudos for his support of the Paris Accord and his clean energy goals for the State.

Brown's entire tenure has been like that. City officials were unhappy when he "stole" redevelopment funds to help the State continue to emerge from the Great Recession and pay its bills. Teacher groups lamented the cuts he wrought, often necessitated by Prop 13. By 2018 Brown has fully funded much of education especially to the poorest schools, but it took a long time. No matter what, in 6 months we will be electing somebody else.

Who are you voting for? I decided to look at the 5 candidates with the best chances of winning. Remember this June 5th the first 2 candidates with the most votes no matter party, win and continue to November.

I have met and listened to all four of the chief Democratic Candidates and believe they all have significant LGBTQIA support. Leading in the polls is Gavin Newsom, former Mayor of San Francisco and current Lieutenant Governor. As Lt. Governor he has been on numerous commissions and bureaus in the State dealing with all sorts of issues. The Democrat who has recently tied for second in the polls with the Republican Candidate is former Speaker of the California Assembly and LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. He is the person I am supporting because of his 8 years of administering that very large city.

Why John Chiang is languishing fourth in the polls is a surprise to me. He has won 4 Statewide elections doing a good job as Controller and Treasurer, "rescuing" the State from "bankruptcy" especially during the tenure of Governor Schwarzenegger. I believe he is the smartest person running for the position, but even though he began the race with the most money and was well positioned he is not performing well. Delaine Eastin is a true progressive and had a very successful tenure as State School Superintendent from 1995 until 2003. Her supporters wear Birkenstocks, tie dye, and only support single payer.

But a lot of the buzz is about whether the Republican Candidate John Cox, who labels himself not as a Conservative but as more of a Moderate can be the second candidate instead of Villraigosa. I decided as I do not know the man I would approach I would research him on line. Immediately he says, "I am the true conservative." So much for what is "known" about a candidate. He has never held an office and is a businessman. He is definitely against "sanctuary cities," and as his Republican detractors point out he has run for President and Senator in past cycles. We have a good choice of candidates to choose from, but I will miss the mercurial Mr. Brown.

(Message from the editor: PFLAG is a non-political 501c3 organization and does not endorse any candidates. We can discuss issues and the positions that each candidate has expressed. We encourage all PFLAG members to become familiar with each candidate's position and experience regardless of party and vote.)

(more on following page)

TIME TO JOIN PFLAG? TIME TO RENEW PFLAG MEMBERSHIP?

If you would like to join PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities, print and mail the form below or join online at www.pspflag.org/join donate.html

All our expenses go to furthering our mission. Our expenses are for materials that we supply to individuals, schools and supporting organizations; the information phone line, newsletter production, support to local schools' Gay Straight Alliances; and, many other occasional expenses such as the Pride Parade.

When you join and support the local PFLAG chapter with a membership of \$30 or more, we send your name and a portion of the fees (\$15) to PFLAG National, making you a member of both the National and our local chapter of PFLAG. You will receive all publications and notices.

Members sometimes don't realize that if you join National PFLAG directly you are not on the membership rolls of the PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities. PFLAG National does not notify us that you joined, and they do not share any of the membership fee.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Suggested Donation: Family Membership \$50 _____ Individual \$30 _____

Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to:
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Chapter Officers

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