



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT

The Newsletter of PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter

Our twenty-third year. June 2018, Volume 23, No. 6

PFLAG MEETING

SUNDAY, June 17TH, 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

The meeting facilitator is Susan Thronson and the discussion topic is:
Parenting a Transgender Child: Being present for a transgender child.
Coming to terms with new information about the meaning of a transgender identity
and advocating for this transgender child in an ill-informed world.

Light refreshments provided by Armour Black and Harry Berman
Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting.

Email: info@PSpflag.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

— *Mike Balasa*

Over the past year I have heard from individuals about the difficulty of dealing with friends and relatives with political and religious viewpoints that are grating. It seems that nearly everyone has people in their lives, usually living in a rural area in the central part of the USA, who advocate beliefs that are odious to those of us who value diversity and human kindness. The issues of concern to PFLAG involve the civil rights of LGBTQI people. Transgender persons seem to be a favorite target of the extremists and state legislatures are trying to reverse gains in non-discrimination laws. Some religious leaders are trying to stir up resistance to marriage equality. The platform of the GOP in New Hampshire has a goal of reversing marriage equality. There are even religious leaders and some politicians making statements supporting so called "reparative therapy" for gay and lesbian youth.

It is difficult for me to forgive people who advocate these positions. There is an argument that a person with strong religious faith should be allowed to have these beliefs as long as they don't personally attack individuals in the LGBTQI community. I don't accept this. I wonder how those so called "religious" persons would like it if I stated that I thought their children shouldn't have the right to marry a person of their choice because of my religious beliefs? How would they like it if I said I would vote for a politician who would work to take away civil rights from their children? How would they like it if I voiced my thoughts that their children were less worthy of protection under the law? and that my beliefs encouraged mentally unstable persons to be violent against their children?

If a person chooses to have a religious or political belief that would harm my child, I am not going to give any approval. There are many people of strong religious beliefs who have chosen to interpret their Bible to accept all people and "love thy neighbor". Still, I am not going to disown friends and relatives with the bad beliefs. I will let them know that their beliefs and actions are unacceptable, but I will continue to try and understand them. There is always hope they will change.

NEW RESEARCH ON TRANSGENDER BRAIN ACTIVITY

Belgian neurologist, Julie Bakker of the University of Liege, has studied the brain activity of 160 persons who were diagnosed with gender dysphoria as children and teenagers. Bakker used a brain scanner that measured activity and brain microstructures using a technique called diffusion tensor imaging.

Bakker reported that her findings indicated that sexual differentiation of the brains of children identified as transgender were different from children who identified with their birth sex identity. Children born as male but identified as female had brain activity of a girl of the same age. The same finding applied to children born with a female identity but who identified as male. Bakker said her research had important implications for the well-being of children who identify as transgender. Using this knowledge, ". . .we will then be better equipped to support these young people, instead of just sending them to a psychiatrist and hoping that their distress will disappear spontaneously."

This study's conclusions agree with several previous neurological studies that indicated transgender adults have similar brain structures to cisgender people of their preferred gender.

SOME FACTS TO PONDER ABOUT SEX/GENDER ISSUES

While some religious fundamentalists would want you to believe there are only men (xy chromosomes) or women (xx chromosomes). Medical practitioners know that chromosome combinations in reality can be xo, xxy (Turner Syndrome) and xyy (Klinefelters Syndrome) along with mosaic chromosomal karyotypes. (It would take a textbook to explain all these complications, but feel free to use these terms to do your own research.)

There are also hormonal complications such as Androgen Insensitivity and Estrogen Insensitivity as well as Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia and 5-Alpha-reductase deficiency. All of these phenomena occur naturally and result in female bodied males and male bodied females.

It is also well known to the medical profession that today's environment contains a large number of chemicals that result in damage to fetuses. Several common medicines such as baldness prevention pills, prostate and heart treatments, are known to cause fetus irregularities. Some of the irregularities are incongruent sex/genital development, ambiguous genitalia, intersex conditions and transsexuality.

Researchers agree that 1.73% of babies born in the United States are affected with the variations described above. The number could be doubled if minor cases of irregularities were included in the statistics.

The hormonal and chromosomal variations often don't become evident until a child reaches puberty and their sexual development does not follow usual patterns, or when trying to conceive. There is definite evidence that as soon as a child is able to recognize the existence of two sexes, they know which sex they belong to regardless of genitalia.

2018 PRIDE THEME - YOUTH POWER FOR CHANGE

Message from the President of Palm Springs Pride, Ron DeHarte: "Inspired by and in support of youth-led movement-building efforts that are awakening critical conversations for social change, Greater Palm Springs Pride kicks off the 2018 Pride season under the theme of Youth Power for Change. Youth of Coachella Valley have also been named Grand Marshals of the 2018 Pride Parade.

Empowered youth are at the forefront of building a national movement that can shape public policy for generations. While we believe youth who are empowered will change the world, we are reminded that youth have historically been on the frontlines of social change, ranging from the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter.

In response to the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, youth leadership emerged across the country and created national marches to demand change and end gun violence. They have crafted powerful position statements, organized school walkouts, lobbied politicians and engaged in conversations with elected-officials.

Greater Palm Springs Pride is committed to empowering youth in the Coachella Valley through mentorship, community engagement and by directly funding grassroots programs in support of youth development, team building and anti bullying efforts. Additionally, we create safe and affirming opportunities for youth to participate in activities related to Pride. We actively collaborate with Safe Schools Desert Cities to connect with youth and provide funding, through the Pride Youth Fund, directly to Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and LGBT youth programs."

The Palm Springs Pride Parade is scheduled for November 4. The parade steps off at 10am at Palm Canyon Dr. and Tachevah and proceeds downtown on Palm Canyon Dr. to the main entrance of the Pride Festival at Museum Way. As the Pride Parade nears. PFLAG will send out details to help members march in our contingency.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR – 2018 PRIDE SEASON EVENTS

Pride season in the Southern California PFLAG Region:

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

STONEWALL HUMANITARIAN AWARDS GALA

June 28th, 7pm Mary Pickford Theater, Cathedral City.

Celebrating the 49th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and the right to equality, this event is also an educational platform for those youth who need to learn the importance of Stonewall. Special performance with an LGBTQI Palm Springs High School student violinist and internationally known hip hop violinist, SVET. Funds benefit the Transgender Community Coalition to continue services for the LGBTQI Community. Please join PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities in supporting this event. For more information go to Transcc.org

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.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION IN THE WORLD

by Bob Warburton

I found out that indeed people do read my nearly monthly column here in the BANNER. I made a mistake last month, and my dear friend Ron Wallen wrote me regarding the current Governor's name. He is Edmund Gerald Brown and I should have referred to him as Jerry instead of Edmund. His Father was also Edmund Gerald who was referred to as Pat. The most important thing I learned was someone does read my written word.

The day after writing my column I read a great tome on Brown and California politics in The New Yorker Magazine that reminded me Brown has been a "better" Governor as he has become less political in his last term when he did not have to worry about re-election. And the purpose of that column was not to push one candidate or another but to remind everyone that there are many decisions to be made this June and this year.

I assume this year most people are aware of what is occurring in the world around them this year. For example, locally the primary elections for Sheriff and Commissioner of Riverside County have become extremely contentious. Hopefully, that will mean a large turnout by an educated electorate. That compares to the last "off year" election when in 2014 a record low percentage of voters participated. Maybe this will be the best election. Or maybe it will be just the most over discussed election in history. On the national level there is much discussion.

Every Congressional Bi-election is important. Will the President have a majority of Congress members of his party to work with to pass legislation is the first question that is asked of every new President. Will there be a Democratic wave sweeping the nation in 2018 similar to the Republican wave that stopped

much of the Obama agenda in its tracks in the election of 2010? I am certain when National press looks at the Congressional races, they tend to over simplify what is going on in each district. The National pundits when looking at a Gubernatorial Democratic Primary in Georgia often say the progressive beat the traditional candidate, while I see the candidate with 12 years of experience winning. A Pennsylvania Congressional Special Election has literally been characterized as everything from a win for a “progressive Democrat” to a “show of strength for what the President believes.” I am certain it was a brilliant win by a candidate who knows his electorate, and is a moderate Democrat, pro-Union, anti-gun control Congressman, in a Nation that is not necessarily that.

In November 2010 I was partially responsible for the worst loss that the Natrona County Wyoming Democratic Party had suffered in over 50 years as its Vice Chair. As I stood in the worst Election Victory Party ever, I noticed an old friend in the corner, who wasn't smiling but neither was he frowning. He was the only successful Democrat who had been barely re-elected County Commissioner. That night he was the smartest candidate and had won the most important election in the world. For the next four years he served his constituency expertly.

SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE ADAPTING TO PARENTING

An article in the May 16th issue of the New York Times by Claire Cain Miller examined the changing roles of same-sex parents. Miller reported on sociological research from Professor Robert-Jay Green, California School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco. Green found that unlike straight couples who divide chores according to gender roles, same-sex couples tend to divide chores more equally. However, when children are born or adopted, same-sex couples tend to divide chores along more traditional lines. Often the major earner continues to work and the lesser paid spouse either stays home or works less hours to tend the child. There are pressures to follow the traditional child care model: work demands for overtime, absence of paid parental leave and preschool responsibilities. There is also the expectation from pediatricians, teachers and family that one person assumes the major responsibility for the child.

Researchers found that even when same-sex couples accept more traditional parenting roles, they still tend to divide chores according to preference and not gender roles. If one partner doesn't like to cook or do laundry, the other partner assumes that task regardless of work schedule. Same-sex couples stated more often than straight couples, that they feel the division of labor is fair even when the labor is not shared equally.

Another finding is that when the stay at home parent returns to the work force a year or two later, their pay earnings recovered to the level they would have attained if they stayed in the work force. Straight women returning to the work force find that their earnings never catch up to expected gains.

(more on following page)

ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT PFLAG

Every time you shop online using AmazonSmile, PFLAG Palm Springs-Desert Communities will receive a donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation.

Don't forget, Father's Day is June 17 and it's a great opportunity to shop at www.Smile.Amazon.com

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/joindonate.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:
PFLAG 611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262, Palm Springs, CA 92264

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430
EMAIL: INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG

Chapter Officers

President: Mike Balasa, Vice-president: Carol Balasa, Secretary: Christine Hammond,
Treasurer: Peter East, Directors: Dan Smith, Sly Zelnys