



INDY PFLAG NEWS

FEBRUARY 2009

PFLAG meets the 2nd Sunday of each month. The next meeting will be Sun., Feb. 8 from 2 to 4 pm at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in the Youth Wing (North door), just west of Meridian on 86th St.

February 8 Meeting

Our February meeting program will feature Walter Sherman, the priest at St. Alban's Episcopal Church (at East 46th and Emerson Avenue) where he has been for just over three years. Previously he worked in churches in Brighton and Fenton, Michigan, and in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has also taught in public and parochial schools in Ohio and at Ivy Tech, and worked as a restaurateur and caterer. He has a partner of almost 25 years. Together they have had 5 foster children, 2 "foster adults" and 2 exchange students. He has been ordained for 26 years. He will speak on being a gay man in a long term relationship, their foster family, and about how the church has reacted to him and his partner. This presentation will follow our confidential sharing time.

Marriage Amendment to be Re-Introduced in Indiana

Once again, opponents of marriage equality want to begin the process of amending Indiana's constitution to prohibit legal unions for same-sex couples. The amendment has been reworded to read: "Only a marriage between one (1) man and one (1) woman shall be valid or recognized as marriage in Indiana. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized."

Rep. Dave Cheatham, D-Mount Vernon and Rep. Eric Turner, R-Marion, are co-sponsors of the amendment for the House and GOP Senator Marlin Stutzman will sponsor legislation in the Senate.

House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer, D-South Bend, states that Indiana already has a law banning same-sex marriage and that supporters of the amendment "must have living proof that that law's not being followed," adding that "we certainly don't want to waste the public's time when we have the critical duties that we have."

Congressman John Lewis on Civil Marriage

"I have fought too hard and for too long against discrimination based on race and color not to stand up against discrimination based on sexual orientation. I've heard the reasons for opposing civil marriage for same-sex couples. Cut through the distractions, and they stink of the same fear, hatred and intolerance I have known in racism and in bigotry."

Notes from Annette

Coming out is often difficult for both parents and children. As a result, a barrier may come up between them. It can be hard to find the right words. We feel something has changed and things are not as they used to be.

Valentine's Day is approaching. What better way to show your GLBT child how much you love him or her, than to give them a gay-friendly gift? It's an easy way to show your support and how much you really do care for your child. I've done a bit of research and have come up with a few ideas. Besides showing our love to our kids, we can also support some of the GLBT-friendly organizations where I found some of the gift ideas.

The National PFLAG site (www.pflag.org) has a Gift section. You can buy hats, t-shirts, mugs and more. One cute gift I saw is a little white teddy bear. With the PFLAG logo on his belly, he's plush and cuddly!

Our own Indianapolis PFLAG chapter (www.indypflag.org) has a Recommended Reading List under "Education." The books listed are geared towards GLBT children and their parents. Most of these books can be found at Out Word Bound Bookstore (www.outwordbound.com), 625 N. East St., Indianapolis (317-951-9100).

Mitchell Gold has edited a book entitled "Crisis: Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay in America." Despite the negative-sounding title, this is a compilation of 40 stories of triumph over prejudice and hostility. Parents and children can find hope in these pages. Again, this book can be bought at Out Word Bound.

The Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.com) is a major force in GLBT-equality. Their "Corner Store" sells jewelry, apparel and accessories. Under accessories I found an off-white tote bag that says "Love Is Real", decorated with little hearts on it. In addition, there are lovely rings and pendants, most with the HRC logo.

For a really extravagant gift, you can purchase your child a GLBT-friendly cruise! "R Family Vacations" (www.rfamilyvacations.com) offers cruises and trips to GLBT families. Started by former Vice President of Atlantis Events Gregg Kaminsky and Kelli O'Donnell (wife of celebrity Rosie O'Donnell), this travel company not only appeals to both gays and lesbians, but families as well and those include kids.

These are just a few suggestions. I'm sure you can think of more. The main idea is to let your child know that you care and support them. February 14th, the day associated with love, is the perfect day to begin!

Indy PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is a group of people who share common experiences and provide support for each other. We listen and love. We help families have open, positive and loving relationships with GLBT children and we work for their civil and human rights.

Study: Family behavior key to health of gay youth

The Associated Press, December 29, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO: Young gay people whose parents or guardians responded negatively when they revealed their sexual orientation were more likely to attempt suicide, experience severe depression and use drugs than those whose families accepted the news, according to a new study.

The way in which parents or guardians respond to a youth's sexual orientation profoundly influences the child's mental health as an adult, say researchers at San Francisco State University. The findings appear in the January issue of *Pediatrics* and are being released Monday. "Parents love their children and want the best for them," said lead researcher Caitlin Ryan, a social worker who directs the university's Family Acceptance Project. "Now that we have measured all these behaviors, we can see that some of them put youth at extremely high risk and others are wellness-promoting."

Among other findings, the study showed that teens who experienced negative feedback were more than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide, nearly six times as vulnerable to severe depression and more than three times at risk of drug use.

More significantly, Ryan said, ongoing work at San Francisco State suggests that parents who take even baby steps to respond with composure instead of rejection can dramatically improve a gay youth's mental health outlook.

One of the most startling findings was that being forbidden to associate with gay peers was as damaging as being physically beaten or verbally abused by their parents in terms of negative feedback, Ryan said.

In the two-part study, Ryan and her colleagues first interviewed 53 families with gay teenagers to identify 106 specific behaviors that could be considered "accepting" or "rejecting." For example, blaming a youth for being bullied at school, shielding him from other relatives or belittling her appearance for not conforming to social expectations fell into the rejecting category.

Next, they surveyed 224 white and Latino gay people between ages 21 and 25 to see which of the behaviors they had experienced growing up. The responses then were matched against the participants' recent histories of severe depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse and unsafe sexual behavior.

While the results might seem intuitive, Ryan said the study, funded by the California Endowment, was the first to establish a link between health problems in gay youths and their home environments.

She has used the information in workshops with parents and other caregivers who have strained relationships with their gay teenagers, and said many were alarmed enough to make immediate changes in their interactions.

In her paper for *Pediatrics*, Ryan recommends that medical professionals ask young patients how their families have reacted to their sexual orientations and tell parents that negative reactions may prove harmful even if well-intentioned.

Such conversations are necessary because young people have been coming out at younger ages. Consistent with other studies, the youths in Ryan's study were on average younger than 11 when they first experienced a same-sex attraction, were just over 14 when they realized they were gay and came out to their families before they had turned 16.

Sten Vermund, a Vanderbilt University pediatrician who became interested in Ryan's work this summer when she presented her research at the international AIDS conference in Mexico City, agrees that doctors should be encouraged to talk with parents about responding to a child's sexual orientation in a supportive way. "So many families of children who are gay, bisexual or transgender, particularly families of gay male youth, think that if they are tough on the kid and tell him how unsatisfactory his gay lifestyle is to the family, he will have it knocked out of him," Vermund said.

Vermund said he also was impressed by Ryan's finding that a little bit of familial acceptance could go a long way in increasing a child's chances for future happiness.

"The Southern Baptist doesn't have to become a Unitarian," he said. "Someone can still be uncomfortable with their child's sexual orientation, but if they are somewhat more accepting and do the best they can, they will do the youth a lot of good. That to me is an important message."

More Quotes from "Crisis: Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay in America"

"Many of the students and teachers were very conservative, and the feeling around the school was very homophobic. But there was a handful of teachers, and the very rare student, who embraced a more liberal Catholicism. They were the kind of Catholics who believe judging is not their job."

-Katie Batza, student and Point Foundation Scholar

"School should be a safe place, and when you can't go to class because other students are harassing and the teacher won't do anything about it, there's a serious problem."

-Tony Meyer, student and Point Foundation Scholar

"I don't want parents to feel they must tell their children not to be who they are in order to keep them safe. I want them to know that the healthiest thing they can say is, 'Be who you are, and we'll work to make the world safer together.'"

-Tammy Baldwin, Congresswoman from Wisconsin

IE Awarded Grant

Indiana Equality (IE) has been chosen as a grant recipient by the Tides Foundation's State Equality Fund, a philanthropic partnership that includes the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr Fund, the Gill Foundation, and anonymous donors. The award will provide major funding for the multi-year civil rights effort, but the group will be working on raising additional contributions that will be needed to fully fund the project.

To help secure statewide civil rights protections for LGBT Hoosiers, the project focuses on expanding the number of Indiana communities providing LGBT protections via a local human rights ordinance. Project activities will include educational and outreach programs, an enhanced Speakers Bureau, earned media, polling, and community mobilization.

Project collaborators include Midwest Office of Lambda Legal (Lambda Legal), American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana (ACLU-IN), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 62 (AFSCME), Indiana AFL-CIO (AFL-CIO), state and local LGBT groups, and several other allied organizations.

To talk with a parent who also has a gay son or lesbian daughter & to learn more about Indy PFLAG, please contact:

***Sarah (317) 545-7034**

***Charlene/Oran (317) 897-0126**

***info@indypflag.org**

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