



Parents, Families & Friends  
of Lesbians And Gays

# PFLAG WAVER

## Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

January, 2004

### Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered 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.



PFLAG provides the opportunity for confidential dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.



Thanks for your continued support!

#### WEB SITES

NATIONAL – [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)  
DALLAS – [www.pflagdallas.org](http://www.pflagdallas.org)



#### PFLAG/Dallas

(Newsletter and all correspondence)  
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**972/77 PFLAG**

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#### Newsletter Deadline:

January 8, 2004  
by mail, fax or e-mail

### Next Meeting

January 8, 2004  
Second Thursday, 7-9:30 p.m.  
Midway Hills Christian Church  
11001 Midway Road, Dallas

### Do you see what I see? I see billboards!

Or maybe something different. PFLAG/Dallas can dream big, and peruse our plans for 2004 with more excitement: in late December, as a Black Tie Dinner beneficiary, we received \$17,966!

This will allow us to continue our support, education and advocacy. We support Safe Schools with literature and speakers; we provide speakers and literature for church groups, GLBT organizations and civic meetings; we support dinners for PWAs (persons with AIDS).

Something else we do that may not come to mind immediately: We meet at the same time in the same space in the same church every month. Many non-profits meet wherever they can find space. PFLAG/Dallas has consistently met at Midway Hills Christian Church since we first started holding monthly meetings. Our meetings are easy to find and easy to join. And if you want to join the chapter, that's easy, too!

While getting that nice check from Black Tie solves some problems, it creates some. Now that we can do more, we need more people to become involved. In addition to the board positions which were voted on last month, we have room for all kinds of workers, drivers, cooks, phoners, setters-up and takers-down for the meetings, table wranglers ... if there's something you like to do, we probably need it done.



It's an odd thing. We know we help parents and friends come to grips with their GLBT loved ones. They've told us so. And we've seen that the gay community appreciates PFLAG/Dallas ... one trip to the Pride Parade proves that.

But we can't do what we do in a vacuum, or with too few hands. We must have more people involved with what we're trying to do — and that's all spelled out in our mission statement, over in the first column. We have too few people willing to work.

How about you?

So you can't make it to the meeting every month. Can you put some packets together for the newcomers? Can you bake some cookies the times you can come? Can you call people to be sponsors, trophy donators or advertisers for fundraisers? Can you solicit funds to buy books for our library (which is growing nicely, by the way) and for literature to be sent out as requested?

Can you spend an hour a week doing whatever needs to be done? In other words, can we count on you for help?

Call Donna Akin (her number's in the first column, too) and tell her what you're willing to do. You may not need PFLAG/Dallas any longer, but PFLAG/Dallas still needs you.



We have quite a list of things we'd like to be doing. Perhaps I can print it in an upcoming PFLAGWAVER. You can scan it to see what's there that you'd like to do.

We have made a difference in the GLBT community. We can continue to make a difference. If your GLBT loved ones are still not free to live where they want, to work where they like, or to marry whom they love, then you need to be on our side, at our side, talking, working, fighting for those rights.

### New meeting info, and newsletter reminder

When our meetings begin at 7 p.m., new attendees will have a 15-minute orientation while the regulars have 15 minutes of announcements, messages, etc. We will all meet together before breaking into rap groups, since we feel that newcomers need to be in a rap group with some veterans. Then we will meet again for the speaker or other entertainment. We feel this will get newcomers up to speed faster.

We're trying to trim the mailing list. If you are willing to read your newsletter on line, send an e-mail with your mailing address so I can take you off the postal list and put you on the e-mail announcement list. You'll be notified when the newsletter is posted on our Web site. To stay on the postal list, send \$5 to Newsletter at the PFLAG address, or join the Dallas chapter and get your newsletter as part of that membership.

# Talking turkey in the New Year

## A good plan and talking points may help ease process

### General tips:

1. Don't wing it! Practice what you'd like to say to your loved ones with a trusted friend.
2. Enlist a "talk turkey buddy" who also plans to talk turkey with their family and friends. Call each other for moral support. Check in on the results.
3. Do your homework. Make it easy for your loved ones to support you. Have the letter you'd like them to send to their elected officials already written and printed out. Include their name and address at the top of your letter. Leave a space for their signature. Have the envelopes filled out. Tell 'em you'll mail it for them, too!
4. Forget the stuffing. Too much info is hard to digest. Think about the *one* thing you want your loved ones to know or remember. Tell a story – either about you or people you know that illustrates or how your or your friends' lives would have been easier if there wasn't discrimination in marriage rights.
5. Make sure your loved ones are registered to vote. This is crucial.

### Breaking the ice:

#### Opening the Conversation – Sample Lines:

- Are you aware of the court decision in Massachusetts about same-sex marriage? You know this really affects me directly.
- I need to talk with you about something that's difficult for me but is really important to me.
- You've always been supportive of me. Are you aware of the marriage debate that's going on?
- Did you know that in this country I don't have the same rights as you? If you're speaking to married folks, use an example of what benefits they have (Social Security, family health insurance, hospital visitation, etc.), and say flat out, "I don't have those rights."
- If you're in a relationship, say: "Do you know that if I were to die in an accident, my partner would not get any of my Social Security benefits, and I've been paying into that system for years. Did you know that if my partner was in a car accident and had to be taken to the hospital, I would be denied the right to see (him)(her) in most hospitals in this country? You know that house we've been wanting to buy? Well, if either of us dies, the one who's still around will have to pay estate taxes to keep the house. No married couple has to do that."
- If you're not in a relationship, but want to be: "Did you know that if I were to meet someone and fall in love, the way things stand

now, no matter how long we lived together, I'd never have the same rights and benefits that a straight person gets the minute they get married?"

• Think of a situation in your family they can relate to involving a married couple and then say how you'd be treated in the same situation: "Aunt Clara is so lucky she has Uncle Joe's Social Security (pension) benefits to live on. It's not right that gay couples never get survivor benefits from Social Security. When \_\_\_ broke her leg last year, she was lucky to have health insurance through her husband's employer – they'd still be in debt without it. I can't get health insurance for my partner from my company."

"Mom, you worked to put Dad through graduate school. You know, if I did the same thing for my partner, he'd have to pay taxes on what I gave to support him?"

"Did you know that the religious and political right – people like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Gary Bauer and mostly Republicans in Congress – are launching a nationwide effort to amend the U.S. Constitution to forever prohibit the recognition of same-sex marriages and permanently write my second-class citizenship into the Constitution? This country has a lot more important things to deal with – the war in Iraq, the economy, health care. We have to stop them. This whole anti-marriage hysteria is about distracting the country from real issues, about dividing America, about hurting LGBT people for political gain. It's embarrassing – our country used to be a leader in civil rights."

### Steer the conversation:

Possible Topics and Questions – "If gay people can get married, it will ruin families." What does the ability of lesbian and gay people to get married take away from others? It helps our families but it hurts no one.

"I don't have a problem with you having rights, but I don't like the word 'married'." The concept of what marriage is has changed over the centuries. Women used to lose their citizenship when they married. Interracial marriage was outlawed in some states just fifty years ago. People could not marry outside their faith. Besides, we're talking about equal civil rights here. All other citizens have the right to marry. I should too.

"What's wrong with civil unions – why do you have to say 'marriage'?" There's nothing "wrong" with civil unions – they're a big advance over where we are right now. *But*, civil unions don't

*See Turkey on next page*



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## *Turkey* from previous page

give equal rights – they are a separate and very unequal status. For example, civil unions are not recognized in other states and because the federal government does not recognize them, couples in civil unions don't get any of the over 1,000 rights and responsibilities that come with marriage under federal law.

"Not everyone wants gay people getting married in their church." I'm talking about civil marriage – courthouses and justices of the peace – not religion. Churches will still be free to marry whoever they choose in a religious ceremony. Not all gay people want to get married, maybe I never will, but this country has to treat me as a full and equal citizen. It does when it collects my taxes.

"If gays get to marry, what's to stop this from snowballing, opening the door to who knows what?" You know, they said the exact same thing when people sought to end the ban on interracial marriage – that it would lead to bestiality, incest, and polygamy. Of course that didn't happen and such arguments are insulting. We're talking about two consenting adults, two human beings being able to make a commitment to one another and be protected by the same rights you enjoy.

### **Exit strategy:**

*Remember, You're Looking for Help – Not Strife, So:*

If they're ready to help: "Great! Here's the letter. Sign it. I'll mail it for you. Pass the turkey."

If they're enthusiastic: "Since you're up for doing this, maybe you could spread the word. Talk with your friends about it. Get other voters to help us. I'll give you letters for others to sign."

If they seem ambivalent or unsure: "Will you at least think about this? It's important to me. I want to call you in a week or so to talk a little more about it."

If they say no: "I understand that you're not with me on this yet and that hurts a lot. But try to give it more thought. I'm going to send you some stuff to read about this. How about dessert?" Or, "I think it's nap time now."

### **Sample letter, e-mail or script:**

Dear Family Member or Close Friend,

I appreciate and value the love you have shown me over the years. I've rarely talked about the kind of discrimination that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face in this country, and I've never asked for you to stand up for me in ending this discrimination. Now, this holiday season I need your help.

Using the so-called "threat" of gay marriage, the religious and political right are launching an unprecedented campaign to keep denying equal marriage rights for same-sex couples and they're even attacking other, more limited forms of family recognition,

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including civil unions and domestic partnerships. Their vicious campaign is based on lies and distortions about LGBT people, and that includes me. Please stand with me and for me by doing two things over the next few days:

1. Call or write your Member of Congress and your two U.S. Senators. Ask them to oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment (H.J. Res. 56), which would ban same-sex marriage and prevent courts from mandating even the most basic benefits, such as domestic partner health benefits and hospital visitation rights. The Congressional switchboard is 202-224-3121. If you aren't sure who your Congressperson and two Senators are, please call the Congressional switchboard or go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

2. Call your state representative/assembly member and state senator. Ask them to support equal treatment of same-sex couples and to oppose efforts to ban same-sex partner recognition in your state. If there is a specific anti-gay bill or proposed constitutional amendment pending, please mention that bill or amendment. You may be able to get this information by contacting your local or state LGBT rights organization. A list of these is posted at <http://federationlgbt.org/Members/members.html>

Thank you for being there for me when I need your help.



## *Gay couple joins exclusive club of newlyweds*

by Deb Price, *The Detroit News*

"Do you think we could get a table by the water?" Joyce asked politely when she phoned downstairs for reservations at Swan Court, a restaurant at the Hyatt Regency on Maui that is ranked as one of the most romantic dining spots in the world.

"Well," the concierge replied diplomatically, "it really depends on what seating is available when you arrive."

There was a pause as the concierge hit a few computer keystrokes.

"Oh, but I see you're honeymooners. I'll make sure the maitre d' knows."

Honeymooners. Instantly, the magic word opened a fantasy night for us: As we dined at a waterside table, graceful swans meandered under moonlight and swaying palms. The maitre d' and waiters took turns congratulating us.

In our 18 years of traversing the globe together, Joyce and I rarely even imagined we could spend two such joyful weeks in Hawaii as full members of the exclusive club of vacationing newlyweds. Bellhops, waiters, hotel managers, pickup doubles tennis rivals, whoever learned of the specialness of this trip sweetly embraced us.

"Put your heads closer together," a recent castaway from Hollywood to the island of Kauai encouraged us as she snapped our photo on a sweeping lanai (or balcony to mainlanders) overlooking misty emerald mountains towering above Pacific Ocean waves. "That's just perfect," she said, as her chiseled-faced husband brought Chopin to life on the Princeville Hotel's grand piano.

Near the six-month anniversary of our Canadian-born marriage, we June brides were embarked on yet another adventure as one of the first American gay couples to experience the once-alien world of married life.

Still a bit wobbly in my training-wheel days of marriage, even at home I sometimes find myself feeling like I'm in a far-away land, trying to figure out how to fit into a strange but thrilling new culture. It reminds me of when Joyce and I went to an outdoor movie

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## Page Four

Hey, Puddin's –

Happy New Year! And wish your favorite Smith a Happy National Smith Day ... Jan. 6!

This month our meeting falls on "National Show and Tell at Work Day." How about showing pictures of your GLBT loved ones and telling about the impact their lives have on you? There are some people who want to know why GLBTs have to flaunt their lifestyles; why talk about themselves. Those people want us to be quiet. Yet straight co-workers have pictures of their families in the office. For some reason when GLBT families and friends put out pictures it's flaunting, and when straight people put out pictures it's cute.

When parents, families and friends show pictures of GLBT loved ones, it just proves that we're all normal. Closed-minded people can't make any judgements that GLBT family members or friends are somehow weird, because pictures don't lie. There's power in pictures. GLBT families are cute and cuddly too. There just happen to be two mommies or two daddies. Straight parents brag about their GLBT children as much as anyone with heterosexual children. Some start with the line, "Wanna see my grand-baby?" and before you know it, you're looking at 20 baby pictures filed neatly in a wallet-size photo album!

There's power in our stories. We have the chance to let people know who we are by telling our stories. Now more than ever we need to tell our stories and show our pictures. There's a huge backlash from the neo-puritans and they've decided to take it to a political level. They want to add an amendment to the United States Constitution that bans marriages of same-sex couples. These people are mad. (Editor's note: I *think* she means angry.) Equal rights have gone too far in their eyes.

Civil rights were granted to same-sex couples in Texas and Massachusetts. And Canada is granting same-sex marriage. Neo-puritans can't stand that. They've worked so hard to create horrible pictures of GLBT people; pictures that create fear. But their pictures aren't real. They are imaginary. Take your real pictures out and share them with co-workers. Let straight co-workers see what a real GLBT person looks like. Let them see that GLBT people are like anyone else.

The fight that is brewing over civil rights is not about GLBT versus heterosexual. It's about human rights. It's about caring for those children in those pictures. It's about marriage tax breaks – GLBTs pay taxes too. It's about hospital visitation.

Just show those cute pictures to your straight co-workers. Anyone who would argue that some cute baby shouldn't be granted rights is the one with the problem.



On behalf of the board and our membership, thanks to the *Texas Triangle* readers for voting PFLAG/Dallas the "Best GLBT Organization for Dallas." Several thousand North Texans voted in the Texas Triangle's "Roundup Awards." What an honor. All of our hard work is appreciated. There are some people that we will never know we've helped. By receiving this award, we are reminded that our efforts do have an impact. The *Texas Triangle* is circulated throughout the whole state.

Thanks also to Vic Ashley who nominated us as beneficiaries of the Texas Gay Rodeo Association–Dallas Chapter. Vic is National Gay Rodeo's vice president. We don't know if we're beneficiaries yet, but the nomination proves that other organizations believe in us. They see that we are making a difference.

And thanks to all who put down PFLAG/Dallas as the recipient of your Black Tie Dinner money. Our chapter award of \$17,966

was the biggest amount ever!

Last year was a momentous year for our chapter and for civil rights across the country. This year looks to be just as busy. So get out and tell your stories, show your pictures. Be proud. People notice.

**Pat Smith**  
Co-President



### *Honeymoon* from page 3

theater with folding chairs on the tiny Greek island of Paros: Half-way through, the projectionist shocked us by turning off the movie to take on his other role of selling soda pop and candy. Or the time when we looked up at the arrival/departure board in the train station in Cairo: The information we needed was there – in Arabic.

So, while honeymooning in Hawaii, I often found myself uncharacteristically discombobulated and shy, reverting to defensive behavior aimed at avoiding a hurtful comment that might spoil a special moment.

Once, when we wore flower leis to dinner, a waiter asked, "What's the special occasion?" I hedged, "Oh, we just love Hawaii."

But ever the fearless travel guide, Joyce embraced being a honeymooner, exploring terrain that as a gay person she had never expected to enter. She even gleefully noted our new status as she made hotel reservations.

Those heterosexuals still uneasy with same-sex marriage often ask, "Why marriage? Why can't you have all the rights and benefits and just call it something else?"

Our answer is simple: Because then it would be something else.

On our honeymoon, we found ourselves studying heterosexual honeymooners, this time not with envy but as fellow newbies. All of us had taken a giant leap of faith, promising to try in a world of one-night stands and quickie divorces to be true to one love.

At dinner in Honolulu one night, we overheard a newlywed husband in his late 30s somewhat defensively explain to a couple at an adjoining table, "We felt like we could splurge on a Hawaiian honeymoon. It's a first marriage for both of us."

Joyce smiled knowingly at me: "It's a first marriage for both of us, too. And our last."

As we capped our final night with a starlit swim in a lagoon, we knew that sharing in a celebratory rite of passage – the getaway trip to fortify a couple for all the ups and downs ahead – had been good for us. How wonderful for once to feel in sync with a supportive tradition.

You can reach Deb Price at (202) 906-8205 or [dprice@detnews.com](mailto:dprice@detnews.com).



### *Are you househunting in Dallas?*

A recent e-mail from Jane Crain ([singnjane@aol.com](mailto:singnjane@aol.com)):  
Greetings, friends and neighbors in Dallas!

Hope the holidays are good ones for you and yours. I recently learned that our former home in Kessler Park is on the market. 1043 Turner Avenue. If you know anyone looking for a home I can heartily recommend it and finer neighbors you could not hope for. The listing is with Debbie Sutton at David Griffin.

Happy New Year, one and all.

**Jane Crain**

3317 37th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406