



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians and Gays

PFLAG WAVE

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

June, 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.



WEB SITES

NATIONAL – www.pflag.org



DALLAS – www.pflagdallas.org



PFLAG/Dallas

(Newsletter and all correspondence)
P.O. Box 111148 • Carrollton, TX 75011

972/77 PFLAG

(972/777-3524)

PFLAG/Dallas Co-presidents:

Donna Akin – 972/443-1422

pflagdonna@yahoo.com

Pat Smith – 214/538-2574

psmith@pflagdallas.org

Newsletter

Phone 972/418-1898

Fax 972/417-0880

newsletter@pflagdallas.org

Newsletter Deadline:

June 10, 2004

by mail, fax or e-mail

Next Meeting

June 10, 2004

Second Thursday, 7-9:30 p.m.

Midway Hills Christian Church

11001 Midway Road, Dallas

Gay-rights supporters protest marriage amendment

Some believe recent action in Massachusetts will help their cause

by Sarah Post

The Dallas Morning News

More than 500 gay rights supporters demonstrated Saturday in uptown Dallas against a proposed constitutional amendment that would deny same-sex marriages.

StandOut! North Texas Coalition organized the peaceful demonstration in Lee Park to voice opposition to the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

StandOut! founder Carol Williams said her coalition hoped to send a strong message to elected officials that "we simply will not tolerate discrimination being written into our country's most sacred document."

"Our Constitution was written to guarantee equal rights and freedom for all people, not just select people," she said.

Some rally-goers said a recent green light for gay marriages in Massachusetts makes a constitutional amendment unlikely. But they still stressed the importance of vigilance.

"Americans who value liberty must be concerned," said Louise Young, who was joined in a civil union with her partner of 20 years when civil unions were legalized in Vermont in 2000. "History is littered with examples of what people thought could never happen here. We have to speak out."

Donna Akin, co-president of the Dallas chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and

Gays, said same-sex marriage has galvanized gays and lesbians like no other issue. She described it as a civil-rights concern much like women faced in the '20s and blacks faced in the '60s.

"Now we have another group of citizens being singled out for discrimination," Ms. Akin said. "It's kind of like a setback in time."

StandOut! was formed in 2003 in response to the Rev. David Roseberry of Plano's Christ Episcopal Church, who publicly opposed the consecration last year of the Episcopal Church's first openly gay bishop. The coalition includes about 20 organizations: churches, the Human Rights Campaign, the Women's Chorus, Cathedral of Hope, The Turtle Creek Chorale and a number of AIDS organizations.

Attendees at Saturday's event waved American flags as they listened to speeches from state Rep. Terri Hodge (D-Dallas), the Rev. John Thornburg, and former White House official Regina Montoya. The Turtle Creek Chorale and Oak Lawn Band performed patriotic music.



Joe and Angie Sifferman attended the event with their infant daughter.

"We have gay friends who support and love each other in the same way my wife and I do," Mr. Sifferman said. "It's a shame they don't have the same rights. To add an amendment doesn't make sense to me."

E-mail spost@dallasnews.com

Are you a good setter-upper?

PFLAG needs you! We could use help setting up the meeting room the second Thursday of each month. It takes 30 to 45 minutes, and involves setting up the chairs, rolling out the library racks and arranging the posters so new people can see what we used to look like ...

If you could be at the church at 6:15 or so, please call Donna at 972/443-1422 and she'll get you started. And for helping out, you can have free cookies and drinks!

See page four for other ways you can help PFLAG. If you believe in our mission statement, please become involved in our chapter. There are simply too few people to do what it takes to continue our work with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

PFLAG/Dallas appreciates your continued support.

Bill to ban gay marriages dies on final night in Alabama Legislature

by Bob Johnson
Associated Press Writer

The Alabama Legislature ended its 2004 regular session without voting on a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages in Alabama.

The gay marriages legislation was one of several bills aimed at improving the state's moral compass that died Monday when the House spent the final day dealing mostly with the General Fund budget and taxes to balance the spending plan.

The constitutional amendment, which would have required approval by Alabama voters, would have defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. In a poll before the start of the session, most legislators had said they would support the proposal, but a political fight broke out during the session over whether to hold the referendum during the presidential election in November or during primaries in 2006.

Rep. Alvin Holmes, D-Montgomery, said he and other members of the Black Caucus were planning to fight the proposed amendment if it had come up for debate Monday.

"The state of Alabama doesn't need to get involved in the personal life or in the bedroom of people," Holmes said.

But the original sponsor of the proposal, Rep. Gerald Allen, D-Tuscaloosa, promised to keep trying until the Legislature lets the people vote on an amendment banning gay marriages.

"I am disappointed, knowing how the citizens of this state feel about this issue. The Legislature did not respond," Allen said.

Allen said he would introduce the proposed amendment next year or in a special session later this year.

Alabama already has a law that bans same-sex marriages, but it is not part of the state constitution.

Other bills that did not come up for a vote on the last night included a proposed amendment to allow the posting of the Ten Commandments in public buildings, a bill to require schools to begin the school day with the Pledge of Allegiance, a bill to allow posting of "In God We Trust" on classroom walls, and a bill to allow teachers to tell students about alternative theories to evolution. Rep. DuWayne Bridges, R-Valley, has worked for years to pass the Ten Commandments amendment.

"For several years it has come down to the last few hours and they always seem to bury it," Bridges said. "I think it would help. I think it's evident in our society that Christian values are eroding."

But Holmes said he was glad the Legislature avoided the morality-based legislation.

"It's not the business of the Legislature. You can't legislate morality," Holmes said.



Ebby Halliday
REALTORS™

Donna Akin
972-443-1422

Fine Homes in Dallas & Ft Worth

Parents demand rights for gay children

by Ashley Harrell
The News, Boca Raton, FL

The only people more concerned that gays and lesbians be granted the privilege of saying "I do" are their parents, according to several Boca Raton moms who say they want to see their children awarded the same rights as everyone else.

Mother and PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) representative Carol Benowitz spoke Wednesday night to the Democratic Club of Greater Boca Raton Wednesday about the dreams she has for her son.

Although Neil Benowitz has been with his boyfriend Paul for more than 13 years and the couple has even celebrated their union with a commitment ceremony, the two do not have the right to get married in the state of Florida.

Along with marriage comes more than 1,000 rights, said Benowitz, disgusted by the denial of those privileges to her son and his partner, and even more so by the potential of Bush's endorsed amendment to the constitution to ban gay marriage.

Although the amendment, endorsed by the president on Feb. 24, would leave open the possibility that states could allow civil unions, it would restrict marriage to two people of the opposite sex nationwide.

The amendment came as a response to the November decision in favor of gay marriage by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which goes into effect for state residents in less than a month, and the legalization of gay marriage in Canada.

For the constitutional ban to pass, a two-thirds majority vote in the House and Senate, and ratification by three-fourths, or 38 states, would be required.

"This would be the first amendment to the constitution that would deny rights instead of granting them," said Benowitz, who

See PFLAG, Page Four

Villa Antique Mall, Ltd.
Antiques Bought ~ Sold • Estate Sales



(405) 949-1185
villaantiques@yahoo.com

3132 N. May
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

LINDA J. BROCK, PH.D.
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
Licensed Professional Counselor

1415 N. Elm Street
Denton, TX 76201
(940) 383-6677

Couple, Family,
Individual and
Group Therapy
Sliding Scale Fees

Waco gays fail to get county marriage license

by Terri Jo Ryan
Waco Tribune-Herald

Pledging their fidelity to each other, Chris and Cade went to the second floor of the McLennan County Records Building on May 17 to seek a marriage license to cement the bond they've shared for more than two years. Accompanied by photographers and reporters, however, this blushing pair knew going in that they would leave without the paper that would legitimize their union.

Chris Benter and Cade Hammond are gay. Under the Texas Family Code, Chapter 2, section 2.001(b) "A license may not be issued for the marriage of persons of the same sex." They said they applied anyway on Monday to demonstrate that restricting same-sex couples from the benefits of matrimony relegates a group of Americans to permanent second-class citizenship.

Andy Harwell, County Clerk, said that in his decade in office he has never known of another same-sex couple even making the attempt for a marriage license. His office issues on average 200 such licenses each month to heterosexual couples, he added.

Same-sex couples seeking a license will be advised about state law: The penalty for a county clerk or deputy county clerk who violates the provisions of the code commits a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$200 and not more than \$500.



Hammond said that people like himself and his partner, having now been denied a right granted to other Americans of his orientation, have grounds to sue the state. He has been in contact with Lambda Legal, a national civil rights organization for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered persons, which has indicated an interest in seeking test cases to bring to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The concerns of gay rights and same-sex marriages — whether civil unions or religiously-sanctioned arrangements — are shaping up to be some of the most divisive issues on the presidential campaign season. President George W. Bush earlier this year proposed a constitutional amendment to "preserve traditional marriage," while his Democratic opponent, Sen. John Kerry, supports legalization of civil unions.

"The fact that Sen. Kerry is from Massachusetts certainly makes it easier for Republicans to explain how he is an out-of-touch liberal," said Ted Royer, spokesman of the Texas GOP. Three of four Texans are opposed to gay marriage, he said, and the state's party platform defends "traditional marriage" as the union of one man and one woman. Kerry's support of same-sex civil unions, he added, "helps us make our case."

M.A. Taylor, McLennan County GOP chairman, said he finds the demands for civil rights from homosexual activists "a constant source of consternation."

"I think those people need to go on with their lives and stop worrying about the rights they've been deprived of," he said, after learning that a gay couple sought a marriage license in Waco on Monday. "I remember when sex was your own business and you didn't go advertising it around. If you mind your own business, nobody has to know."

The more activists push the issue, Taylor predicted, the more the rest of the country will push back what they perceive as an assault on family values. "This will have an impact on the political climate this year, no doubt," he said.

The Rev. Rusty Lee Thomas of Elijah Ministries, although still on the road with his cross-country crusade, sent several of his nine children to protest the gay gathering on the steps of the McLennan County Records Building. He also issued the state-

ment that "We cannot make straight what God has deemed crooked."

Denise Bagby, who joined several Christian home-schooling families who protested the small gay rights rally, said she came to demonstrate her belief that the Bible is specific in its edicts against homosexual conduct. It is a heresy, she added, for gays to say God made them that way.

Ronnie Holmes, pastor of Church of the Open Door, said that 5,000 years of human history outweigh any civic authority for declaring what makes matrimony valid. "Marriage is God's enterprise, not the federal government's," he said.

Jacob Ornelas, 22, the son of a Southern Baptist preacher in Floresville, Texas, said Monday — the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown V. Board of Education* decision that desegregated public schools — will also be looked upon by future generations as a day of liberation for an oppressed minority.

Ornelas, who is heading into medical school in the fall in Houston, following his December 2003 graduation from Baylor, said he looked forward to the day he could marry his life partner. "I don't appreciate being treated like a second-class citizen in my own country," he said.

The Rev. Charley Garrison, pastor of Central Texas Metropolitan Community Church From the Heart, said he performs two or three commitment ceremonies each year for his parishioners. He is a member of an "inclusive" Christian denomination that solemnizes some 6,000 same-sex unions each year.

"These people that are being joined in union are no different in their vows and their love, they are just different (from other couples) in their gender," Garrison said.

The Rev. Nathan Stone, pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Waco, said he has performed only two union ceremonies and one recommitment ceremony for a couple who'd been together for 20 years during his four-year tenure with the local congregation. But the sanctuary has been rented occasionally by other groups for their own "Holy Union" services, he said. The Unitarian Universalist Association, headquartered in Boston, has been conducting same-sex "services of union" since 1984.

Although he was attired in his liturgical garb, Garrison said the day's events were not about religious ethics but civil rights. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, some 43,000 same-sex households already reside in Texas, and they deserve the same governmental protections and support provided to all other American families, he said.

Mike Lavigne, Communications Director for the Texas Democratic Party, said the party's platform is silent on the matter of gay marriage, and he considers it a states' rights issue. Republicans, he charged, are merely trying to create a wedge issue by proposing a constitutional amendment forbidding it, "an amendment that doesn't have a prayer of passing."

The constitutional amendment push is merely a distraction so that ordinary citizens won't question the conduct of the war in Iraq, the state of the economy and the status of health care, he said. "The big issue of 2004 is character," Lavigne added, "and issues that are more important than red herrings like gay marriage."

Our Good Neighbor number has changed

If you use your Reward Card at Tom Thumb, note that our number has changed. The new Good Neighbor number is 10769.

And if you don't use a Reward Card ... why not? Saves you money and pays PFLAG, too! Ask about it at your neighborhood Tom Thumb.

Page Four

Hey, Puddin's –

Happy Father's Day and Happy Summer Solstice!

Last month I attended a friend's graduation. His mother and father, grandma and grandpa drove in from California to attend. After the ceremony, we all met at a party for him.

It was an eclectic mix: young and old, students and non-students, gay and straight. We all took our turns "roasting" and toasting the graduate. There were fond memories of his first apartment, his first car, his first time living away from home. Then the conversation veered toward his new fashion sense and his new taste for the finer things, including his new obsession with "purses."

"It's not a purse ... it's a satchel!" he cried several times. He was irritated that anyone would have the nerve to call his satchel a purse. "No, it's a Man-Bag!" someone shouted. And everyone laughed. He got teased about his matching golf outfits complete with "satchel" for his golf clubs. In fact, his satchel had a satchel!

Someone yelled out, "Just like Barbie ... matching outfit and accessories! ... right, Pat?" I was stunned. I said, "Do I look like I know anything about Barbie dolls?" I pointed out that G.I. Joe never had a plaid matching satchel. He had a green "Man Bag" for all of his cool army stuff. Me play with a Barbie doll? ... Gack! We went on and on making fun of our stereotypes from drag queens to tomboys.

My friend tried to defend himself at every step but to no avail. His dad sat with his head in his hand, at times shaking his head. Even Grandpa jumped in on the fun with a few pithy remarks. At one point, Grandma turned to Mom and said, "This is a new experience." Mom replied, "Yes, it is ... and isn't it fun?"

Grandma agreed. She wasn't scared or upset. She wasn't confused or shocked. It was a new experience. She was sitting there learning all about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. We were making fun of our stereotypes, while showing the family that we were like any other group of friends. We just happen to be LGBT. It was an air of frivolity but with a very serious message ... we are normal.

Mom and Dad have the same concerns any other parents have for their new graduate ... when are you going to get a job? We teased the graduate that he needed to find a job or find a rich spouse. At one point, even Dad said, "We don't care who you marry, a man or a woman, as long as they're rich!" We all roared with laughter! Typical parents!



The fact was, Dad was saying he didn't care that his son was gay. When it was time to go, we bid our friend goodbye. Hugs were given all around. Grandpa was still all smiles. Mom hoped we'd all stay in touch. She was glad to have her son coming home. We all came to celebrate the graduation of our friend. We met his family and they met his extended family.

Our friend is off to find his place in the world. He's got a great start, because he's got a great family at home that supports him, and he's got an extended family he can always reach out to. He'll be just fine.

Graduations are new beginnings; they are also homecomings. It's nice to see someone with a supportive, loving home to go back to.

PFLAG helps struggling parents understand that their LGBT children are normal. It's a new experience, but well worth it. When we believe in someone, then they become capable of doing amazing things. They are able to reach their full potential. Sometimes all it takes is taking the time to learn about someone who is different from

us. It can bring us closer to our loved ones. It's a graduation to a new level of understanding.

Pat Smith

Co-president, PFLAG/Dallas



PFLAG *from page two*

said she recognized long before the amendment that something wasn't right.

The first thing that raised her awareness was when Neil needed to be hospitalized after a dangerously high fever, Benowitz said.

"I started thinking, they can stop Paul from seeing Neil," she said. "He doesn't have the same rights I do."

When Neil switched jobs, his mother noticed that her son and his partner were not granted the social security benefits of married couples, and they were not able to share pensions.

"It's not right. It's absolutely not right. Why should my child be a second class citizen?" Benowitz asked the South County Civic Center lecture hall audience.

Democratic Club member Ramona Shedroff stood up in support of families like the Benowitzes to share a story from her own.

Shedroff's niece, who originally lived in Virginia with her partner, was artificially inseminated three years ago through a sperm bank. Both mothers wanted to be named on the birth certificate but the state of Virginia would not allow it, so the couple moved to Washington, D.C. in order to have dual custody of their daughter.

"Look what they have to go through," Shedroff said. "There's no reason not to allow gay people to raise children."

The state of Florida is one of the last two states to ban any gay parent from adopting a child.



It's ba-a-ck! The Flamingo Fling, that is

Or, to be formal, the Fabulous Family Flamingo Fling. Reserve Sunday, Aug. 27, at Don Carter's All Star Lanes-West, 10920 Composite Drive. Registration is at 1 p.m.; bowling and silent auction are from 2 to 5 p.m. Pre-registered bowlers, \$20; on Aug. 27, \$25. Get up a team of four and get your entry form from our Web site, www.pflagdallas.org.

And if you have any old trophies – any kind, we don't care – would you consider donating them for the Fling? Call Pat Smith at 214/538-2574. You won't recognize them when we're through!

Proceeds will apply to the billboards PFLAG/Dallas plans to erect.



If your chances were one in a thousand,

would you buy a \$100 ticket for a new Audi? Sure, you would!

The Black Tie Dinner will sell 2,000 raffle tickets for two Audis, to be presented the night of the dinner. **You do not have to be present to win.**

All beneficiaries have blocks of tickets to sell and, since PFLAG is a beneficiary this year (thanks, HRC!), we have tickets. If you're interested, call Donna at 972/443-1422.

If you'd like to be on hand to drive it home, ask Donna about a ticket to the Black Tie Dinner. Each dinner ticket is \$300, and the dinner and the program are always special.

And the dessert is almost always chocolate. Maybe not worth \$300, but nothing to sneeze at, either! Join PFLAG for the largest seated dinner in Dallas in October. More later!