



Greater Boston PFLAG

NEWS & VIEWS

March 2009 — May 2009

85 River Street, Suite 5A, Waltham MA 02453

Greater Boston PFLAG is committed to creating environments of understanding and respect for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender 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. We provide opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and act to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

President's Message

By Stan Griffith

Contact info: 781-861-7689 or stangriffith@rcn.com

For the past year, Greater Boston PFLAG has been working on a number of matters of joint interest with Dr. Caitlin Ryan, Director of Adolescent Health Initiatives for the César E. Chávez Institute at San Francisco State University. We are so delighted that some of Dr. Ryan's six years of groundbreaking research is now available in published form in the January 7, 2009 issue of the journal *Pediatrics*. In the article, Dr. Ryan and her colleagues document that parental rejection of GLBT kids is a public health menace and can be lethal. A fuller description of Dr. Ryan's findings, and a copy of her article can be found at: <http://rennacommunications.com/press/new-research-on-gay-lesbian-bisexual-youth-and-impact-of-family-rejection>.

Greater Boston PFLAG

Waltham Business Office: (781) 891-5966

In-State Toll-Free Help Line

866-GBPFLAG (866-427-3524)

e-mail: info@gbpflag.org

www.gbpflag.org

Dr. Ryan spoke about the research she conducted through the Family Acceptance Project at a forum in Waltham that was sponsored by Greater Boston PFLAG. We learned: (1) virtually all parents want to do the right thing in raising their children; (2) the vast majority of parents get their information about sexual orientation and gender identity from unreliable resources (peers, churches, media, upbringing, etc.); (3) almost every parent who is confronted with the potentially catastrophic consequences of rejecting behavior toward a GLBT child, changes that behavior; and (4) a small amount of positive change in parental behavior makes a big difference in a GLBT child's life and healthy development.

Since its founding, PFLAG has understood that unconditional love and acceptance of a gay child makes a huge positive difference in the child's life. We know as parents how important parental acceptance can be in promoting self-esteem and health and success in later life. While we have always had plenty of anecdotal evidence of the harm that results from rejection and the importance of parental acceptance, Dr. Ryan's research gives us the hard proof that we need to advocate for sound public health policies.

Additional support for the importance of Greater

(Continued on page 2)

In this issue:

President's Message Stan Griffith	p. 1
The Magician Linda Patterson	p. 3
Empowering Young People Pam Garramone	p. 5
My Mother's Funeral Diane DeLap	p. 6
Thank-you, Donors!	p. 7
A Year in the Life of a PFLAG Parent Diana Hughes Budreau	p. 8
What Keeps Me Warm Barbara Mulcahy	p. 8

President's Message (Continued from page 1)

Boston PFLAG's programs can be found in a recent study published by the national Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) regarding suicide risk and GLBT Youth. The SPRC report includes the following among its 21 recommendations for combating depression and suicide among GLBT youth: "*Promote organizations that support LGBT youth, such as Gay-Straight Alliances and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG).*" (A copy of the full SPRC report can be found at: http://www.sprc.org/library/SPRC_LGBT_Youth.pdf).

In the May-August 2008 issue of Greater Boston PFLAG's *New and Views*, my President's Message discussed the alarming findings in the 2007 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS):

The data show that risk behaviors, including attacks, suicide attempts, fear of violence against GLB youth (as well as use of drugs and alcohol) stayed the same as or were higher in 2007 than in 2005.... In 2005 and 2007, the YRBS reported that GLB youth were over four times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year than their straight peers. The rate of increased reported attempts for GLB youth was significantly higher than the marginal increase for straight students. The percentage of youth reporting serious attempts, those requiring medical attention, remained the same for straight youth (2.2%), but in 2007, the rate of serious attempts rose from 8.2% to 12.1%, meaning that GLB youth were almost six times more likely than their straight peers to have made a serious suicide attempt. The rates at which youth reported skipping school because of feeling unsafe at or en route to school within the past month rose for both gay and straight youth; and the disparity narrowed slightly, although it is still unacceptable that GLB youth are three times more likely to have skipped school within the past month because of safety concerns. Threats and injuries involving weapons against straight youth in the 2007 YRBS showed a slight decline; but threats and injuries involving weapons against GLB students almost doubled from 2005 to 2007, so that GLB youth are over four times more likely to have been threatened or injured by a weapon during the past year. While the rate of physical fighting involving straight youth remained the same from 2005 to 2007, it rose for GLB students.

Dr. Ryan's research, the SPRC Report and the most recent YRBS data, all point to an urgent need to: (1) get the word to parents about the importance of accepting and supporting their GLBT child, and (2) strengthen anti-bias programs in schools.

As we consider more carefully Dr. Ryan's research results, we are re-examining the way that PFLAG

Greater Boston PFLAG News & Views welcomes coming out stories, articles, letters, and comments from our readers.

E-mail articles to Editor at:
GBPFLAG_Newsletter@yahoo.com.
Include your name and phone number.

Editor/Layout.....Diane DeLap
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Mailing Jill Scobie

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

All ads must be camera-ready (that is, in a format ready to print) or JPEG compatible electronic file. Mail your ad and payment to Greater Boston PFLAG, PO Box 541619, Waltham, MA 02454-1619, or e-mail your ad as an attachment to Pflagsafeschools@aol.com.

	<u>PER</u> <u>ISSUE</u>	<u>PER</u> <u>YEAR (4x)</u>
Business Card, 3-1/2" w x 2" h	\$15	\$50
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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
May 8, 2009

provides services to parents and families. Currently, we hold group chapter meetings on a monthly basis where people can come to get information and support. We advertise these meetings in newspaper calendars and list chapter meeting locations on our web page. We operate a help line that fields calls from concerned GLBT persons or their parents or other family members. Callers get immediate support and education, and are referred to local chapter meetings. We provide speakers for groups who request our services, and we organize community forums on a range of topics affecting GLBT persons and their families. These programs are valuable and must be strengthened and expanded.

However, our current service model clearly needs to be augmented with much more proactive outreach and educational programming, if we are to meet the challenges presented by Dr. Ryan's research, the SPRC Report, and the 2007 YRBS. Some of the changes that we have implemented are in various stages of completion, some are in progress, and some are still in the planning phase. Greater Boston PFLAG:

- Has implemented a program to provide an immediate response to our help-line callers by offering them an opportunity to meet one-on-one with a trained parent volunteer for support and education.

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message (Continued from page 2)

- Is upgrading its web site.
- Is reaching out to religious denominations and counseling professional organizations to ensure that all clergy and counseling professionals are aware of Greater Boston PFLAG services and know how to make an appropriate referral.
- Is working with Gay/Straight Alliances to determine ways of bringing parents into conversation with students in a facilitated discussion, so that parents, working together, can get the information and support that they need in order to be supportive of their children.
- Plans to reach out to parent/teacher organizations to enlist their help in getting the word out to parents about the potentially catastrophic consequences of parental rejection for GLBT youth and the importance of being a supportive and loving parent.
- Is creating ways of reaching out to parents and families through their places of work through employee assistance programs.

- Is working with public policy makers, health professionals, and legislators to create a better understanding of the needs of GLBT youth and their families.

To accomplish these ambitious plans, Greater Boston PFLAG truly needs your help. You can volunteer your time and talent by joining one of our Board Committees. If you have not recently made a donation, you may do so by going to <http://www.gbpfag.org/contribute>. You can also mark your calendar and plan to attend the 7th Annual Pride and Passion Party Fundraiser on Saturday, May 2, at Boston's Back Bay Events Center. In addition to honoring Dr. Caitlin Ryan for her groundbreaking research, this fabulous party will feature an evening of fun, music and fine food, and the presentation of the Elsie Frank Scholarship Awards by the Honorable Barney Frank. More details appear on page 10. By supporting Greater Boston PFLAG as a volunteer or donor, together we can improve the lives of GLBT people, their families and allies.

The Magician

By Greater Boston PFLAG board member, Linda Patterson

My college-aged daughter called me one weekend, and told me that I would be especially proud of her. She knows I value speaking out against injustice, and she knows that gay rights is one of my hot buttons because her brother is gay.

She and her boyfriend attended a magic show on their college campus, and her boyfriend was chosen to be one of the magician's subjects. During the act, the magician referred to her boyfriend as a faggot. Later in the program he used another gay slur. My daughter was so bothered by this that she emailed the performer and told him (in a very nice way) that she objected to the slurs he used. Considering how shy my daughter is, this was pretty gutsy for her.

I was very proud of her, but I couldn't let the situation end there. I wanted to contact the school, but I wasn't sure if the school wanted to hear from a parent. After all, kids in college are young adults, learning to handle things on their own. I conferred with a friend with decades of experience working on college campuses. She told me what steps to expect the school to take and suggested I go straight to the top and write to the president! I weighed the effect of email over a mailed

letter, and finally decided to email because it invited dialog and it had an immediate quality. After some preliminary phone calls to the school, I settled on emailing the head of student activities, the president of the Gay Straight Alliance, and the advisor to the GSA.

The school was not to blame. Whoever hired the magician could not necessarily know that he would use gay slurs during his act. However, I expected the school to take responsibility for bringing him to campus. The college administration needed to take the lead and let the student body know what happened, and that this kind of behavior would not be tolerated. I also expected a clear directive to student activities staff that all future performers be made aware of a zero tolerance policy for any discriminatory language or behavior referring to sexual orientation, gender, race, physical disabilities, etc. Of course, I hoped the school never again hired the performer. Ideally, I'd wanted the school to communicate with him and let him know that they did not accept his behavior, and he would not be invited back.

Through my speaking engagements with Greater Boston

(Continued on page 4)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR MONTHLY PFLAG MEETINGS

If you cannot reach one of the numbers below, call the PFLAG office at (781) 891-5966.

Arlington -- 2nd Tuesday, 7:15pm, First Parish Church, Sunshine Nursery School, 630 Mass Ave., Arlington (781) 891-5966 pflagarlmass@yahoo.com.

Brewster/Cape Cod -- 3rd Monday, 7:00pm, 1st Parish Brewster, Main St. (508) 398-6471.

Cape Ann -- 1st Tuesday, 7:00-9:00pm, First Universalist Church of Essex, 57 Main St., Essex, MA 01929, www.uuessex.org for directions. Contact: Maria at m_menendez@verizon.net.

Concord -- 3rd Sunday, 7:00pm, Trinity Episcopal Church Library, 81 Elm (enter from River St.) Contact: Beth (978) 692-7677, bobandbeth@comcast.net.

Dorchester -- 3rd Thursday, 6:30pm, Codman Square Health Center, 637 Washington St., Conference Room A. Contact: Lucretia lucretiakeygodfrey@msn.com or (781) 891-5966.

Easton Area -- 4th Monday, 7:30pm (if holiday, then 3rd Monday); Unity Church, 9 Main St. (508) 238-0567, pflageaston@comcast.net. Co-Chairpersons: Cecile Arnold and Mary Cuddy Sutherland.

Fall River -- 1st Wednesday of the month. 7:00-9:00pm at Durfee High School, 360 Elsbree St. Room 101. Use the main entrance. Contacts: Mary Zema, Marianne Quinn (401) 391-1874, zemawoman@verizon.net.

Falmouth/Cape Cod -- Contact: Anne (508) 548-1038, annenfred@verizon.net.

Martha's Vineyard -- 3rd Sunday, 3:00pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, 238 Main, Vineyard Haven, (508) 627-4948, rabrown1950@aol.com.

Reading -- 2nd Thursday, 7:30pm, Loring House, 211 Summer Ave., Reading, MA Email Linda at: whtsthpt@gmail.com. (On the campus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading, at the intersection of Woburn St. and Summer Ave. Park in the parking lot between the church and Loring House.)

Springfield -- 4th Wednesday, 7:00pm, Feeding Hills Congregational Church, 21 N. Westfield St., Feeding Hills, MA 01030-1672; (413) 786-5061, agrace1966@comcast.net.

Worcester -- 3rd Wednesday, 7:00pm, The Bridge, 4 Mann Street, pflagworchester@iname.com.

Non-PFLAG Group meetings:

Always Our Children -- 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 7:00pm, Community Room of Sacred Heart Convent (behind Sacred Heart Church), 395 Chestnut Street, Springfield, MA 01104, Contact: Ann (413) 736-6803.

Straight Spouses Group -- For Boston group, contact ssn.boston@comcast.net or call Ivan (508) 966-0275 or email Tara at tgl563@gmail.com. Other areas, use www.StraightSpouse.org.

Transgender Group, Waltham/Tiffany Club of New England -- Call (781) 899-3230 or (781) 891-9325 for info.



The Samaritans provide a free and confidential 24-hour befriending helpline. This unique service, staffed entirely by volunteers, provides unconditional and non-judgmental support to anyone who feels alone, depressed, or in crisis.

Samariteens is a peer support line staffed by teens talking to teen callers during after-school and weekend hours. For more information on volunteering, call us at 617-536-2460 or visit us online at www.samaritansofboston.org. If you need to talk to someone on our help lines for any reason, you can reach us at **617-247-0220** or **877-870-HOPE (4673)** or for teens at **800-252-TEEN (8336)**.

The Magician (Continued from page 3)

PFLAG, I've learned that gay slurs have become very pervasive in student language. They are not used to be deliberately hurtful, but instead to be cool or funny. Phrases like "that's so gay" or "hey, faggot" are not harmless. They hurt, degrade, and demoralize gay students. There is no place for this kind of insensitive treatment, especially on a college campus.

My emails to the college stated that I wanted to know if they were aware of this incident, and what steps the school had taken in response. I let them know that, as a parent who paid an activities fee two times a year, I certainly didn't like the feeling that I was buying into this level of entertainment.

Emails thanking me for the alert about this incident reached my inbox within days. The students in the GSA discussed what happened, and the student activities director brainstormed a plan of action with the group that hired the magician. By the end of the week the staff who had hired the magician sent an email to students deploring the comments of the performer. His spring engagement at the college was cancelled. They emailed me and apologized for his inappropriate and hateful language, and offered to apologize in person to my daughter and the other student. I was deeply touched.

My daughter avoids the limelight, and is probably horrified that her telling me about the email she sent to

(Continued on page 5)

The Magician (Continued from page 4)

the magician created such a stir. It is possible that she will never confide in me again despite my reassurance that I never revealed her name in my emails to school officials. I took that risk because I am passionate about my children, and I could not sit by and let this injustice slip by. After all, that's what PFLAG parents do.

Empowering Young People

By Pam Garramone, Executive Director

Greater Boston PFLAG is partnering with high schools to speak to student leaders including sports, class officers, student council members to improve the school climate for LGBT youth, families, and their allies. We recently met with the students at Canton High School in response to the Rev. Fred Phelps planned protest of their production of "The Laramie Project." The students were engaged, passionate, and enthusiastic about ensuring that Canton is no place for hate. It was amazing for me to witness, but I will let one of the students who was there tell you about it.

Leadership Summit held to discuss tolerance, hate

By Jeffrey Cattel

Canton High School Spectrum Editor '09

On the morning of Tuesday, March 3, a group of approximately 40 student leaders throughout the school assembled in the Distance Learning Lab for a discussion entitled "The Laramie Project Leadership Summit."

The idea of such a meeting was formed after the Drama Club selected "The Laramie Project" as its annual spring play. "The Laramie Project" details the aftermath of the beating and death of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student. The play discusses many issues with hate and tolerance at the forefront.

With a grant from the Canton Alliance for Public Education (CAPE), Canton High invited Pam Garramone, Executive Director of Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), to speak to the student leaders. Garramone, who does an average of 100 similar workshops throughout the year, led the discussion along with Luke Sutherland, a gay alumnus of Canton High School.

The meeting began with a discussion about a planned protest of "The Laramie Project" performance by the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC), a group that protests people or things they consider "fag enablers," according

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to their website. The news of such a protest had spread throughout the school, and students had come up with a slew of ideas of how to counter the protest. At the meeting, the student leaders discussed the methods they thought would be most successful and effective in opposing the WBC protestors.

"I came out of the meeting feeling that our school can act maturely the Friday of the protest

and represent our school as mature young students," Chessica Needleman, a junior at CHS, said.

Then, Garramone showed a video of a story that aired on the ABC Program "20/20" which discussed the story of Corey Johnson, a football captain at Masconomet High School in Middleton, Mass., who came out to his teammates as being gay. The story discussed how, despite what many people may have believed, the team rallied around Johnson and showed support for him, regardless of his sexual orientation.

The workshop ended with a discussion about tolerance of people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Students asked a variety of questions, including whether someone is born gay or if it is a choice. Both Garramone and Sutherland said that although there is currently no definitive scientific research to support either idea, they both believe they were born gay and did not have a choice in the matter.

Additionally, students spoke about the use of phrases such as "that's so gay" as a synonym for "that's so stupid," and how such remarks are offensive toward the LGBT community.

"The message I wanted to share is for students to be aware that gay people exist in their school, their families and their communities, and to think about words and the effect they have on people whether you intend them to be hurtful or not," Garramone said.

"I felt inspired when I heard the students say, 'I don't think it's okay to say, that's so gay,'" Ms. Shapiro, the drama club advisor, said.

After the workshop was finished Sutherland said, "I was impressed with some of the things that were said during

(Continued on page 7)

My Mother's Funeral

By Diane DeLap

March 4, 2009

My mother was buried today. She died last Saturday after a long illness. Unfortunately, I didn't know that she was sick, or that she had died, until my son called to let me know. My youngest sister had called him to make sure that we knew. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be at her funeral today. I hadn't seen her or any members of my family in almost eight years. It's not that she lived too far away. At least four or five times a month I drive through my hometown, where she lived until Saturday. It wasn't distance that separated us; it was bigotry, based on an acceptance of society's estimation of those of us who identify as transgender.

It was the year 2000 when I decided that I could no longer survive without going through gender transition. When I told my family about my impending transition, it was made clear to me that I would no longer be welcome. My mother, brother, and sisters had accepted society's judgment that transgender people are less than human.

We see it daily in the difficulties we have in finding and keeping a job. We see it daily in the willingness of bigots to physically abuse and murder us. We see it daily in the eyes and the actions of police who, rather than seeing us as a part of society that they should protect, see us as something less than human that society must be protected from. We see it daily in the reluctance of insurance companies to provide us with coverage for medically necessary treatment. We see it daily in the eyes of our spouses, children, parents, siblings, and friends who abandon us - who, even if they have the strength to remain with us, are too embarrassed by us to admit to others that their child, partner, sibling, parent, or friend is transgender. We see it daily in the diminishing list of "lifelong" friends who call or write to find out how we are doing. We see it daily in the religious bigots who want to keep us out of their churches and certainly out of their pulpits. We see it daily in the political bigots who don't want to allow us to enter a public bathroom, or who don't want to include us in non-discrimination or hate crime laws. We see it daily that society believes us to be less than human.

For those who think that being transgender is a choice, think about this question. Would you "choose" to live this life if you knew it would be like the previous paragraph? No one would willingly "choose" this. What you don't understand is that we don't choose this. We accept it. That's what being transgender is like in today's society. Someday, maybe a few generations from now, transgender people will be accepted and recognized for their unique gifts. It's sad though. I would have liked to have been able to attend my mother's funeral.

Help Greater Boston PFLAG go green and save money! If you would like to receive the next News and Views newsletter via email, please let us know! Send an email to info@gbpflag.org telling us to go green and save money, and you will receive our future quarterly newsletters via email! Thank you!

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Please mail to GBPFLAG, P.O. Box 541619, Waltham, MA 02454-1619.

Empowering Young People (Continued from page 5)

the discussion. It wasn't so much the actual questions or statements that were made that impressed me, but that people felt comfortable enough to ask or say these things in front of many of their peers. It can take a lot of courage to say something very personal or ask a sensitive question in front of a group of your peers, and I think it is really a testament to the students at CHS that people felt like they were able to do that without fear of judgment."

Students had similar reactions. "I always hear about the negative things—the people who don't know me, but hate me or hate people like me," TJ Leuken, an openly gay senior at Canton High, said. "Today was a realization that there are also people who don't know me who still understand and support me."

Garramone summed it up best saying, "This discussion ranks at the top of the list! I'm still smiling just thinking about it."

Garramone and Sutherland will be returning to Canton High School for similar school-wide presentations on the day of the performance "The Laramie Project," March 20.

Thank you, Donors!

Greater Boston PFLAG's new year began October 1, 2008, and we are off to an exciting start. We have set some ambitious program and financial goals; and with your help, we can stay on target to reach them. This year, we must raise at least \$200,000 to keep programs going at current levels.

The Greater Boston PFLAG Board and staff thank our generous donors who contributed to the year-end fund drive. We surpassed our \$25,000 budget target by \$7,000 -- a very strong beginning. If you have not recently made a contribution to Greater Boston PFLAG or would like to make an additional contribution, you can do it now by going to: <http://www.gbpfllag.org/contribute>.

We have planned a number of fun and exciting fundraising events. The first of these was a benefit showing of *Milk* at the Newburyport Screening Room. Thanks to all of you who attended this sold-out show and to board member, Meg Costello, for making this a huge success. Special thanks also to the Newburyport Screening Room for making this benefit possible.

Keeping Greater Boston PFLAG's vital programs going this year also depends on getting 450 people to come to the **Boston Back Bay Events Center on Saturday,**

May 2nd for our 7th Annual Pride and Passion Party.

Check out the details on page 10 and mark your calendars. We look forward to seeing you there!

We are also hoping to hold six to eight house parties before September 30, 2009. Two were held in January and February. More are on the calendar. If you would be willing to host a party for friends to acquaint them with Greater Boston PFLAG, please call the office at (781) 891-5966. House parties are easy and fun. You provide the place, we help you do the rest.

We are eager to hear from you if you want to work on Greater Boston PFLAG's Development Committee. Call the office to volunteer. It's a great group of folks on a mission to ensure that GLBT youth, families and allies can go to safe schools, and work and live in communities that are welcoming and inclusive.

Donor List

On behalf of the people we serve, thank you for your generous support!

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Membership (\$40/year)

Doreen Grossman

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Other

Anonymous--12

A Year in the Life of a PFLAG Parent

By Diana Hughes Budreau

Last June, Greater Boston PFLAG members walked in the Boston Gay Pride Parade, waving and handing out PFLAG postcards. Cheers swelled on either side of the street. We were 40 mostly middle-aged folk in street clothes, as boring as a church convention – and they were yelling for us “PFLAG! PFLAG!” Tens of thousands of people lined the streets and they cheered for us as we walked by!

Greater Boston PFLAG’ers spent an evening during Pride Week at the Public TV fundraiser staffing the phones and computers as viewers called in during the documentary, *Anyone and Everyone*. The goal was to generate 70 pledges and we exceeded that. Pam Garramone, the executive director of Greater Boston PFLAG, was interviewed on air.

Concord PFLAG celebrated July 4th with a table at the town’s “Picnic in the Park” along with the Rotarians, Amnesty International, and other human rights groups defending the victims of domestic violence, racism, and hunger. We were there with the Unitarians and the Religious Right, the town band, and the police department’s “Speed Pitch” radar game and Bouncing Castle. We gave away rainbow ribbons and sold cookies, rainbow flags and windsocks, and passed out dozens of PFLAG brochures. We spoke with passersby, who sometimes lingered quietly by us, before striking up a conversation.

When Concord has a parade, PFLAG banner bravely borne ahead of us, little kids run up to point to the word “gay” – giggling and running away again! But being a PFLAG parent is not just about the summer and Pride week.

In the fall, we are invited to speak to college student groups, and participate in health fairs where students talk to us about their wish that their own parents would take on such a role and be supportive of them.

Throughout the school year, when we are at high school health fairs; students and staff crowd our table to speak with us about gay topics; staff from other schools drop by – they can’t be “out” in their school, but want to know what the resources are for their students. When I staff the table, I talk to the other participants, sometimes dentists, anti-drug-programs, health clubs, the Summer Jobs table, etc. I offer them a handful of rainbow ribbons. Usually all of them take the ribbons for their display, pin one on themselves, or say what a great thing that PFLAG is talking about GLBT people.

Greater Boston PFLAG offers a speakers’ training, a day of self-examination, laughter and tears; participants learn how to define, write, and narrate their/our own stories. We share our stories to as many audiences as we can. It may even come up over the dinner at an alumni event to the astonishment of the other grandparents at the table – who will probably say that they, too, have a gay son or lesbian daughter!

Every month, we hold meetings – in Concord, Cape Ann, Arlington, Dorchester, Reading, Easton, and Fall River. In the 12 years since my husband, Alan, and I realized we were the parents of both gay and straight kids, there has always been a monthly meeting in our town; sometimes just four of us are there, sometimes fifteen. Sometimes a parent in distress will wait quietly while we introduce ourselves, then slowly bring out a story of grief and fear and despair – her child is gay, he cannot handle the depression, she cannot find a school which will welcome him, the other parent can’t talk about it – and slowly she hears that other parents have the same story, that it worked out well, that there are resources, that there is loving attention from knowledgeable friends; and we will be there for them.

We are members of Greater Boston PFLAG – the parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender children and adults, and we are here for you all year round.

Alan Budreau and Diana Hughes are members of the Cape Ann and Concord chapters of Greater Boston PFLAG

What Keeps Me Warm

By Barbara Mulcahy

In the January issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*, Martha Beck had a great article about how to find out if you are in the life meant for you. She simplified the way one would go about finding this out by using a children’s game as a metaphor. The game involved one person hiding something while the other person was out of the room. Once the item was hidden, the other person came in to find it. The only clues were that as the person got closer to the item she/he was getting warmer, and when the person was further away, she/he got colder.

As you may have already figured out, she was saying that when you are doing something and you are feeling cold and uncomfortable, this is not what you should be doing. On the other hand, if what you are doing makes you feel warm and complete, it is there you should be.

(Continued on page 9)

What Keeps Me Warm (Continued from page 8)

To me this metaphor, though just a few words, spoke volumes! Immediately, the first thought that came to my mind is that when I am doing all things relating to PFLAG, I feel warm. Whether it is doing a speaking engagement, marching in the parade, or attending a support meeting, at the end of the day there is always a warm and content feeling.

Just recently on a trip to Ft. Myers, Florida, which I have taken for the last 10 years each fall and spring, I stepped outside my comfort zone. I was in a consignment shop looking for treasure, and there I met Scott Miller. Scott was working at the shop and his partner was leaving as I entered. I shopped for a bit knowing all the while that I could not leave the store without introducing myself. I went back and forth, do I go the “gay way” or do I mind my own business, smile and leave. Well I guess I knew all along I would never mind my own business, so I started out with PFLAG as the ice breaker, and then there was no turning back! It was just the best. I learned all about Scott and his partner, Carlo. Scott also told me about a couple of places my son, Max, and his partner, Robert, can go for drinks and dinner the next time they are in Florida visiting with and Rich me.

Scott and I promised we would get together when I am back in April, and I will make every effort to make that happen. As I drove away, I realized that Scott is the first gay man I have met in my ten years of going to Ft. Myers! I can't wait to make him my friend.

As we said our goodbyes, I felt warm and content (not due to the temp), and the rest of my day was extraordinary. Traffic lights were only green, and all parking spaces were up front waiting for me to pull right in!

When you have a minute, try this simple little game and find out where you belong. Just like Dorothy, in *The Wizard of Oz*, we all have the power over our destiny; we just have to listen for it.

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