



# Greater Boston PFLAG CONNECTIONS

Summer 2010

## The Elsie Frank Scholarship Recipients are Winners and Go-Getters

By Jennifer Swanson

I contacted the high school seniors who received the 2010 Elsie Frank Scholarships to interview them for this article, and immediately took notice of seven exceptional young men and women. What was immediately apparent when looking at the winners' backgrounds and essays was that they all were heavily involved in other activities in addition to their LGBTQ accomplishments. Greater Boston PFLAG asked them about their future directions and what the scholarship meant to them.

"I have always been very involved at my school. In fact I got an award for doing the most at my high school during graduation," answered **Kaden Belanger** (S. Hadley High School). He was senior class president, president of the student government and president of GSA. As a transgender student (F to M), "My own experiences drove me to push for equality for all students. When I started high school I constantly heard hate slurs, and diversity was nonexistent. I felt like I was not welcome in the school until I joined the school's Gay Straight Alliance. In that club I saw that a person can be themselves and that's when I began to shine as an advocate in high school." As a transguy, Kaden is a trailblazer among even his LGBT peers, and he plans to continue his activism as a political science major at Providence College. He is very grateful for the scholarship because it will help him with finances at the college. "In the fall, I am attending a Catholic college that limits their campus GSA greatly. When I am there, I plan to introduce new events that the club can do to educate the students and teachers about LGBTQ issues while encouraging acceptance. It will be a challenge but I am positive that I can make an impact there."

Receiving the PFLAG award came as a bit of a surprise to **Zachary Silberman** (Andover High School). "I guess this award helped me to realize how far an individual's actions can reach, especially in today's  
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## David Brown Talks about Being Out and Involved in LGBT Activities

By Jennifer Swanson

Most people in the LGBTQ community know David Brown, one of the meteorologists on WCVB TV Channel 5. Openly gay, David has been very generous with his time in supporting different LGBTQ events around New England. I saw him at both the AIDS Walk Boston and the Pride and Passion party, and wondered how and why he does it all.

I asked how he got started being a popular spokesperson. "I've been involved with the Boston AIDS Walk since 1996. I walked it personally for ten years and have been MCing for several years now. Once I started doing one event – well, there's a finite number of openly gay men in communications," he said, chuckling.

He noted that he's asked to do a lot of charitable events every year, both in and out of communications. "I throw everything in and pick and choose what I want to do." He plans to participate in the Harbor to the Bay AIDS bike ride in September, for instance, and is a serious marathon runner.

David was invited to MC the Pride and Passion party six or seven years ago, and agreed because he supports its goals. "I believe in what these organizations do from both a personal and professional level," he said. He wants his children to live and attend school in a safe environment. David heard Stan Griffith speak at Children's Hospital as a father, and he thought it was touching. "You need to remember to have parents as allies because of quality of life."

David grew up in the '70s, which had a different attitude towards same-sex relationships, and he thinks he succeeded in masking that he was gay. In high school, he participated in choir, government, theatre, and was generally happy.

(Continued on page 4)



**About Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.**

We are a group of parents, families, friends, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. We help change attitudes and create an environment of understanding so that our LGBT family members and friends can live in a world that is safe and inclusive. Through support, education, and advocacy we foster dialogue, create safe environments, and open hearts and minds. For more information, visit [www.gbpflag.org](http://www.gbpflag.org).

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**Greater Boston PFLAG Connections**

We welcome coming-out stories, articles, letters, and comments from our readers. E-mail articles to: **GBPFLAG\_newsletter@yahoo.com**. Please include your name and phone number.

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: Sept. 24**

**Pride and Passion Party Was A Great Success, Thanks to You!**

*By Pam Garramone*

Wow! What a night! Over 400 people attended the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Pride and Passion Party fundraiser at the Back Bay Events Center in Boston. The Alec Pombriant Combo from Berklee College of Music provided jazz music throughout the evening, serenading everyone as they wandered through the display of auction and raffle items while chatting, munching, and sipping beverages.

Once the evening's entertainment began, Channel 5's meteorologist David Brown opened the program with his great sense of humor, talking a little about his own experiences, and setting the tone for a warm, wonderful evening.

Our first speaker, Jeff Cattell, shared his coming out letter to his dad – with his dad by his side. It was a very touching moment and showed the power of parental acceptance.

Lesley Hubbard talked about how Greater Boston PFLAG speakers came to her high school and quite literally saved her life. She went on to graduate with a Masters from Wheelock College and even interned in the Greater Boston PFLAG office.

Joan Parker spoke about her two gay sons in a touching tribute to her late husband, Robert. And Lori Dali proudly talked about her astonishingly strong child. There probably wasn't a dry eye in the house.

The Elsie Frank Scholarship award ceremony was led off by one of our winners, Kaden Belanger, who is an openly transgender student from South Hadley High School. It was inspiring to hear of his growing belief in himself and how he applied his strength to become so successful during his senior year.

Many, many thanks go to Linda Peterson and Meg Costello, our co-chairs of the event. Their leadership made this our most successful fundraiser yet – with amazing silent and live auction items and easy check-out. It's an involved and time-consuming task to put on an event of this magnitude but they sure made it look easy.

Thank you to all of our board members, donors, participants, volunteers, and everyone who contributed to its success. We raised over \$170,000 for our Safe Schools

and Communities Programs and Elsie Frank Scholarship program!

We hope to see even more people attend next year. It's a night you won't soon forget!

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## Why I Joined the Greater Boston PFLAG Board

By Ken Heideman

I love the concept of "giving back." Many of us, myself included, have our share of problems, but they pale in comparison to what so many others face. Those of us who are fortunate often feel that we would like to help those who are not. For many, it's a good intention. But there's the job, kids (in some cases), and many other things to take up our time. Weeks, months, and years sometimes go by and we keep saying to ourselves, "I really should give back."

When we finally resolve to replace good intention with effective action we can be overwhelmed with how many groups and communities need help urgently. There's The Jimmy Fund, food pantries, Meals on Wheels, homeless shelters, the Red Cross, and on and on. It's easy to get paralyzed in the face of so much need and end up doing nothing. For me, the trick has been to realize that I cannot help 12 different organizations with my time, no matter how deserving they are. If I can help just one, and really make a commitment to it, that would be helpful and rewarding. As is often the case, the answer for me was right under my nose.

Last fall I had joined PFLAG —not as a parent of a gay child (my kids are 10 and 8 and have a few years before they start dealing with orientation) – but as a dad who is gay himself (and came rather late in life to that realization). This winter I went through speaker training and had my first engagement at Acton High School. The realization that even in a state like Massachusetts that many young people are struggling mightily with sexual and gender orientation issues combined with the wonderful people I have met in the PFLAG community made up my mind for me.

When asked if I would consider running for the board of Greater Boston PFLAG, I did not hesitate to say "yes". For me, for now, this is my "extracurricular" (Continued on page 4)

## Find a Greater Boston PFLAG Support Group near You

Greater Boston PFLAG's Confidential Helpline:  
866-427-3524

### **Arlington**

2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:15pm; First Parish Church, Sunshine Nursery School, 630 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington; Contact: Ann at [pflagarlmass@yahoo.com](mailto:pflagarlmass@yahoo.com) or 781-891-5966.

### **Boston**

Group for parents of transgender and/or gender variant children; Next meeting Wednesday, August 18, 6:30pm; Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center, 130 Boylston St., Boston; Contact: Pam at 781-891-5966 or Melissa MacNish at 617-457-8140.

### **Cape Ann**

1st Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm; First Universalist Church of Essex, 57 Main St., Essex (the intersection of routes 133 and 22); [www.uuessex.org](http://www.uuessex.org) for directions; Contact: Melanie at [weear-tie@yahoo.com](mailto:weear-tie@yahoo.com) or call 978-768-3690.

### **Concord**

3rd Sunday of the month, 7:00pm; Trinity Episcopal Church library, 81 Elm St. (enter from River St.), Concord; Contact: Beth at [boband-bethshaw@gmail.com](mailto:boband-bethshaw@gmail.com) or 978-448-3999.

### **Dorchester**

3rd Thursday of the month, 6:30pm; Codman Square Health Center, 637 Washington St., Conference Room A, Dorchester; Contact: Pam at 781-891-5966.

### **Easton**

4th Monday of the month, 7:30pm (if holiday, then 3rd Monday); Unity Church, 9 Main St., Easton; Contact: Cecile or Mary at [pflageaston@comcast.net](mailto:pflageaston@comcast.net).

### **Fall River**

1st Wednesday of the month, 7:00pm; Durfee High School, 360 Elsbree St., Room 101, Fall River. Use main entrance; Contact: Mary or Marianne at [zemawoman@verizon.net](mailto:zemawoman@verizon.net) or 401-391-1874.

### **Framingham/MetroWest**

2nd Sunday of the month, 7:00pm; The First Parish Church, 24 Vernon St., Framingham; Contact: [metrowestpflag@verizon.net](mailto:metrowestpflag@verizon.net) or 781-891-5966.

### **Reading**

2nd Thursday of the month, 7:30pm; Loring House, 211 Summer Ave., Reading, on the campus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading, at the intersection of Woburn St. and Summer Ave.; Contact: Martha at [pflagreading@aol.com](mailto:pflagreading@aol.com).

## Meetings of Related Organizations

### **Always Our Children**

1st Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm; Community Room of Sacred Heart Convent (behind Sacred Heart Church), 395 Chestnut St., Springfield; Contact: [www.fortunatefamilies.com](http://www.fortunatefamilies.com) or Ann 413-736-6803.

### **Straight Spouses Group**

Boston group, Contact: [ssn.boston@comcast.net](mailto:ssn.boston@comcast.net), call Ivan at 508-966-0275, or email Tara at [tgl563@gmail.com](mailto:tgl563@gmail.com); other areas: [www.straightspouse.org](http://www.straightspouse.org).

### **Transgender Group**

Waltham/Tiffany Club of New England; Contact: 781-899-3230 or 781-891-9325.

## Why I Joined the Board

*(Continued from page 3)*

mission. Through PFLAG, if I can help even just one young person or a parent go from fear and loathing to love and acceptance, I will have done a lot. And I have the sense that if I can achieve that goal with one person, it can be done with many. Multiply that by the number of dedicated PFLAG staff and volunteers and we can, dare I say, change the world.

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## David Brown Talks about Being Out

*(Continued from page 1)*

He then attended a Big 10 university in Indiana and hid his sexual preferences by living in a frat and being very successful at whatever he tried. He finally came out late in college because he was in a relationship.

As a professional, David now has to juggle the demand on his time with a busy job and his family life. "In media, you get used to having an unusual schedule." He has two children, a partner, and the other parent to consider when planning his involvement in any charity events. For instance, he coaches his daughter's soccer team and attends his son's games.

I asked tongue in cheek when he has time to see his partner? I could hear him laughing. "This is a difficult time of year with a lot of fundraising. For the next two-and-a-half months, I'll be very busy!"

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## Stand Up

*By Sharon Zimmerman*

Have you ever watched someone speak to an audience and they are so nervous that their neck turns red and their voice cracks and you can see their hands shaking? That would be me. As part of my job, I periodically have to speak in front of large audiences; it never gets easier and I can never wish the nerves away.

Before PFLAG I would not willingly volunteer to speak to a group. But when I heard others speak for PFLAG I realized my experiences and words had the potential to influence behavior and maybe even change the hearts and minds of those who believe that being gay is, in some way, bad. I decided in

January that I would volunteer for the PFLAG Safe Schools Program and speak publicly about my experience as the mother of a gay son.

I attended training and learned that PFLAG speakers are asked to tell their story. I attended speaker engagements as an observer and I learned how powerful personal stories can be. I spent many months pondering what I would speak about. I procrastinated writing my story down on paper. My fear of public speaking got in the way even though I was committed to trying to make a difference.

One day while struggling with the task of writing my PFLAG speech, I re-read a passage from a speech my son wrote five years ago when he was 16; he was being inducted into the National Honor Society. He was asked to speak about someone who influenced him in a positive way. (Thankfully he did not inherit the fear-of-public-speaking gene). While reading his speech, I thought I should really listen to his words. I should stand up and speak out. And I should not be afraid to be who I am, even in front of an audience. My son was honoring *me*, for teaching *him* that.

I did finally write my story down and I spoke at my first engagement yesterday; it felt good. I have a renewed sense of commitment and mission. I look forward to future Safe Schools Program engagements. Below is a quote from my son's speech.

"My mom has made it possible for me to take chances and she has always been there for me to fall back on when I need support. My Mom would sacrifice anything for me. Like leaving a work commitment suddenly in another city to fly home to make sure I was okay when there was trouble at school because I was attending the prom with another boy. But, most of all, my mom has taught me the most important thing I've learned in life and that is to stand up for who you are. She never once asked me to change who I am to fit in to a mold. And not once did she ever think to stop supporting me. She's the person who has made it possible for me to come to this point in my life and I owe her everything for it. Mom, thank you for everything you have ever done for me and thank you for everything that is to come."

Listen to these words as I did. Stand up and speak out. And never be afraid to be who you are.

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## President's Letter

By Stan Griffith

Two lines from the movie *Milk* often resonate with me: "My name is Harvey Milk and I am here to recruit you!" And: "Come out, come out wherever you are..." The first is a sly swipe at the erroneous prejudice that gays are insidiously recruiting straight people to a "lifestyle." The false premise embedded in this prejudice is that people "choose" sexual orientation – clearly, like hair color and even skin tone and eye color, neither orientation nor identity can be chosen. However, if you are part of the privileged majority of "straights", you can choose to become an ally and use your privilege to advance equality for all. Some get involved because of a relative who we care about; some are motivated only by strong social justice commitments.

Allies can use privilege in a number of ways. We advocate for family members and friends. We speak out when we hear a gay slur or demeaning joke. We contribute time and money to organizations like PFLAG to promote safe and inclusive schools and family acceptance.

Harvey knew the power of being "out" – that is being visible. If LGBT people are "out," it puts a human face on those targeted for bigotry, giving the lie to stereotypes. If allies are "out", bigotry stands no chance. One in four has an immediate gay family member, so when we join with those motivated purely by conscience, we are an unstoppable force for fairness and equality.

PFLAG helped me to be "out". First, of course, this is not just about me – I must speak with my child about when, where and how I am "out" out of respect for my child's privacy. Then, frankly, there was concern about what are people would think of me and some uneasiness about personal confrontations. With practice, my comfort level went up every time I was "out" as an ally: speaking to groups large and small, telling almost everyone I meet about PFLAG, wearing a PFLAG logo on my lapel to stimulate conversations.

Recently, I conquered another silly phobia: I started wearing my PFLAG t-shirt to the gym. I suspect I know why I felt uneasy. Looking around I'd see almost every imaginable cause, sports team and outrageous slogan – nothing about LGBT allies. Not surprisingly, the results were amazingly affirming and positive: good solid conversations (maybe it was the locker room angst).

PFLAG offers help for LGBT people, their families, and communities. We help LGBT people to achieve acceptance, help parents understand and connect with their children, help families to work through sometimes difficult feelings, help schools and other institutions provide safe environments and help counter violence and negative stereotypes.

So this is the message: "We are Greater Boston PFLAG and we are here to recruit you." And allies, one and all, "come out, come out wherever you are!" We need your time and skills, and most of all we need you to be visible. Call us so we can tell you how.

## The Laramie Residency Comes to Boston!

By Ken Heideman

Emerson/Arts presents the World Premier of *The Laramie Residency*, comprising *The Laramie Project (Part 1)* and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later (Part 2)* in late September/early October at the Cutler Majestic Theater in Boston. *Part 1* is a docudrama about the brutal 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, WY. *Part 2* returns to Laramie to see how that community has changed a decade following the original production. *Part 1* will be performed on the afternoons of September 25-26, and October 1-2. *Part 2* will continue at 8 p.m. on September 24-26, and October 1-2. Tickets go on sale on July 26 and can be purchased at 617-824-8000 or at [artsemerson.org](http://artsemerson.org). Greater Boston PFLAG will be co-sponsoring a forum with Emerson College the week before the show starts. Stay tuned for more information.

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**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](http://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)**.

## Hip, Hip, Parade...Oh What a Day It Was

By *Barbara Mulcahy*

As in past years, Richie and I met Pam at 7:30am to set up the PFLAG information booth at the Pride Festival, and our long Pride Parade Day began. This is one of my most favorite days of the year because I get to celebrate, along with at least one million other people, all LGBT men and women.

We marched in the parade with our PFLAG family and the overwhelming reception from the people in the crowds was amazing! The love we felt from the sidelines is like manna from heaven that fills our souls and makes our job as parents that much more rewarding. I experience so many different emotions throughout the day, though each year there always seems to be one special moment that stands out among the rest.

This year, ours started on the train. Richie and I left City Hall Plaza at 11:00 for our journey to the South End. We wore our buttons and carried our signs. I knew we looked a bit conspicuous but that's the fun of Pride.

Standing by the doors of the train, I noticed a mom with a young boy who gave me a shy smile. Seated in front of them was a woman with a young boy who could have been his twin. It took a few seconds, but then I thought, "Hello, I know where you folks are going." I made eye contact with her and we connected.

As they got off at the Arlington stop, I said, "Watch for us marching in the parade so we can wave to you." The door shut, but sure enough, Rich caught sight of this great little family and we shouted and waved to them as we marched by, sharing a special moment.

At 2:00, Richie and I took a break from our post at the booth and headed for Starbucks on Tremont. We randomly chose a direction to walk, and once again met up with our little family! Well, of course we had to stop and do a meet and greet. Our conversation may have lasted only a few minutes but it is now part of the quilt of my special moments from previous Pride Parades.

We are blessed, Richie and I, in so many ways; we're happy, have our health and our Max has given us purpose and opportunities to make a difference. I know we will never find a cure for HIV, Cancer or World Peace, but doing our work with PFLAG and having special moments with the people we have met along the way,

hopefully has some small positive impact.

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## The 25th AIDS Walk Boston – Wet but Wonderful!

By *Jennifer Swanson*

I've never done an AIDS walk before but it has been on my to-do lists for ages. Since this was the 25<sup>th</sup> walk in Boston, what better time to start? Being a total novice, my biggest concern was raising the \$300 I set as my fundraising goal. I wasn't counting on my friends, however, who came through with flying colors. I quickly made the \$300, and still the numbers rose! I put out a final plea the Friday before the walk to reach \$500, and a group of gay-romance-author friends pooled their money and pushed me over my goal. I was so touched...and really psyched to walk!

The weather was damp, sometimes wet, but there were so many people there excited to participate. Colorful t-shirts, balloons, hats -- all helped to set the mood. People of all ages were there in groups and families to participate in this great event and bad weather was not going to be an issue for anyone. I met up with the other walkers from Greater Boston PFLAG – Inez Folsom, her partner Leo Harrington, and Ann Schlesinger. Inez and I walked together and Leo worked as a volunteer at the tent; Ann walked earlier in the day.

David Brown was the MC (of course!) and we listened to various speeches and some music, and warmed up with some basic exercises. Then we were off! Inez and I walked under the balloon rainbow starting gate and began our hike with the others.

While it was my first time, this was Inez's 24<sup>th</sup> walk for AIDS. She walks to support her son Mark, who died of AIDS in the mid-nineties. I loved getting to know about both Mark and Inez while we continued down the route; it made it even more personal and important for me to be there. My friend Andrew died from AIDS around the same time as Mark, and I was happy to learn that both men had a square in the AIDS quilt.

I knew I couldn't make the full 6.2 miles (bad knee), and Inez was patient and nice enough to stick with me. We planned our route, rested occasionally and were back at the finish line in time to watch the others come across the bridge. The costumed line of people congratu-

tulating the finishers made a loud, joyful noise as they thanked all the walkers for their efforts and for finishing.

I was really excited to finally participate in this AIDS walk, and I'm determined to be in much better shape for next year. So I encourage everyone to get out there with me! If I can do it, then you can too! Let's get a much bigger Greater Boston PFLAG team next year with a custom t-shirt and show our care for AIDS research and support! I challenge you...

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## Elsie Frank Scholarship Winners

*(Continued from page 1)*

modern world." Zach was co-president of the GSA and the first male member of the Andover High School color guard, and even organized a summer camp to promote and recruit new guard members. As an LGBT leader, he organized fundraisers, social outings, and even a regional GSA conference. As a student speaker, he addressed local middle school faculty on how to more effectively address LGBT issues, and would like to reach out to middle school students to "show them there are many answers to the questions they may have, and to help them realize asking these questions is a necessary part of the journey." When asked how he got started in activism, he replied, "It was almost a sense of obligation. I was born privileged and grew up with a unique set of experiences. I felt I had to at least be involved in the community. This involvement turned into activism and dedication." Zachary has been accepted to the University of Vermont Honors College where he will double major in Mathematics and Biology. He does intend to stay involved in LGBTQ issues. "I hope to become involved in UVM's Free2be organization. The only problem with going to a liberal school, in a liberal city, is that everything seems to be already done. Looking from the inside, I'm sure I will be able to find plenty of cracks, but as it stands now, I'm not entirely sure what I will end up doing."

**Abigail Carpenter-Winch** (Cambridge Rindge and Latin School) started doing LGBT activism in middle school when she recognized "there wasn't a lot of attention being paid to LGBT issues at my school." Once Abigail started high school, she looked outside of school for somewhere to get involved. She joined and eventually led the Boston Alliance of GLBT Youth,

(BAGLEY), which steered her to join the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition. She chaired the MTPC's youth committee for two years and participated on the organization's steering committee at the same time. "We decided to organize a summit for trans youth because there was such a strong need to create a community and a place where trans youth felt safe to be themselves." They reached out to schools and LGBT youth groups to find transgender youth, and to the community for speakers, presenters for workshops, space, resources and food. "The summit was a transformative and life-changing event," she writes in her winning essay. It was such a success that it has become an annual event, and Abigail plans to continue her activism in college. "I would like to be involved in the queer organizations on campus, and to collaborate with other nearby colleges. I would also like to branch out and do more organizing that combines queer issues with issues of religion and race."

**Michaela Junior** (Codman Academy, Dorchester) is a founding member of her school's GSA, and she often speaks to students about her own coming-out process and the difficulties she faced. "There are a lot of young people who are not comfortable letting their sexuality out and I feel it is important to have a place where they can be comfortable and open about who they are," says Michaela. At one point she was homeless because of her decision to reveal her sexuality, but despite that, she believes that her experiences made her strong. She admits, "It helped me become more independent and learn that only I can motivate myself...My happiness and success comes from being who I am fully and completely and not what others want me to be. My sexuality will not have an effect on my success." Receiving the Greater Boston PFLAG award was a very exciting experience for her. "The fact that I can be awarded for being a lesbian in this society is very significant." She interned with Boston Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS), and wants to pursue social justice as a student in social work or criminal justice, with an emphasis on juvenile justice, at Cedar Crest College in the fall. She definitely plans to join the LGBTQ group on campus.

**Kayla Kantola** (Andover High School) is known for her creative and entertaining videography that has reached beyond her school community. She came out on a humorous video through her YouTube channel, and her internet and technology savvy has allowed her to connect with youth worldwide. "What I've learned from coming out is: if you have a sense of humor, you'll be fine," Kayla says. In addition to her film

work, she is a co-founder of the Merrimack Valley Alliance of Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Youth (McVAGLY). Kayla started getting involved at high school because, although she always felt safe there, there didn't seem to be much of an LGBTQ presence. "I wanted people to be aware of the GSA and its activities, and aware of the fact that there was a strong LGBTQ community within the student body." She's completely honored to receive this award from PFLAG. "There isn't much visible representation of LGBTQ youth, and I'm proud to help combat that." Kayla will take her sense of humor and video expertise to Emerson College in the fall. "Emerson has something similar to a Gay-Straight Alliance, and I'd like to be involved in that. My major is Visual Media – TV, movies, all that. My dream job would be one where I could bring visibility to the LGBTQ community in that format."

**Barbara Morrison** (Westford Academy) was president of the GSA, editor-in-chief of the school paper, and a student director in the school theater program. Barbara helped organize an anti-bullying and LGBT awareness program for her school's incoming freshmen, and when some faculty objected, also organized diversity training for staff. "Receiving the Greater Boston PFLAG award was extremely important to me. The honor of being recognized by an organization that has meant so much to me is unquantifiable. It re-energized me, in a way. I often felt like a nag instead of an activist. Receiving the award made me remember that the work that I do is important, and is appreciated; which, in turn, makes me more excited to keep on doing that work." Barbara started her activism because "it never occurred to me not to 'push' LGBT issues. Most of the time, I was surprised to discover that I was pushing issues; I was taken aback by resistance that I met in taking initiatives that had seemed to me to be the bare minimum." Her activism and drive to participate in other activities both happened somewhat simultaneously, as being involved in queer issues meant that she brought those issues into her other areas of interest. Barbara's attending Hampshire College in the fall (which does not have majors in the conventional sense), where she plans to focus her studies in the realm of social change activism (queer rights, racial equality, and feminism) and journalism. "College is a huge unknown for me right now. I try to speculate as to how I'll continue to advocate for queer rights, but I really can't know what my life will be like in a completely new environment."

From early on in high school, **William Lukas** (Nipmuc Regional High School, Upton) was very active in athletics and the arts, as well as student leadership (Class of 2010 President) and volunteerism (member of Massachusetts Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership, addressed LGBT-related issues as Vice Chairman of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Student Advisory Council). "It was not until junior year when I began realizing the magnitude of homophobia inside and outside the walls of high school. What drove me to push the dialogue of LGBT issues in my school were not only my own personal tribulations as a gay student suffering from depression and harassment, but also the lack of any sort of LGBT voice in school systems across America. The rates of sexual harassment, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide among LGBT students compared to their heterosexual peers are profound. In an effort to reach across all genres of social justice issues, I founded STAND" – Students Taking Action in a New Direction – which functions as the school's GSA and serves to promote a message of "LGBT equality and human rights and a more universal social justice." William said that winning "the Greater Boston PFLAG award is a symbol of hope. Although I am very proud of my efforts as a gay student and STAND, the Greater Boston PFLAG award is a reminder that we must continue to move forward as one in order to achieve equality for all human beings. It represents the power to overcome oppression and create positive changes, both big and small." As an accomplished artist, William has received accolades from numerous organizations, including the Boston Globe, in photography, graphic design, and drawing. William will use his artistic skills as a visual communications or political science major at Drexel University, where he will use his passion to spread awareness of equality and social justice issues through Drexel's LGBT advocacy and cultural diversity groups. "I hope to be inspired and inspire others to take a proactive role in achieving equality for all people."

I am convinced these incoming college freshmen will continue to grow as inspirational leaders beyond school and into their adult lives. With such drive and determination, how can they not succeed at whatever they try? Greater Boston PFLAG congratulates all of you and wishes you the best of luck.

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## Letters to Greater Boston PFLAG

Dear Pam,

I just want to thank you and the parents who came to Cambridge this afternoon to speak at Draper Laboratory's Diversity lunchtime talk.

I knew that it would be a great event because I attended the Pride and Passion party last month and had heard the inspirational speeches by both students and parents. But wow, I was still blown away! The hour turned into 90 minutes because all four of you were so open, fun and willing to engage with the audience. I received many positive comments from the attendees who were very excited about the visit and the discussion afterwards.

The head of the diversity push at Draper and the leader of the Gay Pride Month committee both made a point to thank me for bringing in Greater Boston PFLAG to speak. They both told me that they want to invite you back next year, and to expect a call from us! I cannot tell you how much I appreciated the time that the three parents took from the middle of their day, and how proud I am to be involved with all of you.

I really hope that other companies know that this service is available to them too, because it was a wonderful and educational experience, no matter how diverse an organization is.

Jennifer Swanson  
Sr. Market Analyst  
Charles Stark Draper Laboratory

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Hi—

I'm from Seattle, but have been in Sydney, Australia for several months. The Australian PFLAG is going to put out the following information in their June newsletter and will be adding this to their library. It occurred to me that maybe the folks back home would like to have it too!

When my daughter came out to me as a 26 year-old who only belatedly had discovered she was gay, among my first thoughts were: "Life is going to be so much harder for her!" And, "Oh NO! I'll never be a grandparent!!" Happily, as it turns out, I was wrong on both counts.

When my 3-year-old granddaughter asked me, "Where's my daddy?" that question turned out to be my inspiration for writing *And Baby Makes 4*.

As a child with two moms, there are simply not enough books available that reflect and validate the reality of my granddaughter's life. She thinks something must be missing, even though she has two loving mothers and she can tell you everything you ever wanted to know about donor insemination. In this case, her question referred to the Daddy who is always in the books about the birth of a new sibling. She was about to become a big sister and needed a book to help her prepare for the experience, and since a book about a child with her family profile didn't exist, I decided to write it...The book is available on Amazon.

Cheers,  
Judith Benjamin

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*Are you excited about Greater Boston PFLAG's activities, or has Greater Boston PFLAG helped you handle a particular situation? Write us a letter to explain how we were able to help, and with your permission, we'll publish it to show members what types of services they can count on from us.*



## Family OUTing at Plimoth Plantation, September 25

**Boston Spirit** Magazine has partnered with Plimoth Plantation, Greater Boston PFLAG and Family Equality Council to bring you Family Outing Day at Plimoth Plantation.

This promises to be a magical day for LGBT families and friends.

Learn about Native American history and tradition, experience how the pilgrims lived in the 1600s, enjoy the chance to interact and feed rare breed animals, all while meeting and bonding with other LGBT families and couples. There will be special treats for kids and a BBQ to end the day.

A portion of the tickets that Greater Boston PFLAG sells will benefit our Safe Schools and Communities Program. For more information and to purchase tickets, go to: [www.gbpfllag.org](http://www.gbpfllag.org) or call Greater Boston PFLAG at (781) 891-5966.

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