

**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR TWENTY-EIGHTH YEAR    AUGUST, 2008    Volume 28, No.8**

**MEETING REMINDER:**

Sunday, August 17<sup>h</sup> --2:30 p.m.

At the Gay Associated Youth Center, Palm Desert.

Please call our information line for driving instructions (760) 202 -4430.

**Congratulations To Our Newlyweds**

We learned this past month of two couples in our PFLAG family who married this past month. Warren Wood and Douglas Hairgrove, who are active with the “Safe Schools” group; and, Bob Warburton and Bob Edgerly, members who moved to Casper, Wyoming but continue their membership with our chapter. Our best wishes to these wonderful men.

**A Message From The Editor**

*-Mike Balasa*

I am convinced that James Dobson, Donald Wildmon, James Hagee, Pat Robinson and other professional anti-gay religious leaders know better than to believe what they say to their followers. They know that the Bible passages they spout about the GLBT community are imprecise and open to conflicting interpretations. They know that there is no threat to their religious beliefs from the GLBT community. They know that marriage, as they unsuccessfully practice it, is not under attack from same-sex couples. They know that school children are not in danger from the gay agenda. These are men capable of building vast empires with substantial financial resources and are not fools. What they do know is that financial support is dependent upon having an enemy that they can point to as a serious threat to their followers' well being. Go to the web sites for Focus on the Family or the American Family Association and wonder at the hysterical and exaggerated claims they make about gay and lesbian intentions and behavior. Imagine how much money they would lose if they addressed concerns that hit closer to their homes. If they talked about broken homes, child and spousal abuse, financial irresponsibility or problem drinking, they would be small town preachers struggling to make a decent living instead of multi-millionaires living in mansions and driving luxury cars. They know that their targets have to be remote, easily demonized and already part of the cultural prejudice. Communism is no longer a threat but that was handy for many years. There is nothing on the horizon that can compare to the “gay threat” as a fund raising issue.

It is because they are money grubbing, hypocrites that I see them as contemptible. Their heated accusations encourage sick persons to violence. The man who killed people in a Tennessee church this past week shouted anti-gay words as he fired on worshippers. I, for

one, can never forget how evil these men are.

## **Good News on Proposition 8 Wording**

The ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriage with a state constitutional amendment was given a new title by the secretary of state. The old language read, (Proposition 8) “amends the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.” The new wording is that the initiative, “Changes California Constitution to eliminate right of same-sex couples to marry.” It further explains that banning same-sex marriage could prevent the state from gaining tens of millions of dollars in potential sales tax revenue. The anti-gay right wing activists supporting Proposition 8 were furious that the new wording so clearly spelled out the consequences of the initiative. Their attempt to sue the secretary of state was rebuffed in the courts and the new wording will stand.

## **Could Minnesota Be The Next State to Legalize Gay Marriage?**

Gay and lesbian civil rights advocates are organizing a lawsuit to overturn the Minnesota ban on same-sex marriage. The lawsuit will be similar to the successful lawsuit filed in California that resulted in the legalization of same-sex weddings. Organizers are looking for 30 same-sex couples willing to join in the lawsuit. Each couple will have to pay their legal costs of approximately \$1,000 if they join the lawsuit. Organizer Duane Benson said the cost is worth it, “In Doug’s (Duane’s partner) and my case, we pay \$3,000 more a year in taxes because we are not spouses.” But it is not just about the money said Doug, “The point we want to make is to make sure equality is pursued wherever we can pursue it, because we can’t sit around waiting for this to happen. We want this to become a reality here at home, and we are trying through the courts as well as through the legislature. We have waited long enough.”

## **GLBT Summer Camp for Children 8 to 17 Years of Age**

A highly regarded summer camp for GLBT and supportive youth is available in the Seattle area but open to children from all over the USA. For more information go to [www.camptrees.org](http://www.camptrees.org)

## **Hate Crimes Hit a Five Year High In Los Angeles County**

In 2007 there were 763 hate crimes in LA County up 28% from 2006. Most of the crimes were gang related and involved racial prejudice. Authorities blame the poor economic situation as a factor in the crime increase.

## **Tennessee Man Who Sacrificed His Life Was A Foster Father To A Transgendered Teen**

When the hate filled man began shooting in the Unitarian Universalist Church in

Knoxville, Tenn., one man stepped in his path to take the bullet for others. That man, Greg McKendry, was there to see his foster child, a transgendered teen, who was performing in the musical, Annie. After urging from gay community leaders, the mayor issued a statement saying that, "Knoxville is a caring, compassionate city where diverse viewpoints are shared and respected. Every person, regardless of race, religion, age, sex, or sexual orientation is a person of human dignity and valued member of our community."

Members of the Knoxville GLBT community are hoping that this tragedy will awaken people in their community and state to realize that hate speech directed at "liberals" and "gays" can lead to acts of deadly violence.

The church where this tragedy occurred has a long history of supporting GLBT civil rights. The church also hosts the Knoxville chapter of PFLAG.

### **Leo Party Scheduled for August 10<sup>th</sup>**

George Zander, organizer of the annual Leo Party, announced that this year's party will again be held at Toucans, August 10th starting at 4 P.M. All funds raised from the event will go to the Desert Pride Center. The event will include a buffet, happy hour prices, door prizes and a silent auction. George is encouraging everyone to wear orange and not spend money on black balloons or gifts, "People waste a ton of money on all that garbage. I don't need gifts. I just need people to write checks." Help George raise money for a good cause, and have fun celebrating all the wonderful folks who are Leos.

*Breaking News - George Zander*

*Announces That He Has Invited Noted Leo, Barack Obama To The Leo Party*

*There is no indication that Senator Obama will be able to make it. Senator Obama merited the personal invitation to the prestigious event by having an August 4th birth date.*

### **Our Fund Raiser to Fight Proposition 8 Has Reached Target Amount**

Word from our Treasurer last week is that we have received \$1,000 from our members. Our PFLAG chapter has pledged to match our member's contributions up to a total of \$1,000. The \$2,000 plus whatever else we receive over the next month will be sent to "Equality California" to support an educational campaign to acquaint voters with the effects of the proposed anti same-sex marriage amendment on same-sex couples in California. Thanks to all of you for contributing to this most important issue. If you haven't sent in your contributions, please do so as soon as possible.

### **80th Assembly Race Between Gary Jeandron and Manuel Perez**

The Banner newsroom has received two confirmations that Manuel Perez has publicly told supporters that he is against Proposition 8, the anti same-sex marriage amendment. His opponent, Gary Jeandron, has not responded to an e-mail asking for his position on Proposition 8. We sent the e-mail early in July. In the e-mail we identified ourselves as

representing the Palm Springs, Desert Communities PFLAG and that we wanted to provide a non-partisan comparison of the candidates stances on issues important to our members. (If any of our readers learns of any statement by Jeandron please notify us at our e-mail address.) Below is a comparison of the two parties' platforms on GLBT issues.

## **California Platforms On GLBT Issues by Both Parties**

The Democratic platform:

“Speak out in a unified voice against hatred, racism and violence directed against any minority group;

Encourage, support and defend voluntary and mandatory affirmative action measures to enhance access and equity in employment, education and business opportunities;

Affirm that the decision to accept or reject any religious belief, to bind oneself to any religious creed, or to hold no religious belief at all is a private matter, and should always remain a matter of individual conscience, and we oppose giving any government funding to organizations that discriminate;

Protect the constitutional rights of Native Americans and the sovereign rights of Indian nations as well as the tribal sovereignty and well-established rights and jurisdictions of California Native/Indian nations;

Support nondiscrimination and equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people in all aspects of their lives.

We support the LGBT Community in its quest for the right to legal marriage as well as the clergy's complete religious freedom to solemnize marriages in accordance with their beliefs. “

The Republican party platform:

“The California Republican Party affirms the family as the natural and indispensable institution for human development. A strong and healthy family unit is the heart of the home - a safe surrounding where family decisions are made, children are raised, and morality is taught. The family is a foundation upon which American society has grown and prospered for over 200 years. We support the two-parent family as the best environment for raising children, and therefore believe it is important to define marriage as being between one man and one woman. We believe public policy and education should not be exploited to present or teach homosexuality as an acceptable "alternative" lifestyle. We oppose same-sex partner benefits, child custody, and adoption.”

## **An Outrageous Proposal to Honor The Late Jesse Helms**

Jesse Helms, who died this past month, was a vigorous opponent of federal funding for HIV/AIDS. When Senator Elizabeth Dole proposed that the “Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008, “include the name of Jesse Helms in the bill's title, people who have spent years working on this non-partisan bill were stunned. Helms was the leading vocal opponent of funding for HIV/AIDS and was responsible for the restrictions

placed on immigrants to the U.S. who are HIV positive. That restriction was recently removed with the passage of this bill. Helms frequently stated that treating AIDS as a public health concern would promote what he called, “ the homosexual agenda”.

### **Vast Sums Of Money Will Be Spent by Both Sides on Proposition 8, The Anti Same-sex Marriage Initiative**

Opponents of Proposition 8, the initiative to end same-sex marriages received a million dollar pledge from Bruce Bastian, co-founder of Word Perfect and a resident of Utah. Bastian in his announcement message said, “One thing I learned as a Mormon was that preaching costs money. The Mormons will raise a lot of money to support Proposition 8 in November. You can’t change people’s minds. They have to change them for themselves. If people are shown the truth and have fear taken out of the equation. I believe they will stand up for what’s good and fair.”

Another \$250,000 was given by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, a utility that serves Northern and Central California. Up to that point the coalitions of GLBT rights groups had already raised over 1.3 million from supporters around the country. Anti-gay forces have raised more than 1.2 million. Focus on the Family, headed by James Dobson, gave more than \$400,000, the American Family Association has contributed \$500,000 and the national Catholic Men’s organization, The Knights of Columbus, have given \$250,000.