



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER

Our Chapter's 26th Year, May 2021, Volume 26, No. 5

VIRTUAL PFLAG MEETING
SUNDAY, May 16ST 2:30 P.M.

In lieu of our regular monthly meeting at the Cathedral City Library, will be a virtual meeting, via Zoom. This will be a place to discuss your thoughts and concerns and an opportunity to connect with other PFLAGers.

Just email us at info@PSpflag.org prior to 2:00 the 16th and you will be added to the list. This will be an invitation-only meeting, so be sure to RSVP now! Note: you need to RSVP the March meeting even if you had sent in a request for the April meeting. You can expect an email invitation to arrive Sunday and can join with audio/video or by phone. Facilitated by Sly Zelnys.

Remember, your PFLAG-PS family is here and available to you by phone at 760-202-4430 or via email at info@PSpflag.org if you want to connect.

Visit our Facebook page and share your thoughts, feelings and insights on your individual experience and insights on current events.

SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE FAMILIES

Meetings are the first Wednesday of each month. Next Zoom meetings: May 5th and June 2nd from 6 pm - 7:30 pm. Facilitated by Susan Thronson. Please email info@trans.health or call the Transgender Health and Wellness Center at (760) 202-4308 for more information.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

-Mike Balasa

PFLAG is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. PFLAG is not allowed to endorse a political candidate or party. Giving campaign donations to a candidate is forbidden. Does that mean that as editor of this newsletter, I must not be involved in any political discussion? If that were true, this newsletter would be very different from what is now.

PFLAG's mission is to provide support, information, and resources for LGBTQI people, their parents, families, and allies. That is why my wife and I sought out PFLAG. At the PFLAG meetings we regularly attended in the Seattle area in the 1990's, many people attending were parents who were trying to understand why their child told them they were transgender, gay or lesbian. They were often crying and ashamed, but they loved their children and wanted to learn how to accept and support them. We broke into small groups, and those of us who were veterans would tell our story of how our child came out to us and how we learned to accept and support them. Usually the new parents would return for subsequent meetings; and, eventually, become mentors for other parents attending their first meeting.

Now there are many support groups and parents are much wiser. More information is widely available and LGBTQI people are visible everywhere. Our mission now is much more to advocate for our LGBTQI friends and family. The laws are not clear about how much a non-profit can be involved in political issues. We have the right to make our goals clear on issues of equality and non-discrimination. The positions political leaders and parties adopt on LGBTQI issues are open to our evaluation. If an elected official advocates for laws that are unfair to LGBTQI people we are allowed to discuss and oppose it. We can educate and advocate for fairness.

Today PFLAG is one of several important voices both nationally and on the local level. We must continue to exist as relentless advocates for justice.

WHAT IS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT TRANSGENDER YOUTH

The Child and Adolescent Trans/Gender Center for Health program at the Boston Medical Center published an article to help caregivers who have responsibility for youth experiencing gender conflict. The hospital uses what they call a “gender-affirmative approach”. Medical and mental health professionals work side by side to provide education and guidance preparing the family for necessary medical intervention if needed.

The first step is for patients and families to share their stories. Knowing what the families have experienced and what they hope to accomplish is necessary for moving forward. Often the family experiences a crisis when the child begins to enter puberty and begins to notice body changes that feel wrong and inconsistent with the gender they know they are. Getting the parents to become allies and advocates for transgender acceptance is important for the child and family. Attending a local transgender parent group is recommended. Our local PFLAG chapter has a support group that meets on the first Wednesday of each month. (See meeting announcements).

The child must be allowed to live in their identified gender, and family and friends must learn to use preferred pronouns. Allowing the child to choose the preferred pronoun is important to their self-esteem. In school and other public places, the child has the right to enter the bathroom of choice and participate in team sports as the gender they accept. The child needs to know how to be in public with physical traits of the other sex. They need to learn how to bind breasts or tuck back male genitalia. Studies have indicated that children who are successful in social transitioning have depression levels similar to cisgender peers. For children who still experience depression, anxiety and difficulties managing incidences of transphobia, seeing a sympathetic knowledgeable therapist is necessary.

Medical intervention is necessary when the child feels the need for the physical body to match the preferred gender identity. The interventions start with puberty blockers, hormonal medications and perhaps surgery. Puberty blockers are well studied and are proven safe. They are also reversible. The blockers give the child and family time to consider long term needs and desires. They also prove to be emotionally useful - children using the blockers report less depression and thoughts and attempts at suicide.

Hormonal medications assist late teen and early adult transgender individuals match their bodies to their gender identities. Taking estrogen will help a person develop the female characteristics of breasts, reduce hair growth and develop a rounded female body shape. Testosterone will deepen a voice, facilitate facial

hair growth and grow a masculine body shape. There is also medication available to stop menstruation. Each person is different and some choose to have neither a male or female appearance.

Surgical intervention is not easily reversed and the choice is carefully made. Interventions include changes to genitals, chest or breast and facial features. For many individuals surgery proves valuable for self-esteem and mental health.

The article concludes, "While more research is always needed, a gender-affirmative approach and evidence-based medicine allows young transgender people to live in a world as their authentic selves. This improves quality of life and saves lives, as one of our transgender patients said about his experience receiving gender-affirming care, 'I honestly don't think I would be here had I not been allowed to transition at that point. I'm not always 100%, but I have hope. I am happy to see tomorrow and I know I will achieve my dreams.'"

GERMANY BANS SURGERIES ON BABIES BORN WITH INTERSEX CHARACTERISTICS

Germany's parliament voted to ban unnecessary surgeries on babies born with ambiguous sexual determinants. About 1.7% of all babies are born with indeterminate sex. This can include variations in chromosomes, gonads, hormones and other sex characteristics. Often it is difficult to label the child male or female. German medical authorities reported between 2005 and 2016 over 1,800 children were given surgeries to make them recognizable as male or female. The surgery is mostly cosmetic and completely unnecessary to the child's survival.

Numerous medical and human rights groups oppose the surgeries as they can have long-lasting negative consequences for intersex individuals. The problems include loss of sensation, pain and permanent infertility. Individuals assigned the wrong sex from their self-identity are even more at risk of long-term emotional harm. Studies have found suicide attempts four times higher for these individuals than the general population. Other countries and many U.S. states, are considering similar legislation.

ARKANSAS PASSES LAW HARMING TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

The Arkansas General Assembly overturned the Governor's veto of a law that many consider dangerous to the well-being of transgender people. The law would make it illegal to give transition care to individuals with transgender issues. The law bans the administration of puberty blockers, hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries for minors. Arkansas is the first state to pass this type of law which will take effect this summer. Neighboring states of Texas and North Carolina legislatures are actively considering similar laws, and 14 other states have similar proposals awaiting action. The Williams Institute of the UCLA School of Law, found that over 45,000 youth are at risk of losing needed transition care because of the proposed legislation.

The Arkansas Legislature is exceptionally anti-LGBTQI. In March, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson signed a bill that would allow medical care workers to refuse services to people who they find offensive to their religious beliefs. This law is especially aimed at transgender individuals but any LGBTQI person would be affected. The state also has a law that bans transgender student athletes from competing on teams that match their gender identity.

A parent in Texas, who testified before the Texas legislature on proposed anti-transgender legislation, told reporters she was hoping for more action from President Biden. While she was pleased with Biden's affirmation that Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, protects students from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, she was hoping for a statement countering the flurry of state bills attacking LGBTQI persons. She said, referring to President Biden and Vice-President Harris, "Even if they can't do anything right now, tell us what your plan is. Kamala Harris has a trans flag outside her office. OK, if you're an ally, why aren't you loudly telling my kid she's gonna be OK? Why aren't you loudly saying, you know Mrs. Shappley, you don't have to move, we've got your back. I want someone to say something."

PALM SPRING/DESERT COMMUNITIES PFLAG TO CONTINUE ZOOM MEETINGS

While Zoom meetings don't allow hugging and closeness, they are still an excellent way to interact with your PFLAG family. Everyone has a chance to talk about issues that concern them and share personal experiences. Don't be a stranger. Plan to attend the next Zoom meeting in June. You will be glad you did.

BUTTIGIEG THE GREAT

by Bob Warburton

I have not written about Pete Buttigieg the newly appointed and confirmed Transportation Secretary in the Biden Administration even though I have been a fan of the man for four years and he has been a favorite of the press for at least two years as he ran for the Democratic Nomination for the U.S. Presidency. He is a phenomenal person, and I first heard of him when he ran as a Gay man for Chair of the Democratic Party and Cathedral City Councilman and Democratic National Committee Member Greg Pettis told me to "watch Mayor Pete."

When he ran for President how could we not watch him? He is a brilliant Rhodes scholar, who enlisted in the Indiana National Guard to serve in Afghanistan instead of sitting at home and talking about the situation "over there." He was not some far out leftist trying to change the world, but rather an articulate centrist who even went to church regularly. Still I missed out on much of the hoopla because I did not support him for President. I did not meet him as I would have had if I had just gone with the flow and given him my support, but I could not see him as President. His try for the brass ring impressed the right people, and now he has a great job changing the world. If this gig works out, he has a real chance at running for President in the future.

I was a little surprised he had such an easy confirmation with only 13 Senators voting against his nomination, but then I heard that many of those potential Republican "no" votes spent much of their time lobbying the future Secretary on potential projects in their states. It is not good form to vote against someone you are lobbying to put a new rail line through your state. Also I have listened to Secretary Buttigieg rhapsodize about train stations, transportation, broadband, and the movement of people and goods to and from the inner city to the rural spaces and I am a true believer that this man understands how this Country needs to progress. He is a perfect salesman for this project.

If the Biden Administration is able to get a good portion of its infrastructure plan through though Congress, we may be seeing a lot of the Secretary for the next four years. Buttigieg will continue to make a great spokesman for the Administration and a good representative for our Community.

STORY OF AN UNKNOWN HISTORICAL EVENT ON APRIL 21, 1966

Editor's note: I found this article posted on Facebook from the Hastings, Nebraska PFLAG.

An administrator of their page, Jay D. Hall entered the article.

On this day in 1966 – 55 years ago – three gay men wanted to illustrate the widespread discrimination by bars, nightclubs, and restaurants that refused to serve gays and lesbians by conducting what they called a "Sip-In" – a nod to the Black civil rights movement's lunch counter sit-ins in the South.

The men decided to visit some bars in Lower Manhattan, identify themselves as gay, order drinks, and refuse to leave until they were served. They invited four newspaper reporters along to document their activism.

At the first bar, the New York Times reporter tipped off the owners, who shut the bar before the men could enter. But a sign in the window said it all: "If you are gay, please stay away." A club across the street also closed.

Managers at the next two bars not only served them, but gave them the drinks on the house. Finally, they went to Julius' bar, which was actually known to be gay-friendly. But the night before, a cop had entrapped a patron there for "gay activity," so the men knew the bar, worried about losing its liquor license, wouldn't serve them. And that's exactly what happened.

The next day, the NY Times's story about the activists carried the headline, "3 Deviates Invite Exclusion by Bars."

Three years later, patrons of a Greenwich Village gay bar and nearby residents fought back against police who became violent during a raid on the bar, and the Stonewall Inn riots became a touchstone in the fight for LGBTQ rights.

But the "Sip-In" was also key. "By all accounts, this was one of the first, if not the very first, planned act of civil disobedience for LGBT rights," Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, told the Times five years ago. "It set a lot of incredibly important changes in motion."

(More on next page)

DEAR FRIENDS — IT IS TIME TO JOIN OR RENEW PFLAG MEMBERSHIP

If you would like to join PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities, print and mail the form below or join online at www.pspflag.org/joindonate.html

All our expenses go to furthering our mission. Our expenses are for materials that we supply to individuals, schools and supporting organizations; the information phone line, newsletter production, support to local schools' Gay Straight Alliances; and, many other occasional expenses such as the Pride Parade.

When you join and support the local PFLAG chapter with a membership of \$30 or more, we send your name and a portion of the fees (\$15) to PFLAG National, making you a member of both the National and our local chapter of PFLAG. You will receive all publications and notices.

Members sometimes don't realize that if you join National PFLAG directly you are not on the membership rolls of the PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities. PFLAG National does not notify us that you joined, and they do not share any of the membership fee.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Phone No. _____ E-Mail _____

Suggested Donation: Family Membership \$50 _____ Individual \$30 _____

Make check payable to PFLAG Palm Springs and mail to:
PFLAG Palm Springs, PO Box 4326, Palm Springs, CA 92263

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430

EMAIL: info@pspflag.org

Chapter Officers

Co-presidents: Christine Hammond, Dan Smith, Sly Zelnys, Treasurer: Peter East
Emeritus members: Mike and Carol Balasa

ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT PFLAG

Every time you shop online using AmazonSmile, PFLAG Palm Springs-Desert Communities will receive a donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation.

