

# PFLAG

COUNCIL OF  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS

La Princesa Mononoke  
by Ivan Vazquez

See more artworks on pp 16-21



# Open Doors

August 2023

[opendoors@pflagillinois.org](mailto:opendoors@pflagillinois.org)

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PFLAG Convention, Chapter Reports, Art, Essay, Theater, Film, Events, Studies

# TV, PICNIC, CHAPTER CHANGES

July 23<sup>rd</sup> was PFLAG Parent Day, now in its third year. ABC created a special 45-minutes program in celebration. If you have missed it, click [HERE](#) or click the image below to watch it on YouTube. PCNI is proud of the Hemmer family for sharing their story in this program!



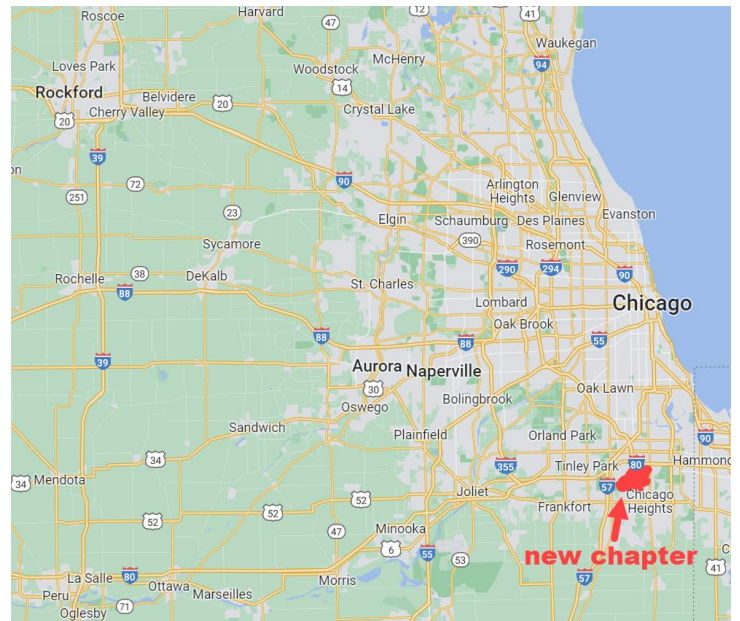
It's nice to have our own day celebrated, because it raises awareness and informs the public about PFLAG and the work we do. But we all know that we are allies every day of the year, not just on the PFLAG Parent Day 😊

Our PCNIC'23 picnic was a wonderful time for reconnecting with friends, sharing potluck food, playing games, and just enjoying life! See more photos from PCNIC'23 in the PFLAG DuPage chapter report. PCNI thanks our sponsor, Deep Eddy Vodka, for providing products for the picnic raffle!



The Kankakee chapter has officially closed. It hasn't held monthly meetings in the last couple of years and there are other LGBTQ+ support groups in the area, so the closure isn't unexpected. PCNI thanks Rev. Barbara Lohrbach for her leadership of PFLAG Kankakee over the last 15 years and for making a big difference in many people's lives!

I'm happy to announce that a new chapter has just formed in our region – PFLAG Homewood-Flossmoor, which is now considering joining PCNI. The Board has started that discussion with the chapter, and we'll extend our full support to help it get off the ground. The chapter is planning to hold meetings beginning this September.



I hope that you enjoy the rest of the issue: artworks, chapter reports, information about cultural events and research studies.

Thank you for being an Ally!

*Andrew Zanevsky* (he/him)

President, PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois



# LEARNING WITH LOVE

## THE 2023 PFLAG NATIONAL CONVENTION

### REGISTER TODAY!

Come to Washington, DC for Learning With Love: The 2023 PFLAG National Convention for workshops, panels, and presentations from community leaders and experts who will provide insight, expertise, training, strategies, and best practices so that PFLAG friends, families, members, supporters, and leaders can work together to fulfill our organizational mission to create a caring, just, and affirming world for LGBTQ+ people and those who love them.

Whether you're a longtime PFLAGer or new to the PFLAG family, join us for what promises to be an incredible four days!

Register now: [pflag.org/events/learningwithlove2023](https://pflag.org/events/learningwithlove2023)

### CONVENTION SCHOLARSHIPS

PCNI is offering **scholarships of \$225** each to up to 5 paid PFLAG members of PCNI chapters who will attend the 2023 PFLAG National Convention in October 2023.

Recipients must register for the conference by July 1<sup>st</sup> and commit to writing about their Convention experience for Open Doors.

Email to [info@pflagillinois.org](mailto:info@pflagillinois.org) to apply for the **Convention scholarship**.

Scholarships are limited to one per PFLAG family membership. Registration costs \$199 for paid PFLAG members and \$290 for non-members.

If you need financial assistance to pay for PFLAG membership, email to [info@pflagillinois.org](mailto:info@pflagillinois.org) – PCNI sponsors memberships based on need.



### TENTATIVE AGENDA

Thursday Oct 19		Lobby Day
Friday Oct 20	2:00–3:00pm 3:30–5:00	Regional Meetings Annual Meeting and Plenary
Saturday Oct 21	9:00–10:15am 10:30–11:45 12:00–2:00 2:30–3:45 4:00–5:00	Workshop Block 1 Workshop Block 2 Lunch and Plenary Workshop Block 3 Community Building
Sunday Oct 22	10:00–11:15am 11:45–1:30	Workshop Block 4 Closing and Awards Lunch

**Warning:** While some of the following stories describe legislative actions to celebrate and affirm LGBTQ+ people, many cover legislation targeting the LGBTQ+ community, particularly trans and non-binary youth. Please be kind to yourself and use your discretion while reading this section.

## COURT MATTERS

**The Supreme Court rules in favor of anti-LGBTQ+ graphic designer.** On June 30th, SCOTUS ruled in favor (in a 6-3 vote) of an evangelical Christian graphic designer from Colorado who does not want to create wedding websites for same-sex couples, despite the state's protective anti-discrimination law.

**Two federal courts debunk misinformation on gender-affirming care.** U.S. District Courts in Tennessee and in Kentucky separately, and each on June 23rd, struck down bans on gender-affirming care with clear and direct language that supports medically necessary care, lauding the science-based evidence.

**PFLAG National, GLMA file lawsuit to block enforcement of SB14 in Texas.** The suit alleges that Texas's SB14, should it go into effect on September 1st, will deprive trans youth and physicians alike of their constitutional rights. [Read more about the suit in PFLAG National's July 13th press release.](#)

**PFLAG National serves as plaintiff in lawsuit against Missouri ban on medically necessary healthcare for transgender kids.** Three families of transgender young people and medical providers filed a challenge to SB 49, a law that would prevent access to evidence-based gender-affirming care in the state.

## STATE MATTERS

**Arizona - Gov. Katie Hobbs signs two pro-LGBTQ+ Executive Orders banning conversion therapy, granting gender-affirming care.** The EO ensures that state employee health insurance plans can no longer list gender-affirming surgery as ineligible for coverage, prohibits state offices to work with states that have banned gender-affirming care, and bans state support for so-called conversion therapy.

- Michigan - [State Legislature bans so-called conversion therapy for minors.](#)** The State Senate confirmed its state ban on conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ minors. The bill would prevent healthcare and mental health professionals from suggesting the practice for minors.
- New York - [Governor signs 'safe haven' law for transgender youth.](#)** Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a bill that protects transgender minors' access to medical care, including puberty blockers and hormone therapy. The bill prevents state courts from labeling transition-related medical care as child abuse for minors, making it one of the 11 states in the country that safeguards transgender medical care.
- North Carolina - [Gov. Cooper vetoes three bills targeting LGBTQ+ youth.](#)** The bills contained provisions that would exclude transgender girls and women from participating in sports, prohibit life-saving medical care for trans and non-binary youth, and require schools to notify parents if their child's gender identity changes.

## GLOBAL MATTERS

- Turkey - [Police detain 50 after Pride march in Istanbul.](#)** During Istanbul's annual pride parade, the Turkish police blocked the usual routes, leading marchers to proceed to the streets, and law enforcement intervened.
- Georgia - [Anti-LGBTQ+ protesters break up Pride festival.](#)** In Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, far right anti-LGBTQ+ protesters stormed a pride parade, destroying posters and flags.
- Greece - [Prime minister announces support for same-sex marriage.](#)** Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced his support in an interview with Bloomberg News.
- Latvia - [Edgars Rinkēvičs sworn in as President.](#)** President Rinkēvičs made history on July 8th as the first openly gay president of a Baltic nation, and only the 7th openly gay leader of any country.

This is a small sample of articles from Policy Matters, a weekly email publication by PFLAG National.

**Become a PFLAG member  
to receive the full newsletter:**  
[pflagil.org/membership-and-donation/](https://pflagil.org/membership-and-donation/)



# PFLAG

## CHICAGO METRO

by Lance Fortnow (he/him)

*[Editor: This article was supposed to be published in last month's Open Doors, but overzealous spam filters blocked email delivery, so it is presented here.]*



PFLAG Metro Chicago joined its Northern Illinois peers to march in this year's pride parade surviving a rather wet start. We walked the whole parade route to cheering crowds and afterwards several of us hung out at a bar near DePaul University enjoying beer, wings and sandwiches.

Halfway through the route we passed the Center on Halsted, the home of our meetings which we have every 3rd Sunday at 2 PM, including a week before the parade. We have been holding hybrid meetings for over a year now, giving us the opportunity for both an in-person and a virtually accessible experience. We've had quite a few new

attendees over the past several months, especially parents trying to do the right thing for their kids. The need for PFLAG remains strong.

This last meeting we shared a video from a group called Unity performing on Britain's Got Talent (<https://youtu.be/YM8UzTadJ7A>). A powerful message of acceptance through music and dance.

On June 28th, chapter members served on a virtual panel to share their experiences for the Joint Commission, the oldest and largest healthcare accreditation agency. There were 130 participants in the meeting and we've discussed how being part of the chapter has helped us in our relationships with our children and how we grow by helping others. Just by coming to the meeting, parents have taken a huge step towards learning how to understand and manage the relationship with their children. We work hard to keep the meetings as a safe space for everyone, without judgment. It's a difficult journey to be a parent, family member or friend of an LGBTQ child and we want to be there to help them on their way.

# PFLAG MCHENRY

by **Chris Kocol (she/her)**

On June 29th, PFLAG McHenry wrapped up our "Pride Month" activities by participating in Crystal Lake Library's "Read the Rainbow" event. While several community groups were on hand to share their information, the library provided coloring & beading activities, as well as a raffle, story time & free donuts from "Joe + Dough", a food trailer serving fresh made mini donuts. Yum! Although the event had to be relocated indoors due to the weather, it was a fun & rather well attended event where we got to chat with many families & individuals about PFLAG & what we do.

For our July meeting, we had a wonderful guest speaker, Onella Piyatilake Conrad, a voice instructor from The Voice Lab in Chicago [<https://thevoicelabinc.com/>]. Onella provides gender-affirming voice care/instruction for feminine, masculine & non-binary genders. She helps clients first find their "habitual voice range" - where they naturally, normally speak - and then helps them learn how to control it through exploration of pitch, then isolating the desired/preferred pitch. She gave an informative presentation that included how voice can be an important part of transition and led our group through a series of vocal exploration exercises that involved pitch, inflection, resonance and articulation, which was quite enlightening.

## Something to Share

Our chapter has decided to incorporate "Something to Share" time in our monthly meetings, a time when participants can share information about a relevant book or article they found/read, a video or documentary they saw, or maybe a website or Face Book group/post that they found worthy of interest & sharing. This month's contributions:

## Books:

**Stuck in the Middle with You** by Jennifer Finney Boylan (New York: Crown Publishers, 2013)  
*"...a remarkable memoir about gender & parenting that discusses how families are shaped & the difficulties & wonders of being human. A father for six years, a mother for ten, and for a time in between, neither, or both, Jennifer Finney Boylan has seen parenthood from both sides of the gender divide."*

**Transitions of the Heart: stories of love, struggle and acceptance by mothers of transgender and gender variant children** edited by Rachel Pepper (Berkley, CA: Cleis Press, 2012)

*"...mothers of transgender and gender variant children of all ages...tell their own stories about their child's gender transition."*

**For the Bible Tells Me So (the biblical-theological necessity of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the church)** by Rev. Dr. Katie Hays (Kindle Direct Publishing; galileochurch.org, ISBN-13978-0578779676)

*"...A seminar called "For the Bible Tells Me So," at Galileo Church, the community Hays founded... evolved into this booklet, which is a succinct rendering of a complex theological mystery: God's consistent and surprising embrace of those whom Very Religious People have cast out."*

## Videos/Programs:

**Independent Lens on PBS/WTTW, "Mama Bears"**, 90 mins

They call one another "mama bears" because of the ferocity with which they fight for their children's rights. Although they grew up as fundamentalist, evangelical Christians praying for the souls of LGBTQ+ people, these mothers are now willing to risk losing friends, family, and faith communities to champion their kids—even if it challenges their belief systems and rips apart their worlds.

Watch an 18 min short video @

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuikLNsRtas>

## You Tube:

- **The Neuroscience of Being Transgender**, 7:25 mins
- **Trans 101**, 7:48 mins, from Minus18TV

## Web Sites/Facebook:

[www.realmamabears.org](http://www.realmamabears.org)

The Real Mama Bears organization is a network of groups, websites, special projects & resources dedicated to supporting, educating and empowering families with LGBTQ+ members and the LGBTQ+ Community. Start here, [www.realmamabears.org](http://www.realmamabears.org), to sign up to follow various, specific private Face Book groups.

[www.mamadragons.org](http://www.mamadragons.org)

Mama Dragons is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides peer-led support groups, educational resources, and parenting classes, in a supportive community of over 9,500 mothers of LGBTQ children. Mama Dragons' provides programs to support healthy families by helping mothers learn to accept, affirm, and celebrate their LGBTQ children.

[www.facebook.com/FreeMomHugsIllinois](https://www.facebook.com/FreeMomHugsIllinois)

Free Mom Hugs is a group of Moms, friends, and allies who support the LGBTQ community. This is the Illinois chapter Face Book page. Also visit: [FreeMomHugs.org](http://FreeMomHugs.org)

[www.facebook.com/thosenerdygirls](https://www.facebook.com/thosenerdygirls)

Search site for: What Does Science Say About Gender Identity?

[Minus18.org.au](http://Minus18.org.au)

This is an Australian charity improving the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth. The website has a number of informative short videos over a variety of relevant topics.

## And for those looking for HRT treatment but don't know where to start....

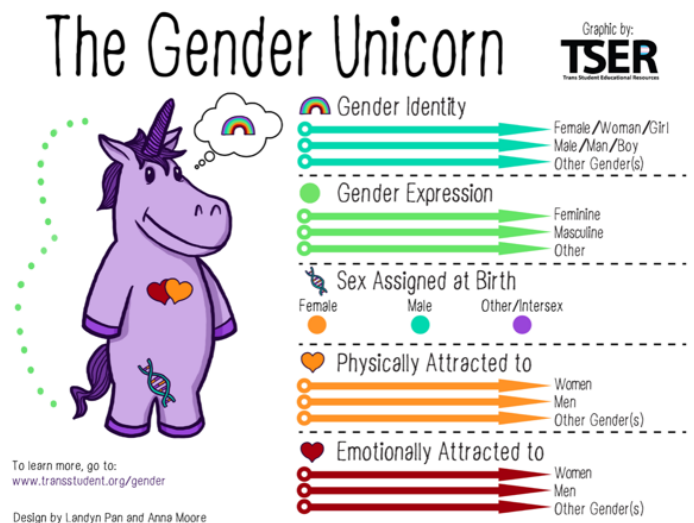
Google: "**Erin's Informed Consent HRT Map for the US**". Erin's map can help get you started in finding HRT treatment for yourself and/or your loved ones.

# PFLAG DUPAGE

by **Bonnie Clemens (she/her)**

## July Chapter Meeting

This month we had an educational program led by Dan Hemmer. This insightful program entitled A Little Knowledge Goes A Long Way, included a presentation and discussion featuring **The Gender Unicorn**. Dan is PFLAG DuPage member, is passionate about PFLAG and is a DEI advocate at work. He is a member of several Employee Resource Groups at the McDonald's Corporation where he has extensive experience educating folks on LGBTQ+ topics.



For our meeting Dan covered all things gender: gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, physical attraction, and emotional attraction. These concepts help us to understand the wide variety of terms that people may use to identify themselves. We had lively discussion about each of these areas and how they apply to everyone, not just members of the LGBTQ+ community. Dan emphasized that though it is important to educate ourselves we should not make assumptions about individual people. When it comes to gender concepts, the terms don't define the person, each individual person defines what the terms mean to them. Knowing this, we then focused on how to be a good ally: creating a safe space, listening to, and valuing each individual person for their own uniqueness.



### Recommendations to learn more about intersex:

- "Remember the Midwife" Season 8, Episode 5
- "Every Body" Documentary

### Wheaton 4th of July Parade

We had a large turn-out for our annual march in the Wheaton 4th of July Parade. This was our nineteenth year to participate in this parade! We believe that in today's climate of LGBTQ+ bigotry it was more important than ever to be present in this community event knowing that we represent hope for anyone that may not be getting the support that they need at home and/or at work.

### Wheaton 4<sup>th</sup> Of July Parade



### PCNIC '23

We had a great time at the Council Picnic on July 22nd! It was wonderful to meet new folks, visit with those we already knew, play yard games and stroll around Herrick Lake. And to top it off Andrew surprised us all with a fun assortment of raffle prizes! Thank you to the Council for hosting this picnic. We are looking forward to next time!





## LGBTQ+Voices Podcast

LGBTQ+Voices is a podcast produced by Allen, a PFLAG DuPage member, that features real-life, everyday stories of the LGBTQ+ community, interviews, and discussions about the experiences of LGBTQ+ people from all walks of life. The goal is to create a space where LGBTQ+ people can feel seen, heard, and understood. Allen hopes that the podcast will help to educate and empower the LGBTQ+ community and allies alike.

Please reach out to Allen at [lgbtqvoicespodcast@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtqvoicespodcast@gmail.com) to be a part of the podcast and share your story. Guests may participate anonymously if it's necessary for their safety.



## Out and About

On July 29<sup>th</sup>, PFLAG DuPage had a booth at the Youth Mental Health and Wellness Fair in West Chicago.

In Case You Missed It! PFLAG Parent Day 2023

Join us in congratulating the Hemmer family for their incredible and heartwarming interview aired on PFLAG Parent Day 2023!! To watch the Hemmers and several other PFLAG families nationwide tune in to the [PFLAG YouTube Channel](#) or [ABC7 Chicago](#).



# PFLAG

## HINSDALE

by Barb Medley (she/her)

Because our July meeting fell on the holiday weekend, we did not have a speaker. Instead, we had a picnic indoors due to the weather, and visited.

We're excited that our August speaker is Andrew Zanevsky who is the president of the PFLAG Council and also edits and publishes Open Doors and showcases its wonderful artwork.

# PFLAG

OTTAWA

by Rev. Jennifer Amy-Dressler

(she/her)

Like most of the other chapters, we were present at our local Pride event. 2023 marks the second annual Ottawa Family Pride Fest. Like last year, we had lots of visitors to our booth, and were able to add new names to our contact list. We hope these folks will find us a helpful and supportive community as they learn, support their LGBTQ+ loved ones, and join in advocacy efforts.

Last year's first Pride event in Ottawa drew about 4500 attendees to our town of about 19,000 in rural LaSalle County. This year's estimate is 7000 visitors! A major addition to this year's event was a parade. Because we are a small chapter, we didn't try to do both booth set-up and parade marching at the same time, but next year may be a different story.... We are pleased with the level of support in our town from the Chamber of Commerce, city leadership, the police department, unions and civic organizations; it means a lot in our setting that local veterans carried the U.S. flag in a Pride parade. Grand Marshal Mercury Stardust (aka The Handy Ma'am -- check out her TikTok and other media on home repairs!) was a huge hit as she shared her story as a transwoman. And we were pleased to see so many families with young children at the event. They are setting a new tone for the future!

This year's event also brought unwelcome disruption from out-of-town religious objectors. Younger festival attendees in particular found it hard to simply walk away and deny protesters the chance to livestream themselves in confrontation. We hope to work cooperatively with festival organizers and other local LGBTQ+ groups to equip the community with a consistent, effective response protocol towards possible provocateurs in 2024.

In contrast to these objectors, one of our local churches offered a Night of Remembrance event the evening before, in one of the primary festival venues. Four

clergy, representing both allies and the LGBTQ+ community, led readings, prayer, and reflections to honor those who were unable to navigate life in an unaccepting world. Luminaries prepared by a local Youth Outlook chapter and event attendees lined the walks. A contingent of the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus sang, and local musicians provided quiet music before and after the program itself. PFLAG members attended wearing PFLAG pins, to make our presence and support known. We appreciate this time of remembrance hallowing the ground in advance of a joyful festival.



**Mercury Stardust as Grand Marshal of Ottawa Family Pride Fest's first parade, in memoriam of John Dann Fisher**



**Ken Brown and Sharon Loudon, Board members of Ottawa PFLAG chapter, at booth**



# PFLAG

## DEERFIELD

by **Jodi Zavos (she/her)**

Deerfield has a history of welcoming young people during the summer months. Ann McAuliffe calls this our **Amazing Young People Series**. This month our amazing young person was a nineteen-year-old college junior who joined us to share his story. The student is transgender and attends an Indiana public university. He reports that although he has not personally had any problems, his school has a diverse student body which at times conflicts with the conservative laws of the state.

Our “amazing young person” came out as bisexual at 13 years old. At 16, while recovering from an injury and while also dealing with the pandemic, he had lots of time to figure himself out and to explore various identities. He came out as trans in 2021.

Our speaker found support in his therapist and his family; and in the new friends he made after coming out. His family was accepting but needed some support along the way. They saw him quickly go through labels and questioned him. There were a lot of uncomfortable conversations. But while all the other labels never felt comfortable, nothing about trans felt uncomfortable. That’s when it all clicked into place, and he “didn’t have to question it anymore.”

The following words from our speaker were powerful and worth repeating. “Names and pronouns really matter. Not getting them right proves we don’t see them for who they are. The name brings back all the pain and memories of who we were before.” “Don’t question it. We need support, love, and acceptance. We are still your children, and we just want you to be proud of us. No matter who we are or how we identify. Questioning us makes us question ourselves and we don’t want to go back there. Not being questioned makes us more confident.”

Many new families joined us for this honest and moving presentation. Candid conversation and support followed. It was a perfect PFLAG meeting.

# PFLAG

## OAK PARK

by **Tara Chavez (she/her)**

Hello from PFLAG Oak Park Area! Our monthly meetings are still HYBRID so members have the choice to join remotely or in person. Although “Pride Month” has ended, pride continues all year long! Pride for who we are, who we love, and what we do never ends! Here’s a brief recap of some of the great opportunities that have taken place this past month:



On **June 28<sup>th</sup>**, PFLAG Oak Park Area, OPALGA+, and the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce hosted the event, “**Transgender Experience in Oak Park Panel Discussion**,” which was held at the Madison Street Theater. This well attended event included two members of our chapter, Katie Thomas and Sarah Corbin, as well as OP Chapter President, Phil Kroker. Their insight and shared experiences were/are valued by everyone who attended.

On **July 4<sup>th</sup>**, PFLAG marched in the **Oak Park Fourth of July Parade**. This parade continues to grow in number of participants and attendees. It was a beautiful day!





On **July 22<sup>nd</sup>**, PFLAG Oak Park members had the opportunity to attend the **PCNI 2023 Family Picnic** held at Herrick Lake Forest Preserve, AND/OR the **2023 Pride Picnic and Ice Cream Social** held at Taylor Park in Oak Park. The Pride Picnic had approximately 150 attendees and we couldn't have asked for a nicer day! Although both events occurred on the same day at the same time, members enjoyed the camaraderie and socialization each event provided.

**Save the date!** PFLAG Oak Park will be participating in the annual **Farmer's Market Bake Sale** on Saturday, **September 2<sup>nd</sup>**, from 7 a.m. until we sell out (approximately 11 a.m.). The Market is located in the Pilgrim Church parking lot at 460 Lake St., one block west of Ridgeland Avenue. We'll have goods from award-winning bakers that will include treats sure to satisfy every sweet tooth. **You'll want to get there early for the best baked goods before they're gone!**

Can't wait to see what's in store for next month!

We will once again offer the hybrid option at our next meeting, held every fourth Sunday at First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60301.



Our next Hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting will be on **August 27<sup>th</sup> at 3PM.** Mark your calendars!



# PFLAG

EVANSTON

by **Jenny Heckathorne (she/her),**  
**Lex Wilder (he/him),**  
and **Sara Keely McGuire (she/her)**

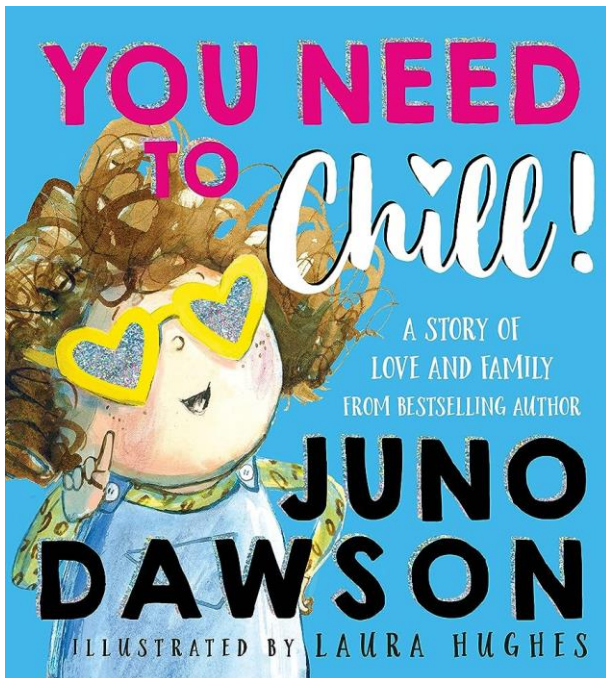
Greetings from PFLAG Evanston/Northshore!

We hope you all had a wonderful PRIDE month full of discovery and celebration!

We have continued to participate in some awesome events.

Our social networking event of last month has really opened some doors to cooperation and collaboration with other people and groups in our area.

We were invited by the awesome owners of the diversity affirming bookstore BOOKED to welcome Juno Dawson! She read her new children's book called **You Need to Chill!** It's a great story about a kid with a trans sibling. The kids and adults who came all helped with the chorus "you need to chill!" We celebrated our state's new law that books cannot be banned!



We met with the board of Open Communities - an organization that works to prevent, identify and correct housing discrimination. They gave us lots of information to pass on to our members and reminded us that the LGBTQ+ community is a protected community in housing rights.

We partnered with the Evanston Public Library in a fun Drag Bingo event! We didn't win any prizes, but were happy to bring PFLAG information and swag to share!

Our chapter president hopped on the PFLAG trolley for the big Chicago Pride Parade! He reported lots of enthusiasm and love from the crowd!





On a smaller scale, we walked in the Evanston July 4th parade along with our community partners from Evanston Pride! There was lots of love there, too. And lots of folks yelling out for PFLAG! Stickers and business cards were handed out to our fans!



On Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, Evanston Pride hosted its annual LGBTQ+ Community Picnic! We'll painted rocks, gave out swag, and met new neighbors who would like to join our chapter.

In an effort to increase our attendance at our monthly meetings and ensure we are providing our members with what they are looking for, we sent out an interest survey. We are hoping to keep growing our chapter and making even more of a positive impact for our members.

That's it for now from PFLAG Evanston/Northshore.

We wish you all well!

# PFLAG

## PTI CHICAGO

by **Francey Oscherwitz (she/her)**

Back in 2017, when “zoom” was just the noise kids made with toy cars—or what we called it when dogs raced around like demons—I attended my first PTI meeting. I was apprehensive and full of dark imaginings, having never attended a support group or met anyone with a child like mine who—bewilderingly to me then—no longer identified with their gender assigned at birth.

When I stepped into the big conference room on the second floor of the Center on Halsted, it looked surprisingly cheerful, abuzz with activity. I saw 20 to 30 humans (full-sized and three-dimensional, I now wistfully recall) having face-to-face conversations, helping themselves to snacks, or peering into one of the books arrayed on the long countertop (by Jo, our then librarian, who at meeting's end packed the ones not borrowed into her big rolling suitcase and lugged them back home).

That night, I delivered my “coming-out” story and then marveled at what I witnessed and heard as other parents took turns describing their own heartfelt experiences. I had found my people. The term “support group” fails to capture the instantaneous bond born of such shared vulnerability. Nor does it hint at the unique combination of encyclopedic knowledge and experience freely shared and gratefully received at each and every Chicago PTI meeting.

After the shutdown, our president, Bill Guilfoile, made our transition to online meetings seamless. Zoom soon joined contact lenses in my pantheon of favorite inventions. The distraction-less intimacy of faces on a screen suited my hyper-focusing ADHD brain. And newcomers from near and far showed up



and stayed. They remain loved members of our community.

Fast forward to July 13. It's Book Club night, and we're going to discuss **Transitions of the Heart**, a book I love and highly recommend. It's a hybrid meeting—the best of both worlds! We have 18 members in total—10 online and 8 in person. We begin introductions but our online voices echo freakishly in the real room.

We've had previous hybrid meetings. But this transition has not been seamless.

It seems the perfect hybrid technology has yet to trickle down from business class.

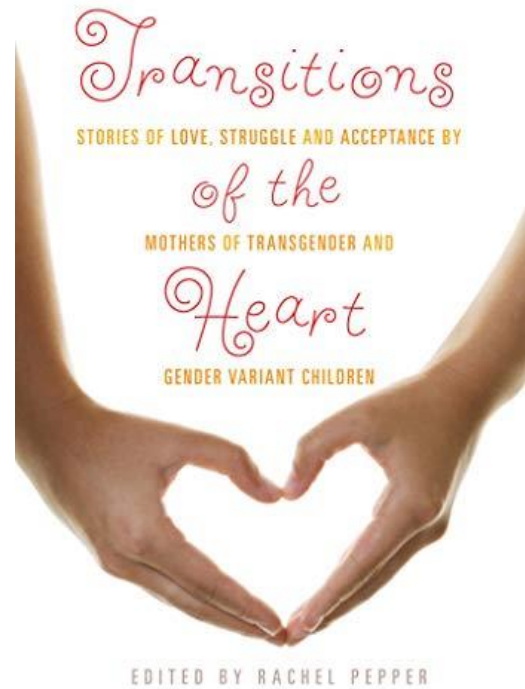
Tonight's book club is canceled and so is the hybrid meeting. We divide in two, with Bill manning the mothership while membership VP Christine Peters takes over Zoom.

We pivot—as our kids have trained us to do. Four new parents and a full-time nanny each have “coming-out” stories to share. And there are longtime parents--and grandparents—whose latest ups or downs we are anxious to hear. And miraculously we do—without a minute to spare.

We will reunite in August with an online-only meeting. The first hour will feature a speaker, clinical psychologist Mary Madrake, who will discuss mental health challenges faced by trans kids and their families—and how best to navigate the system.

At our September meeting, we will read and discuss our Book Club selection, **Transitions of the Heart: Stories of Love, Struggle and Acceptance by Mothers of Transgender and Gender Variant Children**. This classic compilation of voices has

helped demystify the trans-parenthood journey for many newly “out” parents and their families. It's like *reading* a support group.



(For a list of past Book Club selections and recommendations, contact Francey at [Franceyo101@gmail.com](mailto:Franceyo101@gmail.com).)

PTI Chicago meets on the second Thursday of each month.

Parent/s, guardians, or family members of transgender, nonbinary, or gender-diverse individuals who would like to join us for the first time should e-mail PTI Chicago President Bill Guilfoile at [bill.guilfoile@gmail.com](mailto:bill.guilfoile@gmail.com).

Participants will receive an email with the link and password to enter the meeting.

**“unique combination of encyclopedic knowledge and experience freely shared and gratefully received at each and every Chicago PTI meeting”**

# IVAN VAZQUEZ

**Visual Artist, Designer,  
Painter, Muralist,  
Street Artist**

**Interview by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)**

## MEET IVAN

Ivan Vazquez is a contemporary Mexican American/indigenous visual artist and designer born and based in Chicago Illinois. Ivan's work tells stories pertaining to humanistic, domestic, cultural, and social issues from an urban vantage point. Self-taught his work is Realism, Surrealism, Linear artwork, Pop art, Portrait, and Modern abstract expressionism. Using art as a weapon, Ivan's work portrays resilience by embracing and trusting community to help and guide me on my childhood journey growing up in Chicago. His work has allowed him to grieve the loss of best friends (Luis Trueba, Lino Diaz, Juan Zapata, and Daniel Aragon) and positively deal with trauma. His goal is to share his way of healing to others struggling. Ivan's has been featured in sponsored shows/charity and community events ranging from the Jordan Brand, Don Julio Tequila, Mountain Dew, Red Bull Music Academy, The NBA, Pepsi co., season 4 and 5 of "The Chi" on showtime, Howard Brown Health, Broadway Youth Center and Toyota. Ivan Vazquez's work continues to evolve and grow finding better ways to serve the community. Come take a look into the past, present, and most importantly the future with visuals from Ivan Vazquez's budding collection "Aztec boys n the hood".



**Ivan Vazquez holding his painting "Upton Xicago 2037"  
Photo by Joshua X. Miller, Vocalo Radio / Chicago Public**



## ARTIST STATEMENT

I lost a few brothers due to the senseless violence Chicago is known for. I stored it away for over 15 years until I came across an 8th grade photo of them and had an epiphany. My art became the way I finally grieved and at the same time heal it's my way to pay tribute to them. My mission is to empower/educate youth with positive and relate-able alternative lifestyles. The representation of Chicago and hip hop culture in my work reflects the need for positive outlets, unity, love and positivity.

My paintings are a reflection of how it feels and looks growing up in Chicago. The beauty and brutality the city is known for. My art embodies the four seasons and the need for balance in a city where if you don't stay

grounded you get swept away. My subjects are often very young and don the masks of Aztec/Zulu and indigenous warriors and gods. The characters represent modern day warriors and ancestors we call on for strength and to summon spiritual powers. The visuals are meant to empower, unify, inspire and educate. There is a darkness in my work as well as a sense of serenity, promise, and light. My goal is to preserve and contribute to the culture and represent the mis and underrepresented.

### CONTACT:

[www.ivanvazquezart.com](http://www.ivanvazquezart.com)

[ivanvazquez93@yahoo.com](mailto:ivanvazquez93@yahoo.com)



**True Inspiration: Ivan is kneeling in the front row. The young man in the white suit is the dear friend he lost.**

# INTERVIEW

**Open Doors:** You are a self-taught artist. Your works embody Realism, Surrealism, Linear artwork, Pop art, Portrait, and Modern abstract expressionism. How did you learn to master so many different genres?

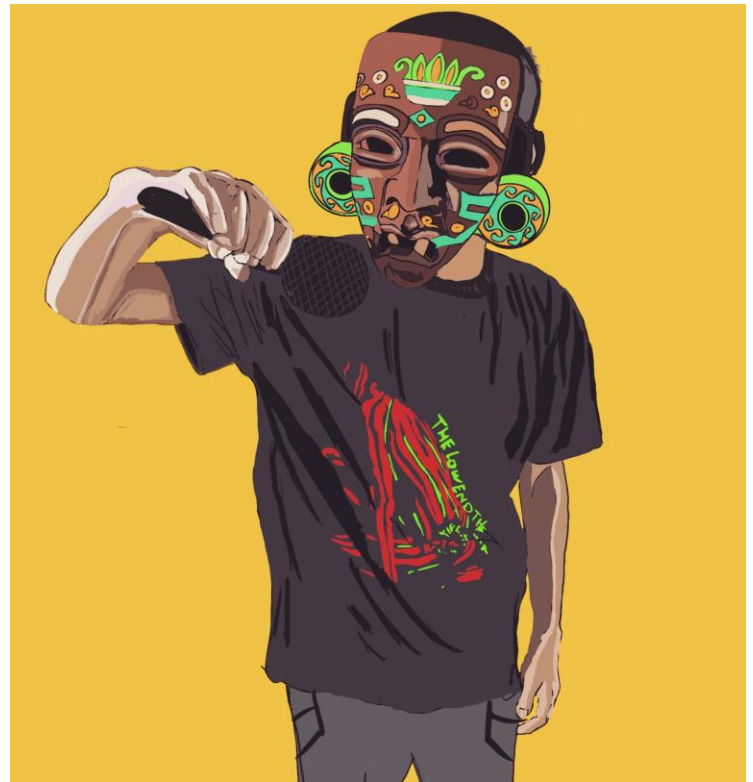
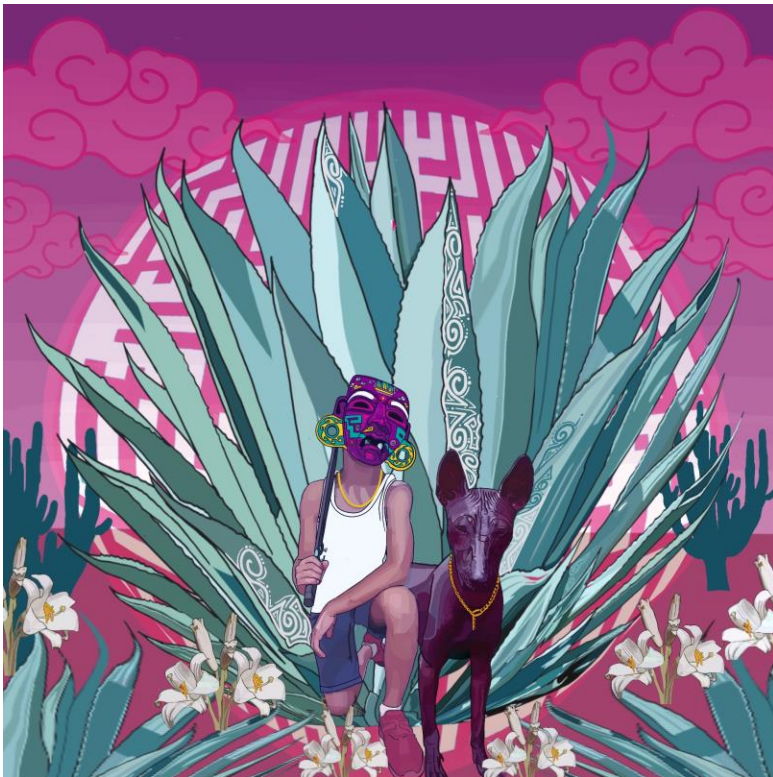
**Ivan Vazquez:** Not a master at all hahaa. I would attribute any success to the mindset of always being a student, continuing to learn and evolve. Being inspired by youth, elders, other artists and the support of local community has been a huge help. Recognizing my strengths as an artist and a person in general and leading with that has propelled me forward.





**OD:** Your art is deeply personal. You describe losing friends to violence at a young age. Your art is a means of expression to address grief, healing & trauma while connecting with community. How does your art create a safe space for young people (and others) to heal and develop resilience?

**IV:** That's the goal! To create a safe space for others to simply feel good and if some healing takes place even better. I think representation is important. Having super heroes that look and sound like us is important. Positive role models to look up to that represent our communities are vital. For me losing my best friend at age 17 I felt a lot of guilt for not doing more to save him. I locked away all those feeling for literally 13 years till I came across our 8th grade graduation photo and felt him in the room with me telling me it's not my fault and that he loves me. In that moment I knew my art would be in honor of him and others lost way too soon to the streets and or system. It really was a turning point in my life where I learned I was enough. That who I am is what I should celebrate. I think opening up about it invites others to do the same. Art is love and is therapeutic. I think alternative ways to get



Aztec boys in the hood



help are a good introduction to therapy and confronting and dealing with obstacles.

**OD:** “My goal is to preserve and contribute to the culture and represent the mis and underrepresented”. This statement says so much about your world view on culture. Can you talk about the development of one of your newer endeavors: looking into the past, present, and most importantly, the future with visuals from your budding collection "Aztec boys n the hood"?

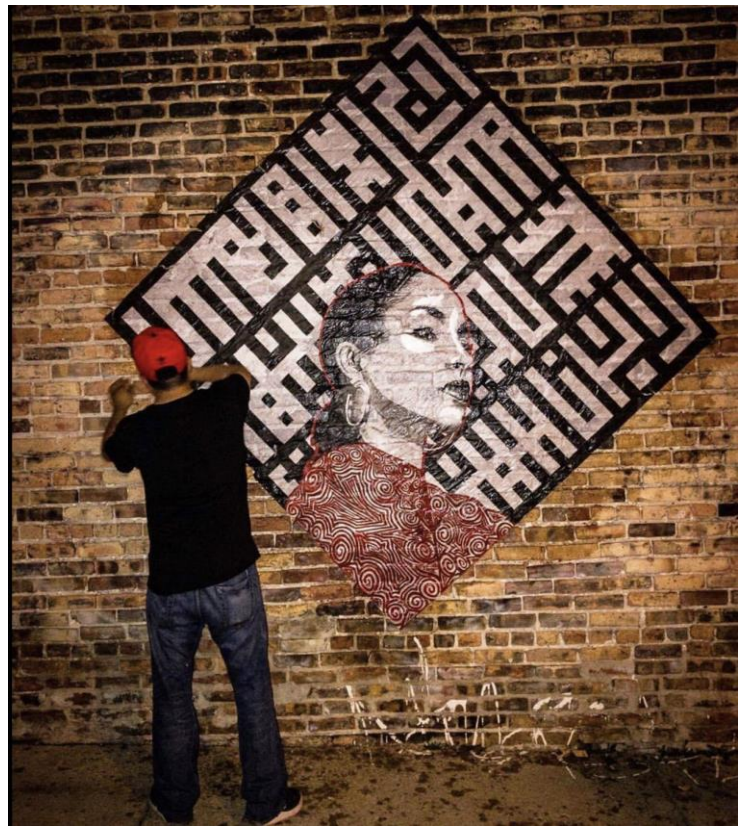
**IV:** My “Aztec boys n the hood” collection is really a reflection of me. A lost kid with identity issues navigating life in a crazy city like Chicago struggling with living up to the definition of what type of man I’m supposed to be to survive let alone thrive. Not feeling Mexican or American enough for either culture. The Hip hop and the artist community in Chicago welcoming me and giving me that identity of hey, I’m Mexican Chicagoan and I can be proud of it.

The character wears a mask that celebrates our indigenous features that were something we were taught were a negative. Changing the perception and becoming empowered through the art has been helpful to continue moving forward. Grateful that the characters have taken off and resonated with so many people of different Latin American backgrounds.

**OD:** Art may deliver a political statement, entertainment, education; it may shock, inspire, anger, fill with love or cause any other emotion. What effect do you want your artworks to have in the world?

**IV:** I want my art to be that extra bit of love for someone that truly needs it can receive it and feel supported and seen. A lot of people don’t have that support system and loving home so we as a community step in to provide that. It worked for me so it’s been a dream come true to give back all that love I received back to the community.

**OD:** As an Ally, do you think Chicago provides a creative environment for LGBTQ+ artists?



Sade ↗ →





**IV:** I think Chicago is on track to provide a good environment for the community but still has a lot of work to do. It's a process of unlearning and learning how to support others - especially marginalized and vulnerable communities.

**OD:** What, in your opinion, may strengthen human rights in the long term?

**IV:** Of course, I would say art is the weapon of the now and the future in the fight for human rights. You can't unsee or un-feel something once it's instilled in someone. Whether it's music or visual art it invites others who might not understand or agree with you see you for who you are. ♥

← ↓ **Black Lives Matter**



# I REFUSE TO GO BACK IN THE CLOSET

by **Jane Fahey (she/her)**

**Born in Iowa, Jane is a retired elementary school principal from Maine who is currently living in Florida. She was closeted for 40 years until marrying her life partner in 2015.**

This, being Pride Month, gives me a reason to react to recent legislation in some states regarding human rights as they relate to the LGBTQ+ community. Like many people, I can't begin to understand human development as it relates to the trans population. I can only understand my own journey. But, then again, I don't have to understand the trans experience to have empathy and compassion for fellow human beings who are different from me. What I have come to understand in these seven decades is that human beings come in all shapes, sizes, colors, personalities, intelligences, and cultures so that no two of us are alike. That patchwork of people makes for a very interesting and diverse world. My job is to be myself and to accept that others should have the human right to be themselves too.

Recent changes in Florida state laws have left me bewildered, however. Things have gotten so bad down there that warnings about travel to Florida have been issued by the NAACP, LULAC, the Human Rights Campaign and Equality Florida in recent weeks. The Governor who wants to be President is campaigning on a platform of "Make America Florida." That sends shivers right up my spine. Here's what's happening in Florida.

It all began a year ago with the passage of the Parental Rights in Education Act, AKA Don't Say Gay bill (HB1557). There is a lot to unpack about this law. This bill gives more power to parents with children in public schools to challenge anything they don't think the school should be teaching or materials they think shouldn't be used (textbooks, books, movies, etc). It has resulted in various books being challenged and, in some cases, banned. It also restricts what topics K-12 teachers can talk or teach about. (The original bill addressed only K-3 classrooms but was expanded to all grades this year) It also limits the conversations teachers can have with students and requires that parents be informed about those conversations. So if a student goes to a trusted teacher to talk about their fears that they might be gay or transgender, that teacher is obligated to inform the parents, even if the child begs them not to. Most of the challenges have been about books that depict same sex couples, even if they are stories about fictional characters or animals. It's ok to read a story about Suzie who has a mom and a dad but not about Tommy who has two moms. Teachers are having to review materials and face loss of their teaching licenses for violating the law. A recent situation of a teacher showing a picture of Michelangelo's David to her class during an art lesson when a parent complained because she was showing 'pornography' received national attention. And, of course, this bill is also the source of the governor's ongoing argument with Disney after the CEO came out against the new law. The

implications of this law are more extensive than I can explain here and, frankly, very very scary.

The passage of the Don't Say Gay law empowered the governor and the conservative controlled legislature to pass even more restrictive laws. On May 11 this year a bill (SB1580/HB1403) was signed by the governor that allows medical providers and insurance companies in Florida to deny services to anyone that they have a philosophical disagreement with (based on moral, ethical or religious beliefs). The bill targets the LGBTQ+ community as it does not include race, color, religion, sex or national origin as factors that could be considered. Under the new law, a medical provider can deny service for gender affirming care or if they don't agree with someone's same sex marriage. "Medical provider" is defined as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospitals and ambulances. Insurance companies may refuse to pay for a medical bill based on the same law.

Another bill (SB254) that was recently signed into law allows the State of Florida to take minor children who are transgender away from parents if the child is receiving any gender-affirming care. That bill also limits care for transgender youth AND adults, making it difficult if not impossible for individuals to receive the hormone therapy they need. Doctors risk felony charges for providing gender-affirming care. Furthermore, transitioning individuals are now required to use only the restroom of the gender they were assigned at birth. Failure to do so is now a criminal offense in Florida. Think about that. Let's say that Charles, who was born Charlotte, and has been going through transition for the last twenty years has to comply with the law by using the female restroom. He now looks like a guy, with some facial hair and sounds like a guy. How is that going to work as he walks into the women's restroom? Or what if it's the other way around? Charlotte who was born Charles has to use a men's toilet room because of the law. Will she be safe? How are the men going to react when this woman comes waltzing into the room? Laws are being written to protect the public from the LGBTQ population. What is being done to protect the LGBTQ population from the public?

Some individuals within the LGBTQ community in Florida have been saying that the State is trying to put us back in the closet again. I refuse to go back to those days. I do think it feels kind of like what was happening in Germany-Austria-Poland in the 1930's after Hitler came to power. Every month or so another law is being enacted that restricts our rights as citizens even more. When will it end? How bad will it get? Will life in the Sunshine State become so difficult that it forces us to leave? And if so, to where?

**Update:** *Since I wrote this article in early June, the courts have begun to declare a few of the new laws unconstitutional. No doubt these will continue to be challenged in higher courts. Nevertheless, the fact that they could even be passed by the Republican controlled Florida legislature to begin with is problematic. Certainly, the goings ons being raised in Florida will continue to be a concern and deserve our complete attention.*



# SHARED GRAPHICS

PCNI maintains an online shared repository of graphic designs and elements that PFLAG chapters may find useful for email communications or social media posts. Click [HERE](#) to access the files.

Kelly Hemmer of PFLAG DuPage has provided an update on files that she has recently designed and uploaded:

**Graphic Elements and Templates | Email Graphics | File: "PFLAG-Signature Line.jpg"**



**Graphic Elements and Templates | Table Graphics | File "2023-07 Donations Jar.pdf" (3 pages - scroll down to see all)**



**Buttons | Ready to Print Buttons | General Buttons | File "2023-06 Rainbow Mickey.pdf"**



**Buttons | Ready to Print Buttons | PFLAG Brand Buttons | File: "2023-06 Free Hugs.pdf" (2 pages)**



**c | Spanish Buttons | File "2023-06 Spanish Orgullosa.pdf" (8 pages)**



Visit the [Shared Graphics repository](#) to download these and other files and use them to enhance your chapter's graphic presentation.

If you are a member of a PFLAG chapter outside of PCNI and your chapter owns a button maker for 2.25" buttons, feel free to download and use button designs from our graphics repository. They are available in ready-to-print PDF files in **Buttons | Ready to Print Buttons**.

**Publish your artworks,  
photography, essays, poetry,  
movie and book reviews  
in Open Doors:  
[opendoors@pflagillinois.org](mailto:opendoors@pflagillinois.org)**

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**art GALLERY OPENING**

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Ruth Crowe      Brian Hofmeister

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MARKET DAYS

## MPOX/COVID VACCINE CLINICS

TWO LOCATIONS

**CENTER ON 6323 S COTTAGE GROVE**

**AUG 10TH**  
4:30PM-6:30PM THURSDAY

**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

**AUG 12TH & 13TH**  
2:00PM-5:00PM SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

\*Online registration recommended for available appointments. Walk-ins welcome. 1st and 2nd dose Mpx vaccine available. Pfizer and Moderna COVID Bivalent booster also available. Supported by ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Community Grant Program. Financial support has also been provided by Glaxo Sciences.

[centeronhalsted.org/MPvaccine.html](http://centeronhalsted.org/MPvaccine.html)

GILEAD      ViiV Healthcare

## Want to mentor?

Are you a trans or non-binary person over the age of 28? Do you want to make a lasting connection and positively impact the life of a young person in our community?

Youth Horizons mentoring program is accepting mentor applications for our cohort starting in August. Based on requests from mentees, we are particularly in need of trans and non-binary mentors. If that's you or someone you know, please consider applying!

Link to the application: <https://forms.gle/Dgup6QAazQszWjeZA>

**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

For more information, e-mail [hrrapp@centeronhalsted.org](mailto:hrrapp@centeronhalsted.org)

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YOUTHOUTLOOK | 25 YEARS and

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DUPAGE

# invite you to our LGBTQ+ Youth & Family

# Picnic

**Saturday, August 26 | 2:00 - 6:00 PM**

**DuPage River Park, 808 Royce Road, Naperville**

Join us for a fun-filled afternoon of connection and community. We'll provide burgers, hot dogs, and vegetarian options. Please bring a dessert or side to share if you are able.

All ages event and a substance-free space.



Scan to register so we know how much food to buy!

[Or click here to register](#)



# RESEARCH STUDIES

These studies are conducted by institutions not affiliated with PFLAG. We screen materials submitted for this section for legitimacy but encourage you to use your own judgement before entering any study to understand privacy, requirements, and incentives offered by the researchers.

## TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONBINARY YOUTH AGE 11-16

Children's National Hospital (Washington DC) and VU University Medical Center (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) are studying transgender youth life and care experiences in the United States as compared to the Netherlands (a country in Europe). The aim of this research is to understand which gender-related policies and practices most influence the wellbeing of transgender youth in each country. The study is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evidence for Action Program.

Transgender and gender nonbinary youth age 11-16 who live in the United States can be participants in this study. (The young people participating from the Netherlands are being recruited with a separate announcement in Dutch).

The study is conducted entirely online and will include five short study sessions over two years. The total participation time across the five sessions is about five hours. The young people will complete questionnaires about their experiences.

Parents/caregivers will also complete questionnaires about their child's experiences.

Families will receive a total of \$330 for their time.

If you have questions or would like to join the research study, contact:

Abby Fischbach, Clinical Research Coordinator  
Phone: 301-765-5573  
Email: [afischbach@childrensnational.org](mailto:afischbach@childrensnational.org)

## TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE INDIVIDUALS

Dr. Nomi Ostrander, an associate professor in the Social Work Department at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, who happens to be transgender, is conducting a research study examining the experiences of other transgender and gender expansive individuals during the early years of Covid-19.

The interview is anticipated to take up to an hour and will occur over Zoom or Google Meet. Participation in this study is voluntary and your identity as a participant will remain confidential. To participate email

[nomi@umn.edu](mailto:nomi@umn.edu).

Upon completion of the interview, you will receive \$20.

## TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND TRANSFEMININE PEOPLE

Project STARS is a research study at the Mindfulness for Health Equity Lab (mHEAL) at Brown University's School of Public Health, designed to develop and test a gender-affirming, peer counseling program for transgender women and transfeminine people.

Participation involves meeting one-on-one with a trans woman or transfeminine peer counselor for 4 sessions.

The study is currently enrolling participants for a clinical trial. Eligible participants can earn up to \$250.

Click [HERE](#) to find out if you qualify.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about our research, email Ty Scott (they/them) at [stars@brown.edu](mailto:stars@brown.edu).



# THEATER

First Christian Church in partnership with Mosaic Players proudly present:



SCAN OR CLICK HERE FOR TICKETS!

Saturday, September 16  
TWO SHOWS  
3:00 P.M. OR 7:00 P.M.



Performance location:  
801 63rd Street  
Downers Grove

Open Seating  
Doors Open  
30 minutes before curtain

“5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)



## Announcing PrideArts' 23-24 Season

A loser who wants to belong, a drowsy princess in search of love, and four bored inquisitive Catholic boys who wants some Bard in their lives. These are the characters you'll meet this season at PrideArts. **For a limited time, get 3 tickets for \$85.**

[CLICK HERE FOR YOUR FLEX PASS TICKETS](#)

**Pride Arts Presents**

**GAY CARD**

A NEW MUSICAL ABOUT FINDING WHERE YOU TRULY BELONG

MUSIC BY  
**RYAN KORELL**

BOOK BY  
**JONATHAN KEEBLER**

DIRECTED BY  
**JAY ESPAÑO**

MUSIC DIRECTION BY  
**ROBERT OLLIS**

AUGUST 24-SEPTEMBER 24, 2023 • PRIDEARTS CENTER

**Pride Arts Presents**

**Sleeping Beauty** WITH a Prick!

It started with a prick!

WRITTEN BY  
**TOM WHALLEY**

DIRECTED BY  
**BRYAN McCAFFREY**

NOVEMBER 16 - DECEMBER 17, 2023 • PRIDEARTS CENTER

**Pride Arts Presents**

Shakespeare's  
**P&J**

A MODERN ADAPTATION OF A CLASSIC LOVE STORY

BY  
**JOE CALARCO**

DIRECTED BY  
**MICHAEL GRAHAM**

FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 24, 2024 • PRIDEARTS CENTER



Open Space Arts  
[OpenSpaceArts.com](http://OpenSpaceArts.com)

Performances are in our home base of 1411 W Wilson. All performances are at 7:30, last 90 minutes, and no late seating is possible.

Open Space Arts presents  
**MESSAGE THERAPY**

A play by Joe Godfrey, Directed by David Zak  
Featuring Mary Anne Bowman & Raymond Nicholas

Nine performances Sept 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 27, 29, and Oct 1 at 7:30.  
Open Space Arts, 1411 W Wilson (just East of Clark)  
[Openspacearts.com](http://Openspacearts.com)

[BUY TICKETS FOR MESSAGE THERAPY](#)

Open Space Arts presents  
**ROSENBERG**

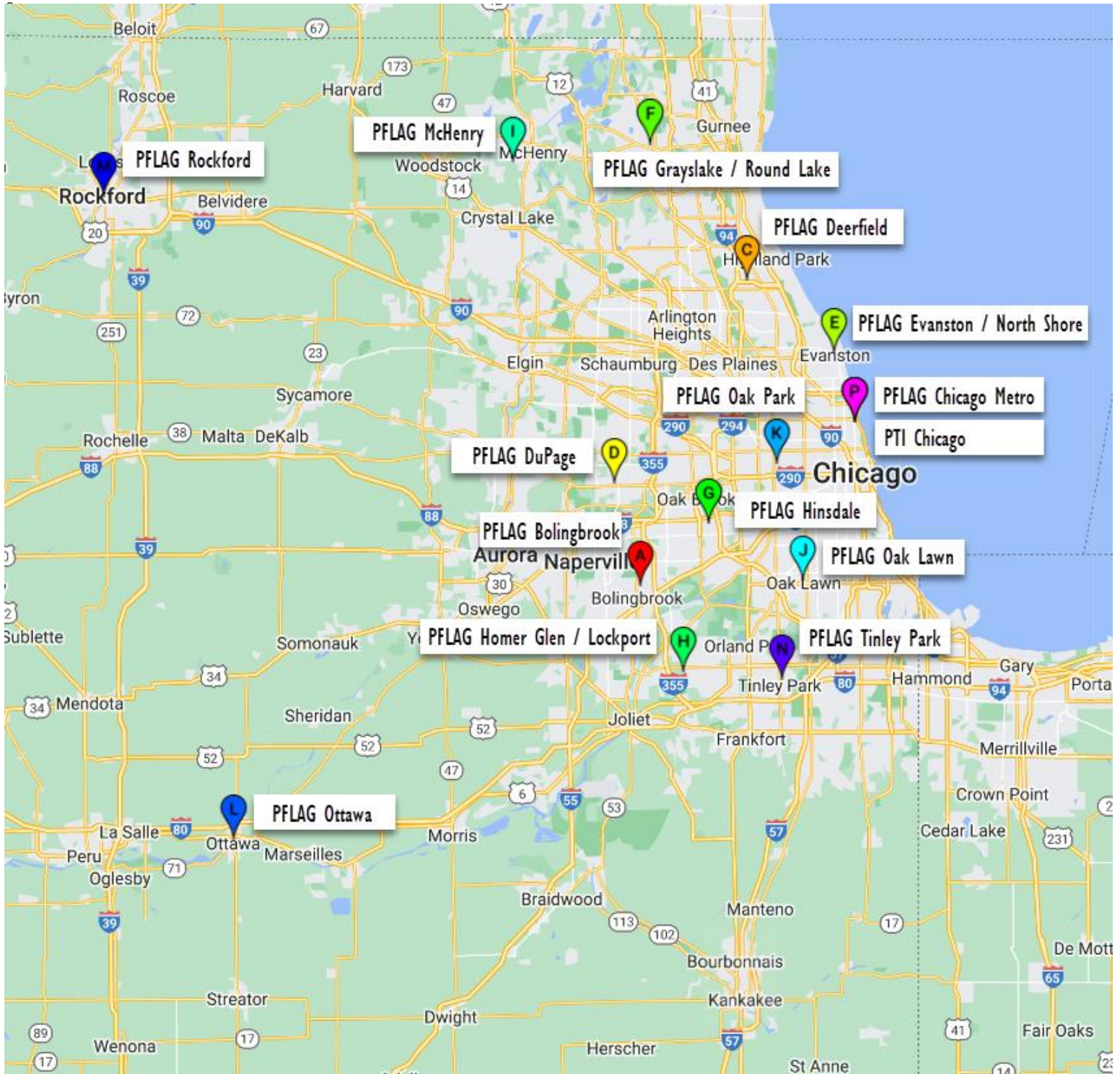
A play by David Meyers, Directed by Michael D. Graham

Nine performances October 21, 25, 27, 28, 29 November 1, 3, 4, 5 at 7:30.  
Open Space Arts, 1411 W Wilson (just East of Clark)  
[Openspacearts.com](http://Openspacearts.com)

[BUY TICKETS FOR ROSENBERG](#)



# PFLAG Northern Illinois Chapters



**Click/tap anywhere on the map to open it online and find meeting dates/ times/locations. Some chapters are meeting online on Zoom, and some are returning to in-person meetings. Contact the chapter for details before your very first meeting and watch for chapter announcements if you are a member.**