

**PFLAG**  
COUNCIL OF  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS

*Butterfly, Jim McNamee*  
more art on pp 16-20

# Open Doors

November 2023  
[opendoors@pflagillinois.org](mailto:opendoors@pflagillinois.org)

# LEARNING WITH LOVE

## Learning with Love: the PFLAG National Convention 2023

took place in Washington, D.C. between October 19th and 22nd. It drew hundreds of attendees from the U.S. and 14 foreign countries! 12 people represented PCNI. It was a time of advocacy, learning, and sharing our stories and experiences, many of them incredibly emotional. There were surprising guest appearances: the First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, gave a strong speech in support of the LGBTQ+ community before the opening plenary session, and the White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre spoke after the closing luncheon.

We've made so many new friends! We've met courageous people who are fighting for LGBTQ+ rights in incredibly hostile places - in the U.S. and abroad. Their stories are moving and inspiring.

Several people came from Uganda, where the legal punishment for same-sex relationships is life in prison... Even writing "legal punishment" in this context feels wrong. This law is inhumane, and there should be nothing "legal" about it!

I met a group of Russian-speaking delegates on the first day, who came from Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, and Lithuania. Some of them work for an organization providing support to LGBTQ+ people and their families in Russian-speaking countries in the region. In some of these countries even sharing LGBTQ+ information is illegal. These people are true heroes, sometimes forced to operate in secret and risking legal problems in their countries. I met a delegate from a country (which I won't name to protect their safety) where they can't officially call a PFLAG support meeting and have to instead announce it as a "gathering of friends" or something else that doesn't trigger censorship. They often post information for the LGBTQ+ community and allies on social media before a weekend when government censors aren't as active and delete it by Monday.

The day before the Convention opened was devoted to lobbying. We went to the Capitol and met with our senators and House representatives. Our Illinois delegation met with the staff of both state senators - Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, and each of us met with our respective Congress representative or their staff. We shared information about PFLAG and PCNI and our family stories about our LGBTQ+ loved ones. We thanked representatives who have been consistently supportive of the LGBTQ+ community and implored those in opposition to change their stance.



PCNI delegation (not all of us) at the Convention

I shared PCNI experiences as one of the panelists during the Strategy and Planning session. The room was full - not a single empty seat! In the audience, there were several other PCNI members, including two past PCNI Presidents, which felt incredibly supportive. You may be pleased to know that dozens of Convention attendees wore T-shirts based on prototypes that PCNI developed during our branding project and shared with PFLAG National to use on its products.

PFLAG National staff, Board of Directors, and PFLAG CEO Brian Bond have done a spectacular job organizing the convention and running the program! I've lost count of hugs and kind words. It's an unforgettable experience, and I hope that all our members will someday attend the Convention.

I spoke with multiple people at PFLAG National and reiterated PCNI's proposal to bring a future National Convention to Chicago. When Brian Bond walked into the elevator that I was riding, I shamelessly took the opportunity to give him my elevator pitch (literally!) 😊 PCNI remains committed to hosting a National Convention either in 2025 or later. As we voted a year ago, we'll use our resources, our fantastic volunteer force, and our strong connections with allied organizations and donors to help organize a future Convention in Chicago.

I have more exciting news to share! **PFLAG Peoria** has applied to join PCNI, and the Council has unanimously voted to approve

their membership at the quarterly meeting on October 28<sup>th</sup>. We welcome PFLAG Peoria to the Council! The chapter is five years old and is led by Amy Orwig - our exceptional PFLAG Regional Director. (Read Peoria's chapter report in this issue.)

More good news: PCNI has been approved by Synchrony Financial to receive a **\$15,000 grant to establish a scholarship** for LGBTQ+ students. We have formed a committee to implement this exciting new program. Details will be announced in future issues of Open Doors.

The National Convention has given us new knowledge, connections, and resources. It has energized us to keep leading with love! I call on you to attend your chapter meetings, help new members, and if you can, volunteer to help PCNI or your chapter and donate generously to help PFLAG do more!

With Love,

*Andrew Zanevsky* (he/him)

PCNI President

Some of many PFLAG Lobby Day participants →



# Highlights of the PFLAG National Convention 2023

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

## Moments you won't want to miss:

Read the article by [Citizen Weekly](#) about the PFLAG National Convention.

Learn more at [PFLAG.org/LearningWithLove](https://pflag.org/LearningWithLove) and stream this year's plenaries on YouTube at [Youtube.com/@pflagstreams](https://youtube.com/@pflagstreams).

Here's the [Highlight Reel](#) for you if you would like to watch the live stream:

- Listen to our phenomenal First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden at minute 12:00 through minute 24:30. Or read her powerful words at [First Lady Jill Biden's Prepared Speech for 2023 PFLAG Convention](#).
- Catch CEO Brian Bond's inspiring opening remarks beginning at minute 28:00 through minute 38:45. This might be one of the best single lines of the conference: "PFLAG versus Abbott – Yes, those might be my 3 favorite words."
- PFLAG National Convention came together to honor award winners, including Dayton, Ohio's Michael Knote of Have a Gay Day with the "Morty Manford Volunteerism Award". You won't want to miss this incredible [acknowledgement of Michael Knote of Have a Gay Day](#). It will remind you of the

power of one person to make a difference for many. Please watch the embedded [video at the end of the article](#).



Dr. Jill Biden speaking at the Convention opening

**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

**11th Circuit Court rules Florida's drag ban cannot go into effect.** The October 11th ruling upheld an injunction a federal district court issued in June.

## FEDERAL MATTERS

**President Biden releases statement marking 25th Anniversary of Matthew Shepard's death.**

**White House Press Secretary honors National Coming Out Day.** Karine Jean-Pierre, the first openly lesbian White House Press Secretary, acknowledged National Coming Out Day on October 11th, saying "This Administration stands with the LGBTQ+ community. We have your back. We are in this fight with you. And we will continue to speak up, speak out, and stand up for our rights and freedoms."

**First Lady speaks out against book bans at PFLAG's National convention.** Dr. Jill Biden condemned anti-LGBTQ+ book bans and discussed the potential for small acts to spark transformative social change for the opening plenary session of Learning with Love: The 2023 PFLAG National Convention.

**PFLAG supporters get mixed reception at their legislators' offices at PFLAG National's Lobby Day.** Aides for U.S. Sens. Rick Scott (R-FL) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) treated constituents visiting their offices disrespectfully. By contrast, staff for other members, including other Republicans were positive, affirming and respectful.

## STATE MATTERS

**Delaware - Gov. Carney signs "gay and trans panic" defense ban into law.** Delaware is the 17th state to ban defendants from using their victims' real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation as a justification for committing acts of violence.

**Florida - Trans and non-binary activists sue to block bathroom ban.**

**Georgia - State agrees to cover gender-affirming care for state employees.** Georgia settled a lawsuit brought by the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF) on behalf of three state employees who were denied coverage for treatments for themselves or their dependents.

**Pennsylvania - Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kinney signs executive order protecting medically necessary gender-affirming care.** The order bans the city government from providing information or assistance to any investigation that may try to penalize anyone receiving or providing gender-affirming care in the city of Philadelphia.

## GLOBAL MATTERS

**Mauritius - Court nullifies colonial-era anti-LGBTQ+ law.** The decision was celebrated by LGBTQ+ rights groups and UNAids, the United Nations agency in charge of combating HIV/AIDS, saying it would save lives.

**United Kingdom - Prime Minister Rishi Sunak makes transphobic remarks at Conference.** On October 4th, the Prime Minister claimed the British public was being "bullied" into believing that "people can be any sex they want to be," adding "a man is a man, and a woman is a woman, that's just common sense."

**Canada - Saskatchewan passes forced outing bill requiring parental consent for a student under age 16 to use a new "gender-related" name or gender identity at school.**

**China - Hong Kong court rules same-sex couples have equal inheritance rights.** Same-sex marriage is not legal in Hong Kong, but some couples travel abroad to get married.

**Japan - Supreme Court rules law, which dated back to 2003, requiring gender confirmation surgery before acquiring official gender change documents is unconstitutional.**

## MEDIA MATTERS

**The 'first English-language trans novel' adapted for stage.** The International Theatre Program at the University of Rochester is launching its production of Sarah Ruhl's "Orlando" this October. This production offers an exploration of identity and gender fluidity.

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/)**

# MEET PCNI'S NEWEST CHAPTER

## PFLAG PEORIA

by Amy Orwig (she/her)

Hello PCNI!

We are PFLAG Peoria, located in the heart of Illinois. We're located equidistant from Chicagoland, and St. Louis - and, we're excited to be teaming up with the amazing chapters of PCNI 😊



A little bit more about us: our chapter will officially be five years old in December! 🎂 We hold monthly education/support meetings for chapter members & visitors. We also run a social youth group, Q Collective, twice a month. And, we have monthly "Parents' Night Out" support sessions. Over the past few months, we have participated in several events, including the LGBTQ+ Family Picnic, River City Pride Fest, Pride Night at the Peoria Chiefs, and a local library's Pride Picnic. We also supported members of the LGBTQ+ community in nearby Morton, when

some anti-LGBTQ+ hate reared its ugly head, by entering a small parade float in Morton's Pumpkin Festival Parade. Our theme was "Helping Love Grow in our Community".

Our current focus is on gearing up for our fifth birthday party, to be held at our December chapter meeting.

So, that's us. We're looking forward to getting to know you all better!

**This is a photo of our "float", and some feedback we received:**



*I was visiting family in Morton last weekend, and it was so encouraging to see the PFLAG family in the Pumpkin Fest parade.*

*I live in Chicago where it's very easy/socially-encouraged to support LGBTQ+ causes. But you were standing up for the LGBTQ+ family in a not-so-friendly environment. And you did it by showing only love. I don't know how well you were received, but I just wanted to say thank you!*

# REPORT FROM PCNI'S YOUNGEST CHAPTER

# PFLAG

## HOMWOOD - FLOSSMOOR

by Rachel Nati Hardy (she/her)

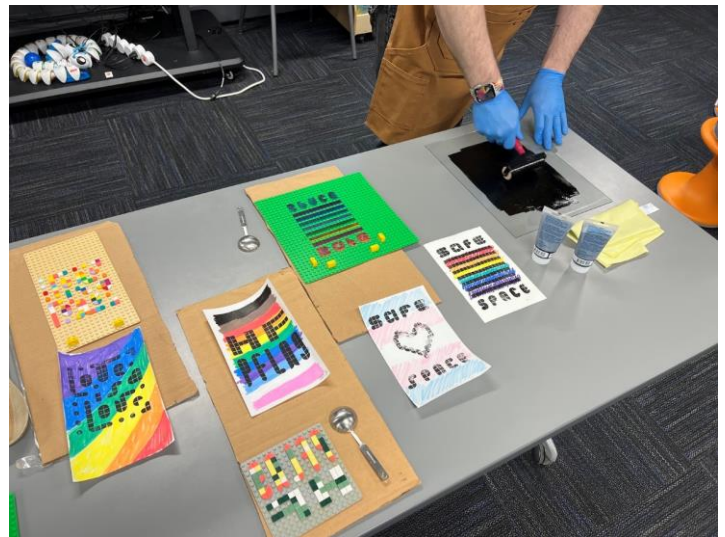
At our October meeting, Galen McQuillen hosted a LEGO printmaking art project to celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month. We'd like to extend our gratitude to Galen and all who participated. We also celebrated by posting photos, biographies and quizzes of modern and historic LGBTQ+ icons on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages throughout October.

We also launched a Spirit Day campaign in October, reaching out to our local school districts and town governments and inviting them to promote and participate in [the GLAAD event](#) with us. The response was enthusiastic and people across Homewood and Flossmoor wore purple on October 19 to show public support for our LGBTQ+ youth, including elected Trustee Anne Colton of Homewood and H-F Intergovernmental Committee members representing both Villages, all three schools districts, and our shared Park District.

Homewood-Flossmoor High School enthusiastically embraced the campaign, hosting a Spirit Day table for students and staff and inviting the *Daily Southtown* to come talk to students and take photos of the festivities. The GSA at James Hart Middle School in Homewood also promoted the campaign across the school and many teachers and staff wore purple to honor the day. In the media, CHGO Sports' Chicago Blackhawks Podcast hosts wore purple – including Homewood's own Jay Zawaski – and promoted Spirit Day on air and on social media.

We were overwhelmed by the response, especially given the last minute nature of our ask, and are deeply grateful for the community-wide support of our local LGBTQ+ youth.

Join us for the next monthly meeting on Sunday, November 12 at 2 pm in Homewood! This meeting will be a safe and welcoming space for open discussion, support, and learning. Our featured topic is gender affirming care, which will be presented by guest speaker Sam Rummel from Howard Brown Health. Whether you're a newcomer or a regular attendee, we look forward to seeing you there. Please RSVP [on our website](#) to let us know you'll be joining us!



**LEGO printmaking at our October support meeting in Homewood**



**H-F Intergovernmental Committee members wearing purple for LGBTQ+ youth on Spirit Day. Those pictured include leaders from the Village of Homewood, Village of Flossmoor, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, Homewood School District 153, Flossmoor School District 161, and Homewood-Flossmoor School District 233.**



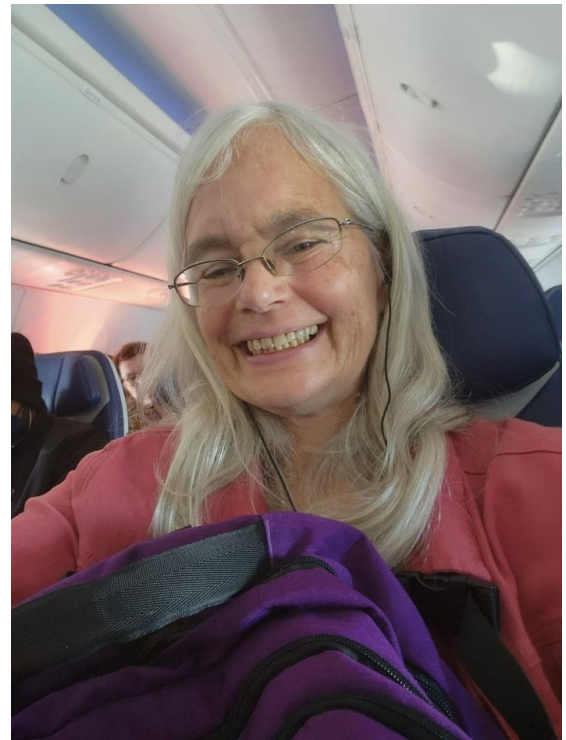
**H-F High School tabled for Spirit Day and pitched the Daily Southtown, who was on site on October 19 to talk to staff and take photos.**



**CHGO Sports' Chicago Blackhawks Podcast hosts wore purple and promoted Spirit Day on air (Jay Zawaski, left, Homewood resident and friend of PFLAG).**



**James Hart Middle School Administration and Office Staff wearing purple for LGBTQ+ youth on Spirit Day**



**Anne Colton, Trustee, Village of Homewood sent us a photo from the road, where she was off visiting her daughter and her wife.**



# PFLAG

## DUPAGE

by **Kelly Hemmer (she/her)**

Our speakers this month were Carolyn Wahlskog and Maxine Smollen from Youth Outlook. They talked about all the great things going on at Youth Outlook, including a new Health and Wellness Program that they are working on starting. Maxine talked about Q-Chat, an online hangout space for LGBTQ+ youth. Youth Outlook is one of many organization that facilitate for Q-Chat, hosting the Friday night session.

Carolyn also talked about some of the data available about LGBTQ+ youth.

According to [HRC's 2023 LGBTQ Youth Report](#) the average age LGBTQ+ youth realize they are something other than heterosexual is 11.1 years old. The [2022 Illinois Youth Survey](#), which breaks its data down by county, shows that 20% of youth in DuPage county identify as LGBTQ+.

And [The Trevor Project's 2023 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health](#) says "41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year – and young people who are transgender, nonbinary, and/or people of color reported higher rates than their peers.

PFLAG DuPage was well represented at the PFLAG National convention. One of our favorite things about the convention was the group of 25 people that were there from all around the world. Was interesting to hear about the different issues dealt with in different parts of the world, but also seeing how what they are doing is the same. Loving their kids, advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, and helping those who are struggling by listening and sharing what they have learned.



**PFLAG DuPage at the PFLAG National Convention 2023**



# PFLAG

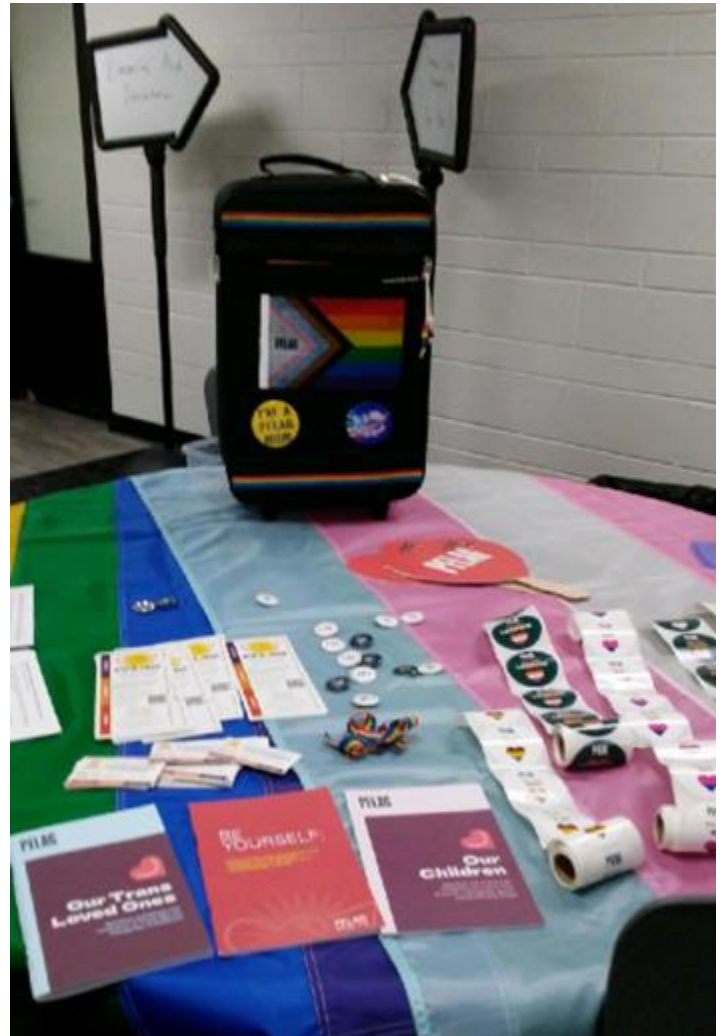
## MCHENRY

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

PFLAG McHenry welcomed guest speaker (and new member) Ellen Cleary at our October General Meeting. Ellen is Vice President of Operations at Northwestern Medicine's Huntley Hospital and has an adult child in the LGBTQIA+ community. She spoke to our group about Northwestern's Gender Pathways Program. The mission of the Gender Pathways Program is to "provide high quality, affirming health care to transgender and non-binary (TGNB) people through the consideration of a person's holistic experience of their gender across the lifespan" to those 18 and older. Ellen explained that

meeting with a Gender's Pathway Program Coordinator is the first step to getting things started. The Coordinator is exactly that, and will help participants navigate their journey through the program. Ellen can be contacted at: [ELLEN.CLEARY@NM.ORG](mailto:ELLEN.CLEARY@NM.ORG) if you wish more information about the Gender Pathway's Program at Northwestern Medicine.

PFLAG McHenry continues to do outreach work in our community. We were recently invited to talk with students of the McHenry High School District's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) group. We like to do what we do best: tell our stories and share our experiences with our LGBTQIA+ family members and loved ones. We were amazed by these young people, their questions, their comments, their support for one another...and the fact that during our presentation the only sound we heard from them was the munching of potato chips & cookies! Our favorite part is always when we get to chat & mingle with our audience, and these kids did not disappoint. A few hugs and tears were shared, along with resources and contact information.



# PFLAG

## DEERFIELD

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

Friendship, love, and support filled our October meeting as we welcomed newcomers and embraced old friends. A little bit of news....

We learned long-time and much-loved member Merle Weston passed away on May 5, 2023. Although Merle moved to Colorado a while ago, she remained close in our hearts. May she Rest In Peace.

One of our members shared Casa Susanna, an intimate book of photos edited by Robert Swope and Michael Hurst. In the 1950's and 60's, Casa Susanna, a house in the Catskills region of New York, was a safe place where transgender women and cross-dressing men could live freely without fear of societal repercussions. The book tells a beautiful and important story of LGBTQ+ history. It was recently made into a PBS documentary.

At the time of the meeting, some members were getting ready to support Buffalo Grove Pride on October 22 and invited all who were available to join them.

We are reading and planning for our upcoming book club featuring I'll Take Everything You Have. We are excited that James Klise, the author, and past Deerfield speaker, has offered to lead our discussion! Details to be determined.

Happy Fall!

# 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.



October was a fun month for PFLAG Oak Park. Members of PFLAG Oak Park attended the fabulous 2023 OPALGA+ Scholarship Gala, held on Saturday, October 21, 2023 at the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association. The fundraiser event, presented by Kendall Alexander, Attorney at Law, helped OPALGA+ award over **\$40,000 in scholarships for LGBTQ+ students for the 2024-25 school year!** Some features of the event included an open bar, drag performances, piano entertainment,

a DJ and dancing, raffle prizes, a live auction, and a panel discussion with the 2023 Scholarship recipients. Plus our emcee, **Tim Joyce from WGN**, helped us celebrate the two winners of the Mel Wilson OPALGA+ Founders Award - the Oak Park Public Library and Erich Krumei of Play It Again Sports in Forest Park. This memorable event was a blast!



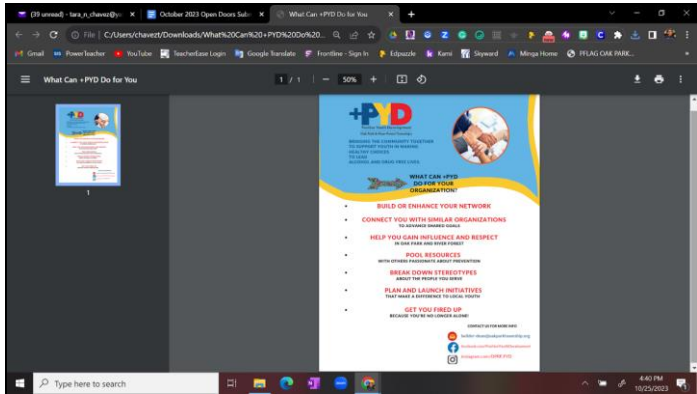
Next, we were fortunate and proud to host a speaker at our meeting this past Sunday. Lyn Wilder-Dean, DFC Project Coordinator from Positive Youth Development (+PYD) offered an hour-long presentation of the evidence-based Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) communications campaign “Talk They Hear You.” This campaign is all about increasing confidence and skills of parents who want to talk with their children effectively about the sensitive topic of substance use. +PYD’s mission is to bring the community together to identify and implement

prevention strategies that support youth in making healthy choices to lead alcohol and drug-free lives.



Why is this presentation important for parents? According to Lyn, "We are looking to recruit parents for a focus group for our Marijuana Parent Communications Campaign. Over the summer we produced three prototype designs for social media and pamphlet communications to help parents bolster their communication skills on the topic of youth marijuana use prevention. We need to get some feedback from the community on what will help them the most. +PYD recognizes that LGBTQIA+ youth are one of the most vulnerable populations for youth substance use due to the discrimination and stigma they face. So the most immediate way that PFLAG could help +PYD out would be to see if there

are any parents or caregivers of LGBTQIA+ youth in Oak Park or River Forest who would like to give us their valuable input via the focus group.... More importantly, +PYD is looking to collaborate with PFLAG in the long term."



Finally, PFLAG Oak Park was proud to host a table for members and allies of the OUT! Bowling League in Addison, IL. Started in Fall of 2014, Out! Bowling has seen over a dozen seasons of friends, family, and loved ones for the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. If you're interested in learning more and looking for a pressure-free night out with your friends where you can be, well, YOU - then Out! Bowling is for you! This is a fun group of people who absolutely love hanging out with one another and look forward to this weekly Thursday event. You don't have to be good at bowling to join either! The bowling alley is located at Stardust Lanes in Addison, IL, on Thursday nights. Learn more at <http://www.outbowling.com>

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 November 19th at 3PM. Mark your calendars!**

**Publish your artworks, photography, essays, poetry, movie and book reviews in Open Doors, send us your ideas of topics to cover and people to interview: [opendoors@pflagillinois.org](mailto:opendoors@pflagillinois.org)**

# PFLAG HINSDALE

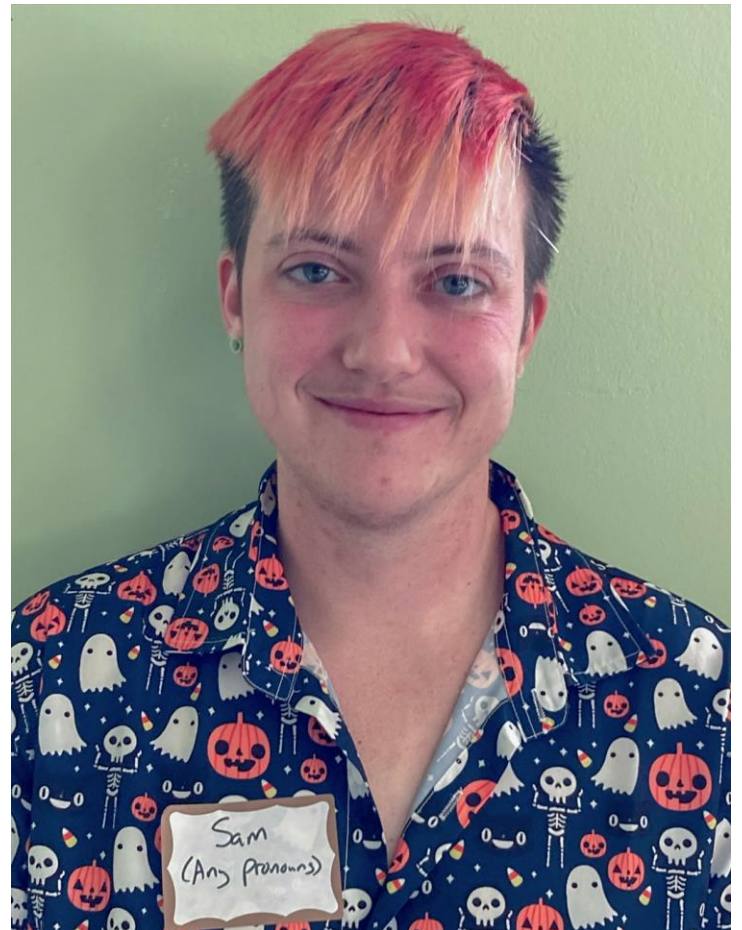
by **Marcia Prichason (she/her)**

PFLAG Hinsdale welcomed Sam, Hormone Program Coordinator for the Howard Brown Center on Sunday, October 1st. As a Licenced Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Sam works closely with Howard Brown’s team of medical providers and other professionals to provide gender affirming treatment for post pubertal individuals. Their primary focus is to serve youths 12 – 17 years of age.

Sam explained the benefits of HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) for young people in the process of affirming their authentic identity. They may have found the right name, right pronouns, and the clothing that affirms who they are, but inside there still needs to be change. HRT can do that. The data shows that, with gender affirming treatment, there is substantially less chance of substance abuse and 50% less chance of self harm and suicide. With parental involvement, that sky rockets to 8.4 times less chance. Those are important statistics because in the past year alone, 1 in 5 young people who identify as transgender have attempted some form of self harm.

Sam highlighted the benefits and drawbacks of HRT.

Most visible changes are not evident for several months and the entire process may take 1 -2 years. There are some physical characteristics that will not change and there are risks. Sam emphasized that it is very important to be seen regularly by a supportive and knowledgeable Physician/Care Team that is fully versed in medication options, their effects and efficacy, and possible side effects and risks. Receiving HRT is going to mean a “second puberty.” Sam emphasized that everyone involved should be aware of and educated about what is happening not only externally, but within the individual who is receiving the treatment.



**“with gender affirming treatment, there is substantially less chance of substance abuse and 50% less chance of self harm and suicide”**

Following Sam's presentation, the group discussed the upcoming panel discussion PFLAG Hinsdale is conducting in conjunction with EQDG (Equality Downers Grove). This program will be held on Monday, November 6th from 7:00 – 8:30 P.M. for the parents and guardians of youth who have come out as LGBTQ+. It will be an informal, informative get-together so those who are new to our community can gain insights, learn strategies, and, hopefully, find they are not alone.

Our November 5th meeting will feature Fredy LLuvia/Rain Roberts-Ramirez. They will speak to us about their work as Sr. Program Manager for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation of the Chicago Public Health Division. The meeting will be held at the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, 17 W. Maple, Hinsdale, IL. Everyone is welcome to attend.

PFLAG Hinsdale will be participating in tree trimming at the Brookfield Zoo again this year. Our tree will be decorated on November 12th and be on display until January. It will hold an amazing display of PFLAG ornaments. Please visit the Zoo and enjoy our contribution!

PFLAG Hinsdale encourages all allies to attend the Downers Grove Public Library Board of Trustees meetings. The Trustees and staff are receiving an inordinate amount of hostility for holding LGBTQ+ Programs and maintaining LGBTQ+ materials in their collection. Your support is greatly needed; we cannot allow these adversaries to bully the Board Members into changing course. Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month (unless otherwise posted) at 7:30 P.M. at the Downers Grove Public Library, 1050 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL

Our December 3rd meeting, held at the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale will, once again, be our holiday potluck. We will enjoy sharing good food, good conversation, and excellent companionship in our safe and welcoming meeting place. Everyone is welcome to attend!

# Leading With Love . . . Not Just a Slogan

by **Marcia Prichason (she/her)**

**PFLAG Hinsdale,**

**[mprichas@gmail.com](mailto:mprichas@gmail.com)**



It all began with a conversation. My friend, a Downers Grove Library Board member, related to me the vitriol the Board and staff members receive at Library Board meetings. Actually, the anger and hostility seem to stem from the library's decision to host a Drag Queen Bingo event. Over 100 young people signed up, but the community was outraged. Drag Queen Bingo was cancelled, but the library's

position on maintaining LGBTQ+ resources, to this day, is a source of anger and hostility. I relayed to my friend that I wished those resources had been available when our son was coming out. Maybe we could have better helped him in his journey. Maybe he wouldn't have felt so alone. Maybe we all would have been better informed. She asked me to come to a meeting and say just that... and I did.

What I discovered launched me in a direction I had not anticipated. It's easy to attribute the bigotry and animosity toward our LGBTQ+ kids to places like Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee. But when it's in our own backyard, literally in our community, it's as horrifying as it is mind blowing.

So now I go to each meeting armed with information to refute the false narrative that our children are deviants who deserve to be denied any dignity. I attempt, respectfully, to inform, educate, and yes, persuade an often openly contemptuous and angry crowd that our kids are entitled to respect.

I see now that this is what advocacy looks like. It was frightening at first. I'm not good at confrontation. But I've learned I have allies! My PFLAG chapter has supported me every step of the way. I contacted Equality Illinois and Mike Ziri provided me with a very informative "Tool Kit" from which I have drawn. I've made it a point to coordinate with other community LGBTQ+ organizations and the Library Foundation. I feel like I'm politicking (and I guess I am) at Library

Board Meetings, as I move amongst supporters, exchanging hello's and thank you's.

Resources for our LGBTQ+ youth are not going anywhere thanks to the new law in Illinois that prohibits book banning. But the fight for dignity, respect, and equality is, sadly, all too real. We cannot, **must not** let our guard down. For it is in our own libraries, villages, and towns where we must prevail. Each and every one of us needs to stand up and advocate for a better future for our loved ones. Who are they to tell us what our kids can or cannot read? Who are they to tell us there is something wrong with our kids?

The fight has **come to us**, and we must take it on. This is not a dress rehearsal, this is not theoretical. Our schools, our libraries, our communities are under assault, and it is up to us to counter the hatred, bigotry, falsifications, misrepresentations, and demonization... because if we don't, who will?

So I encourage you to see for yourself what is happening in your community and to jump in head first. I'm no expert. I'm not brave. But I'm not afraid to fight for my kid and your kid and every kid who needs us. Yes, this is a big ask. It means putting yourself out there, making yourself vulnerable. Are you ready to do that for the future of all our kids? I'm here to help if you are.

**Each and every one of us needs to stand up and  
advocate for a better future for our loved ones.**

# Jim McNamee

Interview by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)



## ARTIST STATEMENT

Jim McNamee has been a therapist in the Chicago for over twenty years. He has also worked as a volunteer clinician with Center on Halsted since 2018. Jim has been painting and drawing for most of his life and received training at several local universities. His current pieces are strongly impacted by his career. He believes the ability to see beyond the surface is an invaluable tool for a therapist. “What you view on the outside of a person, often tells you very little about what is going on underneath. Values, struggles, and passion aren’t things we can see.” In his portraits, Jim uses random lines and cellular detail to allude to the inner-being. He also welcomes mistakes, smudges, pen marks, and even torn paper and uses them to represent the imperfections in all of us. By keeping these things in his works, he’s attempting to make beauty out of what might normally be kept hidden.

### Contact Information:

[jmcnamee@urbanbalance.com](mailto:jmcnamee@urbanbalance.com)

IG: [@jmcnamee2020](https://www.instagram.com/jmcnamee2020)



# INTERVIEW

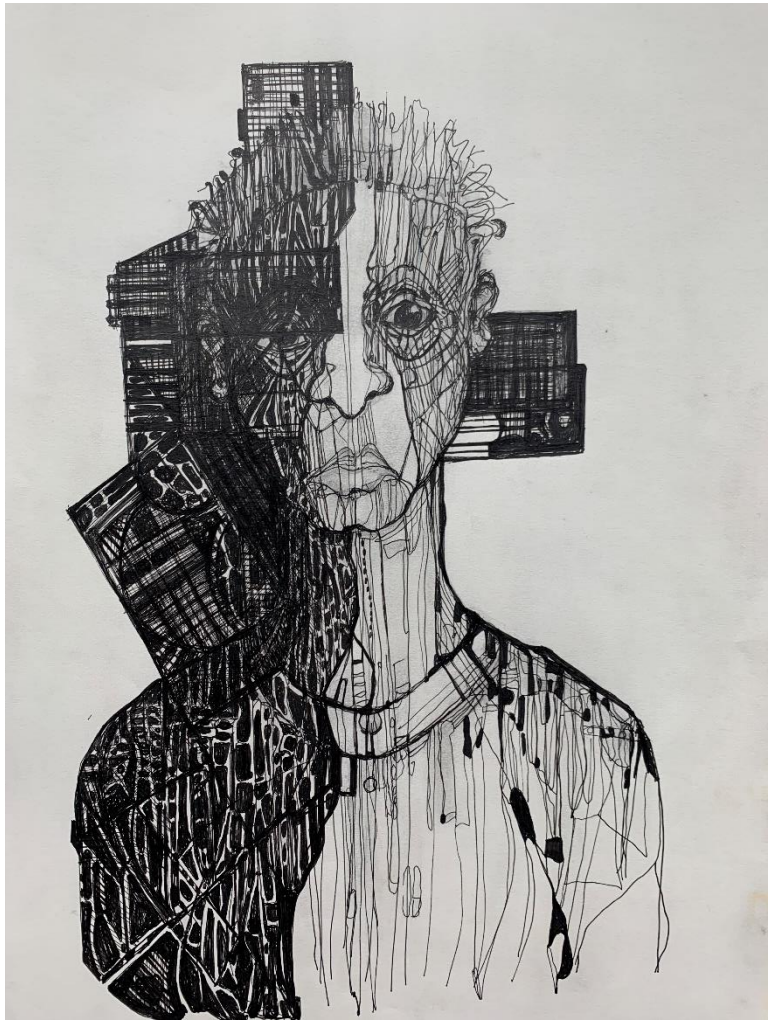
**Open Doors:** How did you discover your passion for painting and drawing? When did you first start painting and when did you decide to be an artist?

**Jim McNamee:** I can't remember a time I didn't do some type of doodling, or actual drawing. I pretty much always had something around that I could draw on, and if I didn't, I'd steal one of my dad's legal pads. But I think he got a little tired of that, so I remember he and my mom giving me an advanced botanical coloring book that I really loved. There was a lot of detail, and I was obsessed with filling out each section very carefully.

I don't think I ever decided to be an artist, and even now, because it is not what I do for a living, I seem to shy away from saying that I'm an artist. But more recently, when people see my art, I can talk about my perspective and technique, but it doesn't come naturally.

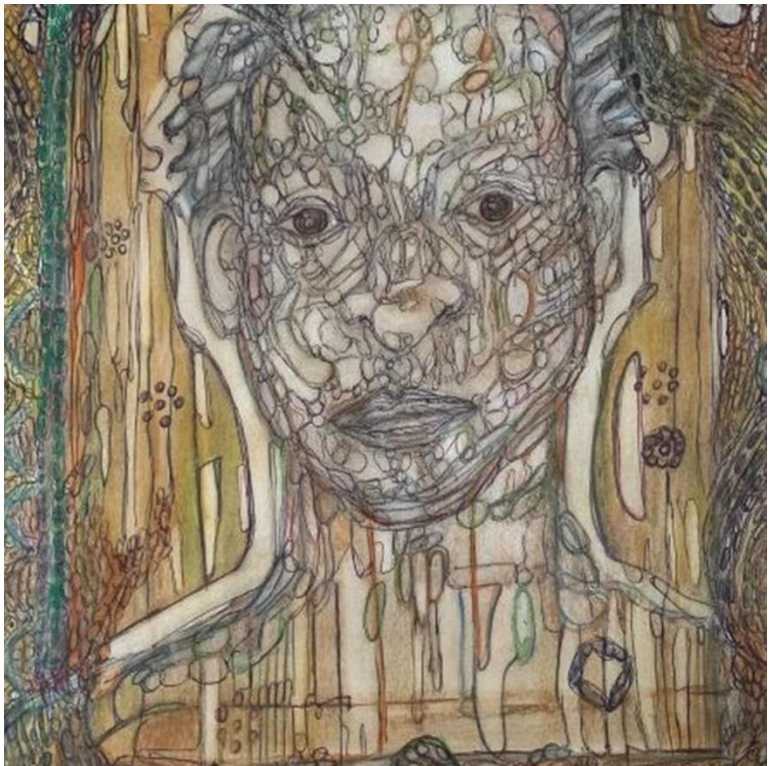
**OD:** When I met you at the Center on Halsted back in April, it was your first public Art Show. The description stated "His current pieces are strongly impacted by his career." The collection on display captured individuals who personified a variety of powerful emotions. How did your work as a therapist inform this particular collection of paintings? I do recall you had a very positive response from your patrons / viewers.

**JM:** Some people find my work to be a little sad or depressing, but I think I gravitate towards wanting people to feel something from my pieces. This seems to connect to my work as a therapist because I'm often telling my clients to accept their moods and feelings, even when they're not pleasant. There's always something to discover when you're angry or sad, and I like to think that people do this when they look at my work. But more specifically, I think a few of the works I showed at the Center on Halsted were inspired by seeing so many of my brave clients find themselves, even though they were facing a lot of adversity and pain at the time. For example, the intention behind the painting "Butterfly" was to evoke



Unfinished ↑

Imperfection ↓



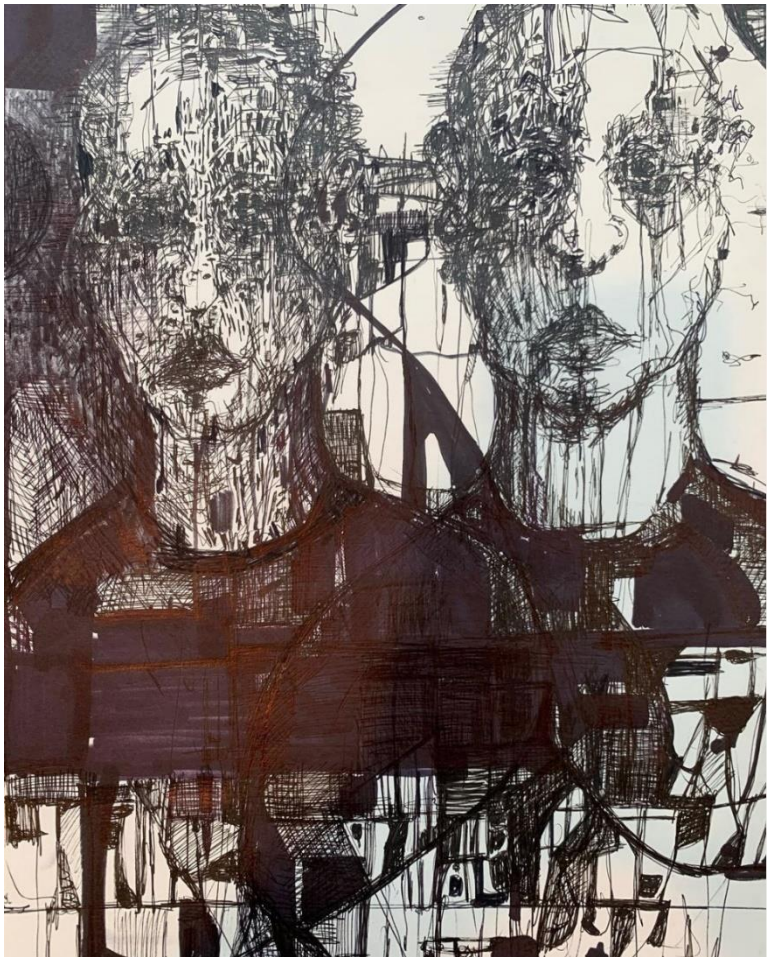
some sense of coming out as a gay person. But on the broader scale, I wanted it to allude to how a person feels when they are becoming their true self.

**OD:** Where do you draw inspiration from? Do you have a favorite subject(s)? Do you think Art imitates Life?

**JM:** To some degree, I find inspiration from other artists. There are few current artists I really admire. The work of Jenny Seville, an artist in Great Britain, has been one of my current obsessions. She normally paints very large figurative paintings, and I think she does an amazing job of bringing out the beauty in body types that some people may not find to be pleasing.

And while this may not seem like inspiration, I often just start a drawing or painting with a random line or brush stroke. Then I just see what comes next. I find it fascinating to take a random mark on a page and turn it into something interesting.

I'm not sure it's possible to say if art imitates life, or vice versa. The human brain is so complex, I'd like to think there is really no way to determine this. There is so much



← What I See

Disconnect ↑

Particular ↓



art to absorb in day-to-day life. What may seem inconsequential, can be full of beauty.

**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?

**JM:** I love when people say they felt something from looking at my work. Someone once told me that they thought one of my portraits was scary and made them uncomfortable. I thought that was a great compliment, but I'm also good with people thinking my work is pretty.

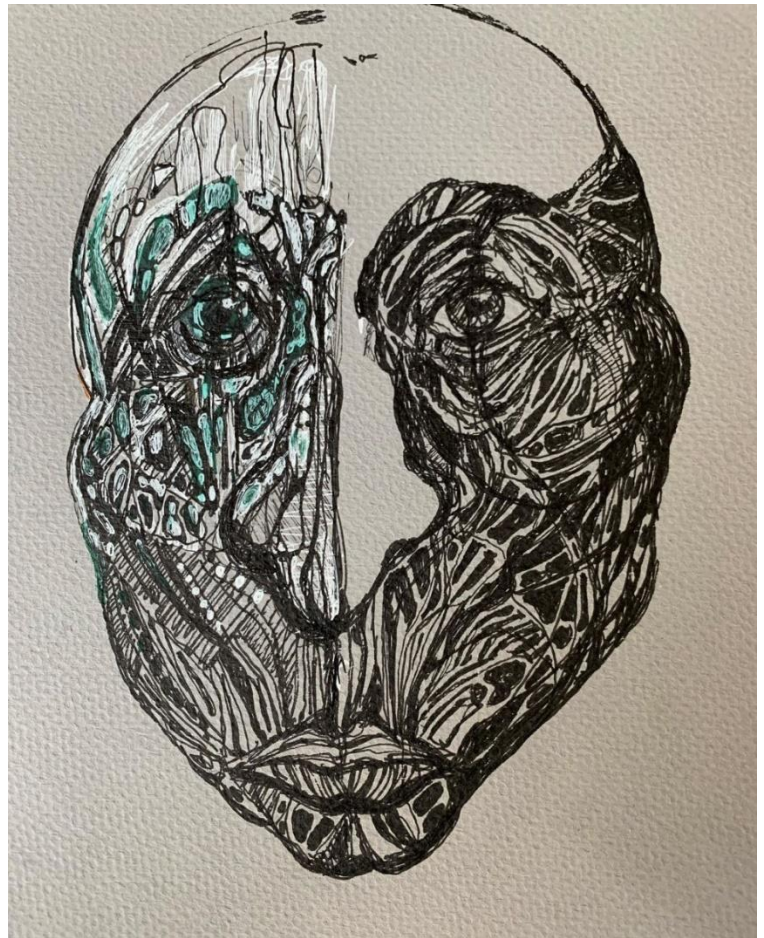
While I don't want to intentionally make something to fit in with someone's décor, it doesn't really matter to me if that's why someone likes it. But when you ask what effect I want my work to have, I guess it would be to



← Queen of the Hill

Wisdom ↑

Dignity ↓



emphasize the point that imperfections and rawness can be truly beautiful things.

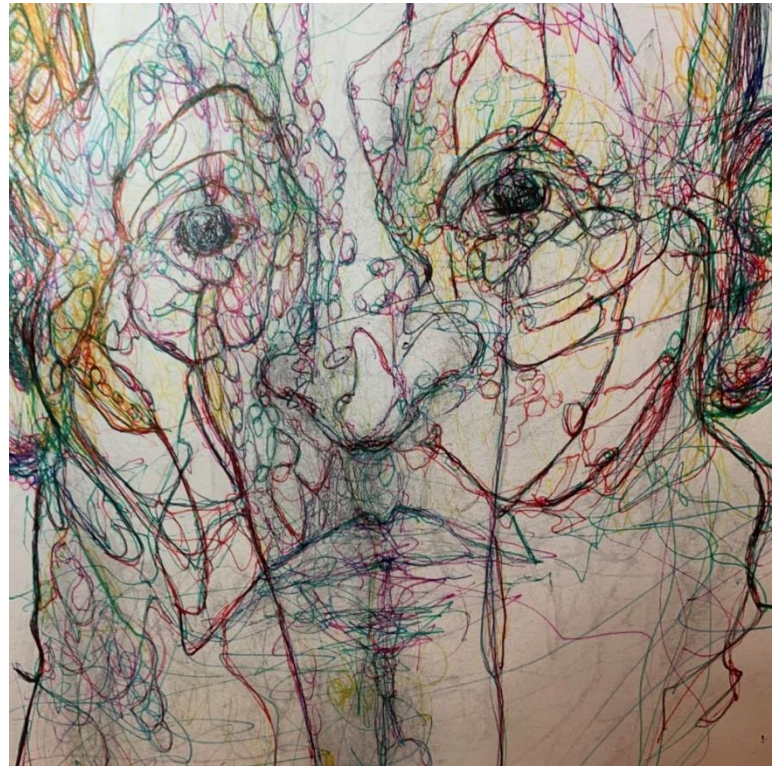
**OD:** How do you stay positive and nurture your soul in challenging times?

**JM:** In relation to what I said before, about how I try to help my clients with difficult emotions, I think I just try to accept whatever mood I'm in or whatever feeling I'm having. Pushing negative feelings away never really works, so I try to embrace them at times. Regarding nurturing my soul, making more art myself, and looking at the other amazing work out there, has been very grounding for me. Since the beginning of the pandemic, I haven't been able to go to sleep unless I draw for at least an hour before I go to bed. I find that whatever difficult things that may have occurred during the day, either seem to float away from my brain, or I use these difficult feelings to create something interesting.

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

**JM:** I think there is a lot happening in our schools that can strengthen human rights, but there needs to be more of it. Exposing children to other cultures, lifestyles and

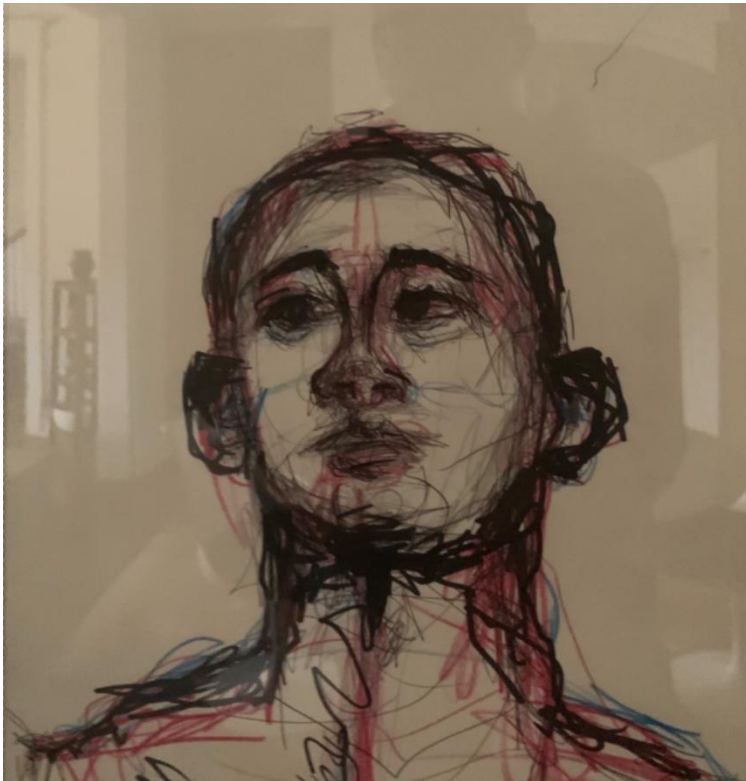
interests is incredibly important. While it opens kid's minds, they tend to be good at opening the minds of the adults in their lives. I've had many parents tell me how they learned something from their child that they may not have taken in or accepted from someone else. ♥



◀ Hope

The Map of Me ↑

In the Light ↓



# The Out & Equal 25th Workplace Summit 2023

**As experienced by PFLAG Member,  
Megan Barrett (she/her)**

**Interview by Maddie Barrett (she/her)**

## How Were You Given the Opportunity to Attend The Event?

I was invited to join the summit as part of my role at work as a leader for our Employee Resource Group (ERG). At first, I was quite excited but a bit hesitant learning the venue would be Orlando, Florida. As we all know, Florida has been in the news for various LGBTQ+ debate. Thinking about it more, I felt it was important to show up and be there as an ally and as a member of our PFLAG community.

## What Types of Sessions Were Available?

The summit lasted 4 days with over 30 different sessions to choose from. Sessions discussed Health Equity, Culture, Career Opportunities, Human Resources, Financial Planning, Supplier Diversity, and Sustainable Change, to name a few.

## Could You Tell Me About a Session You Attended?

Obviously, I attended the PFLAG Straight for Equality in the Workplace session. The room was full, and the speakers were awesome. I listened to the different PFLAG representatives with their reminders of inclusivity, diversity, and allyship. As the summit was for the workplace, I took note of all the wonderful resources available to workplace professionals, such as Ally Development Classes, Understanding and Supporting Expansive LGBTQ+ Identities and of course, Leading with Love: Celebrating and Affirming LGBTQ+ Young People.



## How Did You Feel During the Event?

As an Ally, I enjoyed meeting fellow allies and feeling a sense of true community. I'd have to say the whole experience was magical, and we didn't even visit the "mouse" park. The love and acceptance was palpable. Just awe inspiring-you know?

## What Were the Most Memorable Moments?

Some of the most memorable moments were those times when people shared their stories. Several members of the LGBTQ+ community freely shared their hopes and dreams as well as darker stories of despair and inadequacy. Giving hugs to strangers, crying, laughing, you name it, we shared it.

One common discussion amongst those in attendance were the "coming out" stories. Those stories, mostly heartbreaking, really reminded me of how much value PFLAG has to all communities. I actually learned that even as an ally, I too had a "coming out" story from my relationship as the mother of a young daughter coming out for the first time. I loved being asked and telling anyone who would listen how proud I was of her (you).

## Can you share a couple of stories?

I met so many incredible people through this journey. One attendee who was sitting behind me waiting for a session to start caught my attention. I said hello and shared my name and pronouns (she/her). They timidly responded by mentioning today was the first time they ever used pronouns in public. Each of us had a name badge we wore throughout the week with our name, our pronouns, and our company name. I said to them that I was glad to share this special moment with them. To which they said thanks, but they didn't choose the ones they really wanted to use. I said to them, well, why don't you fix that! I pulled a sharpie out of my bag and together we crossed out the she/her and wrote they/them.

As I was about to walk into a session sponsored by PFLAG, I decided to approach someone and ask if they would like to join me and if they were familiar with PFLAG. The next thing I knew they shared their personal story. Navigating a world far different than it is today, much less "open" as they said. As they spoke, they mentioned a time when their parent called and asked if they had any weekend plans. Thinking for a moment, they mentioned their plan of going to a pride parade and would they like to join them? To their surprise, the family member agreed. As they stood watching the parade imagine how wonderful it was for these people on this particular day sharing a special moment as the PFLAG float went by! PFLAG was critical in their journey over the last 40 years and my mind was blown away by the chance encounter of this wonderful person I likely would have never met until that day.

## Any Final Thoughts?

All in all, the entire experience exceeded my expectations and further solidified my commitment to my family, my friends, my co-workers, and anyone else who needs an Ally in this world.

# CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

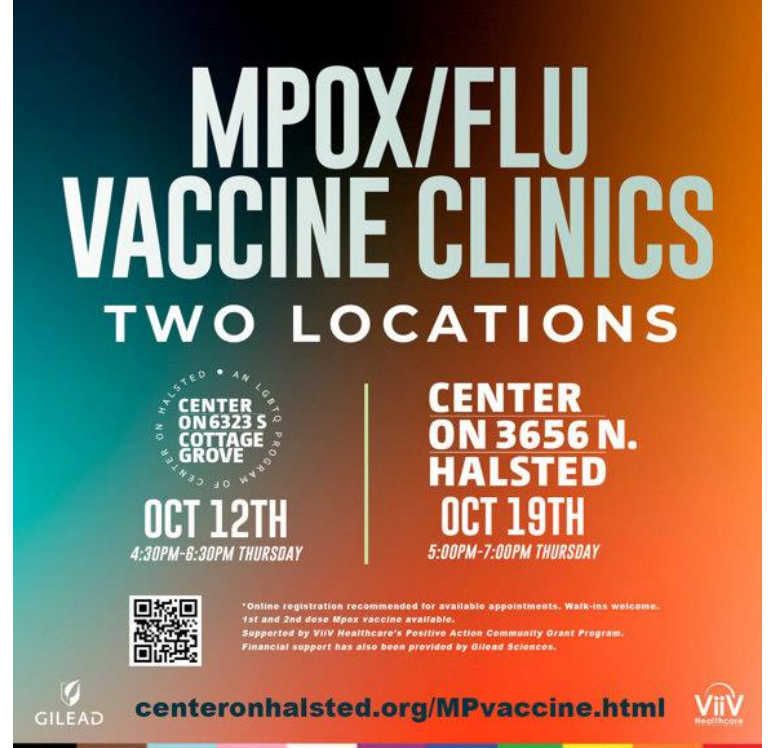


**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

## Cyber Center

Need computer access? Need computer training? The Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center provides free technology training and internet access to the LGBTQ community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO [CENTERONHALSTED.ORG/CYBER.HTML](http://CENTERONHALSTED.ORG/CYBER.HTML)




## MPOX/FLU VACCINE CLINICS



### TWO LOCATIONS

**CENTER ON 6323 S COTTAGE GROVE**  
OCT 12TH  
4:30PM-8:30PM THURSDAY

**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**  
OCT 19TH  
5:00PM-7:00PM THURSDAY

\*Online registration recommended for available appointments. Walk-ins welcome. 1st and 2nd dose MPOX vaccine available. Supported by Viiv Healthcare's Positive Action Community Grant Program. Financial support has also been provided by Gilead Sciences.

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

**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

## BINGO!

AT CENTER ON ADDISON  
12:30 PM MUST BE AGES 55+

Last Saturday of every month

773-472-6469 EXT 426

FOR MORE INFO EMAIL [TODDWILLIAMS@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG](mailto:TODDWILLIAMS@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG)

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**CENTER ON 6323 S COTTAGE GROVE**

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH'S

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**MONDAYS FROM 10AM TO 12PM**

CENTER ON COTTAGE GROVE 6323 S. COTTAGE GROVE  
QUESTIONS? PLEASE REACH OUT TO BETTY AKINS AT [BAKINS@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG](mailto:BAKINS@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG)

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EqIL will provide dinner, open bars, a silent auction, live entertainment, and a powerful message of the fight and our path forward. We'll also recognize, honor, and uplift Illinois' own heroes in equality!

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# TAKE ACTION



## ACT NOW TO ENSURE HEALTH AND SAFETY EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUTH



All students - including LGBTQ+ students - in Illinois public schools need and deserve age-appropriate, medically-accurate, and inclusive personal health and safety and sexual health instruction that will affirm them and help them be safe and healthy. But 72% of school districts in Illinois did not provide comprehensive personal health and safety education or sexual health education to their students during school year 22-23. Furthermore, in not requiring this education in public schools, Illinois is an outlier because 28 states require schools to provide sexual health education, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

**Please contact your State Representative TODAY!**



SCAN OR  
CLICK HERE





Have you thought about running for office to serve your community, but aren't sure where to start or how to run a winning campaign? The **New Power Project** is the only national initiative focused on supporting individuals who have grown up in marginalized communities to run for local/district elective office. We recruit and empower community-based leaders who are truly representative of the people they seek to represent. Often **our candidates** are people who never planned to run for elective office but saw the need and stepped forward.

The goal of New Power is to help candidates overcome the unique barriers that so often prevent people with similar backgrounds from seeking and winning public office. All of our support is free of charge.

If you are thinking about the possibility of serving in a future election cycle, or have questions about New Power, please reach out to our National Director Dev Myers at [devon@newpolitics.org](mailto:devon@newpolitics.org)



# RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Peter Ji and I am an associate professor in psychology at Adler University in Chicago, IL. I am surveying people's positive, neutral, negative experiences with PFLAG.

Everyone is eligible to participate in this survey. If you have not heard of PFLAG, if you support LGBTQ+ issues, if you are not interested in LGBTQ+ issues, if you are heterosexual/straight, if you are a parent, a supporter, from any religious background, if you had a good or bad experience with a PFLAG meeting, or you disagree with LGBTQ+ issues, we welcome your responses. PFLAG promotes LGBTQ+ equality for all, so everyone's positive, neutral, and negative views are welcome for this study.

The heart of PFLAG is the local PFLAG chapter meetings where people receive support about being LGBTQ+ or being family member or friend of LGBTQ+ individuals. It is not uncommon for visitors to attend PFLAG meetings only once, and then not return. PFLAG members are understandably curious about why visitors do not return, why visitors become regular members, and why some never attend the meetings. My study intends to explore these reasons.

All responses are private, secure and confidential. No identifying information is recorded and your responses will not be reported to anyone. No specific PFLAG chapter will receive your specific responses. We need to know about all opinions about PFLAG. There are no restrictions regarding who can participate in this survey, except that the participant must be over 18 yrs old.

If you are interested, please visit [this survey link](#). The survey asks about how you found out about PFLAG, why you came or did not come to a PFLAG meeting, why you stayed at a PFLAG meeting, and why you stopped attending PFLAG meetings. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete and you can start and finish the survey at a later time. You are more than welcome to forward the flyer to anyone else who might be interested in this survey.

Peter Ji, the principal investigator, can answer your questions at [pji@adler.edu](mailto:pji@adler.edu). Peter Ji, Ph.D. is an associate professor in psychology at Adler University in Chicago, IL. <https://www.adler.edu/page/faculty/peter-ji-phd>. His research focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) communities and promoting social equality for LGBTQ communities. Dr. Ji was involved in PFLAG for 15 years and continues to support the mission of PFLAG and its role for LGBTQ communities and equality. This study was approved by the Adler University IRB ([IRB@adler.edu](mailto:IRB@adler.edu)) and you may contact them for any questions.





YOUTHOUTLOOK |



# FALL OPEN HOUSE

**TRANSCEND Palatine Drop-In Center**  
**Wednesday, November 8 | 6:30 - 9:00 PM**

Trans & non-binary youth 12-20, family,  
friends, providers welcome!

FOOD | GAMES | TOUR

Registration required.  
Scan QR code or [click here to register](#).

Email [transcendpalatine@youth-outlook.org](mailto:transcendpalatine@youth-outlook.org)  
with questions.



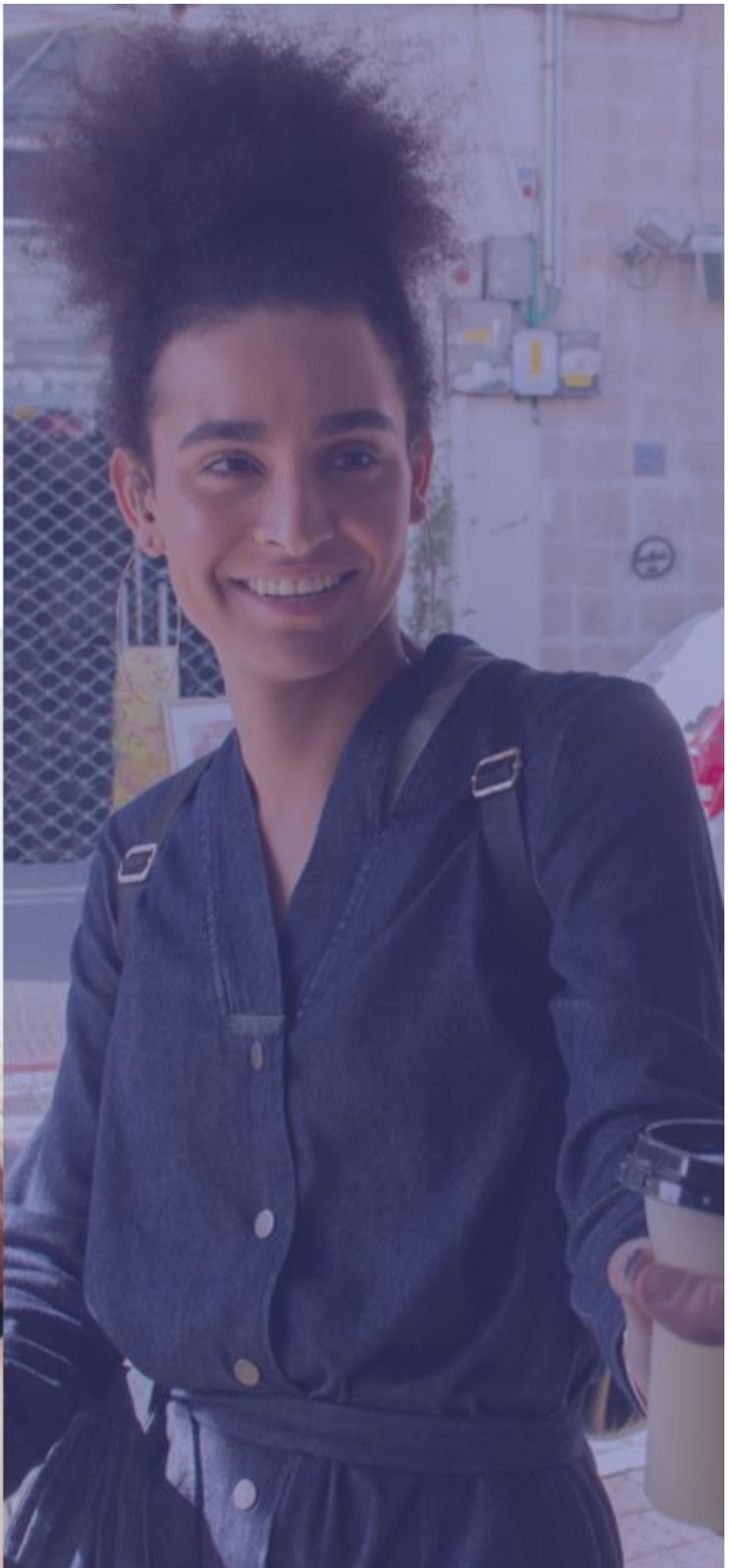
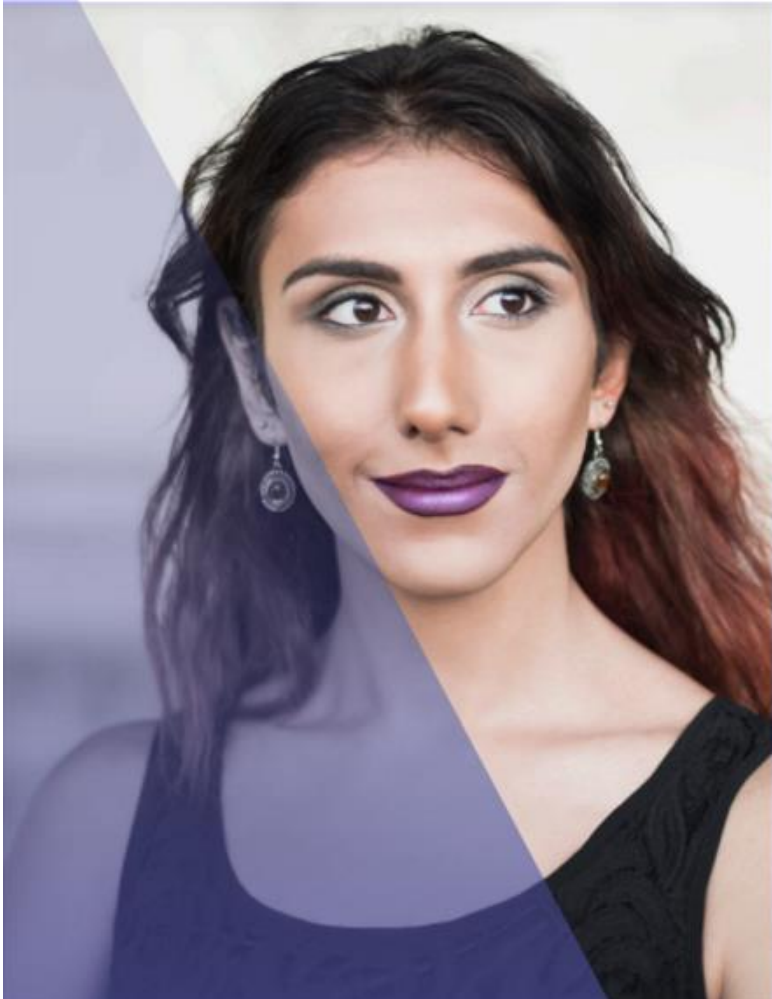


## The Gender Pathways Program

Northwestern Medicine Plastic and  
Reconstructive Surgery  
675 North Saint Clair Street  
19th Floor, Suite 250  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

312.695.2422  
TTY: 312.926.6363

[nm.org](http://nm.org)



**The Northwestern Medicine Gender Pathways Program** is committed to providing gender-affirming care to transgender and gender nonbinary patients. Our multidisciplinary team of specialists offers a range of surgical, medical and mental health services. They are dedicated to helping people achieve their individualized transition-related goals. <https://www.nm.org/conditions-and-care-areas/gender-pathways-program>

# APPLY TO SERVE AS AN AMERICORP VISTA AND SUPPORT LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Apply At:

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Deadline is November 27



## Constellation Collective

[info@constellationcollectivechicago.com](mailto:info@constellationcollectivechicago.com)

(312) 857-6716

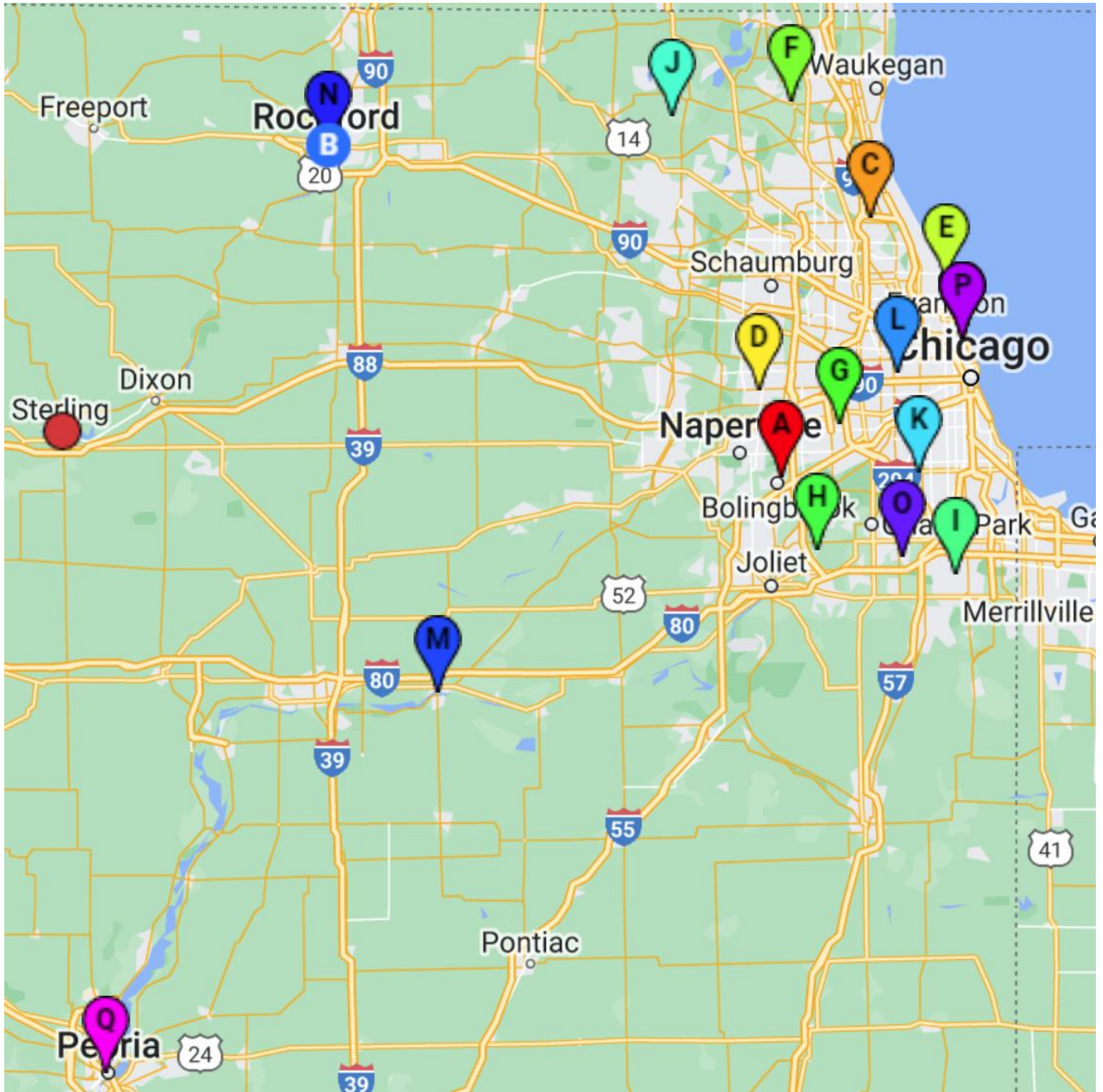
6666 N Western Ave

Chicago, IL 60645

Constellation Collection is a group of kind, queer, curious, and thoughtful therapists and educators who provide a mix of individual and family counseling + professional learning of all varieties.

<https://www.constellationcollectivechicago.com/>

# 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.