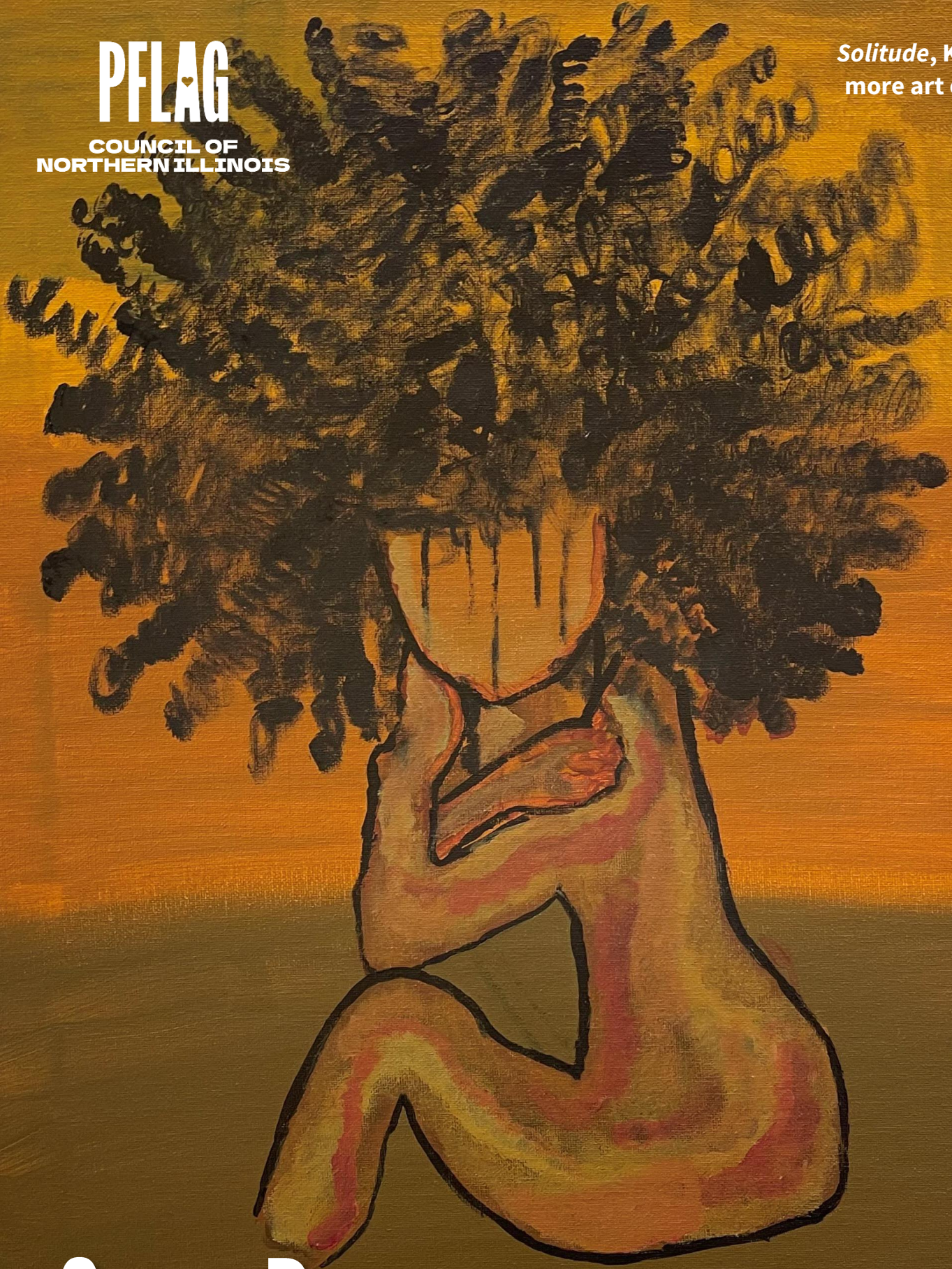


**PFLAG**  
COUNCIL OF  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS

*Solitude*, Kyra Horton  
more art on pp 11-15



**Open Doors**

**October 2023**

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



# 50 YEARS OF LOVE

Dear Friends,

PFLAG, the first and largest organization “dedicated to supporting, educating and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and their families,” is 50! **Let’s celebrate through membership!**

It all began with a mother’s love for her son. The mother was Jeanne Manford. The son, Morty Manford. On June 25, 1972, Jeanne and Morty walked together in the Christopher Street Liberation Day March in New York City. Jeanne carried a simple sign that read “PARENTS OF GAYS: UNITE IN SUPPORT FOR OUR CHILDREN”. The sign was a call to action! Jeanne was overwhelmed that day as the crowd cheered, cried, hugged, and kissed her. They asked her to talk to their parents, to help them. Ten months later, on April 11, 1973, Jeanne and Morty held the first Parents of Gays (POG) meeting. Approximately 20 people attended.

POG eventually became PFLAG and today has hundreds of chapters and over 325,000 members and supporters. As society changed, the scope and purpose of PFLAG changed. But some things have remained the same. PFLAG still gathers to march and carry signs. We are still met with cheers, tears, hugs, and kisses. We are still asked for help. We still receive love from strangers, and we still give love in return. Because somehow, we are not strangers. The love is real. PFLAG is rooted in love. The love of a mother for her son. The love of Jeanne Manford.

In memory of Jeanne and in celebration of PFLAG’s 50th anniversary, I respectfully put forth the following challenge:

**If you are not yet a member of PFLAG, please join!**

**If you are a renewing member of PFLAG, please consider renewing at a higher level!**

Your tax-deductible membership payment to PFLAG

- Supports PFLAG’s legislative advocacy at the state and national level
- Supports community and national outreach efforts in schools, libraries, businesses, etc.
- Supports participation in community PRIDE events, including the Chicago Pride Parade
- Operates and supports our helpline
- Maintains our website and the publication of our Open Doors newsletter



- Covers the printing costs of brochures and educational materials
- Supports the establishment and growth of strong PFLAG chapters in our area
- Provides liability insurance to the chapters supported by PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois

#### Membership Levels:

- Household Membership \$45
- Supporting Membership \$60
- PFLAG Flag Waver \$100
- PFLAG Hero \$250
- PFLAG Superhero \$500

Dues are shared by your local chapter; the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois; and the PFLAG National Office. Please join online at [pflagil.org/membership-and-donation](http://pflagil.org/membership-and-donation) or by mail: P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126

**Everyone is welcomed with love regardless of membership status. But please join if possible.** PFLAG’s mission is “to create a caring, just, and affirming world for LGBTQ+ people and those who love them”. It envisions “an equitable, inclusive world where every LGBTQ+ person is safe, celebrated, empowered, and loved”.

**Thank you for your support in this mission and vision. It can’t happen without you!**

Respectfully,

*Jodi Zavos* (she/her)

PCNI Secretary

**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

**[Federal judge restores Georgia's ban on hormone replacement therapy for minors not already in care.](#)**

**[Texas Supreme Court grants Attorney General Paxton's appeal of injunction,](#)** making the ban on medically necessary gender-affirming care go into effect on September 1st.

**[Federal judge rules Texas drag ban unconstitutional,](#)** finding that it infringed upon Texans' free speech rights and was unconstitutionally overbroad and vague.

## STATE MATTERS

**Pennsylvania - [Pittsburgh could become 'sanctuary city' for medically necessary gender-affirming care.](#)** Pittsburgh Councilwoman Barb Warwick is proposing a bill that would safeguard healthcare providers performing medically necessary gender-affirming care and reduce enforcing penalties on patients if a national ban were to be implemented.

**Missouri - [Washington University halts medically-necessary care for trans and non-binary youth.](#)** While new legislation banning gender-affirming care for Missouri minors included an exemption for those already receiving care, it also exposed providers to "unsustainable liability" via a newly created legal cause of action.

**Ohio - [Cleveland Catholic diocese adds policy to limit LGBTQ+ expression in schools under its jurisdiction.](#)** The policy prohibits gender-affirming names and pronouns for trans and non-binary students, staff, and volunteers; bans same-sex couples at school dances; bans expression or celebration of LGBTQ+ identity on their clothes or in their conduct, including rainbow flags and other Pride symbols; and prohibits students, staff, and volunteers from seeking medically necessary gender-affirming care.

**Tennessee - [Olivia Hill becomes first openly trans person ever elected to public office in the state.](#)** Ms. Hill was elected to one of the at-large seats on the Metro Nashville Council.

**Oklahoma - [Free Mom Hugs organizes first conference in Oklahoma City.](#)** The inaugural conference attracted more than 400 attendees; speakers included PFLAG National CEO Brian K. Bond, Chasten and Pete Buttigieg, and nonbinary Oklahoma state Rep. Maureen Turner.

**California - [Governor Gavin Newsom signs trio of bills supporting LGBTQ+ youth.](#)** The bills require LGBTQ+ competency training for public school teachers and staff, establish a task force to identify needs for LGBTQ+ students, and require state courts to keep petitions to change the gender marker on state documents confidential.

## GLOBAL MATTERS

**Brazil - [Brazilian Supreme Court rules homophobic slurs are punishable by prison.](#)** The Supreme Court ruled (9-1) that using homophobic slurs is a punishable offense as part of a larger effort to address bias in Brazil, protecting the LGBTQ+ community and allowing offenders to be prosecuted with possible two-to-five-year imprisonment.

**Andorra - [Prime Minister Xavier Espot Zamora came out as gay in an interview with Radio and Television of Andorra.](#)**

**Greece - [Stefanos Kasselakis, a Greek-American, won over 56% of the votes to lead the leftist Syriza party and aims to be Greece's first openly gay Prime Minister.](#)**

## MEDIA MATTERS

**[Lyft's new feature lets women and non-binary riders request their driver's gender.](#)** In the next few months, Lyft will introduce a new feature called "Women+ Connect," allowing riders and drivers to each opt-in to identify their gender, matching them only if the matched driver is nearby.

**[New poll shows majority oppose political interference in accessing gender-affirming care.](#)** A survey by the 19th News found 72 percent of Americans believe politicians do not know enough about gender-affirming health care to make accurate policies. Just 17 percent of Americans said restricting access to gender-affirming care should be a focus of politicians.

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

## TINLEY PARK

by **Kathy King-Watters (she/her/ella)**

PFLAG Tinley Park has been present in the community a lot this month. One of our members spoke at a Will Township Board meeting about a transphobic post that was on their sign board a few weeks earlier. They also spoke at a District 230 Board meeting where parents were concerned about access to bathroom and locker room facilities for transgender and gender non-conforming people. At both meetings, the majority of people in the room were not allies, showing that PFLAG still is needed and still has a lot of work to do. These meetings have also brought new opportunities to collaborate with Equality Illinois and Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and to learn how to best respond in these situations.

At our September meeting, Scott Sowinski, the Executive Director of the Center for Performing Arts at Governor's State University spoke to us about some of his personal and professional experiences. He was very candid and we really enjoyed his humor and his insight. Afterwards we shared as a group and helped each other with any concerns. We've had a recent influx of new people and the sharing has been very transforming for many of us.

Ray and Kathy had the privilege of attending the Reeling Film Fest, an

LGBTQ+ film fest here in Chicago, and seeing "American Parent," a story of two lesbian moms filmed in Chicago. Afterwards was a Q & A with the director and some of the actors. Look up "American Parent" online to watch it.

We wrapped up PRIDE season with a table at Joliet Pridefest. The day was busy talking to people about PFLAG's mission, our presence in the south suburbs, and giving out fans, buttons, Safe Space cards, and Skittles. We stayed for the After Dark Miss Joliet Pridefest competition, and watched our friend Fonda LaFemme get crowned this year's queen! It was a long but rewarding day.



# PFLAG

## OTTAWA

### by Rev. Jennifer Amy-Dressler (she/her)

A member of the Ottawa PFLAG Chapter came with a question: Might we focus a session on the facts of gender-affirming care? Misinformation abounds, especially in the current political climate that often targets transgender people. Transgender youth and the parents are targets of several state legislatures positioning themselves for continued conservative-to-far-right power.

Culling from reputable sources, chapter president Jordan Johnson prepared a very informative presentation for our September meeting. While gender-affirming care includes major medical interventions, it is actually any combination of social, legal, and medical measures that help people feel happy, healthy, and safe in their gender. Social measures can begin as soon as an individual recognizes that they are trans, or as they explore their gender identity. Hairstyles, clothing, preferred name, or pronouns are social measures even children can take -- yet even these, some states limit in school settings. Legal measures, such as name changes and gender markers on birth certificates or driver's licenses, also vary widely in their availability, depending upon one's state of residence or birth. We are fortunate that the barriers in Illinois are relatively low, and that recent legislation has made name changes easier and less costly.

Medical interventions capture the media limelight, and it is here that misinformation abounds. For instance, puberty blockers have been safely used for thirty years for the health of children beginning to experience early-onset puberty. Generally, they may be used up to three years without concern for

permanent side effects. In fact, it is only after five years that research shows concern for possible lower bone density or sterility. For these reasons, puberty blockers are rarely prescribed and used for so long. That ensures that the effects of puberty blockers are NOT permanent and irreversible. The effects of not prescribing puberty blockers -- including an elevated lifetime risk of suicide -- ARE permanent and irreversible.

Guidelines established by the American Academy of Pediatrics call for solid therapy for children/youth and their families as they navigate their gender identity. The AAP recommends social measures for children under age ten, the option of puberty blockers and legal measures for children ages ten to thirteen, the possibility of youth ages fourteen to fifteen to receive gender-affirming hormones with strict requirements, and likewise for youth sixteen to seventeen regarding chest surgery. Those requirements include experiencing at least six consecutive months of gender dysphoric symptoms, letters of support from mental health professionals, and of course parental support. Other surgeries are not recommended before age 18.

Reputable U.S. studies indicate up to a 1% regret rate of adults who have undergone any gender-affirming surgery. Regret may be due to lack of social support or poor surgical outcomes; "changing one's mind" is rarely cited as cause for regret. Given that the regret rate across all surgeries is closer to 14%, it seems the recommendations of the AAP (reaffirmed in August 2023), the American Association of Clinical Endocrinology (as of March 2022), and the American Medical Association (June 2023) are providing solid guidance and excellent results for transgender individuals. Lives are being saved and transformed.

Three take-aways: First, we were reminded of the importance of vetting one's sources of information! Second, we feel both more understanding of gender-affirming care and more able to support persons seeking such care. And third, we hope to support the AAP and AMA in their stated objectives to publicly support the rights of trans individuals in receiving care and being fully represented in the medical field.

# PFLAG

## MCHENRY

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

September had PFLAG McHenry out & about in the community once again. On September 8th, we participated in The Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Recovery Conference at McHenry County College. It was a busy day in between breakout sessions, as we met with & talked to many professionals as well as fellow attendees at the conference. Many wonderful conversations were shared as we provided printed materials as well as sharing web site & contact information.

We had our monthly meeting as an in-person event on September 12th. We had some new faces join us for a lively evening of conversation, sharing & support. We are looking forward to seeing our new friends at future meetings.

As the new school year started, School District 300 was happy to announce that their LGBTQ+ Learning Space, a group for parents of children in the LGBTQ+ community, had been approved to continue for the 2023-24 school year. They schedule four meetings each school year, one each quarter. Learning that their members

really enjoyed the parent panel, advice, and community they found when PFLAG did a panel presentation last year, PFLAG McHenry was honored to be invited back as their first guest speaker! Several members shared their stories as parents of children in the LGBTQIA+ community, answered some questions, and then mingled with parents & school staff for more intimate conversations. We had a table set up with booklets & information for attendees to take home & share with family & friends. PFLAG McHenry continues to enjoy being out in our community, Leading With Love.



# 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.

September was a fun month for PFLAG Oak Park. Our **Annual Farmer's Market Bake Sale** was a huge success.



We sold out around 11 AM and was able to make over \$1400 for our chapter! We had shoppers from the previous year return and buy out most of our baked loaves to store in their freezer. They said they were so sad when the one loaf they bought was all gone and they had to wait until the next year to buy it again. So they bought enough to last until the next sale, next year... it was THAT DELICIOUS! If that isn't the best food critique ever, we don't know what is! A huge thank you to our 17 bakers and all the volunteers who helped make this a success!



We had beautiful weather at Oak Park's 20th Annual Neighborhood Celebration, **BarrieFest**, held on September 9, 2023. This also happened to be PFLAG Oak Park's 20th year participating in this event! This exciting neighborhood celebration featured live music, activities (including a climbing wall), community updates, and fabulous FOOD! This year, **Takeout 25 proudly launched our community as Illinois' first Green Dining Hub at BarrieFest**. This initiative helps local restaurants alter operations to become more sustainable. The yearly festival celebrates the anniversary of the reopening of Barrie Park to the public and has since evolved to become more of a celebration of the neighborhood. We were able to distribute tons of free buttons and enjoyed great conversation with community members. Another shout out to all members who volunteered their time to help advocate and educate on behalf of PFLAG. Your time is invaluable.

**Lastly, we have a couple of local upcoming events.  
Mark your calendars!!**

**October 5th:** Mark your calendars! You do not want to miss the Rainbow Celebration for LGBTQ+ students and families hosted by Oak Park and River Forest High School (South Cafeteria), on Thursday, Oct. 5 from 6:30 - 8pm. Dinner! Entertainment! Resources! Games! Giveaways! OH MY! PFLAG Oak Park Area is a proud sponsor of the event and will host a table as it is a great way to network, recruit members, and give out buttons. Hope you can join!



**October 21st:** The 2023 OPALGA+ Scholarship Gala will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2023, from 6-11 p.m. at the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association 178 Forest Avenue, Oak Park, IL

Ticket price: \$150 per individual ticket OR Table of ten (10) tickets for \$1250 (\$125 each)

To learn more about the event and scholarship winners, click here: <https://opalga.org/gala-2023/>

Tickets are still available! Buy yours before they sell out! <https://opalga.org/scholarshiptickets/>

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 October 22nd at 3PM.  
Mark your calendars!**

**PFLAG**  
**DEERFIELD**

**by Sue Ginsburg (she/her)**

We have been so very lucky over the past few months having outstanding speakers. However, we have found that sometimes, we actually need the full 2 hour meeting for support and discussion. We found this to be true for our September meeting. After announcements were made of upcoming events that may be of interest, including Mosaic Players' upcoming traveling show, "5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche".

- Click [HERE](#) for tickets.
- Click [HERE](#) to read more about the play.

Other important reminders were of **PFLAG National's Conference** in Washington, Oct.19-22 and to honor **Bisexual Awareness Week**, (9-16-9-23), the e-learning program from **PFLAG Academy Online** will have "Bi+ 101 Allyship: How to Not let Things Fall Bi the Wayside". You can always access the Academy's programs, past and present, from their website, [pflag.org](http://pflag.org)

Finally, we previewed our membership drive for October! We're READY!!!!

We welcomed four new individuals and, as always, the discussions and support were heartfelt and, hopefully, helpful. Sometimes in our search for wonderful speakers, (thanks, Ann), we sometimes forget we are not only here for education, but for support. Since we always learn from our members, we heard about a website which recommends LGBTQ friendly businesses and places to stay while traveling, which sounded a lot like the Green Book. While I couldn't find the one that was talked about, I did look to see that there are many other sites that have lists of the safest places to visit for those in our community. I hope to have more information next month. Another one of our members told us about an event at the Highwood Public Library, targeting the Spanish speaking population, as part of the Highwood Pride group, called **LGBTQ Youth 101**. It took place 9/21!

While we love having speakers, sometimes we learn a lot from one another!!



# PFLAG

## DUPAGE

by Kelly Hemmer (she/her)

Happy Fall, PFLAG! With the fun summer months behind us we've shifted our focus to fall and beyond. First up is the PFLAG National Conference, Learning with Love, in Washington D.C. October 19-22. Four members from PFLAG DuPage will be in attendance and it's our hope to see others from the Council there as well.

For our September chapter meeting our speaker was **Mike Ziri** from Equality Illinois, the state's civil rights organization for LGBTQ+ people. Mike talked about several bills supported by Equality Illinois that have recently become law:

- **Patient & Provider Protection Act** - provides some protection to people coming to Illinois seeking health care from being prosecuted for that care in their home state, and to health providers wanting to relocate to Illinois.
- **Birth Certificate Modernization Act** - a doctor's note is no longer needed to change gender on birth certificate.
- **Healthcare Cultural Competency** - this type of education will become part of license renewal process starting in 2025.
- **Equitable Restrooms Act** - makes it **possible** for businesses to have gender neutral multi-stall bathrooms.
- **Regulation of how license plate reader information used** - try and prevent this data from being used to prosecute people coming from other states for healthcare.
- **Anti-Book Ban** - seeks to protect public schools and libraries from pressure to ban, remove or restrict access to books.

Equality Illinois continues to work on making sure the **Keeping You Safe & Healthy** bill passed in 2021 is implemented. This law requires school districts that offer health classes to include age-appropriate inclusive education. School districts can currently get around this by

not providing any health education. Currently 70% of Illinois school districts do not teach health (up from 64% before the bill was passed). Equality Illinois is working to make it a requirement that school districts teach health education (parents would still be able to opt their children out of health classes).

Mike also shared several ideas for how people can get more involved to support LGBTQ+ civil rights:

- Equality Federation - group made up of Equality groups from many states. Follow them on social media to find out how you can help in other states.
- Canvassing going on now for upcoming elections - candidates are required to get a certain number of signatures to get onto the ballot. Find out who your local precinct captain is to add your signature.
- Become an election judge.
- Join Equality Illinois' Community Advisory Group, which gives advice and feedback. Equality Illinois is currently taking applications for this group. The group meets virtually once a month.

One of our members asked Mike what was being done to help older LGBTQ+ people. Mike shared that Illinois has a state commission looking into issues that older LGBTQ+ folks face. He also mentioned two organizations, Pride Action Tank and Golden Rainbows of Illinois South, that do work in this area.

With well over 20 people in attendance, we had another lively discussion during our sharing circle. Here is some information that was shared:

- **Pride Squad** is a Chicagoland LGBTQ+ social group. Follow them on Facebook to learn about activities.
- **Youth Outlook's Dare to Dream Gala** coming up on October 21st: <https://youth-outlook.org/events-fundraisers/dare-to-dream/>
- **Bolingbrook Pride's Friendsgiving** on December 2nd: <https://www.bolingbrookpride.org/events>
- Recommendation for **Almost Australian** series on Netflix. Actress Mirium Margolyes investigating what it means to be Australian (and often introducing herself as "the first lesbian you've probably ever met").
- **How To ADHD** - You Tube channel with great ideas for people with ADHD and great explanations of what ADHD is.



# LGBTQ+ History Month

LGBTQ+ History Month is celebrated in the U.S. and several other countries in October to coincide with National Coming Out Day on October 11<sup>th</sup> and to commemorate the first and second marches on Washington in 1979 and 1987 for LGBT rights.

To celebrate, the **Aurora LGBTQ+ Pride Advisory Board** is having two events on Saturday, **October 21<sup>st</sup>**:

- 10:00 - 11:30 am - [Coming Out Stories](#), an open mic event at the Aurora Public Library.
- 12:00 - 3:00pm - [LGBTQ+ History Scavenger Hunt](#) in downtown Aurora, starting at the library.

# Equality Illinois 2024 Gala

After the challenges of this year and the fight still to come, Equality Illinois invites you to celebrate the uniqueness and resilience of our LGBTQ+ community. At this year's Gala, EqIL will share the story of how our community has fought for progress and still carved out victories in spite of those who aim to drag us backward.

**Saturday, February 3, 2024 | 5:30PM | Hilton Chicago**

As always, EqIL will provide dinner, open bars, a silent auction, live entertainment, and a powerful message of the fight and our path forward.

Ticket and sponsorship sales will start at the beginning of October.

# MBLGTACC

MBLGTACC (31st annual Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Asexual College Conference, pronounced Mumble-Tac) will take place on November 3-5 in Lexington, Kentucky. Visit [mblgtacc.org](http://mblgtacc.org) for more information and to register.

# LGBTQ+ Wellness Retreat

The **Morton Arboretum** is offering a one-day wellness retreat for the LGBTQ+ community and allies in October, which is such a pretty time to be at the Arboretum.

**Saturday, October 28 | 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

\$111 members / \$130 guests / \$65 needs-based rate

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Find stillness in nature with a day of self-care and community. During this one-day retreat at The Morton Arboretum for LGBTQ+ community and their allies, join other nature lovers for a day of reflection, mindfulness, and connection with three nature-focused sessions:

- Practice shinrin-yoku, the practice of bathing the senses in the atmosphere of the forest, during a mindful walk with a certified forest therapy guide.
- Deepen your connection to the natural world by exploring nature through the lens of queer ecology.
- Use journaling and sketching as a means to slow down and draw closer to nature through self-reflection.

# KYRA HORTON

Materials prepared by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Kyra Horton, a 21-year-old Black artist hailing from Chicago’s southside. Her artistic journey finds its essence in the realm of poetry, a medium that has captivated her since 2016, igniting her passion through engaging in Louder Than A Bomb competitions and open mics. Kyra has graced countless stages, sharing her Spoken Word Poetry at diverse events ranging from live concerts to spirited competitions.

In 2021, Kyra unveiled her literary debut, “Cries of a Butterfly”, a collection of verses that explores the metamorphosis of butterflies as a poignant metaphor for human evolution and growth. She took charge of every aspect, painstakingly crafting the books editing, illustrations, and design, culminating in its independent publication.

In the same year, Kyra’s expressive voice traversed new horizons with the release of an EP, harnessing its power to evoke profound emotions. This expansion allowed her to harness the potency of her mesmerizing performances and manifest them in musical landscapes, broadening the scope of her artistic trajectory. Ever since she penned her inaugural poem, Kyra had continuously pushed the boundaries of her craft, seeking novel avenues of self-expression.

Photography by Evelyn Menchaca →



In 2022, Kyra unveiled her full-length album, “The Silencer”, a collection of songs and poetry that transcends traditional boundaries and blazes a trail in a realm all its own. Fearlessly, it intertwines themes of pain and beauty, suffering and power, struggles and resilience, transforming the darkness that permeates the world into a foundation from which to rise. “The Silencer” delves deep into the dichotomy of existence and the multidimensional tapestry of human emotions.

Fast forward to 2023, and Kyra breathes life into her second poetic opus, “Self-Preservation”, a poignant exploration of love and loss, moments of joy and grief, rest and resistance. This collection grapples with profound concepts of history, lineage, blood, family, spirituality and belonging, enveloping readers in its profound introspection.

Between major creative endeavors, Kyra’s pen dances as a freelance writer for community-based organizations. She orchestrates an enthralling interview series featuring fellow poets from the vibrant Chicagoland area, while also sharing her own creative process in insightful dialogues. Moreover, Kyra’s artistic influence draws from the rich tapestry of Chicago culture, the intertwined evolution of hip-hop and poetry, the powerful legacy of art in activism, and the fusion of her political fervor with her poetic craftsmanship.

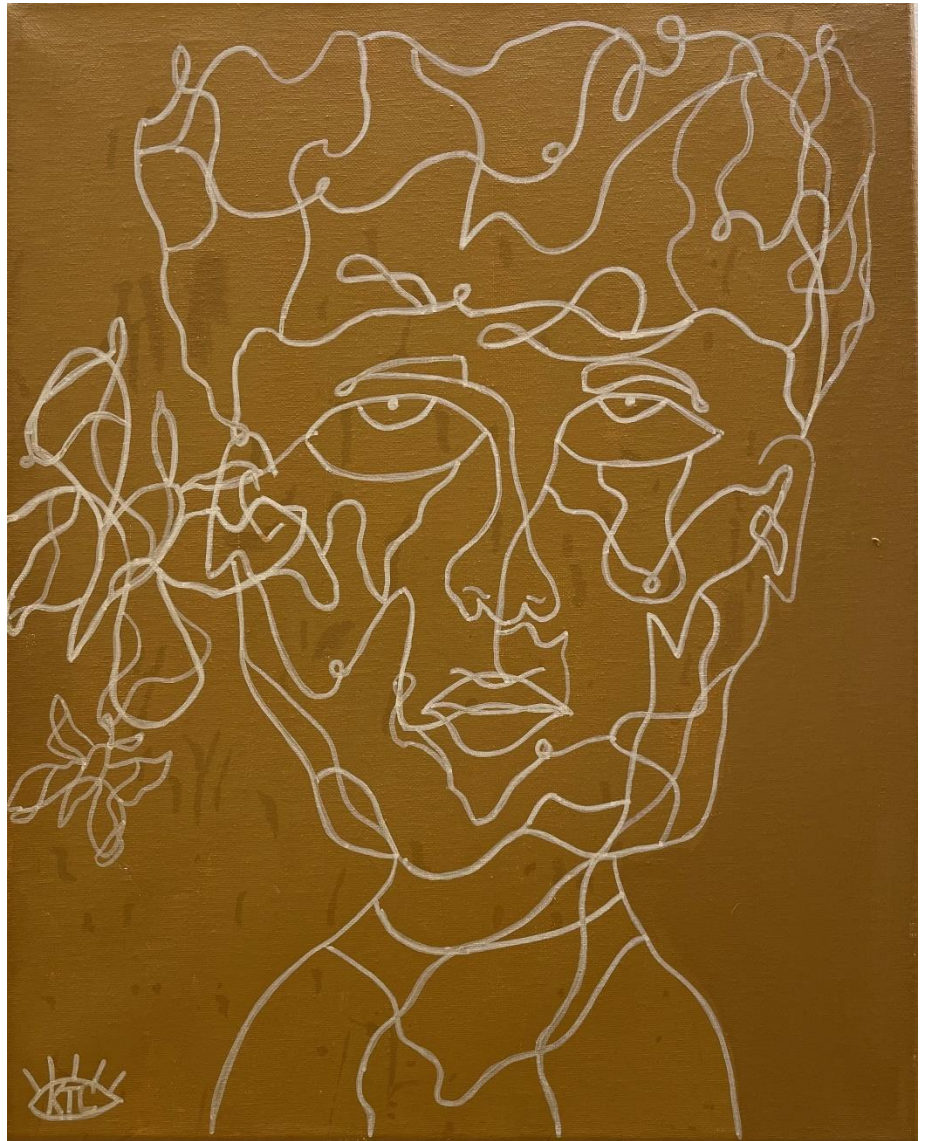
Beyond the realms of artistry, Kyra Horton leverages her talents in the nonprofit sector, melding art, education, and activism to champion social justice in her community and beyond. Whether her expression takes the form of writing, performing, directing, or organizing, she dauntlessly transforms suffering into acts of resistance. Kyra embraces art as a liberating practice, weaving narratives of community, loss, oppression, resistance, love and pain.

Contact information:

<https://linktr.ee/KyraHorton>

[kyrahortonmgmt@gmail.com](mailto:kyrahortonmgmt@gmail.com)

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



**Butterfly Man**

## Embracing Vulnerability with Kyra Horton

The following article by **Iman Music** originally appeared in <http://TheseDaysMag.com/articles> on February 18, 2022.

A multidisciplinary artist, Kyra Horton is constantly creating and authentically at that. The Chicago-raised artist began pursuing poetry in 2016 and since then, has seen her craft evolve and take different lifeforms. From physical books to albums, each project is a new extension of what Kyra can do and the shapes her art can take. Fate, in both herself and the universe, brings Kyra reassurance that everything she sets her mind to and puts her authenticity behind works out. We can all learn something from Kyra’s trust in herself, or at least feel inspired to nurture that trust within ourselves. Influenced by her home city of Chicago and life experiences, Kyra paints vivid stories that hold mirrors up to who we are and evokes personal exploration. In her own introspectiveness,

Horton encourages and celebrates vulnerability. Hours away from her debut album release, I sat down with Kyra to trace the evolution of her artistry, how **The Silencer** fits into it, and the bravery of being an artist.

**These Days:** Can you give us a little bit of background on who Kyra Horton is?

**Kyra Horton:** Sure, my name is Kyra Horton and I consider myself a multidisciplinary artist. My main medium is spoken word poetry. I also do written poetry and I just got into doing my poetry over my music. So I considered that melodic poetry. I also do paintings so I paint on clothing primarily, like customizing clothing, also canvas art. I've dabbled in photography, I've dabbled in film, instruments so I'm really down to any creative hobby but those are my main mediums.

**TD:** You started writing poetry in 2016, how did that begin?

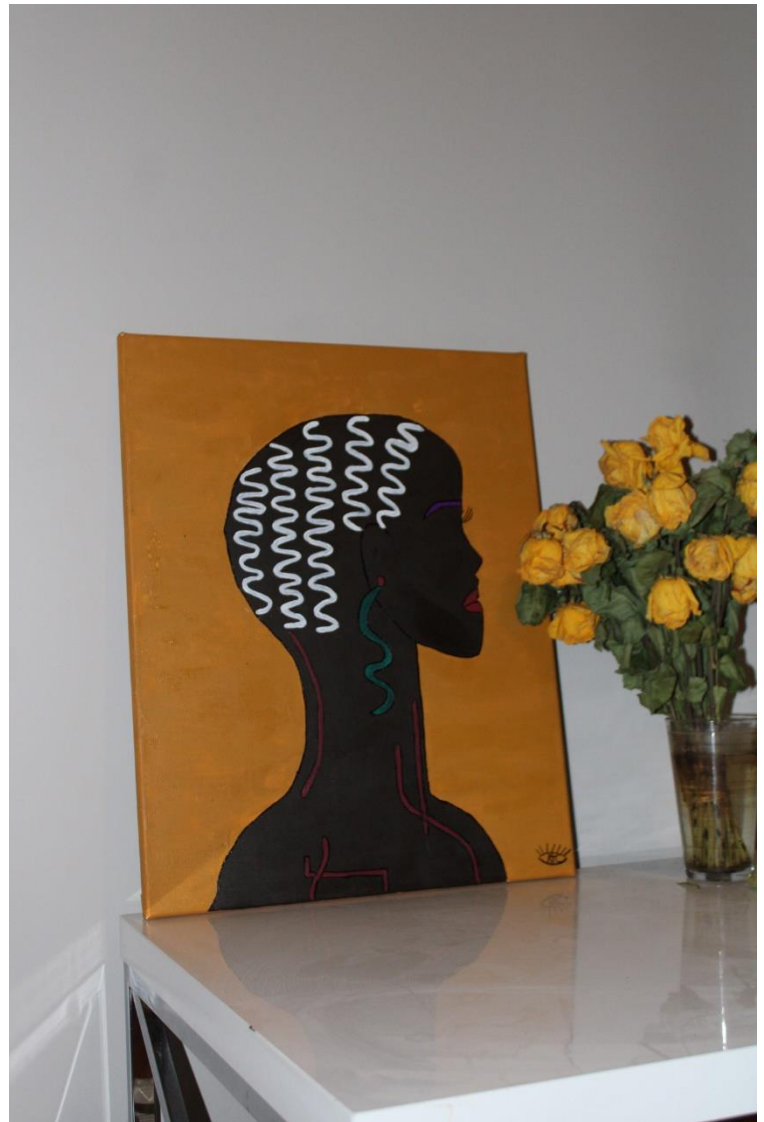
**KH:** So, I started in high school like Louder Than A Bomb competitions in Chicago and I was on the team at my school. I was a freshman and everyone on the team was way older than me. I was taken on as an alternate so I was just basically there so I could watch what's going on because I was still so young and I really hadn't started writing poetry at all yet. I was traveling with them, I did some competitions and I was able to experience the environment, and that's what really got me into writing and loving writing, performing, and competing. And it's crazy because like during my freshman year at high school, I knew that I wanted to write a book, like I had the title of the book, the title that I have now, I chose it in 2016. I just didn't have the resources or the amount of poetry. It was just one of those things that was always in the back of my head but I had to wait till the right time.

**TD:** Fast forward 4-5 years later and you published your first novel, *Cries of a Butterfly*. Can you talk a bit about the experience and how it would eventually shape your first EP and now this album?

**KH:** Yeah. So, I think the process is not at all what I expected. I had not thought about my book in years and it was kind of just one of those things because I started in 2016, and then I tried to revisit it in maybe like 2017/2018 and I still felt like I wasn't ready but it's actually a funny story. I was watching this sermon, this church sermon, and it was called beta blessings. And it was talking about how God'll plant an idea or a seed at a time but that's not like the time it's meant for and then it comes at a later point. And for some reason, I thought of my book instantly after hearing this sermon. And so I was like, 'Wow, I haven't thought about that in a while.' When I tried to pursue it at first, I was living in Arizona. And at the time when I watched this sermon and ended up publishing this book, I was back in Chicago, and I always feel like I have more resources, more connections, more support in Chicago. So when I think about the book again, I feel like I had everything I needed to publish and so I did the self-publishing route. I had explored other options, but I felt like I wanted to control every creative aspect. I didn't wanna go through someone else to say like this isn't the typical way the line structure is or like, this isn't grammatically correct. And things like that. So I did it completely myself. I edited, I illustrated all the images and I published it on KDP through Amazon because that was like the best, the most successful self-publisher. I think that it's a cool platform cuz I'm able to get the books sent to me, just order them from them at print price and I could sell them myself, and so that's been really cool. And I think that my book was very isolated to specific points in my life where I wanted to write poetry. I feel like typically I want to perform poetry, but in those moments I wanted to literally write

poetry for people to read instead of hear. But I think that I kind of got that out of my system and got back to wanting to perform and that's how my EP came about, because it's like I can never perform as much as I want like there's just not enough events. I thought about the idea of kind of like performing and putting it in a way that people can consume it without being in front of me. That's how my EP came out and my EP was pretty impulsive. I was just like, I have a bunch of poetry. I wanted to record it, I mean, I finished that EP start to finish in maybe like four days and it was like very much one thing after another. I spent three days nonstop with my producer and took the cover art in those days, uploaded them, it was just a crazy process. With my album, I wanted it to be something that was way more intentional and something that I spend more time thinking about each detail, concepts, things like that. I think that the EP was like me dipping my toes in the water and just trying it out, trying something new. Then, the album feels like a more developed version of what I was trying to do then.

**TD:** Can you speak to the name of your album, *The Silencer*, and some of the themes that shape the album?



**Strength, oil and acrylic on canvas, 16x20**

**KH:** The name of the album is very significant to the concept. The name of the album is *The Silencer* and the reason I chose that title is because I feel like all throughout my life, and it's not just particular to me but people who identify with the same intersectional identities that I do have also experienced these things, but it's like our voices are not heard, they're not considered, they're pushed to the side. We also just don't have the resources to put our voices into the world as much as other people do. When we do, it's often not taken seriously and so that's one half of it. But the other half of it is like a silencing that I've done to myself because of a fear of vulnerability. I think that this album is just a representation of all of the times that I've been silenced, but still like the aim is achieved, you know like even if you have your silencer on, you still hit your target. And so I think that, like this album really just represents me overcoming struggle in a lot of different aspects; as a Black woman, but also just as a human being and dealing with my own internal struggle to express how I feel and overcoming those things to create something beautiful to make art out of struggle, to make art out of pain, and also to just celebrate joy and the things that come in between.



**Honor, acrylic on canvas, 24x30**

**TD:** The feelings and emotions that you explore throughout this album are not small by any means. What are your feelings on being so vulnerable with people and sharing stuff that's so deep with the public, especially knowing that once it's out there, we can't really control how it's perceived?

**KH:** I think that my vulnerability has been inspired a lot by other artists and understanding that if they didn't get their vulnerability to me and to the world, I wouldn't be the artist I am, the person I am and I wouldn't be as vulnerable as I've been. I think it took a lot because I'm an extremely private person, especially with my emotions and I know that I've studied other artists, especially in the process of making my book and making my album, and seeing how powerful their vulnerability is and how much it can do for other people and how much it can do for them, just releasing the things that they've experienced in a way that is beautiful. And I think that I just sit with that rather than sitting with fear. I feel like I don't really think about how people will perceive me very often anymore. It's kind of like, I do what I can to create art that feels good to me and then hope that someone can relate to it or feel it in the way that I did. But when it comes to thinking about, I don't know, negative ways that it could impact me or like ways that it could truly hurt me, I think that those are just things that I don't consider often because they're just rooted in fear. I try to not encourage that emotion too much.

**TD:** I know you picked each instrument sound and word in this album, which is similar to how you did literally everything for your first book. Can you talk about just the process of why it's important for you to have a hand in every aspect?

**KH:** Yeah, I think oftentimes when I have an idea or a vision for something, it's extremely vivid. And I think that when I try to incorporate other people in specific aspects of it, I end up not being satisfied in the way that I would be if I were to do it myself. That can be a good thing, but that can also be a bad thing because I am a huge proponent of collaboration and trying to create things with people but I think that when it comes to visions that I have or ideas that I have, a lot of times like each piece is crafted in a very specific way in my mind and in order to enact it, rather than micromanaging someone to exactly how I want it, I'd rather just do it myself and create the work in the vision that I already have and it always comes together. I don't think I ever really worry too much about the finished project. I just like to work on what I'm working on in that moment, whether it's the instrumental or whether it's the cover art. I don't really do that much of big picture thinking I just focus on what I'm focused on and know that it's going to fit in the end result and fit well. I guess that's just the fate, but it always works out.

**TD:** Are there any poems or songs that you find yourself like constantly going back to throughout your creative process or just like personally?

**KH:** Yeah, there is a poet called Malanda Jean Claude and I find myself, when I'm creating, checking his work often. It's not really the content of what he's writing about, it's the way that he writes and the way that he produces. He has a book out called *Because of a Woman* and I own that book, it's like annotated to death. I just think that when I'm feeling like I want to be inspired, I always

reference back to his writing, his Twitter feed, his Instagram feed because there's something so unique about what he does and it's extremely inspiring. There's just specific aspects that I draw from with him, which is more so structure and design and then there are artists where there's music or poetry that I learn from their vulnerability, and I feel like that's more of what drives the art for me. There's artists like Reyna Bidy that I go to, she's another poet, and I'll listen to her work and she literally just lays her heart out and I'm like, if she was able to be that vulnerable and it was able to affect me and inspire me this strongly, I want to be able to do that too and that's what kinda keeps the work going sometimes when it's harder.

**TD:** Lyric Breakdown:

*“The pressure of a million suns waiting for you to become who you said you'd be, who they are expecting out of you, some days I'm not sure I can be her.”*

**KH:** With any gift comes weight and pressure. When people see a light inside you they automatically attach certain expectations. Sometimes those expectations can be fueling and comforting, the days that I can see my own potential clearly. Other times the weight of that pressure can crush me. I'm not always sure of myself, I'm human, but even in those times people are still expecting me to reach my full potential. That can be very heavy.

*“Don't be afraid to leave paranoia on the canvas, despair on the mic, don't box your complexities into something more presentable.”*

**KH:** This line pushes creatives to examine who they are when they're alone. When no one is listening or watching, then bring that into the public. We too often feel the need to package our emotions in a way that we think people will perceive it best, but the art can lose its authenticity that way. This line is more so a reminder for me than anything. I'm telling myself to be 100% genuine to who I am even when it's ugly, bitter, or heavy. I have the right to share all parts of myself, we all do.



**Butterflies Do Cry**

**Keep up with Kyra Horton on  
[Instagram](#) & [Spotify](#)**

**Watch Kyra's Spoken Word  
Performance on YouTube:  
[Human by Kyra Horton \(Official  
Music Video\)](#)**



**Cries of a Butterfly Book Cover w/you reading – photo**

# SHARED GRAPHICS

Kelly Hemmer of PFLAG DuPage has uploaded new button designs into our **SHARED GRAPHICS** folder. Button-making chapters may download hundreds of button designs in ready-to-print format.



# Trans Media Fashion

Tickets are now on sale for Trans Media Fashion on Sunday, **October 22<sup>nd</sup>** from 2-6 pm at Water Tower Place in Chicago.



The purpose of the show is to celebrate trans and nonbinary models while raising money for Howard Brown Health's Broadway Youth Center.

100% of ticket sales and donations made through this link will go to helping LGBTQ+ young people using services at BYC! Feel free to share with your network on social media, newsletters, email, etc!!!

[CLICK HERE TO BUY TICKETS OR DONATE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO TO LEARN MORE!](#)

## EVENT ITINERARY:

- Doors open at 2:00 pm
- Red Carpet and Media Interviews begin at 2:30 pm
- Cocktail Reception opens at 2:30 pm
- Performance at 3:15 pm
- The Show begins at 4:30 pm
- CLOSE at 6:00 pm
- Showcasing Brands: IAMTONYLONG
- Headlining Brands: Naranki Fashion

**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)**





# Reeling Film Festival

## Highlights

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

**Reeling 2023 - The 41st Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival** in Chicago ran from September 21<sup>st</sup> through October 8<sup>th</sup> with in person theater screenings as well as virtual streaming options. **Check out: [REELING 2023: FILM GUIDE — Reeling 2023 — Celebrating LGBTQ+ Stories From Around the World \(reelingfilmfest.org\).](#)**

I had the pleasure of attending two movie screenings with my PFLAG colleagues, Lex Wilder (PFLAG Evanston) as well as Ray King and Kathy Watters-King (PFLAG Tinley Park).

### **THE MATTACHINE FAMILY** **Opening Night Film at the Music Box Theater**

Starring Nico Tortorella (YOUNGER; THE WALKING DEAD: WORLD BEYOND) and Juan Pablo Di Pace (FULLER HOUSE, MAMMA MIA!) as the very much in love Thomas and Oscar, and toting a supporting cast featuring Emily Hampshire (SCHITT'S CREEK) and Carl Clemons-Hopkins (HACKS), THE MATTACHINE FAMILY is a story about family, both made and found. When their foster child reunites with his birth mother, husbands Thomas and Oscar deal with the loss in very different ways. Oscar's acting career finally picks up, taking him out of state for filming for months at a time. Meanwhile, Thomas finds himself at home alone, dealing with his new world full of change and loss. Having never considered a life as a husband and father available to him, Thomas begins a journey of self-discovery, trying to figure out what he wants from life and what it means to be gay in 2021. Told through a web of connected moments in time, Thomas and Oscar navigate their differing world views, while growing and changing, both as individuals and as a couple. Loosely based on director Andy Vallentine and writer Danny Vallentine's own lived experiences as husbands and potential fathers, THE MATTACHINE FAMILY tells a story about the universality of love, family, and community. THE MATTACHINE FAMILY was produced by Zach Braff (GARDEN STATE), Scot Boland (THE HOBBIT), and Mike Diaz.

The screening was followed by a very special Q&A with writer/director Andy Vallentine and star Nico Tortorella!

Talk about Art imitating Life! Both Andy (writer/director) and Nico (starring as Thomas) shared their inspiration and experience on their journeys to become parents – which they both did (with their respective partners) over the course of filming this movie!

### **AMERICAN PARENT** **PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois was proud to co-present this film screening at the invitation of Reeling organizers.**

Chicago filmmaker Emily Railsback crafts a heartfelt tale of two mothers navigating the trials of parenthood and personal identity in the wake of COVID. This indie family drama, set in the heart of Chicago, captures the couple's struggle with job loss, financial instability, and the balance of personal and relationship life. As they face the potential loss of their apartment and the breakdown of their newly purchased car, a job offer emerges that could alleviate their financial stress but would require a move to a rural, conservative area. In her narrative feature debut, Railsback's cinéma-vérité style allows for strong, often improvised performances, in this poignant exploration of everyday humor, disappointments, and the enduring power of love within an American family.

The screening was followed by a special Q&A featuring director/writer Emily Railsback, producer/co-writer Doreen Bartoni, and producer Caro Posse!

Set in Chicago in the aftermath of the pandemic, married couple Elsie and Bette, along with their young daughter, struggle to make ends meet and find a path forward as they deal with job loss, identity shifts, financial instability and family disapproval. It's a beautiful story of love, resilience and family. The young toddler in the movie is actually the director's daughter in real life!



# CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED



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## Want to mentor?

Are you 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?  
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For more information, e-mail [hrapp@centeronhalsted.org](mailto:hrapp@centeronhalsted.org)

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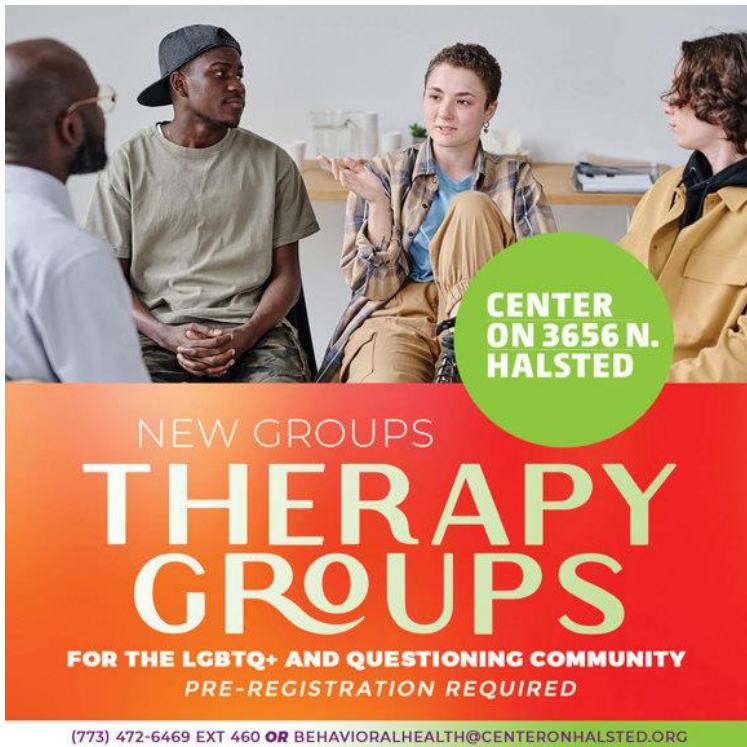
**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

## art GALLERY OPENING

Friday, October 6th 6:30PM TO 8:30PM

Jill Sutton (she/her)      Birdo Beaverhausen (he/him/they)

3656 N HALSTED \$5 SUGGESTED DONATION • CASH BAR      [centeronhalsted.org/art-gallery.html](http://centeronhalsted.org/art-gallery.html)



**CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED**

## NEW GROUPS THERAPY GROUPS

**FOR THE LGBTQ+ AND QUESTIONING COMMUNITY**  
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

(773) 472-6469 EXT 460 OR [BEHAVIORALHEALTH@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG](mailto:BEHAVIORALHEALTH@CENTERONHALSTED.ORG)



**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)  
806 W ADDISON • [CENTERONHALSTED.ORG](http://CENTERONHALSTED.ORG)

# First-Ever Symposium and Resource Fair to Empower LGBTQ+ Students and Families to Advocate for their Rights

CHICAGO, October 4, 2023—The Chicago law firm Matt Cohen and Associates has announced a first-of-its-kind symposium and resource fair for LGBTQ+ youth and their families. The “**Legal, Educational, and Mental Health Rights for LGBTQ+ Youth Symposium and Resource Fair**” will be held at Loyola University School of Law on **November 4, 2023**, from 9:00 am to 4 pm.

This uplifting all day event will empower participants by teaching them about their rights and how to advocate on their own behalf in school and beyond. It will provide valuable opportunities to connect and consult directly with community and mental health resources.

The event boasts two inspiring keynote speakers, Joe Wardenski and Ash Whitaker. Whitaker, a transgender student who began to openly identify as male when he was a high school freshman, filed suit in 2016 against Kenosha Unified School District, his then-school district, after he was prohibited from using the boy’s restroom. His case has been pivotal in protecting the rights of transgender students in Wisconsin, Illinois, and throughout the United States. A renowned civil rights attorney from New York City, Wardenski successfully represented Whitaker in litigating his case. He has litigated several groundbreaking cases that have advanced LGBTQ+ equality and racial justice.

Additional presenters will discuss the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, legal and educational rights, bullying, and ways to advocate for youth in school. A panel discussion will present the legal state of the union and discuss day-to-day logistical concerns for LGBTQ+ youth.

Advocates, clinicians, therapy providers, and community organizations will be available at the resource fair to talk one-on-one with participants about their experiences and provide information on what is available and where they can go to get the help they need.

“With so many efforts taking place across the country to deny LGBTQ+ individuals their civil rights and basic personhood, this event will renew hope by discussing the

many positive ways these youth and their allies can work to protect their rights and help them navigate the systems they will encounter in their lives.” said Brad Dembs, attorney at Matt Cohen and Associates.

The cost of the event is \$10 per family and includes a light breakfast and box lunch for each participant. If this price is cost-prohibitive, free admission will be offered on a per-case basis. Online access to watch the presentations will also be available for free.

To receive notices about the event and to register, go to [www.mattcohenandassociates.com/LGBTQevent](http://www.mattcohenandassociates.com/LGBTQevent) and click on “Register Here”.

Help LGBTQ+ Youth Thrive

## Legal, Educational and Mental Health Rights for LGBTQ+ Youth

A Symposium and Resource Fair

**Lunch Provided**

**Date:** Saturday November 4th, 2023  
**Time:** 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM  
**Location:** Loyola School of Law, 25 E Pearson St., Chicago IL 60611

For more information, scan the QR code or visit [www.mattcohenandassociates.com/LGBTQevent](http://www.mattcohenandassociates.com/LGBTQevent)

**Matt Cohen & Associates**  
Special Education, Disability Rights & Human Services Law



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OCTOBER 11, 2023

7PM-9PM

\$30 TICKET

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# Open Space Arts

*OpenSpaceArts.com*

A massage therapist and his female client don't have much in common. Yet as a year passes, they develop trust and treasure their time together. When the client needs extraordinary support from the therapist, their bond is tested considerably. This serious drama also provides surprises and lots of humor.

*"Best new play in the Key West Festival. Plays gingerly on the heart."*

– South Florida Sun-Sentinel



## PRIDE FILM FEST

Pride Film Fest streams new LGBTQ films year-round. Discounts for members!

<https://pridefilm.org/>

# 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**

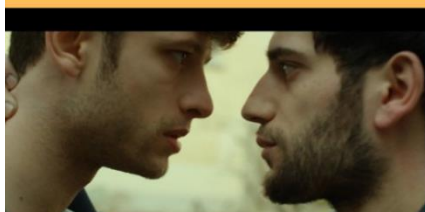
**BUY TICKETS FOR ROSENBERG**

## New Season Nov 1 to July 1



## PRIDE FILM FEST

Celebrate Pride All Year Round  
[Pridefilm.org](https://pridefilm.org/)



# THEATER

The traveling show **5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche** performed by the Mosaic Players is still running near you! It's a comedic piece, featuring LGBTQ+ themes.

If you're interested in attending, either personally or as a chapter outing, buy tickets here:

<https://www.mosaicplayers.com/post/mosaic-players-presents-our-fall-tour>

Read more about the play here:

<https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/9940/5-lesbians-eating-a-quiche>

Note that this show features mild adult themes.



# RESEARCH STUDY

The Center for Health, Identity, Behavior and Prevention Studies (CHIBPS) at the Rutgers School of Public Health, is looking for individuals for a paid research opportunity related to LGBTQ+ adults' sentiments and experiences with guns/firearms and gun violence.

The opportunity is a 15-20 minute online survey to learn more about LGBTQ+ adults' attitudes towards guns/firearms. Those who complete the survey will have the opportunity to enter to win one of twenty \$50 e-gift cards.

Many LGBTQ+ voices aren't typically highlighted during conversations on guns. Researchers want to ensure that a wide variety of LGBTQ+ perspectives on gun ownership and safety are collected during the survey.

Click here to enter the survey:

<https://go.rutgers.edu/nx7isvh5>

**RUTGERS**  
Center for Health, Identity, Behavior, and Prevention Studies

Study: Gun Violence in the Context of Interpersonal Violence Among Sexual and Gender Minorities (GIVES)

## SEEKING LGBTQ+ ADULTS

FOR A 15-20 MINUTE ONLINE RESEARCH SURVEY ON GUN BELIEFS AND OWNERSHIP

- This research study aims to learn more about the thoughts that LGBTQ+ people have about firearms, interpersonal violence, and mental health.
- You may be eligible if you live in the US, are over 18, and identify as LGBTQ. **We are interested in hearing from people who do and do not own firearms.**
- Upon completion, you will have the opportunity to enter a raffle!
- To determine eligibility scan the QR code or go to: <https://go.rutgers.edu/nx7isvh5>

• Contact [chibps.rutgers@gmail.com](mailto:chibps.rutgers@gmail.com) with questions.



Version 1: 5/24/2023

**RUTGERS** | eIRB APPROVED  
IRB ID: Pre2021002223  
Approval Date: 5/4/2023  
Expiration Date: 3/7/2024



# BG Pride's 6th Annual COMING OUT DAY CELEBRATION

Sunday, October 22nd 2-5 pm

Community Arts Center Buffalo Grove

*Family friendly fun for all!*

Drag Queen Bingo

Drag King and Queen Show

Rainbow shopping

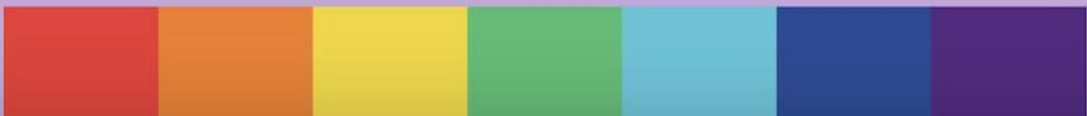
Resource tables

Art by Peter Thaddeus

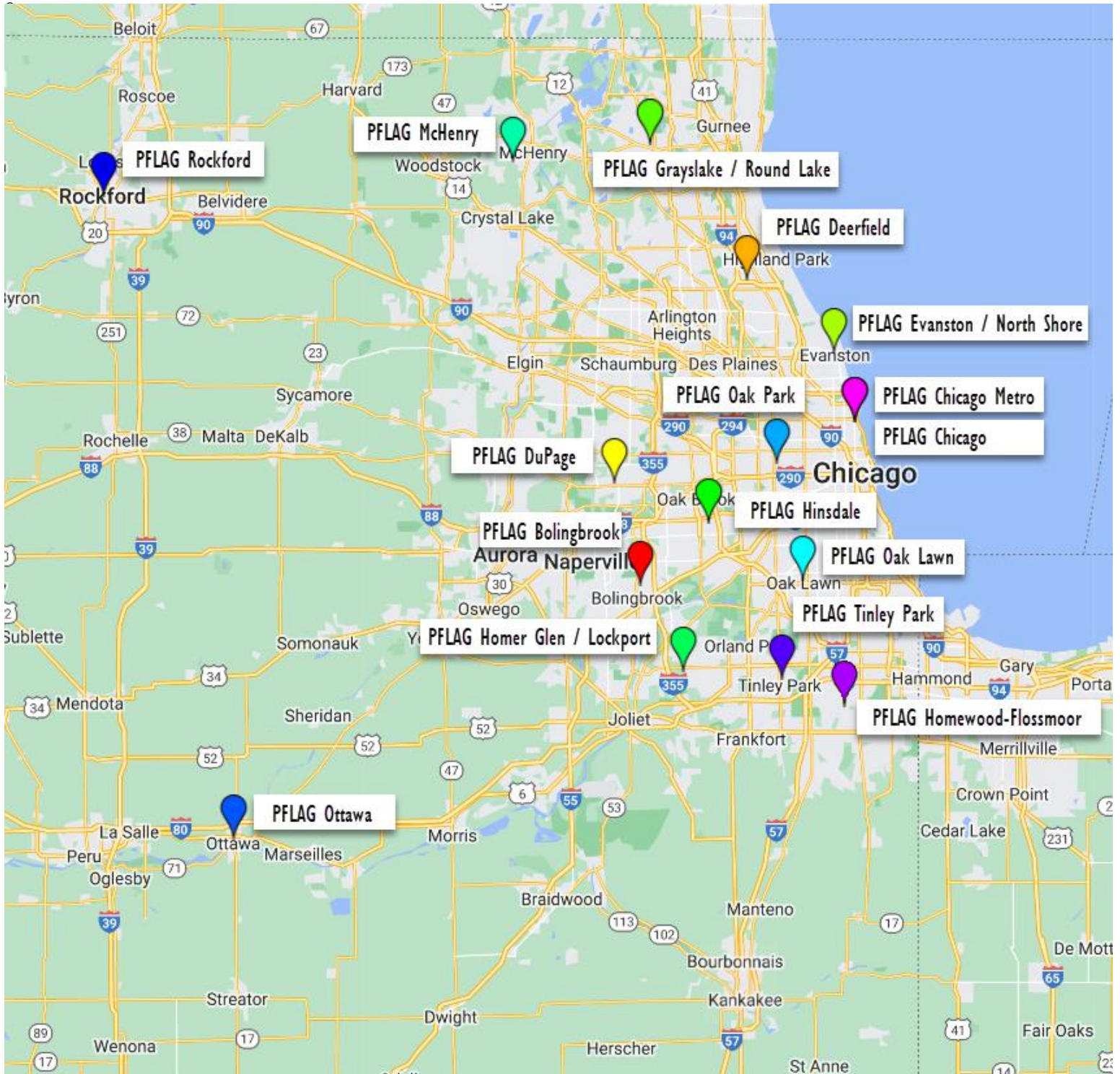
Balloons by Tommy

Games, music, treats and more!

**Tickets @ [pintaprideproject.com](http://pintaprideproject.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.**