



Jill Sutton

PFLAG
COUNCIL OF
NORTHERN ILLINOIS

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Open Doors

December 2023

Celebration of our Cover Artists in 2023!

by Ann McAuliffe and Andrew Zanevsky

We would like to recognize the Artists who graced the covers of Open Doors this year. Thank you for making the world a more beautiful place – one cover at a time.

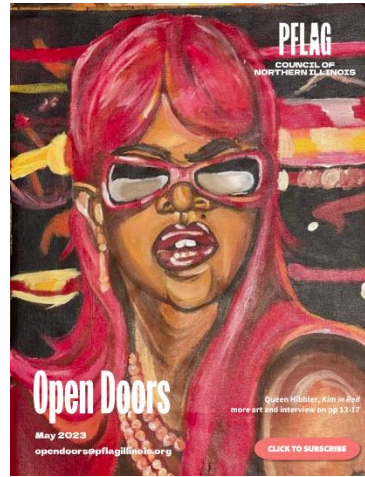
We are:

- In awe of your talents
- Humbled by your generosity
- Inspired by your interviews
- Elevated by your creativity
- Touched by your expression of emotions
- Reminded how art creates community
- Connected to our shared humanity

We had the pleasure of meeting you in a multitude of ways. Our colleagues at Howard Brown Health graciously introduced us to four artists whose works are on display at Broadway Youth Center. Several of us met over cocktails at the Center on Halsted's Art Gallery Opening when you were the featured artist. It started with a phone call to COH, and we were added to their distribution list. Others graciously answered that random, cold call invites in your email box to display your works in a PFLAG publication. Sometimes you were the "friend of a friend" introduction.

No matter how we met – our connection was instant, profound, entertaining and the result of a shared experience. It all started with "Hi, I'm a PFLAG parent...".

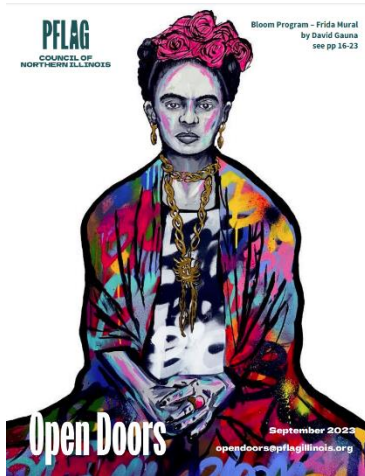
In this season of Gratitude, please know how deeply appreciative we are that you said "Yes!". PFLAG stands with you in Love, Pride, and Solidarity!



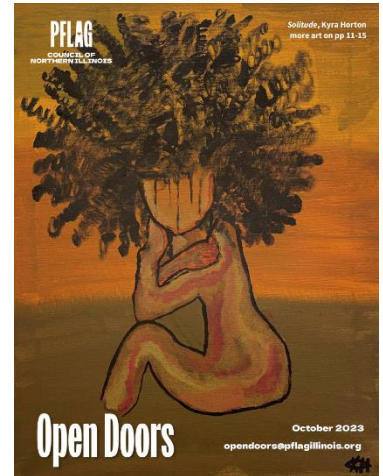
Queen Hibler – May



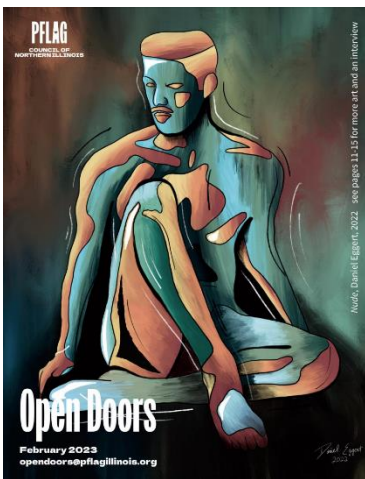
Ivan Vazquez – August



David Gauna – September



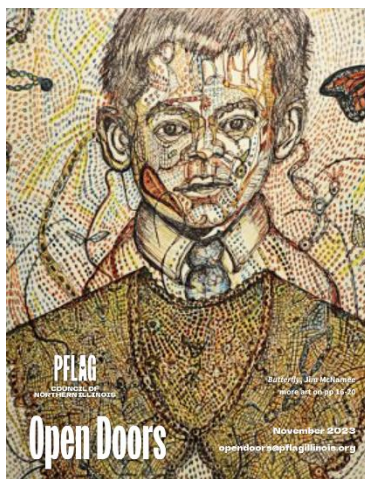
Kyra Horton – October



Daniel Egert – February and March



Jae Lin – April



Jim McNamee – November



Jill Sutton - December

Your PFLAG Membership

Our membership drive this year has been going extremely well! As of November 20th, we received **70% more membership dues payments** and **2.5 times more donations** than in the same period of 2022! There are several possible explanations:

- The overall harsh political climate in the country makes our members realize the importance of providing funds to PFLAG to stand firm in its advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community.
- Our membership drive appeal letter this year, written by Jodi Zavos, is very powerful – see page 2 of the [October issue of Open Doors](#).
- Our hard work this year has not gone unnoticed by members: we held a spectacular biannual Conference in October of last year, successfully implemented new PFLAG branding, opened our online store on Zazzle, organized strong participation in the Chicago Pride Parade, created our Button Brigade that made hundreds of buttons for various events, participated in the Mother's Day fundraiser in front of Sidetrack, held a summer picnic, staffed tables at many outreach events, and worked on other initiatives.
- Chapter leaders have made passionate appeals to the members to pay dues and/or donate. It works. Members listen and are glad to support their chapters and PCNI.

Whatever the reasons, I want to thank everyone who has paid their membership dues and donated! Whether you made a large or small contribution, every one of them makes a difference; it keeps our projects running and makes PFLAG stronger.

Anyone who has recently joined PFLAG or hasn't yet paid their dues this year, please visit pflagil.org/membership-and-donation/. Everybody is always welcome at chapter meetings regardless of payment status, but your payments and donations are very important to the PFLAG's future.

Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones! PFLAG is and has always been one big family. I'm sending you love, hugs, and support!

Andrew Zanevsky (he/him)

PCNI President

P.S. There will be no January issue of Open Doors, as we traditionally skip one issue at the end of the year. The next issue (February 2024) will be released at the end of January.

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Synchrony Scholarship

Synchrony has provided PCNI a grant of **\$20,000** to fund a scholarship program for LGBTQ+ students. (We announced \$15,000 in the November issue, but the donor has generously increased the amount since then.) We have formed a Scholarship Committee, which has developed a plan and is now working on the application form and other details of the program. High school seniors and current college/university students will be invited to apply.

Synchrony Scholarship will be rolled out early next year and scholarship recipients will be announced in May 2024. We'll publish application rules on our Facebook page, in Open Doors, through chapter leaders, and through other channels. We are very grateful to Synchrony for proposing and funding this program!

AbbVie's 2023 ERG Community Grant

We're honored to receive **AbbVie's 2023 ERG Community Grant** in the amount of **\$25,000** to advance our work together to create an equitable and inclusive world. PFLAG works every day to ensure LGBTQ+ people everywhere are safe, celebrated, empowered, and loved.

AbbVie Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), in partnership with the AbbVie Foundation, provide \$700,000 in funding annually to nonprofit organizations in the United States that advance ERG values and align with the Foundation's philanthropic priorities.

Based in North Chicago, Illinois, the AbbVie Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to making a remarkable impact around the world through a commitment to building sustainable health care systems, effective educational programs and strong communities.

This generous grant will provide funding for some of our big projects, including the 2024 Biannual Conference on October 26, 2024, and for projects and programs implemented by PCNI chapters.

This month, we are publishing only positive news on this page, because we all need some joy and cheer! It's been a difficult year for many in our community, but it's also been a year of incredible support and outpouring of love.

COURT MATTERS

Supreme Court denies Florida's request to enforce anti-drag law. In a 6-3 decision released on November 16th, the Supreme Court justices declined to remove an injunction barring enforcement of the law while appeals are carried out in the lower courts.

STATE MATTERS

Michigan - State House passes gay/trans panic defense ban. House Bill 4718 passed the House on October 19th and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

Pro-inclusive education school board candidates win seats across the country. School boards across the country held on November 7th. Pro-inclusive education candidates took control in high-profile races Iowa, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and in other states. The American Federation of Teachers said candidates publicly endorsed by conservative groups such as Moms for Liberty and the 1776 Project lost about 70% of their races nationally in elections this week.

Texas - Sherman High School reverses course - allows trans student to keep role in school musical. On November 13th, The Sherman school board directed Sherman High School leadership to allow the production of "Oklahoma!" to proceed as planned before the school principal stripped trans student Max Hightower of his role. The board also insisted the original script — and not a "youth" version — be used, ensuring Hightower will have a solo.

GLOBAL MATTERS

Austria - Government establishes fund to compensate gay people who faced prosecution. Some discriminatory laws targeting the gay community remained in force in Austria until the 2000s. Justice Minister Alma Zadić estimated 11,000 people were eligible for compensation, with a total of €33 million allotted for payout.

China - Gay Games close in Hong Kong. Over 2,300 people participated in the week-long event, which included dragon boat racing and mahjong.

MEDIA MATTERS

Check out photos from Learning with Love: The 2023 PFLAG National Convention. The Advocate published photos from the recent PFLAG National Convention, held from October 19-21 in Arlington, Va., which saw over 400 attendees from the U.S. and 14 international PFLAG organizations converge for advocacy and support within the LGBTQ+ community.

Google searches related to LGBTQ+ identity increase significantly over last two decades. Searches in the United States for questions like "Am I gay?" and "Am I trans?" have increased 1300% since 2004.

NPR launches new series on the history of trans youth in the US. Laine Kaplan-Levenson hosts All The Only Ones. The first episode in this three-part series was released on November 2nd in NPR's Embedded podcast feed.

Dolly Parton expresses support for trans community in interview. In an interview with the Hollywood Reporter, Parton said, "I just want everybody to be treated good" when asked about Tennessee's anti-trans laws. She went on to say that trans people are God's children like everyone else and she loves the trans people in her life.

Tracy Chapman's LGBTQ+ anthem "Fast Car" wins Song and Single of the Year at Country Music Association (CMA) Awards. Chapman is the first Black songwriter to win Song of the Year in the ceremony's 57-year history; visibility of "Fast Car" is thanks to Luke Combs's cover.

Kelly Clarkson Show features PFLAG dad, Jeff Walker, and daughter, Harleigh, for a PFLAG-inspired episode centering the stories of transgender people. The PFLAG-inspired episode, which aired on November 15th, had Jeff and Harleigh Walker of PFLAG Auburn (Ala.) as guests, along with Laverne Cox, Trace Lysette, and Patricia Clarkson. If you missed it yesterday, watch #LoveTakeAction in selected clips from the episode.

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

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to receive the full newsletter:
pflagil.org/membership-and-donation/**

PFLAG

DEERFIELD

by Sue Ginsburg (she/her)

We were so fortunate to welcome Mike Ziri, Director of Public Policy at Equality Illinois! While Mike has been guest speaker before, we always like to bring him in so that he can update us on what is going on down in Springfield and how it affects our LGBTQ+ community.

As of this month, there have been over 600 anti-LGBTQ+ laws written and enacted across the country. Mike connected the dots for us in linking the Dobbs decision, reproductive rights and rights to privacy, with banning gender affirming care for our youth. You will find those who support abortion bans are the same people who write and support these anti-LGBTQ+ laws. Illinois is surrounded by anti-equality states. Illinois has been a leader in advocating LGBTQ+ equality for many years:

- Chicago was the site of the first Gay Rights organization in 1924!
- In 1961, IL decriminalized homosexuality
- 2015 - Conversion therapy banned
- 2021 - IL was second state in the country to decriminalize transmission of HIV
- IL has enacted protection to advance security and socialization of seniors, so they don't have to return to the closet when in nursing home
- This is the 10 year anniversary of IL passing marriage equality as a State law!
- IL passed Inclusive curriculum law, which requires schools to teach the importance of contributions of LGBTQ+ persons in history (Only 6 states in the US have this)
- IL also has legislation to stop any library from banning books - we are FIRST in the nation for this!

Mike reminded us of the Equality IL Gala which happens February 3rd. They are looking for volunteers, which you can respond to by accessing the link provided.

Another chance for advocacy: The "Invest In Kids Program", which was enacted in 2017, offers a tax break when people donate to private schools. 75% of these are religious schools, who very often discriminate against

LGBTQ+ students. This law will sunset on 12/31/23. While there are people who wish to reinstate this law, there is no extension planned. However, THIS IS A GREAT CHANCE FOR YOU TO CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES TO TELL THEM YOU ARE VERY MUCH AGAINST THE REINSTATEMENT OR EXTENSION OF THIS LAW!!! (This also takes money away from public schools)

The good news is that there is lots of anecdotal evidence of people relocating to Illinois because of our stance on equality in many areas!

If there's one thing we learned after Mike's presentation is that we are so very lucky to be living in Illinois!!!!

As we talked about last month, due to a change in the schedule at BJBE we were told that we would need to change the day that we hold our meetings. We have been asked to **change our meeting day from Thursday to Tuesday**. They have always been so gracious to us, never asking for a penny over the last 40 years! So, we of course, agreed to the change.

SO PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS. OUR REGULAR PFLAG MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH, BEGINNING IN DECEMBER!!! Our first Tuesday meeting will be on **Tuesday, December 12th.**

BOOK CLUB

After hosting James Klise, high school librarian, teacher and award-winning author, a few months ago, we had the idea of starting a book club and having James' latest book, "**I'll Take Everything You Have,**" be our very first book. James even volunteered to attend and lead the discussion. So on the 19th of November, ten of us gathered, with lots of great sweets and coffee, and our one hour book club meeting went well over 2 hours!

We had a great discussion of his book, set in 1934, about a young man who sent from Southern Illinois up to Chicago to get a job to help his mother keep their farm. It is a "vivid portrayal of queer coming of age in Depression Chicago", where the protagonist, Joe experiences underworld Chicago gangsters, politics supposed 'friends' all making him decide who exactly he wants to be.

Having the author there was amazing! We were able to ask James how he went about writing a book, his motivation of his characters, whether some events were autobiographical or not and so much more. We all agreed that even though this book was considered YA (for young adults), it was a wonderfully written story for adults as well. Now comes the hard part, how to choose the next book and top this experience?

PFLAG HINSDALE

by Barb Medley (she/her)

At our November meeting, PFLAG Hinsdale welcomed LLuvia Roberts-Ramirez, who talked about their work as Sr. Program Manager for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which is part of Chicago's Public Health Division. Michael Weinstein founded the foundation in the 1980's in response to the emergence of AIDS, called the Gay Disease during that time. It opened by offering hospice services.

Lluvia came out 27 years ago and began HIV/AIDS work in 2007. They moved to Chicago about six years ago and previously worked at Howard Brown Health before joining the Foundation. The Foundation has grown tremendously and now offers pharmaceuticals,

The Foundation runs the Out of the Closet Stores, which offers household items. 96 cents of every dollar goes back to offering care and testing to their patients. The AIDS Healthcare Foundation will soon open a third facility in Chicago, in the Hyde Park area. They try to get care assigned to patients who come to them within 24 hours.

In the United States they offer housing in Florida and Los Angeles. In some places, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation runs food pantries and offers social service programs. They're a worthy charity for you to remember in your end-of-year giving, and their website is <https://www.aidshealth.org>.

On November 6th we joined a panel discussion conducted along with EQDG (Equality Downers Grove). The program was geared toward parents and guardians of youth who have come out as LGBTQ+.

PFLAG Hinsdale's Brookfield Zoo tree was decorated on November 12th and will be on display until January. It holds an amazing display of PFLAG ornaments. Please visit the Zoo and enjoy our contribution! It's tree #326 located at the East Mall.

PFLAG Hinsdale continues to encourage all allies to attend the Downers Grove Public Library Board of Trustees meetings, held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at

the library, 1050 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove. 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.

Our **December 3rd** meeting, held at the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale will, once again, will 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!

Our **January 7th** speaker is **Carolyn Wahlskog** who will update us about happenings at Youth Outlook.

PFLAG Hinsdale decorates a tree at Brookfield Zoo!

photos provided by Marcia Prichason (she/her)





PFLAG

PEORIA

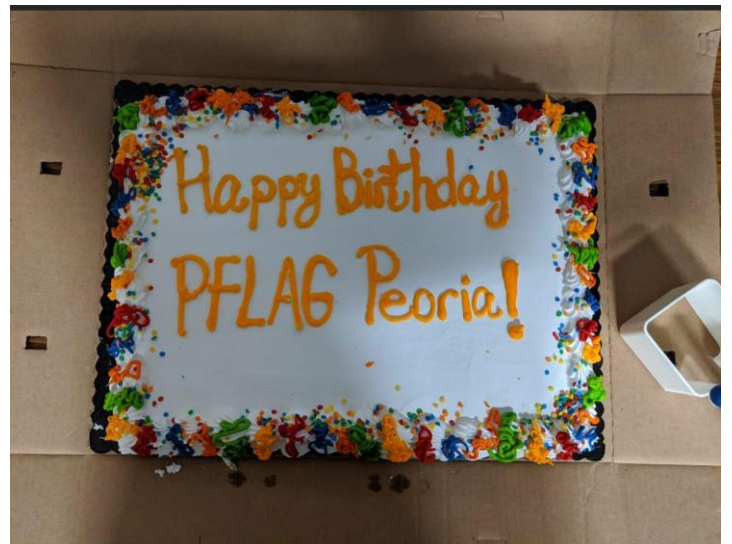
by Amy Orwig (she/her)

Hello from PFLAG Peoria, in the heart of Illinois!

This month, we're celebrating our fifth birthday!! For those who have been involved with PFLAG for awhile, you may remember that Peoria boasted having a PFLAG chapter many years ago. Sadly, that chapter closed towards the end of the last century, (anyone else feel old, reading that statement? I know it makes me feel a bit old!). Anyway, on December 1, 2018, we held our inaugural meeting. In 2019, we held our first "birthday party", with cake, punch, and a community showing of the film, "Reel in the Closet". Then, 2020 happened...and, well, you know. 🙄. We're excited to come together, for the third celebration of our birthday, (thanks Covid!). This year, we will be playing board games, and making centerpieces for an upcoming community event. For the second year, PFLAG Peoria is helping to sponsor/co-host an LGBTQIA+ Family & Friends Family Potluck! The event last year was an absolutely wonderful experiment, and we're so glad to be part of sharing this event with our community again!

Have a safe, wonderful season - no matter how you do, or don't celebrate!

Thanks for all you do!



PFLAG

MCHENRY

by **Toni Weaver (she/her)**

The holidays are upon us which provided the perfect topic for our November meeting: how to navigate the holidays with relatives who might be less than supportive of our LGBTQ+ family members. Folks attending our meeting for the first time commented on how they found the sharing component so very valuable. Time and time again PFLAG's slogan of "Lead with Love" took center stage as the perfect way to approach the possible conflicts, and, as always, as parents we put our kids first, loving them with all our hearts and souls and protecting them from those who would look upon them with disdain.

We aren't sure yet when we will return to in-person meetings, so Zoom continues to be the order of the day. Because Zoom lacks the personal component, we try to match new people with "old timers," encouraging face-to-face get-togethers at public spaces like Starbucks or Panera. We never, ever meet people in private homes for obvious reasons: safety and liability. Some of the best conversations have taken place in these private get-togethers. One question that comes up time and time again is "How will I recognize the person I'm supposed to meet"? There must be a telepathic sense because it's never been an issue!

We at PFLAG McHenry would like to wish all the other PFLAG chapters in the Northern Illinois Council a most love-filled holiday season!

Lead with Love!

PFLAG

HOMWOOD - FLOSSMOOR

by **Rachel Nati Hardy (she/her)**

At our November meeting, Sam Rummel from Howard Brown Health gave a super informative presentation on gender-affirming care. Originally from Texas, he has over five years of experience providing group and individual therapy to gender-diverse youth and adults. Sam's work focuses on supporting minors and their families who are considering hormone replacement therapy as part of their gender-affirming health care. She moved to the Chicago area in 2022 to restart the Minor Youth Hormone Program at Howard Brown. In their free time, Sam enjoys board games, cooking, and taking care of the animals on their happy suburban homestead. After the presentation, we welcomed 7 first-time attendees to our support meeting!

Join us for the next monthly meeting on Sunday, December 10 at 2 pm in Homewood. This meeting will be a safe and welcoming space for open discussion, support, and learning. Our featured topic is "Thriving through the Holidays" with Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Board Certified Art Therapist, Emalee Kay from Creative Approaches to Therapy. 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!



Sam Rummel

PFLAG

DUPAGE

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

As I write this note in our season of Thanksgiving, I cannot help but express gratitude for PFLAG as an organization, all our members and friends, and our tremendous networks of allies. We truly achieve wonderful things as we work together, advancing the cause for each LGBTQ+ individual to be met with respect and equality. Thanks to each of you for your part in this reality.

For our November chapter meeting we enjoyed hearing first-hand about the PFLAG National Conference held in October. There were six members from PFLAG DuPage who made the trek to Washington D.C. Four of them were

at our November meeting to share their experiences. First, I was blown away by the muscle of the Plenary Sessions -- the big names that came to the stage in support of PFLAG: the First Lady, the President of the American Library Association, and the President of the American Medical Association to name a few. It is heartening to know that we have this kind of power behind us. The next thing that struck me was the sheer number and variety of workshops that were offered. It was no easy task for our crew to decide which sessions to attend! They brought back many ideas around strategic planning, ally-ship, political activism, and public education for LGBTQ+ issues that we can use to strengthen our chapter. It is exciting to have this burst of new ideas. I want to give a big thank you to our attending chapter members for sharing their experiences with us!

As usual we ended our meeting with sharing time, where we go around the circle and give each attendee the opportunity to share a bit about their story, their successes, and challenges; basically, whatever may be on their mind. We believe it is this heart-to-heart communication that gives us strength and binds us as a chapter.

PFLAG DuPage Name Change Fund

Picking your own name is a powerful step in the journey to take control of your identity.

With this fund we are able to help people who make too much to qualify for a waiver of court fees, but not enough to be able to pay the fees.

Recipients of the gifts do not need to be members of PFLAG DuPage, but they must be recommended by a member.

Since the start of the fund PFLAG DuPage has helped 7 people. Six of these have been through the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois (TJLP).

If you know of someone who could benefit from this assistance, please send an email to PFLAGdupage@yahoo.com.



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.

November has been a bit of a quiet month but we are always available to provide supports for all who need it. Here's a fun update: **PFLAG Oak Park Area is now up to 21 paid members and counting!** This number is up from just 8 back in 2020! Our community is growing but our bond is only getting stronger.

Looking to the future, PFLAG Oak Park Area will be hosting a special guest speaker during our January 2024 meeting. Our guest speaker will be Dan Hemmer from PFLAG DuPage! We are so looking forward to hearing him share his experience as a parent of a nonbinary child, being a proud PFLAG DuPage leader/member, as well as his wealth of knowledge gained from attending this year's PFLAG National Convention!

Lastly, please check out the official PFLAG Oak Park Area Website created by one of our members, Cori McMillan! <https://pflagoakpark.org/> It highlights the history of our chapter, meeting details, contact information, and soon-to-be launched is our our tab of Resources.

While we will not be hosting a meeting in December, we will once again offer the hybrid option at our January meeting, held every fourth Sunday at First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60301.

Please enter through the double doors (in the rear of the building) from the parking lot off Kenilworth.

Our next meeting will be held in the new year (still hybrid: in person and via Zoom) on **January 28th at 3PM. Mark your calendars!**

Happy Holidays and warm wishes for a fabulous New Year!



Photo by Tara Chavez: Target's Pride Nutcracker Is Making the Yuletide Gayer And I Am Here for It - This year's inclusive Pride Nutcracker by Target.

From 8 paying members in 2020 to 21 this year!



by Francey Oscherwitz (she/her)

What's in a name? Oh so much!

While a fetus may undergo name changes galore—fanciful or formal, sentimental or heroic—the name given a child at birth (along with its gender marker), is solemnly certified by the state. It's official, legally documented, a done deal. Right?

Not for my child... and maybe yours.

We may briefly suffer pangs of regret when a child of any age chooses to discard the name we gave them for one that reflects their genuine, real-life sense of self. But when it comes to making the change official, even savvy parents and young trans adults may find the process, well, formidable.

Don't let the legal hurdles discourage you, said Transformative Justice Legal Project's Carolyn Wahlskog (she/they), addressing PTI Chicago members at our November online meeting. Part of TJLP's mission is to help Illinois residents complete name change and gender marker paperwork –and receive your proof, the "Golden Ticket."

"We enjoy doing names changes because it's so positive," said Wahlskog with a big grin. "We're helping make individuals happy!"

And it's free.

Since its founding in the late 2000's the Transformative Justice Legal Project (TJLP) has grown by leaps and bounds, changing along with the times.

"In 2007-2008 there was no national conversation," Wahlskog explained. Now they have 3 full-time staff,

assisted by volunteers. "We're always looking for more volunteers!"

The organization has already completed name changes for over 600 applicants this year.

(When it comes to changing gender markers, Wahlskog advises a bit more caution, stressing the need to explore ramifications such as the impact such a change might have on one's medical insurance.)

Anyone over 18 may file for a name change on their own or with a parent or guardian's assistance. A parent or guardian must file for children under 18.

Applicants also must:

- be an Illinois resident for at least 6 months
- file in the county in which they reside
- have no felony convictions in the last 10 years (this will change as of January 1, 2024)
- publicize name change information in a newspaper serving one's county--already optional for most minors with parental consent. (And a new waiver process will be introduced as of January 1, 2024)

Here is a link to initiate the name change paperwork with TJLP:

<https://tjlp.cliogrow.com/intake/712040a6deacd37ae98148e2e0e9913a>

The Transformative Justice Law Project hosts monthly Chicago-area drop ins at the Brave Space Alliance and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center.

(For more information, visit the TJLP website:

<https://chartreuse-roadrunner-rpsl.squarespace.com/>)

Completing the name-change paperwork currently takes a month or less, said Wahlskog, with the entire process spanning two to three months. Once armed with your "Golden Ticket" you can visit other agencies (Department of Motor Vehicles, Social Security, Passport) to update all legal documents.

Email TJLP with questions at namechange@tjlp.org or The National Center for Transgender Equality:

<https://transequality.org/documents>

At our December 14th meeting, we will share stories, spread virtual holiday cheer, toast Bill Guilfoile, our multi-talented (and sadly outgoing) fearless leader of the past 5 years, and introduce the new slate of candidates for our five-member board ahead of upcoming elections!

PTI Chicago currently meets via Zoom on the 2d Thursday of every month from 7 to 9pm. (We plan to resume hybrid virtual/in-person meetings in the coming months.)

Parent/s, guardians, or family members of transgender, nonbinary, or gender-diverse individuals who would like to join us for the first time should e-mail PTI Chicago President Bill Guilfoile (he/him) at bill.guilfoile@gmail.com. Participants will receive a welcome email and be sent the meeting link and password a few days before the meeting.

(For a list of our Book Club readings and recommendations, contact Francey (she/her) at Franceyo101@gmail.com.)

PFLAG TINLEY PARK

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

PFLAG Tinley Park decorated our tree at the Tinley Park Oak Park Avenue train station this year with ornaments painted by our chapter members and students from Tinley Park High School and Stagg High School. We love the personal touch it has this year.

In November, our speaker was Jackie McKethen, the first transgender person elected as a library trustee in Illinois. Jackie shared her personal story and her devotion to assuring that Crete LGBTQ library patrons can find books that reflect who they are. Our chapter donated a copy of "Mother

of a Movement" to Crete Library on her behalf.

We're still showing up at District 230 board meetings to support the board's commitment to equal facility access for transgender and gender nonconforming students. The opposition is still demanding the board violate federal law and Illinois State Board of Education guidance, so we will keep showing up to show LGBTQ students and their families they are not alone. Reach out to chapter member Kathy King-Watters, pflagtinleypark@gmail.com, for info on how your chapter can help.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!



Learning with Love

by **Lex Wilder (he/him), President,**
PFLAG Evanston (Northshore)

Learning With Love was the first convention I attended since my retirement from teaching. During my 33-year career, I went to many conventions—national and international—as an attendee and as a presenter. Those conventions—isolating and often intimidating—were different from this one. I’m different too, because instead of trying to be someone I invented to fit the incorrect gender marker on my birth certificate, I’m me.

There is a strong possibility that one of the many reasons I finally get to be me is because of PFLAG’s fifty years of tireless work. I’ve identified as queer in one form or another for about forty years. So, I’ve known about the existence of PFLAG for a long while. But it feels different from the inside as a member and chapter president. As an outsider, I felt supported; I felt an unusual lightness every time PFLAG was around. Now that I’m on the inside there is a feeling of added weight... of responsibility for the collective soul of every queer person and their loved ones. There is so much work to do.

I came to the PFLAG convention in a vulnerable state for various reasons. And I attended alone. On my first evening, as I was enjoying some solitude after the bustle of traveling, I was reminded of words I often hear from those who care about me: Just because

you crave alone time doesn’t mean you should always be alone.

So, I went down to the bar with my iPad to read *This is the Story of a Happy Marriage* by Ann Patchett. I ordered a rye and a chicken Caesar, and read my book. The bartender was a master at gauging how talkative to be with each customer. The vibe was good. I was content. Eventually a woman took the bar stool next to me. She ordered a beer. She checked her phone. She talked to the bartender. And eventually she talked to me; she asked what I was reading.

I enjoyed our conversation. Eventually she introduced me to a friend she had made during Lobby Day. And the friend introduced me to his mom. And the mom was talking to someone too, so the group filled out. I felt a sense of belonging. Like one of those content, occasionally happy people I’ve heard about... who go out into the world and have pleasant experiences.

After I said goodnight to the folks at the bar, I headed up to my room. When I got off the elevator, I found a frustrated guy searching the floor for his missing earbud. The way he beamed at me when I found it... “dude!”... the high five... It was a perfect ending to the day.

I enjoyed Jill Biden. I loved the Let Freedom Read panel. I was excited to see people in person that I had only seen on Zoom. I was nourished by the sessions led by people who felt the same responsibility as I to those who need us.

Yes, I still feel the weight of the work that needs to be done. But the experience of being in the midst of PFLAG has brought back that lightness I used to feel.

“I was nourished by the sessions led by people who felt the same responsibility as I to those who need us.”

PFLAG Programs



Learn more at qchatspace.org!



[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and check out our upcoming meetings for December.

Julie Milavec

by **Marcia Prichason (she/her)**,
PFLAG Hinsdale

When I was a child, Saturdays were chore days. More importantly, Saturdays were library days. The sooner we completed our chores, the sooner we could get to the library. Our library was located above a firehouse and, sometimes, as an added bonus to selecting any books we wanted, we were rewarded with bells, whistles, and sirens from right beneath us. It was the highlight of our week!

Libraries in the Chicago area are generally no longer located above firehouses, but one library in particular is under fire. The Downers Grove Public Library has taken an inordinate amount of heat since planning a drag queen Bingo night for teens. The library backed off hosting the event, but continues to battle the inferno that it set off.



Right wing extremists continue to harass, verbally attack, and insult the library Director, its Trustees, employees, and our LGBTQIA+ loved ones.

I wondered how the DGPL Library Director, Julie Milavec, was handling the hostility more than a year later, so I met with her for a talk.

It is impossible not to like Julie. She is friendly, cheerful, optimistic, and an easy conversationalist. She comes from a family of librarians. Her grandfather was renowned on the national level and her father was Library Director at the Joliet Public Library for over 30 years. Her background alone might well qualify her to be a librarian, but she entered college at 16 in an early admissions program for gifted students and after graduation, completed her MS in library science from Florida State University. She came to DGPL after 15 years as the Plainfield Library Director and has, in the 7 years she's been Director of the Downers Grove library, brought the library tax rate down every year while simultaneously investing in and increasing the diverse content maintained at the library. Under her stewardship, DGPL has achieved a 5 Star rating from the Library Journal (LJ). It is prestigious recognition; widely coveted throughout the industry.

Julie believes that libraries are for everyone. Those of any age, ability, or gender should be able to enjoy the library and its services. As she states, libraries are "the town square, the heart of the community." This philosophy is demonstrated by the friendly, helpful culture she has curated at the library, the deep and diverse selection of materials, and the vast and varied programs a patron can find. This is also what seems to have gotten her in bad graces with those who believe that reading a book or being in close proximity to one that has LGBTQIA+ content "promotes" being gay.

Julie, who has many friends and family members who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, feels the pain and trauma that these hateful comments invoke in our

community. Yet, despite the attacks from a small, but very vocal segment of the community, she continues to be the professional she is and maintains content that appeals to the needs and wants of the vast majority of the community.

It comes with a price. Employees are regularly harassed at the grocery store, while dropping their kids off at school, and in parking lots and stores in town. Afraid of even more retaliation, many who work at the library choose to keep their heads down and their mouths closed. It is difficult to overcome the fear that has been instilled in people, but Julie has implemented a support system that seems to be having some positive effect. She herself does Yoga and regularly meditates.

She also attends each Library Board of Trustees meeting fully prepared to respond to any questions regarding library content, fiscal responsibility, strategic planning, and attendance (which continues to rise year after year). She is indeed a force.

But, is she enough . . . can she alone counteract the hate and hostility? Can she single handedly stop the arsonists from throwing fuel on the fire? I do not believe she can. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us, those who support equality and our loved ones, to fight the conflagration with all of our resources. We cannot, must not allow those who want to marginalize our loved ones by taking away their right to be represented in books and films or to easily access those materials.

We cannot, however, fight fire with fire. We stand up and say who we represent. We state how harmful and unjustifiable bigotry is. We lead with love.

Julie says, and I'm trying to internalize this mantra as I stand up at Library Board meeting each month to let people know I'm not now, not ever going to let hate grab a home in our library house, "Get out and be a positive force in your community."

It's a good lesson from someone under constant fire!

**"I'm not now, not ever going to let hate
grab a home in our library house"**

Jill Sutton

Contact Info:

Website: www.jillsutton.com

Instagram: [@jillsuttonart](https://www.instagram.com/jillsuttonart)

Facebook: [jillsuttonart](https://www.facebook.com/jillsuttonart)

Interview by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

ARTIST

STATEMENT

Jill holds a BFA from Washington University in St. Louis and an MFA from California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Her work has been exhibited extensively including shows at Evanston Art Center, Greenleaf Art Center, Bridgeport Art Center, Gallery Studio Oh!, Jackson Junge Gallery, Melanee Cooper Gallery, University Club of Chicago, Governors State University, Center on Halsted, Bridge Art Fair and Elmhurst Art Museum. Her work is included in many collections. She currently is on the painting and drawing faculty of Evanston Art Center. She is originally from Columbus, Ohio, but has lived in Chicago for over 25 years.



About the Progress Series

This work is inspired by collected images of conflict. Figures and locations are removed leaving only the commonalities of light filtered through smoke, tear gas, and dust. There is a silence in the photos that defies the chaos of the image. The abstracted paintings begin in this charged space, both existing there, and removed from the upheaval.

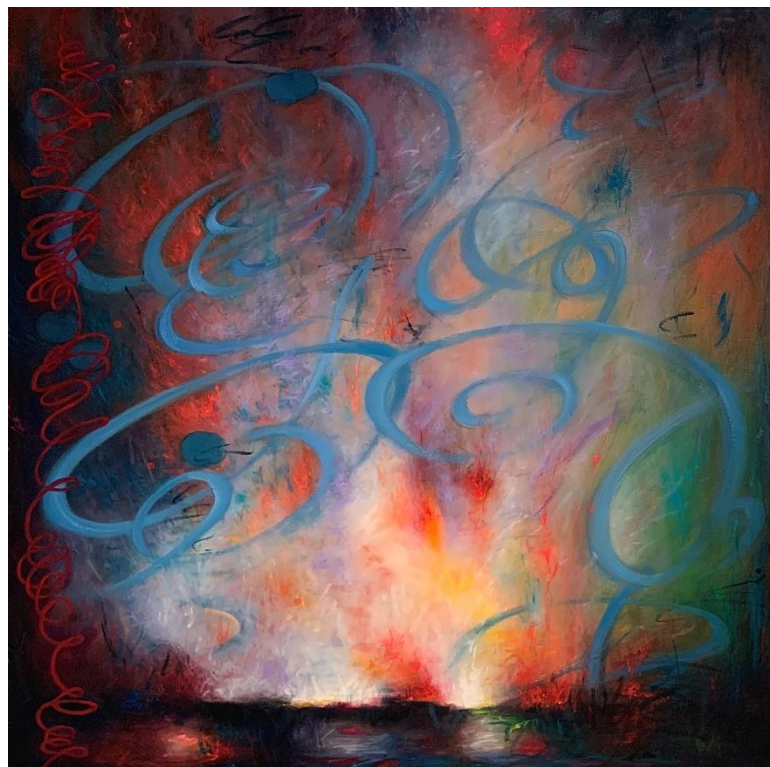
INTERVIEW

Open Doors: Welcome to Open Doors. When we met at your Art Show at Center on Halsted, you mentioned you come from a long line of artists. Your grandmother, mother and you are all artists. How did that creative environment inspire you? When did you decide to become an artist/painter?

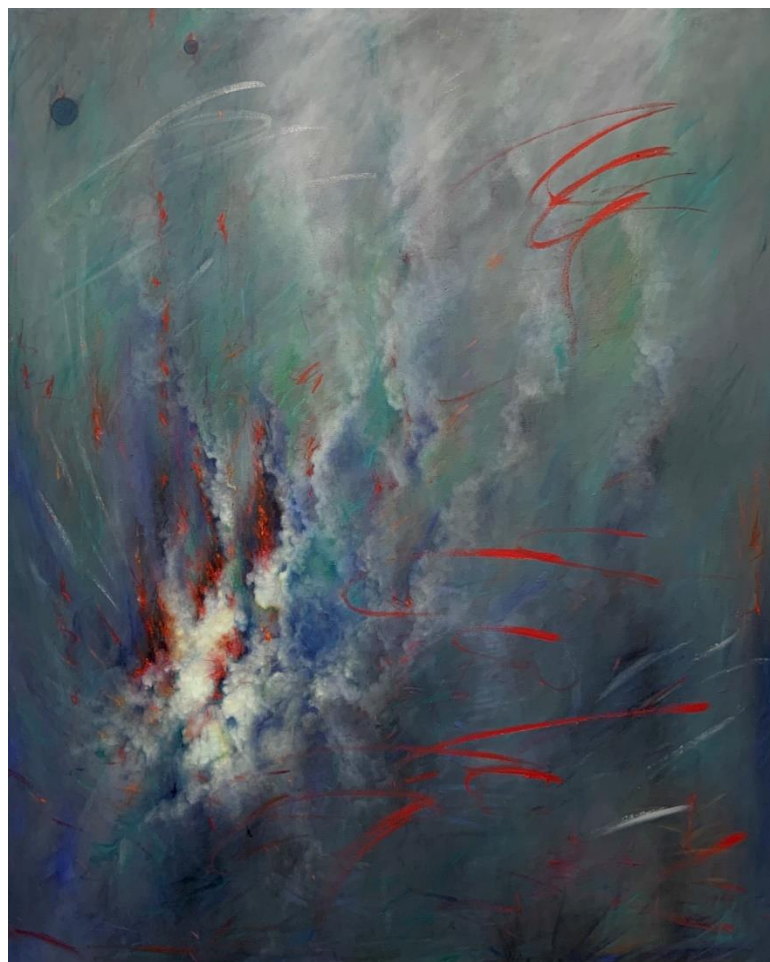
Jill Sutton: I grew up with art. My grandmother showed me how to paint in her basement studio. My mom is always in the middle of multiple art projects and her studio is brimming with amazing boxes of supplies. Growing up making things, or painting and wanting to eventually attend art school was very normal. I always knew I would be an artist. I experimented with many different mediums along the way, but I am a painter through and through.

OD: Your home page displays multiple collections. What is the inspiration for your works? What inspires a particular collection? How do you determine the theme? How do you know when a collection is complete?

JS: I don't have definitive plans about starting or stopping a series. Painting is always about color and light and really my multiple bodies of work are all just different ways of exploring the same thing formally. The subject of a series, whether it is abstracted landscapes, old family photos, or



Hush, Progress Series, 2022, oil on canvas, 36''x36''



Ascent, Progress Series, 2021, oil on canvas, 36''x42''

newspaper clippings, are where my ideas follow a unique path. I just follow the paintings. I read and do research for each series constantly. One piece leads to the next. Every time I start a painting, a list of questions follows. Some of those questions get answered by that painting, others will require a follow up piece. Eventually the questions dry up, or they become repetitive, and I have no interest in painting what I already know. I need to be challenged by ideas.

OD: You teach at The Evanston Art Center. How do you encourage your students to develop and embrace their talents? How do your students evolve from a craft to a passion to a profession (if they do)?

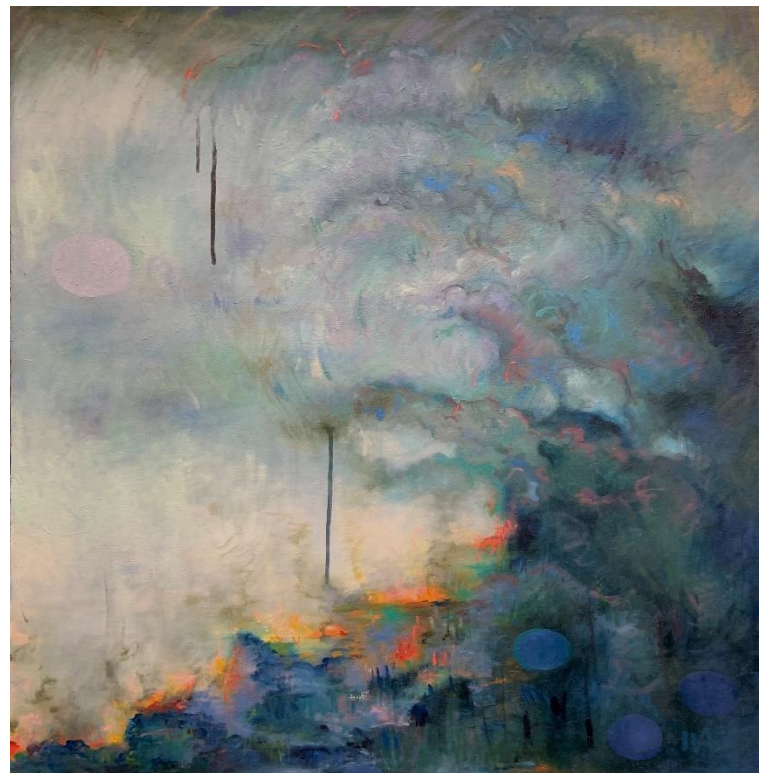
JS: My students' artistic ambitions are wide ranging. Some want to know the basics of materials and technique and then they move on. Others have continued to study with me for several years. I come from an academic art background, and I teach with respect to that. If you want to learn you can learn, but art is a language and it takes practice to speak it fluently. It is hard and it takes time. It is sometimes frustrating. I encourage my students to mess up a lot, to experiment, and to fail. I ask students to have compassion for themselves and the process. Laughing is encouraged.



Flare, Progress Series, 2022, oil on canvas, 24"x30"



Target, Progress Series, 2019, oil on canvas, 42"x36"



Reckoning, Progress Series, 2020, oil on canvas, 24"x24"

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?

JS: Painting is a funny medium. I am alone with my work in the studio for a great length of time. Eventually, it goes out into the world. Except for one night maybe, I don't really get to witness any reaction and rarely know what my work might inspire. I am always striving for a certain beauty and some light. My work at Center on Halsted is

based on newspaper clippings from protests. These photos often capture the chaos of a scene. On the canvas I edit and layer constantly, looking for what might resonate without having to rely on retelling the narrative.

OD: How do you nurture your soul in trying times?

JS: My family keeps me grounded and sane, so they are the most nurturing aspect in my life. We share a love of music, and it is a constant in our home. I love books and reading. I also love to visit artwork. I recently went to the Art Institute to locate all the George Inness and Whistler

Gentle Breath, Progress Series, 2018, oil on canvas, 42" x 42"

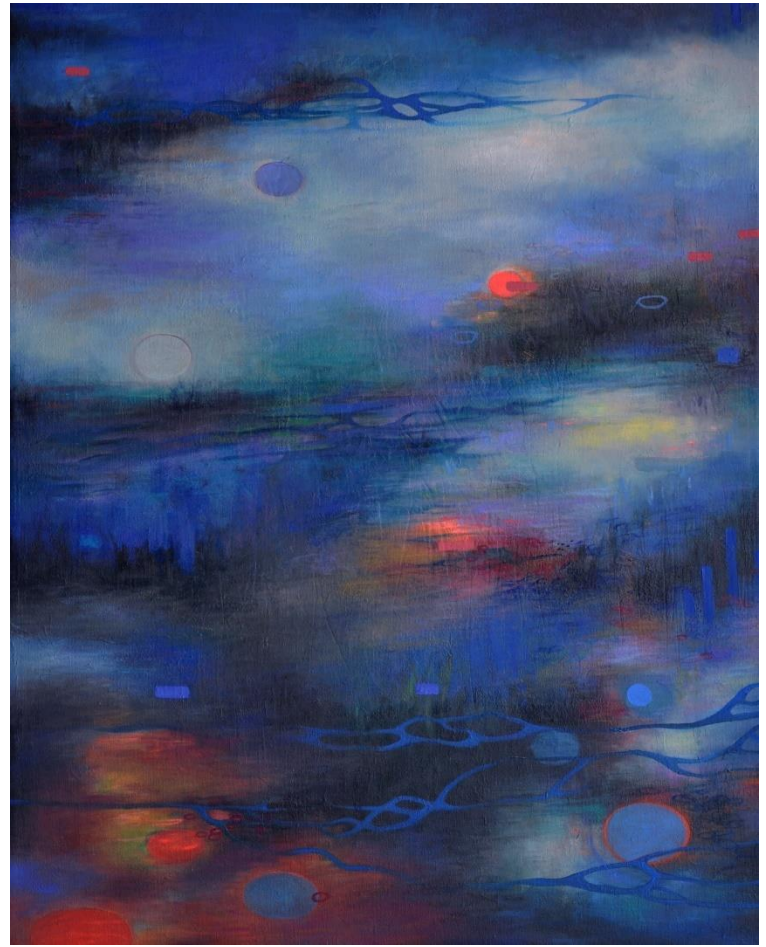


paintings in their collection. I was doing research for a new series, but those paintings are just magnificent and so incredible to get to experience in person.

OD: How can art impact or change the world? How has your art changed over time?

JS: I use art as connection. When I'm lost in a painting, I start looking at other work. I research other artists' questions. Whole worlds can open. It is my favorite part of working on a new series because I begin to find how I fit into something much bigger. I am a small piece in this shared connection.

I've explored several series over the years, so my subject has changed, but I always feel like I'm looking for the same thing from every series. I'm always just looking for light in the dark. I've just started a new series of night landscapes, so maybe I'll finally figure this out. Or maybe this is just a good excuse to read about and visit other artworks / artists that have tackled this shared sentiment of nocturnal quiet. I don't know if this changes the world at all, but it lets us know we are not alone. ♥



*Fluid, Abstracted Landscapes, 2017,
oil on canvas, 24"x30"*



Flash, Night Series, 2023, oil on canvas, 36"x42"



Night Sway, Night Series, 2023, oil on canvas, 36"x36"

CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED



art GALLERY OPENING

CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

Friday, December 1st 6:30PM TO 8:30PM



David deCastro (he/him) Timothy Longwith (he/him)

3656 N HALSTED \$5 SUGGESTED DONATION • CASH BAR centeronhalsted.org/art-gallery.html



USA MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

VIRTUAL TRAINING

9 AM - 4 PM • VARIOUS DATES

CENTERONHALSTED.ORG/MHFA.HTML



SANTA SPEEDO RUN NORTHALSTED

SATURDAY DECEMBER 2ND

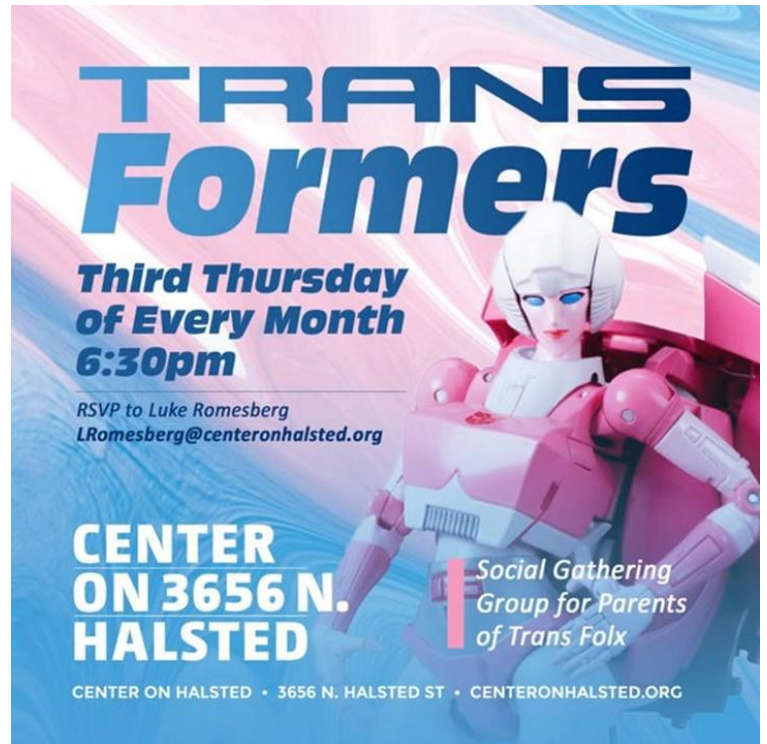
SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

AT **SIDETRACK**

12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Sidetrack • 3349 N Halsted

Benefiting
CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

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TRANS FORMERS

Third Thursday of Every Month
6:30pm

RSVP to Luke Romesberg
LRomesberg@centeronhalsted.org

CENTER ON 3656 N. HALSTED

Social Gathering Group for Parents of Trans Folx

CENTER ON HALSTED • 3656 N. HALSTED ST • CENTERONHALSTED.ORG

FAMILY WEEKEND

Family Equality is hosting a vibrant and inclusive weekend filled with exciting activities for LGBTQ+ families. Our goal is to create a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ families to connect, have fun, and make lasting memories together. Some of the fantastic events planned include family ice skating, attending a Chicago Wolves game, and the premiere of a special documentary.

Dates: **December 1 - 3**

Location: **Chicago**

Link: **Register today!**

FAMILY EQUALITY

MIDWEST LGBTQ+ FAMILY WEEKEND

December 1-3, 2023 in Chicago, IL

Use this toolkit to spread the word!

@familyequality

Come to Navy Pier for an All Day

equity extravaganza!

ESPECIALLY FOR
YOUTH IN CARE
AND THE ADULTS
IN THEIR LIFE

DECEMBER 2, 2023 • 9:30AM–2:30PM • NAVY PIER



Interactive fun and meaningful activities to learn together about how to make the IL child welfare system better for all of us! Connect with ongoing opportunities for equity leadership.

And after the program: **free tickets** to the full **Light Up the Lake** experience. Including **ice skating, ride on the Centennial Ferris Wheel, & axe throwing!**

Parking, Continental Breakfast, and Lunch included.

Sponsored by DCFS and the Youth Advisory Board and Affinity Groups.

REGISTER NOW!
<https://bit.ly/EquityYAB>

Any questions? Please contact
alyssa@bestrongfamilies.net



OPEN DOORS

- Publish your artworks, photography, essays, poetry, movie and book reviews in Open Doors, send us interesting online resources to share, and your ideas on topics to cover and people to interview. Email: opendoors@pflagillinois.org
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RESEARCH STUDIES

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

Self-assessment tool for transwomen

Researchers at Midwestern University are currently recruiting participants in a research study, “Development of a self-assessment tool for transwomen.”

We aim to develop and validate a voice self-evaluation tool that would enable care-seeking transwomen to rate their own voices for an individualized clinical decision making. As part of this larger project, we have designed a preliminary questionnaire and would like to understand the relevance, ease of administration and aspects related to the tool. Based on your input, we hope to revise and redesign the questionnaire that we hope to validate on a larger group of participants.

Participation in this study will involve rating the questionnaire and providing feedback via online survey using Redcap. By clicking the link below, you acknowledge that you are either a speech-language pathologist working in the area of gender affirming voice care or a transwoman/transfeminine individual with at least one year of lived experience as trans. Your participation is entirely voluntary. We will not collect any personally identifiable information in this survey. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact one or both of the investigators: Dr. Anand Balaji Rangarathnam (branga@midwestern.edu) or Ms. Audrey Bowlds (abowld@midwestern.edu).

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SURVEY](#)

LAVENDER LAB UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

ARE YOU 13 - 17 YEARS OLD? ARE YOU A RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY TEENS CAN RECEIVE A \$15 GIFT
ARE YOU LGBTQ+? OR PERSON OF COLOR (BIPOC)? CARD FOR PARTICIPATING IN
OUR STUDY!

SHARE YOUR STORY!

Visit @lvndrlab on Instagram or scan the QR code for more information and to complete a brief 5-minute eligibility survey!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO PARTICIPATE!

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SURVEY](#)

IRB # 22460

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

ARE YOU A TRANSFEMININE PERSON?

DO YOU EXPERIENCE MENSTRUAL-LIKE SYMPTOMS?

PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE A \$50 GIFT CARD FOR
COMPLETING A VIRTUAL INTERVIEW



To learn more and participate in our
study, scan the QR code or visit
tinyurl.com/BloodlessPeriod



QUESTIONS?
CONTACT RIN NGUYEN AT
KNGUYEN21@HUSKERS.UNL.EDU

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SURVEY](#)

Parents/caregivers of young trans or GNC children

Are you the parent or caregiver of a transgender, nonbinary, or gender diverse child under age 18?

Researchers from The Gender Research Lab at the WVU School of Medicine want to learn about your experience to develop ways to support parents and caregivers like you. Please consider participating in this 20-minute anonymous online research survey. **Participants will receive \$20 for participating.**

Please note: This survey has several security features to protect participants and their data and payment requires email verification.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SURVEY](#)

Queer Parent and Adolescent Lives

We are writing you today to ask for assistance in spreading the word about our research study. Our lab, the **Families, Adoption, and Diversity Lab** (FAD) at the University of Kentucky, is recruiting volunteers for a study titled the **Q-PAL Project** (Queer Parent and Adolescent Lives). You may have already seen this in your spam, but we wanted to reach out to you again now that we have fixed that issue.

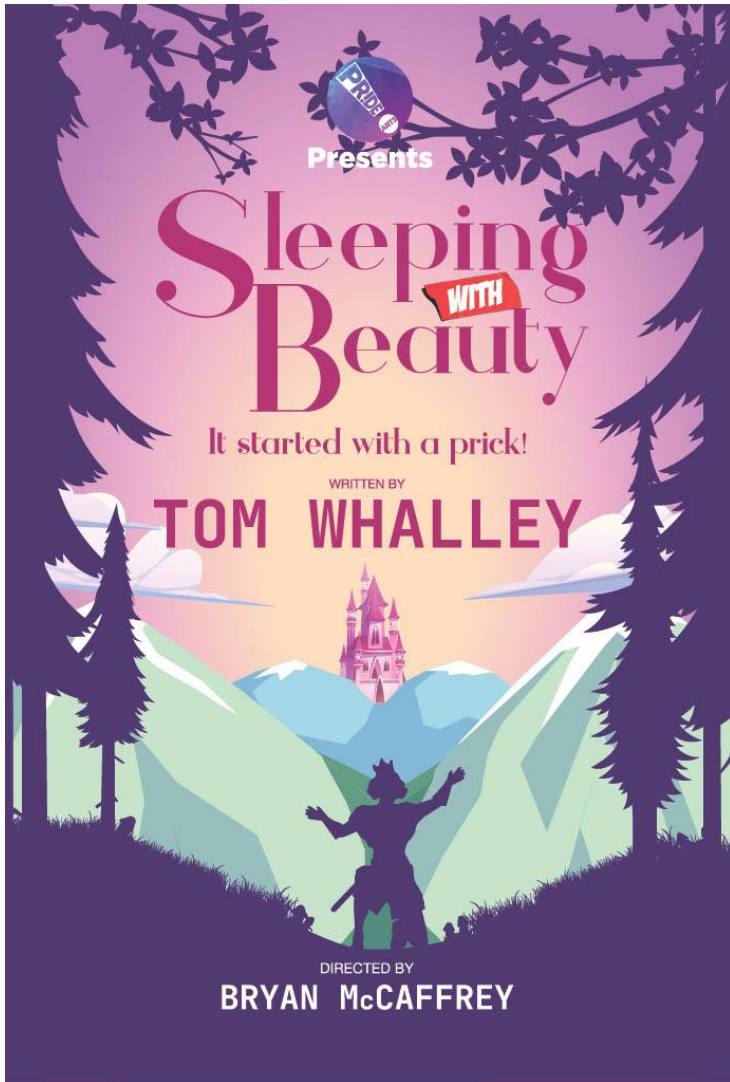
For a bit more context about our study, we are looking for both adolescents ages 12 to 19 years old with an LGBTQ+ parent as well as LGBTQ+ parents with an adolescent age 12 to 19 years old to participate in this study. Adolescents need to be 12 to 19 years old and have at least one LGBTQ+ parent to be eligible to participate. They will be compensated up to \$100 via digital Amazon gift card for their participation. Parent participants must identify as LGBTQ+ and have at least one adolescent child ages 12 to 19 years old to participate. **They will be compensated up to \$65 via a digital Amazon gift card for their participation.** Next, we provide language to describe our research project- if you are willing to forward this info along to any community email lists, social media, or listservs, we would greatly appreciate it!

Q-PAL STUDY INVITATION AND INFORMATION:

[Do you have an LGBTQ+ parent or are you an LGBTQ+ parent?](#)

Hello! The Families, Adoption, and Diversity (FAD) Lab at the University of Kentucky is recruiting for a research study about the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ parent families, funded by the **William T. Grant Foundation** and the **Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues**. We are asking LGBTQ+ parents and their adolescent children to take part in survey-based research. If you are 12-19 years old and have at least one LGBTQ+ parent, or if you are an LGBTQ+ parent with a child aged 12-19, you and your family may be eligible to participate. Compensation will be provided. Additionally, we hope the findings can inform policy, practice, and future research to support LGBTQ+ parent families. If you are under age 18, please have your parent contact us. If you have any questions or would like more information, please email us at qp.al.study@gmail.com. Follow **[THIS LINK](#)** to sign up!

THEATER, FILM



SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY

In this **adult pantomime** by Tom Whalley, author of last season’s JACK OFF THE BEANSTALK, Princess A’whora has finally come of age, though a terrible curse from the wicked witch Malefic*nt means one prick in her hand and she’ll perish! With the help of the fabulously thorny Fairy Fanny, will Queen Clitoris and Muddles (the court jester) get in a spin? Or will the scantily clad Prince Albert have to get his chopper out? SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY will include songs, dances and audience participation to make the show a raucous holiday celebration. Bryan McCaffrey, who directed last year’s JACK OFF THE BEANSTALK for Pride Arts, will return to direct. **NOTE: no one under the age of 18 will be admitted.**

[CLICK HERE to buy tickets](#)



WILD FIRE, written and directed by Jennifer Cooney

Wild Fire is the story of seven acquaintances that get radically honest about their lives one night around a fire after a party. Unknowingly, they all come to the gathering at a crossroads—one they each have been avoiding, for perhaps their entire life. After an unyielding game of Truth or Dare, the exemplary couple opens up about what they’re going through—that they’re not as perfect as they seem. This sets the stage for the rest of the group to open up about their lives, unspoken desires...and secrets. The following morning back in their bedrooms, each couple must choose a path. Will they integrate their newly exposed truths...or choose to act as if nothing has changed?

[Buy WILDFIRE Now and watch now to Dec 10!](#)



Re/Generation Studio Spotlight:

Meetups and Workshops for Queer Youth & Emerging Creatives

Re/Generation Studio is About Face Theatre’s invitation to build the future of queer theatre together. This week, we’re highlighting the workshops and get-togethers we’ve put together specifically for young LGBTQ+ artists, community builders, and allies. Ready to up your game and build relationships with other queer creatives? These are the events for you!

All workshops are free and open to the public. We recommend you RSVP early, as workshops and events may reach capacity.

S.L.A.Y. (Space for Leaders & Artistic Youth)

with **DIONNE ADDAI**



"S.L.A.Y. (Space for Leaders and Artistic Youth) is just what it says – a place for up and coming creatives to get to know each other, share industry tips and tricks, and discuss their experiences as artists. This is a space where people can have fun, find their next artistic collaborator, and maybe even win some cool prizes **wink wink**."

–AFT Education Manager Dionne Addai

WEEKEND ONE: Friday, Dec 1 @ 5:30pm

Welcome to S.L.A.Y, a place to build community with like-minded creatives. This session will include ice breakers, snacks, and immaculate vibes. Choose how you want to engage: try your luck at our trivia game, join us for a chat about the weekend's upcoming reading, or just relax and meet someone new. Followed by our New Play Reading Workshop of A Home Education.

WEEKEND TWO: Friday, Dec 7 @ 5:30pm

Just when you thought the ice couldn't be broken anymore, we brought out the hammer! That's right, we wanna help you find your artistic soulmate via matching-making for potential creative collaborators. We'll also still have games, a chat about the weekend's reading, and a chance to win a prize via trivia. Followed by a performance of Quyen Tran's Transformation.

WEEKEND THREE: Friday, Dec 15 @ 5:30pm

We'll be joined by a special guest, playwright Emilio Williams. You'll get a sneak peek at the script of his new play Yūgen and a chance to weigh in on the content. Snacks and games included! Followed by our New Play Reading Workshop of Yūgen.

[SAVE YOUR SPOT AT THESE WORKSHOPS NOW!](#)

LEVEL UP: Skill Building for Emerging Creatives

with **DIONNE ADDAI & MEGAN CARNEY**

Young actors, writers, directors, and community builders—these workshops are for you! Each session will be filled with movement, knowledge, and transferable skills that you can apply to your own work immediately. This is a sharing space: our goal is for participants to give something (from their own experiences or ideas) and leave with something new. Creatives of all skill levels welcome!

THAT HITS DIFFERENT: Saturday, Dec 2 @ 11:00am

An introduction to creative and dynamic staging for directors, performers, and community builders.

BUILDING CARE INTO ACTION: Saturday, Dec 9 @ 11:00am

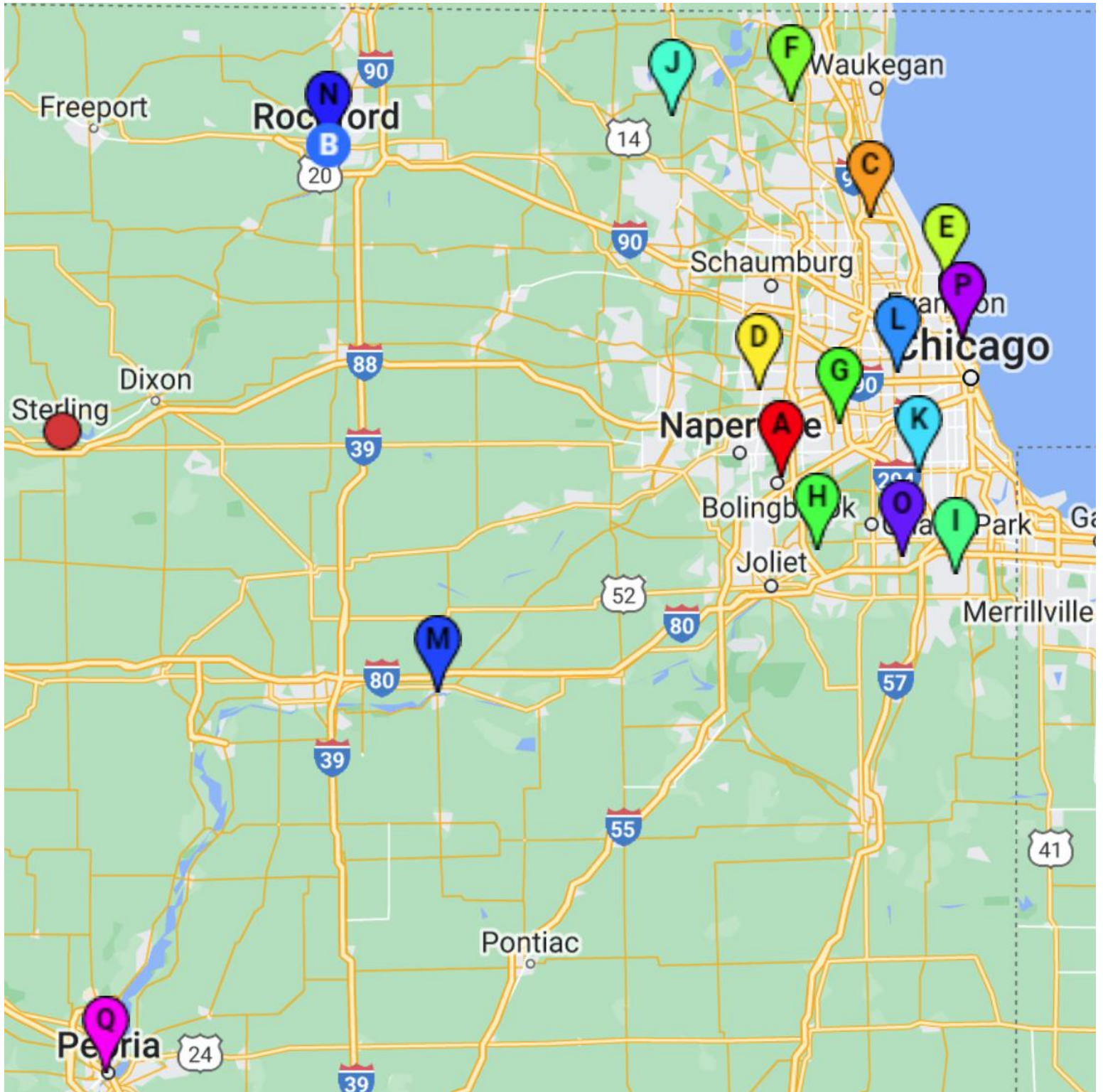
Building Care into Action. Participants learn how to mindfully create work containing sensitive content.

ACTIVISM & THEATRE: Saturday, Dec 16 @ 11:00am

Participants learn how devising can be used to address cultural issues and shape contemporary storytelling. With special guest theatre artist and cultural strategist Alyssa Vera Ramos.

[VIEW THE FULL RE/GENERATION STUDIO SCHEDULE](#)

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.