

Red Crosses Diptych by David deCastro
more artworks and interview - pp 15-21



PFLAG

**COUNCIL OF
NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

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Open Doors

May 2024

Celebrating the “Mother of a Movement” on Mother’s Day!

With excerpts from “The Mother of a Movement. Jeanne Manford – Ally, Activist and Founder of PFLAG” by Rob Sanders.

“What does a mom do?

Some listen and love.

Learn and lead.

Some want the best for their children and make life better for them, too.

Then one day, Jeanne’s son Morty told her, “I’m gay.”

What does the mom of a gay son do?

Some turn their children away. Some turn their backs.

Some shed tears. Some share fears.

But others hold their children close.

Hug them tight.

And listen, love and learn.

That’s what Jeanne did.”

As we know, Jeanne did this and so much more.

She would speak up, show support, write letters, make phone calls – she proudly carried her sign in a parade. She made new friends, friends who might become allies. The allies might become a force. She organized meetings. She brought parents together. She founded a new organization.

We are following in the footsteps of an amazing mom.

50+ years later, we do all the things she did to create a caring, just and affirming world for all LGBTQ+ people and those who love them.

PFLAG is, and continues to be, as vibrant and vital as Jeanne imagined.



For all the moms reading this column –

Mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-waiting, chosen mothers and every possible mothering relationship...

Celebrate your beautiful day on Sunday, May 12th.

And for every parade you attend this Pride season, let’s follow in Jeanne’s footsteps, raise our signs and proudly celebrate all LGBTQ+ “children”.

Always listening, learning and Leading with LOVE.

Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

PCNI Vice-President

Save the Date!



Biennial Conference October 26, 2024



PCNI Conference Committee is energetically working on the Conference program and other details. This year, we'll offer a very diverse program with multiple parallel tracks during some of the sessions. We are also planning to hold "learning circles" during lunch for moderated discussions on several topics. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The conference space, graciously donated to PCNI by The Morton Arboretum, is beautiful and will allow us to accommodate more attendees than in past years. We'll publish more details during summer.

Save the date Saturday, October 26th! Our biennial conference is an opportunity for PFLAG members from our whole area and beyond to come together to learn, meet new friends, and make unforgettable memories!



CHICAGO PRIDE PARADE

The Chicago Pride Parade starts on **Sunday, June 30, at 11 AM** (one hour earlier than in the past).

All PFLAG members and family are invited to march in the Parade together. Last year, our group had more than a hundred people! Registration is not necessary. We are planning to announce the exact meeting area in the June issue of Open Doors.

TROLLEY

As usual, we'll have a trolley to accommodate those who cannot walk the route for any reason. Trolley seat registration is now open! Seating on the trolley is limited, so we are asking everyone who can walk the route to do so and leave trolley seats for people who have difficulty marching. Please visit forms.gle/pcuL4df5Jhmr2iH2A to reserve seats on the trolley or email info@pflagillinois.org.

- All paying PFLAG members of PCNI chapters have priority registration period starting from May 1st.
- Non-paying members of PCNI chapters with mobility issues and parents with small children will be registered starting from June 1st (but you may submit your request before).
- Other non-paying members of PCNI chapters may register starting from June 8th (you may submit your request before).

RULES AND ATTIRE

Everyone marching in the PFLAG group is expected to follow the rules imposed by the city of Chicago, the Parade organizers, and PCNI. You are welcome to bring guests if you take responsibility for their conduct at the Parade.

Guests from PCNI community partners and corporate partners are welcome to join our group, up to 10 individuals from one organization. Please email info@pflagillinois.org to coordinate that.

Everyone marching with PFLAG must wear PFLAG-branded attire or general Pridewear and accessories. **No logos, insignia, and branding of organization other than PFLAG are allowed.** If you are making signs or posters, please remember that **PFLAG cannot engage in political campaigning** because of its nonprofit tax status, so any statements for or against political parties and candidates are not allowed. PCNI Parade monitors may ask anyone violating the rules to leave our Parade group.

We encourage everyone to purchase a T-shirt or sweatshirt with PFLAG branding from **our online store:**

www.zazzle.com/store/pflagil

If you want to carry a **customized poster** at the Parade, email info@pflagillinois.org. Provide your own message for the poster and we'll implement it for you.

Remember to wear sunscreen and comfortable shoes.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We need volunteers to decorate the trolley (this requires arriving to the staging area earlier), to serve as Parade monitors (keep an eye on our procession and report problems), to carry PCNI and chapter banners, and to bring water and snacks for everyone (PCNI will reimburse expenses). To volunteer, please email info@pflagillinois.org.



PRIDE MONTH

by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

June is Pride Month. Here's a glimpse of coming attractions ...

Summer is on the horizon and so is Pride Month in June. Pride season is a time of joy, celebration, support, allyship and advocacy. We stand together, united in our purpose, fighting for the cause. Our life-saving mission is to create a caring, just and affirming world for all LGBTQ+ people and those who love them.

In cities and towns all across the country, here's where you will find us during the PRIDE month. **Where there is Community, that's where we will be.** PFLAGers will be attending: Parades, Community Events, Farmer's Markets, Community Partner events, Park Districts, Speaking Engagements, Village Halls, Libraries, Schools, Corporate Partner celebrations, SideTrack, Shedd Pride, Pride at the Pier, Springfield, (just to name a few) during the month of June.

In this election year, we need to stand strong for the long haul. For all the progress we have made, our work is not done. History tells about our future – we ALL need to show up and speak up. Advocacy is necessary now more than ever.

Why are Pride Parades so essential to Freedom? Pride Parades embody the bedrock of Democracy – equality, freedom of speech, freedom to organize, freedom to love. **“Love in Action”** is on full display during the month of June. So, when you are carrying your Pride poster and waving to the crowd as you march along the parade route, know that you exemplify “Advocacy” and “Love” just by being there.

If you have never attended a Pride Parade, please join us. It is truly an amazing, joyous experience. PFLAG receives a tremendous reception – the cheering never stops along the entire parade route. You will hear shouts of “PFLAG, we love you!” and “Thank you, PFLAG, for all you do!”.

How do we feel during Pride Month?

PROUD – to fight for equality!

INSPIRED – to work tirelessly for the entire LGBTQ+ Community!

LOVED – our work matters!

Our founder, Jeanne Manford, would be so proud to know the great Pride Parade tradition boldly carries on.

Come march with us in Pride, Solidarity and Love! The Chicago Pride Parade is Sunday, June 30th at 11:00 am. We will see you there!



Coming Soon! The Synchrony Scholarship

The Synchrony Scholarship winners will be notified May 1st, 2024. As Open Doors will be published on or before May 1st, we plan to announce the winners (with their permission) in the June edition of Open Doors.

A sincere **Thank You** to all the Chapter Leaders, PFLAG Members, Community Partners, High School Counselors, GSA Sponsors, Teachers, Community Colleges, Professors, Family Members, Friends, Allies and Anyone who loves a young person who helped promote the scholarship. It truly took a village to get the word out throughout the state of Illinois to our amazing, deserving LGBTQ+ Students!

The applicants represent the best and the brightest in their endeavors – if this is a glimpse of our future, we are in very capable hands!



PRIDE AT THE PIER

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

Calling Chapter Leaders and PFLAG Ambassadors! Pride at the Pier takes place every year on the Saturday before the Chicago Pride and PFLAG Northern Illinois has attended the last several years. People from all over the country attend and it is a great place to make connections and tell people about PFLAG. Last year we heard so many stories from people who were from parts of the country

that do have the freedom to express themselves that we do in Illinois.

Which brings us to the reason for writing:

We need help staffing the table!

The table will be staffed from 11 am to about 5 pm. The Pier gives us tables under a canopy on the south pier near the Wave Wall. You can take public transportation, or the Council has offered to pay parking for those who drive in. We will supply everything – just bring yourself and your enthusiasm dressed in PFLAG or pride wear. Go to this link to sign up for shifts: bit.ly/3UwPiDQ or go to the QR code below. Please contact Kathy King-Watters at pflagtinleypark@gmail.com with any questions. We look forward to seeing you there!



EQUALITY ILLINOIS
TOGETHER WE WILL

LGBTQ+ ADVOCACY DAY

WEDNESDAY
May 8th, 2024
Illinois State Capitol
Springfield, IL

REGISTER TODAY

SHOW UP. SPEAK UP!

www.equalityillinois.us/2024-lgbtq-advocacy-day/#content

PFLAG EVANSTON

by **Jennie Heckathorne (she/her)**

Hello from PFLAG EVANSTON!

We are excited about all the great things we've been doing and have in our plans!

Our chapter president, Lex, was interviewed by a reporter from the Northwestern University paper. This was a great opportunity to increase our visibility in the area.

[Drawing on lived experiences, Gender Affirming Evanston aims to support parents of transgender children](#)

Here's the link to the article: tinyurl.com/54yx8re4

PFLAG EVANSTON was invited to attend the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Conference (CAUUC). Two of our board members were there to talk with members of congregations from Cook, DuPage and McHenry counties. We passed along information, invitations and lots of swag!



PFLAG Evanston has joined forces with Gender Affirming Evanston and Evanston Pride to form what we are calling the Queer Joy Consortium! The idea came about after a PFLAG member suggested that especially in these scary times of hateful legislation, we do more to celebrate joy! Together we are planning events to provide all our members with information and resources and to host events to celebrate the joy of the LGBTQ+ community!

Our first event will be a presentation by Janay Joyce-Ward, LCSW. She works at the Gender Development program at Lurie Childrens' Hospital. She will be speaking about many aspects of transitioning. We are looking forward to hearing her presentation.

Near the end of May, QJC is hosting a **Family Dance Party!**

We'll have a DJ, Open Mic, refreshments and a quiet space with crafts.

It should be a very joyful event!!



We're looking forward to continuing a great Spring and gearing up for lots of fun during PRIDE MONTH!

PFLAG HINSDALE

by **Barb Medley (she/her)**

We didn't have a speaker for April 7th but met to catch up and discuss issues of importance.

Our chapter updates included several activities. Equality Downers Grove invited us to have a table at Downers Grove Pride, scheduled for Saturday, June 8th, in downtown Downers Grove. We'll also co-sponsor the upcoming DG Equality presentation by David Settje, an author of both non-fiction and what he calls "Gay Speculative Fiction" under the pen name, Damian Serbu. He presented at our meeting this past February. He'll discuss developing LGBTQ+ ally skills.

We agreed we would continue having a decorated holiday tree at Brookfield Zoo this coming holiday season. We've had fun doing this event the past few years, and it brings awareness to what we do to the community.

In May, we'll welcome back Mike Ziri from Equality Illinois as our speaker.

PFLAG

MCHENRY

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

PFLAG McHenry has been carrying on, despite some board members being under the weather, in the hospital, or being in South Africa (we are all jealous of that one). We met in person for March & April and both meetings stirred up some active communication & discussions. Two of my favorite "shares" were quotes from participants which they received from others.

- When dealing with unsupportive friends/family, or situations start to "get to you", remember, it's their problem, not yours: "I didn't cause this. I can't change this. I can't cure this."
- A message from rehab: "When you think it's the end, and it's all finished, that will be your beginning."

We are already gearing up to spread the word of PFLAG's message "Leading With Love" at events. Earlier this month we again participated in the annual **RAD (Recognizing American Diversity)** event hosted by Huntley High School celebrating the LGBTQ community with a color fun run, food trucks, a photo booth, music, and vendors. Despite 43-degree temps and a biting wind, Debbie Barton and Toni Weaver held on for the two hour outdoor celebration. Students and parents stopped by our table to chat and take advantage of all the freebies. The chapter secretary made quite a few ribbon pins in both the pride and transgender colors, and these were quickly snatched up as were the pronoun pins. How great it is to have high school staff who work so hard to promote an atmosphere of acceptance and celebration for their LGBTQ+ students.

Future events include a panel **presentation at First Church in Crystal Lake** in May, a June event at **Randall Oaks' first Pride celebration**, the **Woodstock Pride Parade**, and later in June, the **"Read the Rainbow" event at the Crystal Lake Library**. In August, we're already signed up to participate in the local **Behavioral Health Fair for School Professionals**.

So PFLAG McHenry is gettin' in gear for this year! See you around!



PFLAG

OAK PARK

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

Greetings from the PFLAG Oak Park Area! Our monthly meetings are still HYBRID so members have the choice to join remotely or in person.

March and April have been a bit quiet, but we are always available to provide support for all who need it. In addition to our membership number growing, our monthly attendance has skyrocketed as well! The need is out there, and we are available to help!

YOU ARE ALL INVITED! Looking to the future, PFLAG Oak Park Area will be hosting a special guest speaker, **Bex Streit**, for "**A Conversation on Supporting your Transgender Loved Ones**" during our monthly May Meeting, which will be held on Sunday, May 26th. **Our chapter would like to extend an invitation to all PFLAG chapters to attend this special presentation.**

Here is some more on Bex:

Bex Streit (He/They) was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois. Bex moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2013 to pursue a degree in Biomedical Engineering from Marquette University. After working as an engineer for a couple of

years he made the switch to social work and currently works as the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Program Coordinator of the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center.



Bex's presentation will be an open question-and-answer session on how to best support your transgender loved ones. We hope you can join us! Feel free to reach out to pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org with any questions or if you are interested in joining us for future meetings and events!

We will once again offer the hybrid option at our May 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 (still hybrid: in person and via Zoom) on Sunday, May 26th at 3 PM.

Mark your calendars!

PFLAG Oak Park invites members of all PFLAG chapters to attend a presentation
“A Conversation on Supporting your Transgender Loved Ones”
by **Bex Streit** on Sunday, May 26th at 3 PM.

The meeting format is HYBRID:
in-person at First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake St, Oak Park
and on Zoom (contact the chapter in advance
at pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org for a Zoom link)



PFLAG

DUPAGE

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

We have successfully moved our web site pflagdupage.org over to the one sponsored by PFLAG National. One new feature is having a list of all upcoming events that PFLAG DuPage will have a presence at. Coming up on May 18th we will be helping young people make their own buttons at Young:Equal's Field Day event. We will have a busy pride month this year, including walking in the Aurora Pride parade along with PFLAG Geneva and Bolingbrook and at least 4 table events.

Our speaker this month was **Rita Brosnan from the DuPage County Health Department**. She shared with us the many mental health services provided by the county. Just a few examples are:

- Counseling
- Emergency Response teams
- Addiction recovery programs
- Both temporary and permanent housing for people struggling with mental illness
- Staffing the 988 mental health hotline.

It is truly impressive the amount of mental health services they provide. They collaborate with police departments and work in schools. They provide counseling when a traumatic event occurs in our community. One of the most important things we learned is that the 988 hotline is not just a suicide hotline, but for anyone who is struggling with mental health issues.

Next month our speaker will be **Nat Duran from the Constellation Collective** speaking about what it means to be Nonbinary.

PFLAG

GENEVA/TRI-CITIES

by **Angela Febles (she/her)**

The May newsletter for PFLAG Geneva Tri-Cities is out now. May we celebrate Mother's Day, which is a reminder of the love and strength of the women who started our organization. As we move forward, let us keep our foundation of family strong to protect our loved ones in shaping a more inclusive world. Next, Elaine and Stephanie wrote about our first support group meeting.

Support Meeting

Thank you to everyone who attended our first PFLAG Geneva/Tri-Cities support meeting. We met a few new people and had a handful of friends return from our March meeting. We talked a bit about Gender vs. Sexual Orientation. We realize they both can be fluid and the terms and language we use continue to evolve. In the end, it is up to an individual to determine for themselves. We encourage our friends to look at the PFLAG National glossary to help with language & definitions that are new to them.

We also had the pleasure of meeting Samantha Newman who is involved in the City of St. Charles Equity & Inclusion Commission. We are starting to reach out to our local DEI city committees to see how we can work together to support our community. -Elaine

What's Next

At our next support meeting on May 5th from 6:30-8:00 pm we will acknowledge Mother's Day and share the topic of self-efficacy and wellness.

Exciting Future Plans

We have plans to participate in several summer pride parade activities and are arranging speakers and visiting to build relationships working with other organizations like Belong and Out of the Closet.

The Elgin Pride Parade donated our registration fee to our new chapter. DuPage PFLAG has invited us to walk with them in the Aurora parade. These relationships are important, and we recognize the significance of their wonderful contribution to our infant chapter.

We will be sure to post pictures on our new website www.pflaggenevatricities.org after our Pride month extravaganza activities.

PFLAG

TINLEY PARK

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

Our chapter has had a great April and accomplished a lot both internally and in our outreach. We got our national website up and running! We were very excited to complete that task. We also obtained a Zoom account through PFLAG National so we don't have to use someone else's account to hold online or hybrid meetings anymore.

Additionally, we started a safety plan for our chapter. After watching a PFLAG webinar, we realized we didn't

performer with Christian roots, and sent her a copy of the book. We're so excited to spread the story of PFLAG in this way!

We've been compiling a list of pride events throughout Illinois and northwest Indiana and made so many new connections with pride groups this way. We hope that PCNI chapters can be a part of all the events in our area. If you have never had a table or want ideas, reach out to us, because it's one thing that we truly love to do and have fine-tuned over the years! One of our members turned our list into a spreadsheet calendar so you can really get a look at what each weekend holds. The list and spreadsheet calendar are linked at

tinleypark.pflag.org/upcoming-events. Our friends at PFLAG DuPage have a calendar with links that can be found at Pride Events - PFLAG DuPage (pflagdupage.org/pride-events).

Our April speaker was David Cerda, the Artistic Director of Hell in a Handbag Productions. He's a member of the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame and a native of Hammond, Indiana. David shared his experiences growing up in

If you have never had a Pride event table or want ideas, reach out to us at pflagtinleypark@pflagillinois.org, because it's one thing that we truly love to do and have fine-tuned over the years!

have a written plan for emergencies at our meeting location. Not just the unthinkable, an attack, but also weather events, fire, and medical emergencies. We spent time before our April meeting walking around our meeting location and finding where we can shelter from weather, locations of exits, fire extinguishers, and the first aid kit, and discussed reunification in case of evacuation. The webinar was really thought provoking and it's going to become information we share at the beginning of our meetings every month.

In our outreach, since "Mother of a Movement," the children's book about the story of PFLAG founder Jeanne Manford, came out we have donated copies to story time drag performers. Through Facebook, we made a connection with Flamy Grant, a well-known drag

northwest Indiana, the south suburbs, and Chicago, finding a community of LGBTQ chosen family, losing friends during the AIDS crisis, his personal growth long the way, and his work with Hell in a Handbag Productions. He was so open, honest, and entertaining. We're honored David took time out of his weekend to spend it with us. You can check out Hell in a Handbag and their shows at handbagproductions.org.

Our May speaker will be Joshua X. Miller from Black Alphabet, a not for profit that focuses on advocating for social equity by creating and spreading awareness of issues adversely or disproportionately impacting the black LGBTQ+ community. Their website is blackalphabet.org.

PFLAG

PTI CHICAGO

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

Every three months, PTI Chicago devotes the first hour of our two-hour monthly meeting to talking about great books by trans authors and allies. On April 11th we celebrated our Book Club's third birthday with a discussion of *A Girlhood: Letter to My Transgender Daughter*, published under the pen name "Carolyn Hays." In real life, the author is an award-winning writer of fiction—and it shows.

A Girlhood is a big ambitious whirlwind of a book framed as an open letter to the author's unnamed youngest child, who came out at age 3.

While the book begins in utero—the fetal brain poetically unfurling — *A Girlhood's* central drama is a "knock on the door" of the Hays's family home in a Bible Belt state, prompted by an anonymous report to Child Protection Services. The family (thriving big kids, adoring parents scrambling for guidance on raising a toddler who may be trans) is accused of forcing their baby "to be homosexual." As the investigation proceeds, family members are interviewed; friends, neighbors, and the school principal provide glowing testimonials. A friend runs Hays through a short list of questions used by defense attorneys to screen clients-to-be. Hays realizes it is a "checklist of privilege": Are you white? Are you straight? Is your husband the father of your child? Can you afford a lawyer?

"What happens, she writes, "if you're Black or brown or poor or dealing with custody issues or not married or . . . queer yourself? I knew the answer without asking. You were more likely to lose your child. . . This is how we terrorize mothers. We threaten to take their children."

Hays's family leaves the South, seeking safety in states with anti-discrimination laws. She has lost her sunny optimism but her ideals are intact, deeply rooted in her own girlhood—her huge open-hearted Irish Catholic family, the mentorship of her school's quirky, kind "feminist nuns." She gamely confronts the powers that be—a liberal college president, a priest—first by appealing to their humanity and then with logical arguments, working within the system to effect incremental change—a place for her daughter in an all-girls Catholic school, health insurance coverage for gender-affirming medical care.

A Girlhood "leads with love." Love empowers Hays to bare her soul, sharing her hopes, fears, prejudices and vulnerabilities. It drives her deep dive into years of research, conferences, and volunteer advocacy. It infuses every page, propels every well-honed argument she levels at humans and their institutions. It empowers her to channel her motherly outrage into art—and wield it as a weapon of peace.

Even those who didn't manage to read the book (including six first-time members) found the conversation engaging and topical. The second hour was devoted as always to confidential sharing and discussion.

We hope you'll join our next meeting! We are a vibrant community—even on Zoom—with a wealth of experience and resources to share. We continue to welcome many first-time parents (and grandparents!) of the extended LGBTQi+ community.

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

PTI Chicago gathers via Zoom on the second Thursday of each month, so **our next meeting is Thursday, May 8th from 7:00pm to 9:00pm**. A few days before the meeting, participants will be sent an email with the meeting link and password.

Parents, guardians, or family members of transgender, nonbinary, or gender-nonconforming individuals who would like to join us for the first time should e-mail PTI Chicago co-president Francey Oscherwitz (she/her) at Franceyo101@gmail.com.

PFLAG

HOMWOOD - FLOSSMOOR

by Rachel Nati Hardy (she/her)

PFLAG Homewood-Flossmoor has some exciting news: We have officially expanded our board from three to eight! At our April meeting, Dawnn Pirani-Brumfield was appointed as Treasurer, Beth McQuillen as Support Chair, Becca Fassbender and Quincy Crump as Advocacy Co-Chairs, Rachel Pirani-Brumfield as Education Chair and Amy Crump as Fundraising & Membership Chair.

Most recently, our advocacy co-chair, Becca Fassbender, led the charge in the fight for an inclusive graduation for all students at Prairie State College. For the third year, the publicly funded college is holding its graduation commencement at Victory Apostolic Church in Matteson. The church has a clear stance against same sex marriage and is not accessible to all abilities. Becca worked tirelessly to rally students, teachers and community members to push back against this decision and ask that this location be changed in the future. After a lot of hard work and some good press (tinyurl.com/yv2ts3f), Becca succeeded in getting the graduation's location changed for next year! Read PSC's statement here (tinyurl.com/ycxmc88a) and here (tinyurl.com/4jw5e2ee). Becca also organized PSC's first lavender graduation in which LGBTQ+ students can feel celebrated for who they are.

We are planning for the Homewood Starry Nights PRIDE festival in June. We are busy ordering merch, planning an interactive art project, creating a photobooth and gathering giveaways. We are also excited to use our new banner and table runner provided by PFLAG! We are collaborating with Flossmoor Public Library to bring a panel of people together to answer "Fearfully Asked

Questions" and our very own Dawnn Pirani-Brumfield will be performing with the Playback Theater (www.chicagoplaybacktheatre.com) in an "Amplify Queer Joy" event.

At our April support meeting we watched the new PFLAG documentary Pieces of Me that tells the story of Joslyn DeFreece.

Join us for the next monthly meeting on Sunday, May 12 at 2 pm in Homewood. This meeting will be a safe and welcoming space for open discussion, support, and learning. Our featured topic is "Challenging the Binary". Whether you're a newcomer or a regular attendee, we look forward to seeing you there. Please RSVP on our website www.pflaghomewoodflossmoor.org to let us know you'll be joining us!



Becca Fassbender

PFLAG

DEERFIELD

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

We held our elections in April! Many stepped up to serve and many came out to cast their vote!

I am happy to announce the following Executive Committee of PFLAG Deerfield!

Ann McAuliffe (she/her) President; Jodi Zavos (she/her) Vice President; Marjorie Howard (she/her) Treasurer and Beth Gerber (she/her) Secretary. Members at large Amy Amdur (she/her); Jennifer Bullman (she/her); Michael Bullman (he/him); Karen Freed (she/her); Susan Ginsburg; Alisa Kober (she/her); Barbara Levie (she/her); Jim Levie (he/him); Modesta Sailer (she/her) and Mike Wilson.

As a chapter, we say “goodbye and thank you”, or rather “hope to see you at the next meeting”, to long term Co-Presidents Sue Ginsburg and Barbara Levie, and Treasurer Mike Wilson as they step down after many years of service. Their leadership, wisdom and support are the roots of our chapter. We also say “thank you” to the amazing Ann McAuliffe as she says “hello” to her new role as President. Ann spent many years as our Speaker’s Bureau lead, and only, member. Ann put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to bring us many wonderful speakers over so many years! At the April meeting, Ann, in her ever so gracious way, beautifully expressed gratitude to all who served our chapter. I think I speak for all our chapter when I thank her in return for all she has done to expand our knowledge and to bring us support through the Speakers she chose.

Jennifer Bullman will step into the Speaker’s Bureau role as Ann transitions into the Presidency. Jennifer brings knowledge and experience to her new role. We look forward to hearing the Speakers she books for future meetings.

Overall, Deerfield is excited about the future as we continue the important work of PFLAG!

Happy Spring!



New Button Designs!

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

Have some new Button designs available in the [Shared Graphics](#) (tinyurl.com/4mtvyfur) files.

To find it:

- Open “Buttons” folder
- Open “Ready to Print Buttons” folder

Reach out to Kelly Hemmer if you have any questions or requests: hteam7493@gmail.com

In the PFLAG Brand Buttons folder:



In the General Buttons folder:



David deCastro

he/him

Interview by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

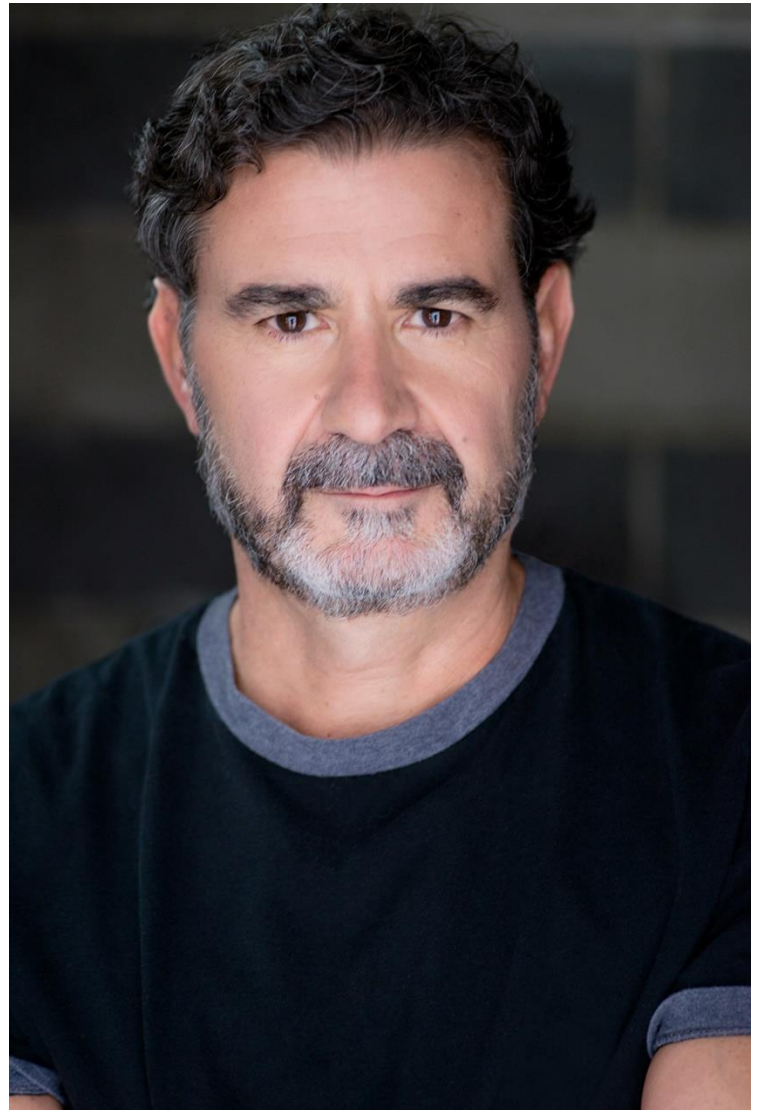
Painter

ARTIST STATEMENT

I have always explored themes of order and chaos in my work, and that exploration frequently begins with the randomness of a found object or an unanticipated outcome of an event or process. Once I discover the subject, I create an ordered composition, manipulating and abstracting the object and/or the world in which it exists. My current work continues this exploration through block imprints on canvas and painting then etching distressed wood salvaged from an axe throwing bar.

The Block and Containment canvases are a further exploration of an idea that began with my earlier Impressions series. During that creative process, I applied mistint paint to large canvases and then pressed them onto a hardwood floor. Once dry, the canvases were pulled from the floor to reveal random shapes and patterns that incorporated color, texture, and wood veneer. The current series utilizes the same randomized process, but rather than pulling canvases from a floor, they are pulled from deliberately composed constructions created from old, salvaged wood. The resulting expressions are further defined and ordered with the conscious application of charcoal and paint.

The cement board pieces on view are an extension of my earlier Stations series. As a child, I was fascinated by the Stations of the Cross that lined the walls of our church. It was a narrative of tragedy that moved through and surrounded me in a place of sanctuary. With these new (secular) abstractions I continue to explore the cinematic and inevitable movement of time through space.



www.daviddecastro.com

daviddecastro@sbcglobal.net

INTERVIEW

Open Doors: Welcome to Open Doors. When did you discover your passion for painting? Have you always wanted to be an artist? Can you talk about your background, education and/or training? You have some impressive credentials on your CV.

David deCastro: My passion for making art didn't actually begin with painting. My dad was an architect and artist and spent weekends in the basement creating wall constructions from old wood shingles and crown molding left behind after various renovations and updates to our house. In my early teens I followed suit, joining him in the basement to create pieces of my own.

Did I always want to be an artist? After high school, I studied theater and art at Bates College in Maine, the University of Southern California in LA, The American Academy of Dramatic Arts in NYC, and finally the University of Massachusetts in Boston. So yes, I suppose I've always wanted to be an artist of one sort or another.

After college I spent some years in New York City studying and pursuing a career in acting and occasionally painting on the side. It wasn't until I moved to Chicago, also to pursue an acting career, that I began working again in wood constructions. I had a loft space down in the Fulton Market area, which, at that time was not at all residential

and pretty much deserted on weekends. I would wander the streets collecting old shipping pallets and other odd and random pieces of wood and metal. That was the start of my 'pallet' series which I began showing in various galleries in and around Bucktown.

OD: I love this description of your work found in your Artist Statement.

"My work has always explored themes of order and chaos, and frequently begins with the randomness of a found object (never beginning with a concept or theme for which I have to find "the right thing"). Once found, I indulge the impulse to create an ordered composition by manipulating and abstracting the object and/or the world in which it exists."

How has the practice of bringing order to chaos been a thread throughout your work? How do you know when an individual piece or a series is complete?

DD: Bringing order to chaos and exploring the tension between the two is inherent in the process of working with found objects. The chaos is represented by the randomness of stumbling upon weathered pieces of wood or metal or cardboard that had served a purpose at some point and were then discarded - whether in an alley or dumpster or even a junkyard. Over the years I've used old painted signs, rusted garage door springs, aluminum from a discarded refrigerator, antique print boxes and, in one case, a boxed wedding dress from a divorced friend who was cleaning out her basement. When I come upon an object that interests me, there is typically something

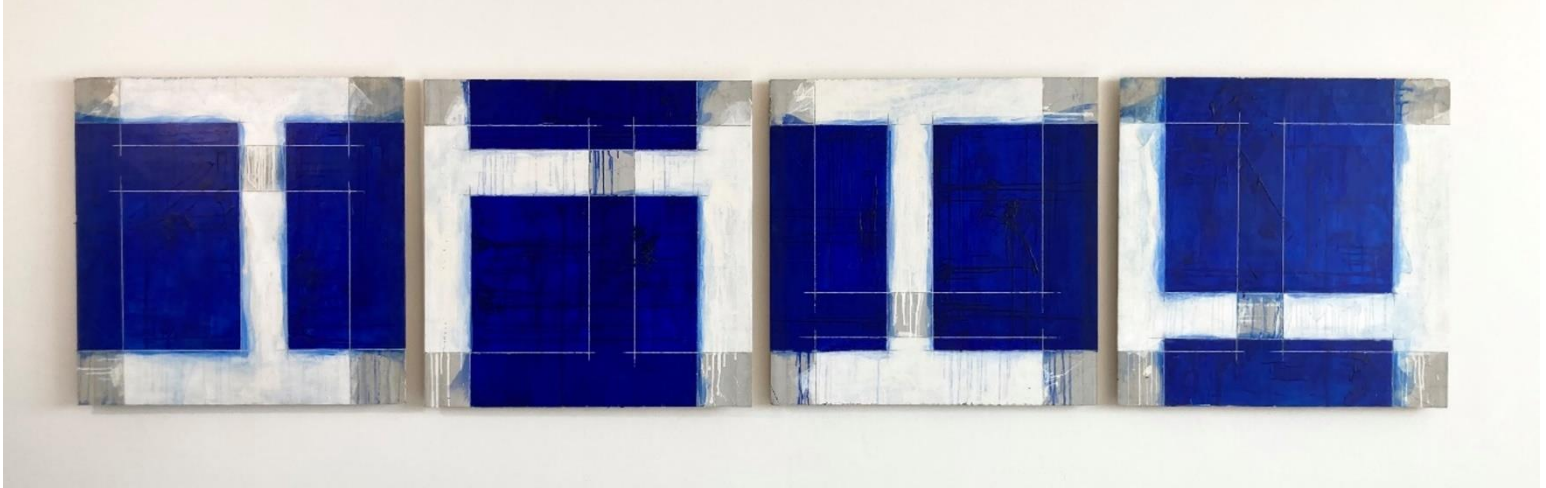


Blue Yellow X

about its texture or color or the lines of the piece that I find intriguing. Then begins the process of abstracting, composing and creating order.

Another instance of this in my work did not start with a found object at all. It began as a result of a performance piece. Many years ago, when I first met my husband, we started a theatre/performance company, Running With

Scissors, with a group of actor/dancer/painter friends. We decided to create a piece that involved an improvised 'dance' between some dancers and painters. The dancers moved on a large canvas laid out on the floor as the painters threw paint, creating a dialogue of motion and color. We used my studio to rehearse the dance, and after laying a canvas on the hardwood floor, we proceeded to make quite a mess. Several weeks later,



Diazo Stations



Yellow Stations

when I finally got around to cleaning up after the rehearsal, I pulled the dried canvas from the floor and was quite surprised by the chaotic pattern of color and the interplay between the paint and the wood veneer that had pulled up from the floor and adhered to the canvas. I then found several compositions within the chaos and begin applying order with charcoal and paintbrush.

Regarding knowing when a piece is complete, there's no hard and fast rule. I just know. In terms of understanding when a series has run its course, it is usually due to a loss of interest or an interest in something new. In the case of the pulled 'Imprint' series, however, it was something entirely different. I moved to a new studio space with a concrete floor.

OD: You have a distinctive, contemporary style of art. It's dimensional, architectural, sophisticated and complex. How does an artist "arrive at" or discover their style? Does your art reflect your view of the world? How has your style evolved over time? (Love that your business card mirrors your art!)

DD: My father was an architect and artist, so these disciplines surrounded me as I grew up and have had a major influence on the development of my style. I grew up around construction sites and blueprints and there are elements of those things in most everything I create. When I look at much of my work, I see site plans and elevations - the foundation of architectural drawings.



Top: Wedding Dress (no veil)

wedding dress, cardboard box, found objects,
acrylic on wood panel 48"X78"

**Middle and bottom: Open Air 1943 Installation
at Chicago Park District Theater on the Lake**

Canvas, rope, buckets, water, nylon sail, industrial fans This installation references the use of this building in the 1940's as an open-air sanitarium for children and babies with tuberculosis.

My art reflects my view of the world through the lens of chaos versus order. The great existential question, as I see it, seems to be whether we live in an inherently chaotic universe which we struggle to bring order to, or whether we were gifted a supremely ordered world that we persist in disordering and then seek to remedy. To put it another way, it is the question of God or no god. I was raised a Catholic, so there you go (I had to go there).

My style has evolved incrementally over time. I'd like to think that it has become more advanced in some way, but really, it's just different. I think that I see color and shapes and line and textures more acutely so maybe that has led to work that is more nuanced. I'll leave it at that.

Imprint #32, acrylic, wood fiber on canvas 48”X78”



Untitled

Sculpture wood molds and steel plates 24”X24”X24”

OD: When I met you at COH, I was admiring a blue and white piece with triangular designs on a textured piece of wood. You described an outing with your son which involved axe throwing; hence, all the cuts and nicks on the wood slab. At the end of your axe throwing session, you asked for the wood and it became a canvas for one of your paintings. I recall you saying “I’m going to do more of that”. Is this an example of a found object making its way into your repertoire? Why was this piece of wood so interesting?

DD: That is a great example of how the found elements in my work find their way into my studio. A dumpster, a back alley, an axe-throwing bar - it is all quite random. In the case of the axe thrown wood, my husband and son and I were at an axe bar, a first for us, and in the next stall the staff was replacing wood targets. They had stacked the old, distressed wood on an adjoining table, and I was immediately struck by its texture. I easily imagined it as a canvas on which to apply structure and color. On an emotional level, I was struck by the visual record of the wood as an act of violence and aggression.

OD: You have an installation commissioned by the City of Chicago for the North Pavilion of the Theater on the Lake (at Fullerton Avenue and Lake Shore Drive). How were you selected for the commission? Can you describe the process of creating the art for the space and then installing it in the venue?



Block #1.0, acrylic, wood fiber, stainless-steel cable and turnbuckles on wood panel 48”X48”

DD: Running With Scissors, the theatre company that my husband and I help to found, was commissioned to create a site-specific piece for Theatre on the Lake, part of which was an installation I created in the North Pavilion. The building that houses Theatre on the Lake was a park district building that was re-purposed in the early 1940’s to house children with tuberculosis. The idea behind it was that, with its screened walls, the North Pavilion would provide a therapeutic, open-air environment in which the patients would recover or peacefully finish out their lives. The theatre piece, “Breathing Under Water” was performed in the adjoining South Pavilion and my installation, “Open-Air 1943” was constructed in the screened pavilion. Both pieces incorporated the themes of illness and breath and the healing power of water. I based my installation primarily on a photo from the period which shows the space filled with sick and dying children in hammocks, swinging in the breezes from the lake. I created several oversized hammocks, partially filled with water that dripped through the fabric into buckets below. It was a slow drip that rhythmically marked time and represented the wasting away of a life.



Untitled (kitchen floor)



Untitled Copy 2

“My art reflects my view of the world through the lens of chaos versus order.”

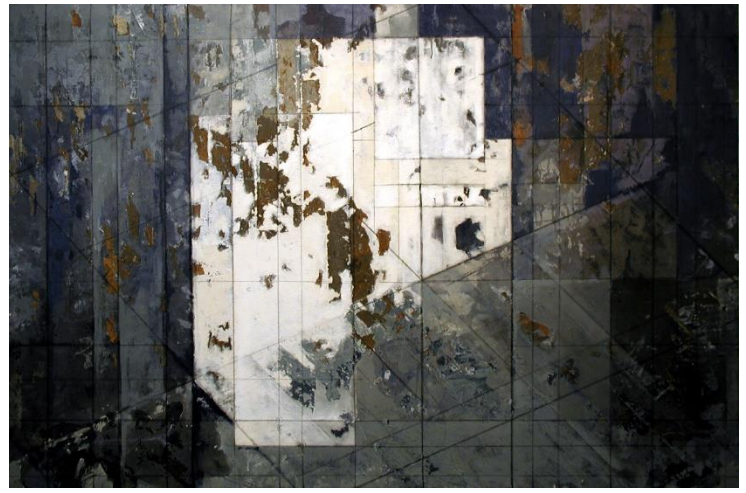
At both ends of the space there were large billowing parachute fabric ‘lungs’ being blown by two large fans. A single white medicine cabinet was hung in the corner of the space.

OD: Does Chicago provide a good environment for a creative LGBTQ+ person? Are new professional opportunities opening up for LGBTQ+ artists? What can allies do to support creative LGBTQ+ people? Any advice for young people starting out in a creative field?

DD: I feel that Chicago is very supportive of the LGBTQ+ community on many levels and has been for quite some time. As an openly gay artist I have always felt welcomed by galleries, theaters, clients and audiences. I would say that one of the best opportunities for emerging LGBTQ+ artists is where you and I met, The Center on Halsted. They have two galleries, a theatre, and many opportunities to get involved in the community. I find that being creative doesn’t always mean standing in front of a canvas or on a stage. To be an artist is to be involved in life on many different levels. As an example, when I first moved to Chicago, I volunteered for the first openly gay, HIV positive candidate for state representative, Larry McKeon. This was almost 30 years ago and he won! Many of the people I met during that period are my best friends today and the experiences and opportunities it opened up to me have been invaluable. My advice is to put yourself out there with dignity and pride and don’t give up.

OD: Describe your perfect day.

DD: Any day that I feel I’ve have moved the needle forward creatively, even if it’s just a thought or an observation, is a good day for me. Alternatively, sitting at a school assembly with my husband and watching our son on stage doing his best James Brown imitation is priceless. ♥



Imprint #60



↑ **Containment Quadriptych**

↓ **Compound Triptych**



Love Knows No Gender: Parenting a Transgender Child

by Wendy Cole

Introduction...

No matter how much you love your child or how open-minded you are, parents are rarely, if ever, prepared to learn their child is transgender. My parents weren't prepared when, at 10 years old, I told them I was a girl, not a boy. As most parents, they did their best at the time. Threatening to "fix" me (if I didn't forget all about being a girl) did irreparable damage to our relationship. Until I was 67 years old, I did everything I could to suppress knowing I was a female and in the wrong body. This suppression included using drugs, alcohol. I'm sharing my story with you because I don't want another child to go through what I went through. Nor do I want parents to be at a loss for how to respond to the child they love.

Most parents are initially surprised and uncertain about how to respond when their child comes out as transgender. I've heard stories like that of a mother whose son, in his early twenties, revealed his true identity as a woman, leaving the family shocked and unsure about what to do next. This is where my firsthand experience and understanding become invaluable, as I offer a compassionate and well-informed perspective from "the other side" of this journey.

By offering support, guidance and a safe space for learning, we can empower parents to lovingly embrace their child's identity and foster stronger family bonds. In turn, this will contribute to a more inclusive society.

I truly believe the universe guided me onto this path in 2015 for a meaningful purpose and it has become my life's mission. My commitment is to openly and authentically share my story in order to touch people's hearts and minds and promote positive change in how others perceive and understand transgender individuals like myself.

People rarely think about their gender because it just is...

Your child was born this way. It's not your fault. As a parent, you did nothing wrong. And you can't "fix it"! It is difficult, but learning to accept your child without the burden of needing to understand it, is essential. It's important you accept and support them. People tend to resist change and hold onto preconceived notions about transgender individuals like me. I started my program for parents of transgender individuals to help people think about gender and work through situations with their child. I never want any other child to go through the challenges I faced. I use the words "child" or "children" to denote a relationship, not the child's age. It makes no difference

if they're 14 or 45. A child's identity is not a result of their parents' mistakes; it is simply a part of who their child is. This truth cannot be wished away, no matter how much someone may want it to be otherwise.

When parents value maintaining a strong relationship with their child and are willing to accept their child's true self, they will unconditionally embrace this reality. Parents must first believe their child. This takes some time to validate and process this experience. The guidance I provide to parents includes insights from my personal experience and practical tools to assist them in navigating this journey of acceptance. You can do it!

Unconditional Acceptance Without Needing to Understand...

My life is an example to parents of what NOT to do with a transgender family member, regardless of their age! Here's what I teach parents to do instead:

- Don't deny your child's awareness of their gender! It takes a lot of courage for a person to tell their parents and family, "I'm really a girl," or "I'm really a boy." It's not your child's "choice." It is how he or she feels about who and what they truly are. When you let go of your fears, it will be easier to help them.
- Accept them unconditionally without needing to understand. People rarely question or think about their gender because it just is.
- Get help for yourself as well as your child from someone who has experience and understands being born transgender, as well as the effects on a person's life.
- Prepare yourself to adapt to your child's to new gender role in the family dynamic. Their roles will change over time as they begin to live authentically as themselves and develop and blossom into their new lives. You'll need to see and relate to this person differently!

Hiding and repressing myself over six decades...

If you do what my parents did with me, you'll subject your child to a life of anger, depression, anxiety, guilt, and fear. I lived like this for six-plus decades. I'm grateful to my "male facsimile" (or "male representative," what I call the person I used to live as) for not making me a drug addict, alcoholic, or killing me, even though I thought of these often. The last time I was in a very dark place was at age 66. You see this never goes away! Until then, I had no idea the official medical diagnosis was changed in

2012. Before that, being transgender (the way I was born) was categorized as a psychological condition with no treatment or cure. Now it is considered treatable with therapy, hormone replacement therapy and surgeries. When I discovered this, I knew I had to transition and finally openly become the woman I've always been repressing.

Please don't force your child to live my experience...

I was never a man, rather a facsimile who had to live as a male. Honestly, the last nine years have been the happiest of my life. It's been great! It has been an evolution...where I have become social, have friends and gone is the anxiety, depression, etc. Early in 2015, my trusted therapist referred me to a psychiatrist who took me off the psych meds I'd been on for around twenty years. Being off the meds and now on estrogen therapy was wonderful. The sky opened up for me. I was so happy. I felt so free with no secret to hide. Both my therapist and new psychiatrist had first met my "male facsimile" before meeting the real me, Wendy. I was gradually getting comfortable with the new person I was becoming. A few years later, I was told they couldn't believe the immediate personality change between my "male facsimile" and Wendy, the woman I am. I was a different person—open, happy, outgoing and social—all things I had not been for 67 years!

Please don't force your child to experience what I had to go through. Learn how to accept and support them without question.

It's about correcting how they were born, so they can fully be who they've always been...!

Something many parents think of is "What will others think?" Or "How will our relatives, the neighbors and friends react to our family and to our child?" Today, you hear the term "transition" or "transitioning." Many parents will think, "My boy is changing to a girl." Let's look at it from a different perspective and more valid truth. It's less about "transitioning" from someone they weren't and more about correcting how they were born, so they can fully be who they've always been! That is such an important shift of perspective for any parent of a transgender child. It's also more affirming to your child for you to adopt this perspective. And it's also a perspective I encourage transgender people to adopt. Once you understand this perspective, talking about what is going on becomes so much easier. And the conversations will come up with others. As a parent, remember, you've done nothing wrong!! It's not your child's choice. It's who they are and how they were born!

Roles within the family dynamic will need to change...

Let's talk about your child's role within the family dynamic. As a parent, be open to your child adopting any gender-specific roles they feel comfortable with and want. Ask your child how they want to affirm their gender identity. A parent of a transgender woman (male to female) took her daughter to a salon and for the first time where she had have her hair cut and styled in a feminine way. She also took her daughter to get her nails done. This was a huge experience for both of them. It affirmed her daughter's identity and brought them closer together. I dreamed of that happening for me at times during my high school years.

- ✓ Your child who is transitioning is seeing themselves differently. It's an ongoing process.
- ✓ As they evolve over the first few years and even longer, things they used to do and their interests change, as do their bodies and physical strength – this is a new person.
- ✓ The person transitioning has new experiences daily that are important to their development. So talk with them and listen when they want to share their feelings – don't try to fix them. Don't ask, "Are you sure?" This invalidates their experience.
- ✓ Invite family members and relatives to change how they see this person and their expectations of this person.
- ✓ Family needs to see beyond the clothes, hair, name and pronouns, realizing this is a very different person evolving.
- ✓ Make it easy for them to move into new gender roles as they evolve. As appropriate, participate with them.
- ✓ Transitioning is for the child alone – don't impose conditions, restrictions, or wishes of others or even your own hopes for them.
- ✓ It's important for family members to be publicly accepting and supportive without question, especially with friends, neighbors and in public.

Consider changing schools when supporting your child to socially transition. This may not be as necessary today, since many kids don't think twice about being transgender. Many completely accept it as just another aspect of life, unlike many adults.

Self-acceptance and self-awareness are key for your child...

It's important to be aware that initially your child has not accepted themselves for who they are, especially within the first year. Even after a year or two of living as themselves, self-

“My life is an example to parents of what NOT to do with a transgender family member”

acceptance is still developing. It takes time. For most of their life, they've been living in fear, guilt and shame for having these feelings of being a girl when they're assigned male at birth or vice versa. Self-acceptance, self-awareness and self-esteem are key factors for your child, regardless of age. These enable them to develop and successfully become the person they've always been and knew themselves to be. When a person is born, the doctor says, "It's a boy" or "It's a girl" based on anatomy. But in reality, the doctor doesn't know for certain. Being designated male at birth, in my case was clearly a mistake.

Gender is between the ears not the legs...

Gender is in the brain, it's in the mind and it's with you from birth. Gender is designated at birth based on anatomy formed in the second trimester. In my case, my brain developed as female and my body as male. As your child grows, they develop a sense of their gender and, in most cases, it remains congruent with their physical anatomy. But with people born transgender, they become aware there is something wrong. Socialization from parents, family, school and society begins at birth and is opposite to how your child sees themselves. So, before your child tells you how they really feel, they're struggling with this dichotomy. Because at whatever age, they see there are girls, there are boys and this is how their parents react to them. This is how everybody treats them. They may be thinking, "Oh, God, if I say I'm different, they're going to think something's really wrong with me." That's what your child is feeling. That's when the fear, shame, guilt, and anxiety come in. They have a big secret to hide!

Things Parents can do to be supportive...

- ✓ You love them.
- ✓ Help them tell others, if and when they choose.
- ✓ Be there for them even if you don't understand.
- ✓ Support their gender expression.
- ✓ Welcome their friends.
- ✓ Participate in support groups with them and get guidance for yourself.
- ✓ Connect them with adult role models.
- ✓ Talk with them about their identity and listen even if it's uncomfortable.
- ✓ Use their name and pronouns that match their identity.
- ✓ Insist that other family members treat them with respect.
- ✓ Tell them you're proud of them.
- ✓ Stand up for them when others mistreat them.
- ✓ Show affection when you are made aware of their gender identity.
- ✓ Educate yourself.
- ✓ Speak openly and positively about them with others.
- ✓ Believe they can be happy and successful as adults.

The issue is really the parents accepting the child...

First of all, accept your child without any conditions. Accept them without needing to understand why. Because needing to understand why gets you down into wondering where you went wrong. All of those types of debates are not the issue. The issue is really the child and the parents accepting them for who they are, embracing them for who they are and supporting them. As a result of your support, your child will go through their process so much easier. They'll be more comfortable in their life and grow to be themselves. And telling them they will forget all about this when they have a "normal life" doesn't work! That didn't work for me. And it hasn't worked for anyone else I know. And it won't work for your child! There is nothing more damaging to a person's psychological well-being than to repress who they are and how they feel. I didn't talk with anyone about my feelings for forty-five years! From 1970, when a psychiatrist publicly called me a freak, until 2015. That's no way to live for all those decades, yet I lived it!

Speak supportively of your child with others and not in anger...

When you, as a parent, overhear friends or relatives saying something disparaging about your child or their transition, immediately intercede in that conversation with kindness, not in anger. Explain what you know about how your child feels and how you feel about it. That might diffuse the conversation and hopefully diminish the possibility of that conversation happening again between those people. They might think whatever they want in private, but it might prompt them to actually look for some way of accepting it or at least being more knowledgeable about what your child is going through. I use the word, knowledgeable, as opposed to understanding. Gender is not something that we normally think about. It's not something that people normally question when their gender and their sex assigned at birth are aligned. That's the thing that's different about a transgender child. They were born transgender and they will reach a point in their lives where they are constantly questioning who they are, their value and their self-worth. They will be questioning the validity of how they were born and the validity of their sex assigned at birth. Having parents who are accepting and supportive makes a tremendous difference.

Happy real-life experience...

A few weeks after her surgery, I met a patient of my surgeon at a photo shoot in Manhattan. She was a very intelligent, very bright person who had graduated from Vassar in Poughkeepsie, New York, and went on to be an Oxford fellow. When she came home from England, she announced she was transitioning. Her

“accept your child without any conditions”

parents threw her out so her grandparents took her in. They weren't sure what to do and knew nothing about transitioning, but they didn't want her to be out on her own. I met her grandmother at the event and gave her a big hug telling her, "You're absolutely amazing and I'm so glad you are with her." The grandmother said, "Well it was scary at first. We had no idea what to do or what was going on. She helped us by sharing how she felt and we just went with it. And then this whole idea of surgery and changing her sex, as well, was another huge thing for us to get used to." Then she said, "We're so glad we did this because even though I loved my grandson, my granddaughter is amazing. The personality change and who she's becoming is so wonderful. We wouldn't have had this if we hadn't accepted and taken her in."

Learn how to parent compassionately from "the other side" of this journey...

When parents value maintaining a strong relationship with their child and are willing to accept their true self, they must unconditionally embrace this reality. Calling on my personal experience from the other side of this journey, I have provided guidance, insights and practical tools to assist parents in navigating this journey of acceptance. Think of how helpful it would be to know how to talk with other people about this change in your family.

Most parents are initially surprised and uncertain about how to respond when their child comes out as transgender. This is where my firsthand experience and understanding become invaluable. In my coaching program for parents, I offer a compassionate and well-informed perspective from "the other side" of this journey. By offering understanding, support, guidance and a safe space for learning, I help parents feel empowered to lovingly embrace their child's identity and foster stronger family bonds. You will learn the skills and techniques for building and maintaining a strong, positive relationship with your child as they claim their true gender and learn to live as their authentic self. In turn, this contributes to a more inclusive society and a more inclusive world for all.

If this feels like what you're facing, I'd love to have a conversation so we can see how I can help you.

Links:

Calendar Link to schedule conversation:

calendly.com/wendycoletm/next-step-strategy-session

Link to Parent Coaching Page:

wendycoletm.net/parents

Parents Guide Book – soon on Amazon (will be announced).

STEPHENS FAMILY YMCA, in collaboration with Uniting Pride, present

CAMP KALEIDOSCOPE

JUNE 3-7
2nd-5th Graders

Time: 8:30am - 4:00pm
Fees: \$250



JULY 22-26
6th-9th Graders

Camp Kaleidoscope aims to provide youth in the LGBTQ+ community with daily summer adventures that promote a healthy spirit, mind and body. Participants will meet at the Y each morning and will be transported to a nearby space of retreat where they can meet new friends, learn team building, and experience character growth & development.

Questions? Contact Alyssa Anderson at alyssa.anderson@ccymca.net.



Making buttons with our friends at CITI

by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

On Thursday, April 25th, we spent a few hours with our friends at CITI making buttons for numerous upcoming Pride Month events – notably, the Unconditional Love from PFLAG Parents event at SideTrack on Sunday, May 12th (Mother’s Day). This is the second year CITI’s Pride Employee Resource Group (ERG) has invited us to do a teambuilding activity. Through their generous volunteerism, we produced 800+ buttons in just over 2 hours. Even better, we got reacquainted with our friends over the sounds of button machines and laughter. We had a lot of fun picking out custom buttons from our extensive catalog for each of our volunteers!

A sincere thank you to CITI, our corporate partner, and the beautiful Allies who work there! We look forward to seeing you at the Chicago Pride Parade.

We stand with you in Pride, Solidarity and Love!





May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

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

NPR SPECIAL SERIES

Asian American And Pacific Islander Heritage Month

[The story behind Asian Pacific American Heritage, and why it's celebrated in May \(tinyurl.com/232bz2r3\)](#),

by Rina Torchinsky

The PFLAG Connects

Asian American & Pacific Islander Community

meets on the second Sunday of the month at 6pm ET / 3pm PT. Join us online!

[REGISTER NOW \(tinyurl.com/52y4v64p\)](#)

Welcome to PFLAG Connects: Asian American & Pacific Islander Community! These virtual meetings are open to parents, family members, and members of the LGBTQ+ community who are AAPI. Each meeting is led by members of the AAPI community who will guide you in receiving support, giving support, and finding resources to help you, your family, and your community. If this sounds like something you would be interested in attending, please click the registration link. You will also find links to additional resources below.

Questions? Reach out to Senior Partnerships and Communities Manager, Angelina Leon at aleaon@pflag.org.

More AAPI chapter meetings:

- PFLAG NYC Rainbow Parents
www.pflagnyc.org/families/api-rainbow-parents
- PFLAG San Gabriel Valley
www.sangabrielvalleyapipflag.com/support-group.html
- PFLAG San Jose
pflagsanjose.org/support-meetings/

Organizations and Resources for the AAPI community:

English – Asian Pride Project – Immigration and coming out stories from Indian individuals

English – **Desi Rainbow Parents and Allies** – Support meetings and resources –

asianprideproject.org/portfolio-item/uncovering-our-stories

English – **Okaeri** – Japanese-American elders’ stories –

www.okaeri.org/okaeri-voices-season-one

English & Japanese – **Okaeri** – General page with resources – www.okaeri.org

English – **Viet Rainbow of Orange County (VROC)** –

Resources and information – www.vietroc.org

English w/Japanese subtitles – **Barney Cheung**

(**YouTube**) – “A Love Letter” video stories –

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JulaPb15p28

Various API languages – Family Acceptance Project (SFSU)

– Multilingual project posters –

familyproject.sfsu.edu/posters

Tidbits: small actions, BIG impact

by Ann McAuliffe (she/her)

Allyship Beyond the Basics: Personal Pronouns and Why They Matter

Why should you include your pronouns when you introduce yourself?

1. It's a quick and easy way to vocalize inclusion as well as to support, celebrate, and affirm our transgender and nonbinary colleagues.
2. It communicates where our values lie and that we envision a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
3. It can be a conversation starter that allows us to lead with our allyship and educate new and potential allies about gender identity, gender expression, and the gender spectrum.

We can all learn to incorporate Pronouns into our daily practice. Here are some practical strategies to demonstrate our PFLAG commitment to Inclusion and Equality.

Happy Reading & Learning with Love!

	<p>This monthly newsletter is the companion to Jeannie Gainsburg's book, The Savvy Ally, A Guide for Becoming a Skilled LGBTQ+ Advocate.</p> <p>You can subscribe at www.savvyallyaction.com. There are 3-minute videos (not to be missed!), free downloadable handouts, workshops and information on her book.</p> <p>Here are some of her short instructive videos with "real life" applications to get you started on the path to practical pronoun usage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why Share Pronouns? www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0a2sdBKRpU 2. Two or More Pronouns? Now What Do I Do? www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ja_AaasJjA4 3. Common Pronoun Sharing Bloopers – www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsjtEybiUPI
 <p>Better Allies</p>	<p>Better allyship starts here. Each week, Karen Catlin shares 5 simple actions to create a more inclusive workplace. Know someone who wants to be a better ally? Forward our newsletter to them. Received a forwarded copy? Sign up at tinyurl.com/4e4up96w to get 5 Ally Actions delivered to your inbox every Friday.</p> <p>While Better Allies focuses on tips for the workplace, I've found them so helpful, they work ANY place! Here's a few examples of normalizing pronoun usage at work:</p> <p>5 Ally Actions - Apr 19, 2024 – tinyurl.com/24yuj5z9 – #1 Broadcast your Support for Inclusion</p> <p>5 Ally Actions - Apr 12, 2024 – tinyurl.com/ycy2tz2a – #3 Support Someone being Misgendered</p>
 <p>Kelly Hemmer PFLAG DuPage President She/Her/Hers (Why is this here?) PFLAGdupage@gmail.com</p>	<p>I'd like to showcase 2 people Demonstrating Best Practices on the Pronoun front!</p> <p>Kelly & Dan Hemmer of PFLAG DuPage are using their signature lines as a mini lesson in Pronoun Etiquette. It's a teachable moment – it speaks volumes without saying a word!</p> <p>Dan Hemmer (he/him) Why is this here? Pronouns-Guide.pdf (tinyurl.com/mta8nx27)</p> <p>Dan uses this link on his work signature line. People can read the message on their own time. They often circle back to Dan and thank him for educating them on Pronoun usage.</p> <p>Kelly also uses the link on her signature line on all her PFLAG email correspondence. Just think how many people are exposed to the positive Pronoun message on a weekly basis!</p>
	<p>Let's not forget the amazing work that comes out of our very own PFLAG National on a variety of current events! The resources are impressive.</p> <p>Download the worksheet "Pronouns: Why They Matter" on the Straight For Equality Website straightforequality.org. It includes information on why sharing personal pronouns matters, common gender-neutral pronouns, and examples of when and how various pronouns are used. tinyurl.com/mwm5vyzp</p> <p>www.pflag.org</p>

Parenting with Pride: Unlearn Bias and Embrace, Empower, and Love Your LGBTQ+ Teen

Excerpt from the new book by Heather Hester

Heather was one of the panelists at the PCNI Conference in 2022 and has been an Open Doors contributor.

Email: hh@chrysalismama.com

Two thousand miles from home, I received a call that my sixteen-year-old son was missing. A search that lasted into the early hours of the morning culminated with a call and a single sentence: “Mom, I’m gay.” My response? “Thank God! I thought you were dead!” Through our tears of relief, my darling boy started to explain what brought him to this terrifying point, and thus, our journey began.

More than six years have now passed, and we’ve experienced growth that has been anything but linear. I say we because when your child comes out as LGBTQ+, it involves shifts, growth, and learning for the entire family—not just the one who’s connecting with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The learning curve for the first year and a half was more like a steep, jagged incline than a gentle curve. As my son—the oldest of four, the overachiever and rule-follower—took a 180-degree turn in every possible way, we encountered substance use and abuse, extreme self-loathing, mental health issues (including extreme anxiety and deep depression), dangerous behaviors, and a suicide attempt all in just the first few months. And this was with unconditional love and complete support from his immediate family.

My husband and I scrambled to learn and to find resources and support. We were pitifully unprepared and frustrated as we could not find the support options we needed or research and resources readily available past national organizations such as PFLAG (formerly Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and The Trevor Project.

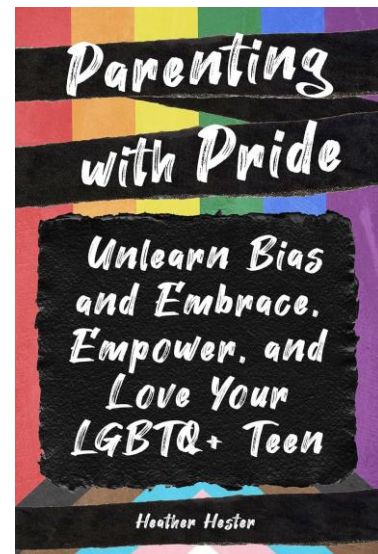
When we hit the eye of the storm in late 2018, I set out to create what we could not find. I couldn’t bear the thought of other families going through what we did: the fear for your child’s safety, the sleepless nights, the endless worry, the frustration, the heartbreak of just wanting to help and support your child and not being able to find help anywhere!

I wanted other parents to know that they were not alone and that there was nothing wrong with them or their family. I wanted parents to know that their child embracing that they are gay or lesbian or transgender or any other sexual orientation and/or gender identity was not a choice, but who they

inherently are. So, I set out to build a safe space where others could find the help and support we wish we’d had throughout our storm.

In the summer of 2018, I created a blog and resource-filled website called Chrysalis Mama so that I had a place to list and add incredible research, books, websites, and other resources as I found them. In November 2019, I launched my podcast, Just Breathe: Parenting Your LGBTQ Teen, knowing so many families desperately need this information but are either too overwhelmed or too frightened to reach out. I still host solo and interview episodes, and it sits in the top 2 percent of all podcasts worldwide. Since February 2021, I’ve launched my digital course, Learning to Just Breathe, one-on-one coaching for parents, speaking engagements for organizations, and an e-book and workshop called The Language of LGBTQIA+.

There are so many lessons we’ve learned. Crises, internal shifts, and evolution do not occur in a vacuum. What Steve, Connor, Isabelle, Grace, Rowan, and I experienced affected each of us deeply. Each of us has had our own challenges and shifts within our greater family dynamic. I am deeply grateful for the guidance, both spiritual and otherwise, that has supported and helped us as individuals and as a family, and I am in awe of the beautiful spirit and resilience of each of my kids and my husband. This book is my love letter of sorts to every person out there who sees themselves in our story. You are not alone.



Pre-order the book on Amazon: tinyurl.com/mwfahj7x

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD

LEARN ABOUT BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

At Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), our goal for children in foster care is to help them find their forever home through reunification with birth families or through adoption. In Illinois, the need for Foster Parents is urgent, with 20,000 children currently in foster care and not enough foster parents to meet the need. Foster parents for teens and siblings especially are needed. LSSI welcomes and affirms members of the LGBTQIA+ community, including children in care and foster parents.



Every single foster child has touched our lives, and I believe every minute that they're with us, we're touching their lives."

MICHELLE, LSSI FOSTER PARENT

Make a difference in the life of a child when you become a Foster Parent by:

- Providing a safe, loving, stable home for a child or youth
- Shaping future generations by being a role model and mentor
- Teaching a child to connect with others
- Being a positive support for biological families

Being a Foster Parent provides many rewarding—and surprising—benefits:

- Caring for children keeps you young!
- Helping a child or teen find a forever home feels awesome!
- Making a difference in the life of every child who comes to your home is amazing!

Foster Parents are people with big hearts!

- Single people
- Couples with children
- Couples with no children
- Married couples
- Same-sex couples
- Extended family members
- Unmarried couples



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

FosterAChild@LSSI.org

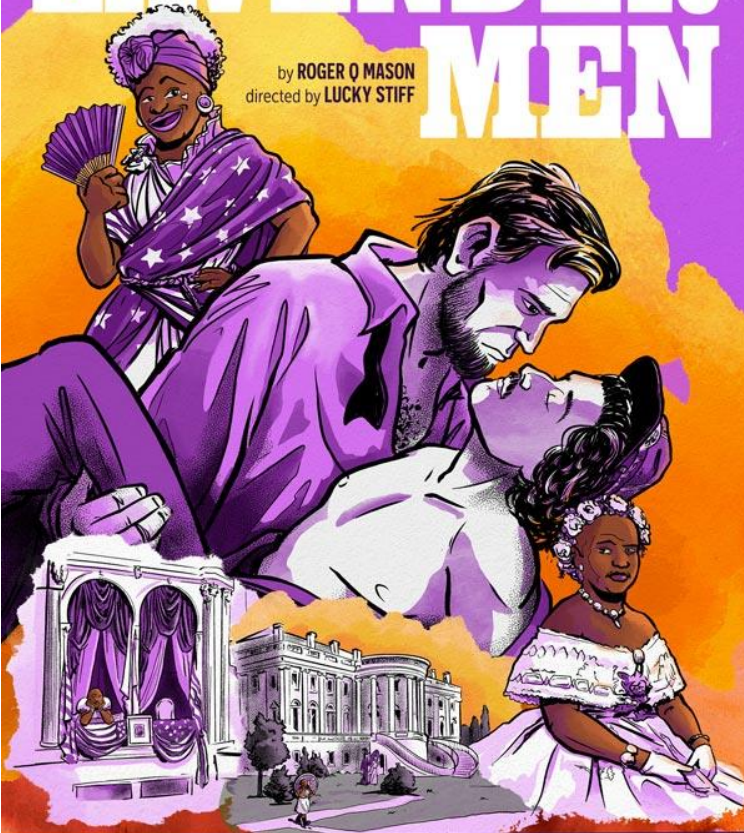
LSSI.org/fostercare

LSSI is an Illinois licensed Child Welfare Agency, Lic. #013005

A queer historical fantasia of love & self-acceptance

LAVENDER MEN

by ROGER O MASON
directed by LUCKY STIFF



MAY 9 – JUNE 8 THE DEN THEATRE
1331 N Milwaukee Ave
Learn more at ABOUTFACE THEATRE.COM

Taffeta is a fat, multi-racial femme with a unique form of queer magic: she can conjure dead historical figures. In this energetic and surreal play, Taffeta invites audiences along as she summons none other than President Abraham Lincoln and his handsome young law clerk Elmer Ellsworth to her stage. Playing every other character in Abe and Elmer's gay narrative, Taffeta uses this fantasia to confront issues of visibility, race, and LGBTQ+ inclusion. But is any of this historically accurate? Sit down, honey, that's not what we're here for.

Lavender Men is an embrace to every queer, fat person of color who has been ignored, neglected, or erased for unapologetically being themselves.

Pay-what-you-can tickets are on sale now!

Get tickets at aboutfacetheatre.com/show/brightestthing



Chicago Repertory Ballet presents Modern Motions at the historic Ruth Page Center for the Arts May 10 - 12.

Get tickets at www.chicagorepertoryballet.com/modernmotions

PRIDE ARTS

DRAG QUEEN BINGO

HOSTED BY RAMONA MIRAGE
THURSDAY MAY 23, 2024
7PM-9PM
\$30 TICKET
PRIDEARTS CENTER
BINGO | FOOD | PERFORMANCES
SIGN UP TODAY AT WWW.PRIDEARTS.ORG

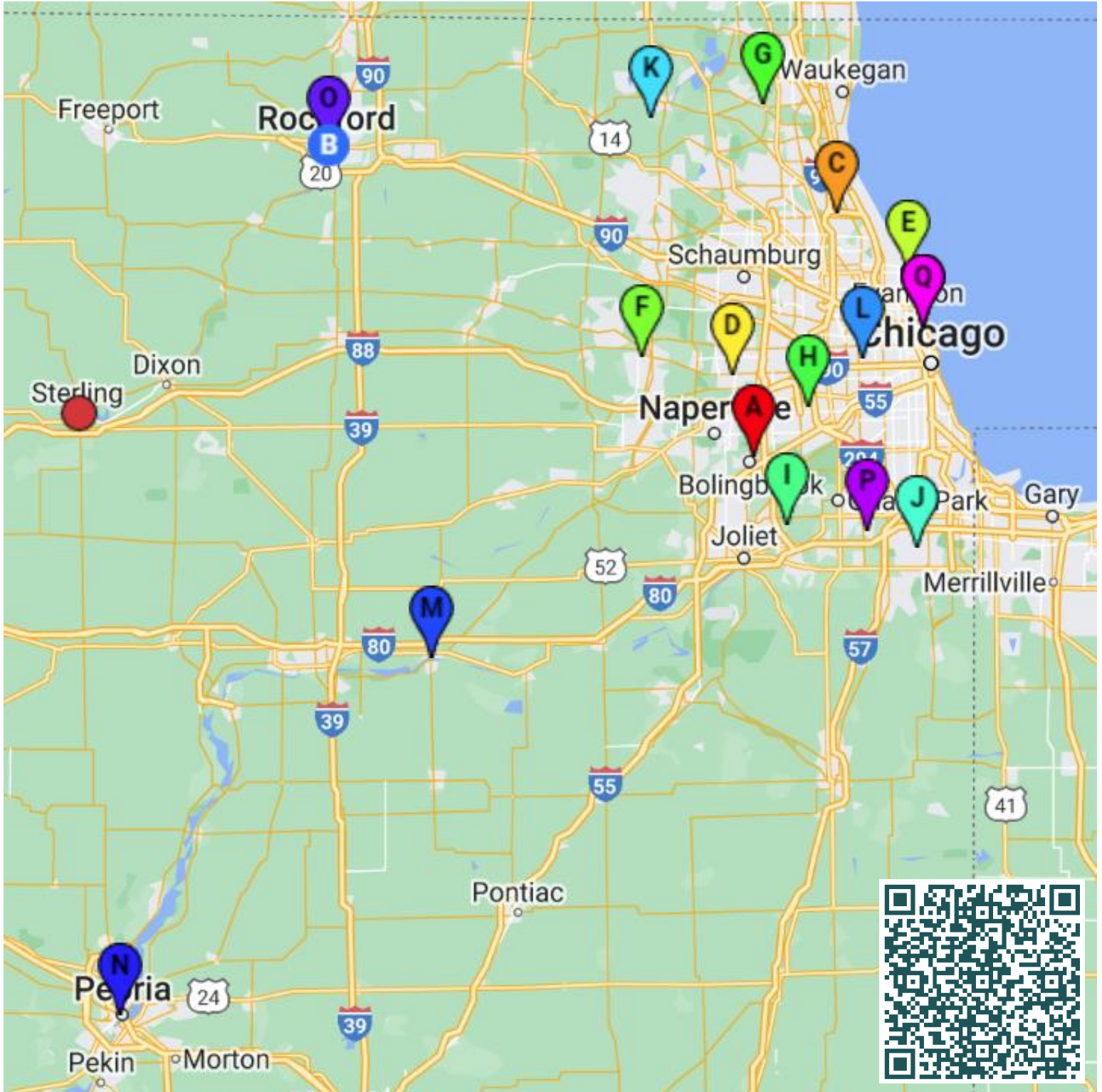
Get your BINGO cards at tinyurl.com/2z7zfzccr

Pieces of Me

PFLAG

Watch online: pflag.org/piecesofme

PFLAG Northern Illinois Chapters



Click/tap anywhere on the map or scan the QR code to open it online and find meeting dates/ times/locations. Meetings may be held in-person, on Zoom, or in a hybrid format. Contact the chapter for details before your very first meeting and watch for chapter announcements if you are a member.