



THE PFLAG NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

PFLAGpole

SUMMER
2017



“Your existence is not a burden”

**#prideelevated #pflag
#pflagprovo #lgbtq
#takeonestep
#lovenotetoself**

DONNASHOWALTER:
I love you, JD!!

#Equality Act would allow my daughter, a law-abiding citizen, to travel freely within her own country, using restrooms anywhere.
#takeonestep



@SUSANMHAYDEN



THEPFLAGTABLE

Building On a Legacy

45 YEARS LATER, PFLAGERS #TAKEONESTEP AND PFLAG MOVES INTO THE FUTURE

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- 03 Notes from National
- 06 The Ninth Annual Straight for Equality™ Gala
- 07 A Decade of Engaging Allies through Straight for Equality



Building on PFLAG's Legacy of Success

We are sending out the *PFLAGpole* having just celebrated the 45th anniversary of Jeanne Manford's iconic march by her gay son's side. I doubt Jeanne realized—although I suspect her son Morty did—that she was quietly sparking a revolution that would help shape so many lives, but spark she did. We are so pleased to share with you LGBTQ author and historian Eric Marcus' recollection of the moment, and his subsequent conversations with Jeanne.

In the weeks before that anniversary we asked you to join us and #TakeOneStep, sharing with us the efforts you were taking to follow in Jeanne's footsteps and create your own legacy of support. The action culminated on June 28th, the actual anniversary date, and the response was powerful. We have captured just some of the stories and photos we received on social media, but we know that so many more steps and efforts occurred during this time—more than could ever be shared in one short piece in a newsletter. June was also Pride month for so many, which always brings endless actions by PFLAGers across the country, but in typical PFLAG fashion, all of us built not only on Jeanne's legacy, and on the legacy of countless pioneers who each day took steps to get us to this point and create the legacy of tomorrow. There is no doubt that the fight for equality—and PFLAG—are both at a crossroads on this journey.

PFLAG must be as entrepreneurial as possible, adapting, pivoting and responding to the dynamic times in

which we now operate as an organization. This requires not only building on our collective legacy but also taking new and different approaches to reach our destination point on the horizon.

“PFLAG must be as entrepreneurial as possible, adapting, pivoting and responding to the dynamic times in which we now operate as an organization.”

To hear more about how the PFLAG National Board of Directors is creating this roadmap for the organization's future, please read the letter from Susan Thronson on the work of the Strategic Review Task Force. Another member of our Board, Isolda Atayde, has also written a letter to all of you, sharing how she personally is helping PFLAG expand available resources to ensure access for all who need them. We're also thrilled to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of our Straight for Equality™ program, a decade's worth of success at engaging allies as we all look to expanded strategies to welcome the influx of allies turning to PFLAG.

The PFLAG National staff have also been examining what we do well and what we can improve upon to serve you

and our collective mission better and more efficiently, especially given our limited resources. One big change coming? A new Executive Director to help build on PFLAG's legacy of success and move us into the future. Over the summer, the PFLAG National Board will begin conducting interviews to select a new Executive Director who will write this next chapter in collaboration with the Board, the staff and, most importantly, all of you.

Many of you, including members of the PFLAG National Board and the Regional Directors Council, have been kind enough to encourage me to throw my hat into the Executive Director ring. I want to share with you all that, for many reasons, I did not put my name in the mix for consideration of the position. Though it was not the right personal path for me, I remain as committed as ever to the success of PFLAG, the small-but-mighty PFLAG National staff, and to all of you. *Once a PFLAGer, always a PFLAGer.*

Thank you, as always, for everything you do.

Beth Kohm
Interim Executive Director,
PFLAG National

Expanding PFLAG's Impact

This is an exciting time for PFLAG, a moment rife with opportunity to move our organization strongly into the future.

The movement is at a critical crossroads, with historic advances in national equality giving way to an unprecedented backlash of discriminatory local and state legislation. While LGBTQ youth are receiving more family support than ever before, there continues to be a need to advance those support efforts, as well as the education required to move parents and others further along on that journey. Sadly, as evidenced by the backlash mentioned above, LGBTQ people continue to experience both latent and overt hostility from friends, family, co-workers, peers and more.

The LGBTQ movement has many organizations that share PFLAG's vision of a diverse world where all people are respected, valued, and affirmed, but we also know that we bring unique value to the work that we do.

Therefore, in order to do a deeper dive into the challenges and identify opportunities for us to apply that unique value to our mission, the PFLAG National Board of Directors created a Task Force, which has embarked on the process of a Strategic Review.

I am proud to chair this Task Force, and happy to work alongside my colleagues: Board President Jean Hodges; Vice President and Regional Directors Council Chair Kathy Godwin; Development Committee Chair Chuck Middleton; board members Peggy Moore and Larry Ryan; Business Advisory Board member Matt Koehler; and Interim Executive Director Beth Kohm. We've also engaged nonprofit strategic planning expert David LaPiana to facilitate the development of the plan. His book, *The Nonprofit Strategic Revolution*, has provided an excellent template for the work at hand.

We will present our recommendations to the board at our July meeting, and then present the Strategic Plan to PFLAG members at *We Are the Change*, the 2017 National Convention, in October.



We look forward to sharing the outcome and recommended next steps from the Strategic Plan with you all, so that together we may enter 2018—our 45th anniversary year—with confidence, purpose, excitement, and a renewed promise and commitment to achieving our important and lifesaving goals.

Susan Thronson

Susan Thronson
Board Secretary; Chair, Strategic Review Task Force, PFLAG National



As a member of the board of PFLAG National, I am committed to supporting this wonderful organization's vision of creating a world that is truly diverse and inclusive. As a fierce advocate for the LGBT

community and especially gender-expansive and transgender children and youth—and as a woman of color of Latinx descent—I live that vision in my own life every day.

When a close relative of mine came out as trans, I remember how valuable it was to connect with other families and allies of trans kids, including members of PFLAG. However, as crucial as those connections were, what my Latinx community needed most—and what I could see was a dire need for other families—were Spanish-language resources. Beyond that, we needed resources that were culturally competent, which reflected our understanding of the issues and spoke across a great many Spanish-speaking backgrounds, each of which was diverse and different from the next.

This is why I am so excited and profoundly honored to lead efforts to create new

translations of PFLAG National's revised publications. Beginning with OUR TRANS LOVED ONES, and then continuing on with other beloved publications such as OUR CHILDREN and BE YOURSELF, I and a team of excellent contributors are working together to ensure that families which are primarily Spanish speaking have the same good access and trusted resources as families that primarily speak English.

The process is a lengthy and detailed one: I first sit down and read and re-read the publication at hand. I then go line by line to translate, guided not only by the wording and concepts used in the publication but the intent behind them, and how I believe those will be best reflected and shared with Spanish speakers from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. My first draft translation then goes to a wonderful review team made up of volunteers from other organizations as well as staff members Diego M. Sanchez and Cesar Hernandez. Each member of the team brings their own understanding of the language, the terms used, the LGBTQ community, and more to their recommended edits. Those edits are then reviewed by me and Diego, who brings unique insight into this project, having been

a part of the Spanish-language translation team for NCTE's *Injustice at Every Turn*. After reviewing the drafts and compiling the edits, I make edits based on suggestions, consistently checking in with the team to be sure we are capturing the important nuances of the information we are sharing.

By late summer, we know we will have an excellent and informative resource that will no doubt help thousands of families just like so many I already know.

If you speak another language fluently and would like to see PFLAG publications available to others who speak that language, please contact Director of Communications Liz Owen via email at lowen@pflag.org. All of us at PFLAG National welcome your input to make our resources available as widely as possible, and to help fulfill our shared mission of support, education, and advocacy.

Isolda Atayde

Isolda Atayde
Board member; Member, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, PFLAG National

Jeanne Manford—Quiet Revolutionary

by Eric Marcus

Jeanne Manford was fearless. Or at least that’s what I thought the first time I saw the now iconic photo of PFLAG’s founding mother carrying a homemade sign in the 1972 Christopher Street Liberation Day parade in New York City. Jeanne was a lone middle-aged mom walking alongside her twenty-one-year-old gay son, Morty. Her sign’s message was as no nonsense as the soft-spoken elementary school teacher: “Parents of Gays: Unite in Support for our Children.”

Nearly thirty years ago I had the good fortune to sit down with Jeanne and Morty around the Manford dining room table in Flushing, Queens to interview them for my LGBT civil rights history book about how they came to launch an organization for parents of gay people. From Jeanne and Morty I learned that what looked like fearlessness was a complex combination of love and anger with a huge dose of fear. I’ll explain.

When Jeanne learned from teenaged Morty’s psychologist that Morty was gay, Jeanne told me that while she didn’t fully understand, she loved her son. Period. Her understanding grew as she and her husband Jules got to know Morty’s friends, who were all deeply involved in the new wave of post-Stonewall militant gay activism.

But it wasn’t until Morty was beaten to a pulp at a Midtown Manhattan protest in April 1972 that Jeanne felt compelled to take a very public stand. “I was furious,” Jeanne recalled. “I’m not the type of person who belonged to organizations. I never tried to do anything. But I wasn’t going to let anybody walk over Morty.” So Jeanne wrote a letter to the *New York Post* (then a liberal newspaper) calling the New York Police Department to task

for not protecting her son and the other protestors. It was published and created a sensation. Soon after, Morty asked his mother to march with him in the gay pride parade. Jeanne said yes, but only if Morty let her carry a sign that made clear why she was marching.

“From Jeanne and Morty I learned that what looked like fearlessness was a complex combination of love and anger with a huge dose of fear.”

The transformative process that turned Jeanne into a front-and-center activist was described by the late Frank Kameny—who led the first gay rights protests in front of the White House back in 1965—as being “radicalized.” For Jeanne it was the mortal threat to her child’s life that radicalized her. But I only learned recently, from Jeanne’s daughter Suzanne, that there was yet another layer to what motivated Jeanne. Her

oldest child, Charles, died by suicide in 1966. He was twenty-two. Jeanne wasn’t about to lose a second child, not her beloved Morty, and not at the hands of anti-gay bigots. I can only imagine how terrified Jeanne was by that prospect and, consequently, how determined she was to protect Morty.

Looking back on her work as an activist, Jeanne didn’t think of herself as a radical or revolutionary. But others did. Morty explained during our 1989 conversation, “There was a calendar that somebody published, which I picked up over on St. Mark’s Place that next year. For each month it had a picture marking some occasion. For example, for the month of Mao Zedong’s birthday, there was a picture of Mao. There was a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., during this birthday month. And for June, guess who the calendar girl was?”

From the bashful, half-embarrassed smile that quickly spread across Jeanne’s face, there was no need for me to guess. Jeanne picked up the thread: “Before Morty turned to June, I said, ‘This is not a true revolutionary calendar unless there is something about the gay march—about gays—for the month of June.’ And then when I turned the page, there was

my picture. The irony, of course, is that I considered myself such a traditional person. I didn't even cross the street against the light."

That's not quite true. Toward the end of our time together, Jeanne told me another story that strongly suggested her self image hadn't yet caught up with the person she'd become. It's a story that's left an indelible picture in my mind's eye that's even more emblematic of who Jeanne was than the iconic photo we all know so well.

Jeanne and Morty were on Christopher Street at Sheridan Square waiting for the start of another gay pride parade a year or two later. "We were standing in the street," Jeanne recalled, "and a policeman came over and said to get on the sidewalk. And I automatically did. Then I saw that Morty was still standing there



in the gutter, and I said to myself, *I'm a law-abiding citizen! I pay my taxes! The nerve of him!* I got off the curb and stood there in the street with Morty and stared at the policeman. I was just so angry."

The policeman turned and walked away.

Eric Marcus is the author of Making Gay History, an award-winning oral history of the LGBT civil rights movement. He's also the creator and host of the [Making Gay History podcast](#). You can hear Jeanne and Morty in their own voices in [Episode 6](#).

In the last issue we encouraged you to **#TakeOneStep** to make a difference in people's lives. Here are just a few of the ways people built on this historic moment from yesterday to effect change today.

#Take One Step

 @PFLAGJOHNSCREEK



"You have so much to give ❤️"
#lovenotetosef
#takeonestep
#prideelevated
#pflagprovo
#pflag
#nofilter



 @THEPFLAGTABLE



Pride is all in the family!
#prideelevated
#pflag #pflagprovo
#takeonestep



 @RJD42

#TakeOneStep today and share this great piece on mothering a trans kid. ift.tt/2qNOpdl



The Ninth Annual Straight for Equality Gala

March 27, 2017
New York, NY

A good time was had by all, as evidenced by the dancing on stage from emcee Fortune Feimster (L) and CNN's Don Lemon (R).



The Neal family, including Lucien (far L), Trinity (L), and trans advocate mom DeShanna (R), flank KINKY BOOTS star Eric LaJuan Summers on the red carpet.



(L-R) Interim Executive Director Beth Kohm and PFLAG National board president Jean Hodges together on the red carpet.



Entertainment honoree actress Martha Plimpton and Media honoree CNN commentator Ana Navarro enjoy a moment together on the red carpet.



Alcoa Corporation Chief Executive Officer Roy Harvey (R) accepts the Straight for Equality in the Workplace award from Dow Chemical Business President of Energy and Water Solutions—and PFLAG National board member—Larry Ryan.

All images by
D. Dipasupil/
Getty Images

We Are the Change

Time flies when you're having summer fun...blink and it will be fall, and time for *We Are the Change*, the 2017 PFLAG National convention. If you haven't registered yet, there's no time to lose!

Every other year, *We Are the Change* attendees have access to top experts, organizational leaders, and other chapter members doing the work to move equality forward. And this year is no different: we'll soon be announcing our lineup of fantastic workshops and learning sessions

(heads up: It's going to be an incredible array of offerings).

There will be something for everyone, from chapter management to fundraising to diversity and inclusion efforts for chapters, and more.

Whether you're a brand new PFLAG member looking to learn the basics or you're a seasoned leader wanting to up your game, we'll have something for you! Add to that an opportunity to celebrate chapter leaders and others who are making a difference, as well as PFLAG

Gives Back, our day of local service, and you can trust that this year's convention will be a don't-miss opportunity.

PFLAGers across the country are already making their plans to be there, combining three days of connecting, volunteering, and learning with an early-autumn long weekend getaway to the beautiful Pacific Northwest. Why not join them? Visit pflag.org/2017convention to register now. We look forward to seeing you in Portland!

A Decade of Engaging Allies

“So I read this book, and it has me thinking...”

It was with that line that PFLAG’s Straight for Equality program was conceived. Ten years later, Straight for Equality is one of the most successful programs in PFLAG’s history.

So how did it come to be?

It was then PFLAG National board president, John Cepek, who had the idea. He’d heard of a growing number of PFLAG chapters in which allies—people who didn’t come to PFLAG for support, and didn’t have family members who were LGBT—were showing up and becoming engaged, some in leadership roles with the organization. At the same time, he’d read the book *Straightforward: How to Mobilize Heterosexual Support for Gay Rights* by Ian Ayres and Jennifer Gerarda Brown, which made the case for why people outside of the LGBT community have an ethical responsibility to support equality through words and, more importantly, changes in behavior.

“It was the starting point,” says Jean-Marie Navetta, PFLAG’s Director of Learning and Inclusion, who has managed Straight for Equality since its start. “We needed to find a way to apply to allies everything we knew about PFLAG’s work with families, moving them from not caring or seeing this as “their issue” to active advocates for equality.”

The program’s development lasted just over a year, and tapped into a committee who brought a wide variety of perspectives into the discussion.

“We discovered that most definitions of ‘ally’ were aggressive and political—you must vote one way, you must worship in certain places—and that’s not PFLAG.

We know that acceptance is a journey, and our program had to reflect that,” says Navetta. Ultimately, it was PFLAG’s decades of experience, and a belief in truly meeting people where they are that shaped the approach taken.

Straight for Equality was officially launched in 2007, first with a press conference in Washington, D.C. where musician Cyndi Lauper was the first person to sign the Straight for Equality pledge, and then at the 2007 PFLAG National Convention.

While the project started with a website and a single book—*the guide to being a straight ally*—it didn’t stay small for long. Within a few months of the launch, representatives from Caterpillar in Peoria, IL, contacted Cepek and asked for a workplace learning session on allies.

“It was intimidating!” says Navetta, “But John was convinced that we could do this, so we packed up and went to Peoria, and the response was fantastic. People liked that they weren’t being told what they were doing wrong, but how and why they could do better. It was accessible. It was PFLAG.”

Cepek, always known for finding the humor in every situation, summarized the first session this way: “Well, you know what they say. If it plays in Peoria...”

Since that first year, Straight for Equality has transformed the way that allies are understood and supported. The first book gave way to three more publications—a trans ally guide, a guide for allies of faith, and a guide for allies in healthcare professions. Additionally, three more

S4E by the Numbers

7 publications 15K+ people participating in learning sessions

500K copies of publications distributed since launch 20 learning sessions

>6K Facebook likes >2.4K Twitter followers 32 people/organizations honored at Galas

publications were developed to empower PFLAG chapters to use the program in their communities.

Learning opportunities significantly increased, with the Straight for Equality in the Workplace program expanding from one learning session to more than 15 options for corporate partners, allowing them to bring PFLAG into their organizations and work with employees to build ally skills and boost workplace inclusion.

The visibility of Straight for Equality—and, more importantly, for the allies it has supported—also offered PFLAG a chance to create an annual gala in New York City to highlight the accomplishments of allies in a wide spectrum of disciplines, including the workplace, faith, sports, entertainment, journalism, and literature. To date, it remains the only event in the LGBTQ movement that is solely dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of our allies.

“It started with a book and John Cepek’s tenacity, pushing to see a whole new aspect of the work that PFLAG could do—and that idea and push have transformed what PFLAG is and whom we serve,” says Navetta.

Sadly, John passed away unexpectedly a few short months ago. He leaves a legacy of engaging thousands of allies in the cause for equality through a program that is uniquely PFLAG...and undeniably needed now more than ever before.

PFLAG National looks forward to many more years of inviting, educating, and engaging allies.

Passionate PFLAG Support Through Decades of Giving

Major donor John LeBedda has been supporting PFLAG since 1988, but was aware of the organization long before that, having attended Columbia University with Morty Manford son of PFLAG founder Jeanne Manford. John's husband Steve has a similar connection to the Manford family, having attended one of PFLAG's earliest meetings with his parents.

For both John and Steve, giving to PFLAG National is a very personal act. "We've both been blessed to have extremely loving and supportive parents, relatives and friends," shares John.

"But we've always been aware that our experience is not universal. Since its founding, PFLAG has been a symbol of hope and a place of refuge for so many."

Recently, John and Steve chose to donate stock to PFLAG National. John says that for them, this was a timely decision. "PFLAG is an important organization to counter all the negativity that the LGBT community encounters in this country. For this reason, we decided that a larger single donation of stock to PFLAG was appropriate."

John and Steve both believe in the importance of PFLAG, especially at

a time when critical rights are being rolled back, and support for people who are LGBTQ is more important than ever.

"If there were no PFLAG," says John, "I believe that LGBT youth would lose an invaluable network of kind and supportive individuals who are dedicated to easing the turmoil often encountered in coming out, helping them develop into proud and self-actualized adults."

John and Steve are two such individuals, making their incredible kindness and support tangible with their donations. We thank them both for their decades of generosity!

Thank you to our partners for their generous support.

TITANIUM PARTNERS



PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



BRONZE PARTNERS

