

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
 A joint publication of the Akron and Cleveland chapters

Random thoughts...

By Ed Kancler, Akron chapter president

In January, I always look back on the prior year, which then creates a bunch of random thoughts.

Why do people tell me, with absolute certainty, what the Founding Fathers of our

country intended? Where did they get their knowledge? Not at the schools I attended.

Why do people say confidently that this country was created on Christian values and beliefs, when many of our Founding Fathers were deists, who did not exactly believe all that is in the Bible? To name a few: Ben Franklin, George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

We hear time and again that a particular idea is right and all others wrong. We see it in politics, as nauseum. But it

seems that no idea is perfect. And that, boys and girls in Washington, D.C., is why compromise is necessary in governing.

Why the constant attempt by some to put religion into government, when it is clear that was not what the Founding Fathers had in mind? And, that gets us to LGBT (and Q, if necessary).

There are legal rights that apply to everyone. Those rights are protected by the Constitution and are separate and apart from religious beliefs. When are more people going to get it? When are more people of reason going to say legal rights are one thing and are not to be confused with religious beliefs?

This past year saw many steps forward for equality and some not. And so, 2012, here we are. In this regard, as we heard at the PFLAG National convention, if people believe in the Golden Rule, then more progress will be made, more understanding will occur and equality will be recognized.

Here we go again! More work. More effort. And, ultimately, more equality for all.



Opt to go green

We are compiling an email list for our members and affiliates to receive the monthly newsletter electronically in PDF format (in lieu of a paper mailing). If you would like to subscribe, please send an email with your name and zip code to our managing editor at debkimble@sbcglobal.net. And thanks for helping us save paper and postage!



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CHAPTER MTGS.

Akron PFLAG
 Feb. 16, Mar. 15 - 7 pm
N. Springfield Presbyt.
 671 N. Canton Rd.

Cleveland PFLAG
 Feb. 14, Mar. 13
 7:30 pm
Trinity Episcopal
 2230 Euclid Ave., 44115

Alliance PFLAG
 Info: a_cromwel@yahoo.com

Wooster PFLAG
 Feb. 16, Mar. 15 - 7 pm
Universalist Fellowship
 3186 Burbank Rd.
 Please call ahead to confirm.

Youngstown PFLAG
 Feb. 19, Mar. 18 - 3 pm
Stonewall Comm. Ctr.
 1523 Poland Ave.



Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons, their families and friends through SUPPORT to cope with an adverse society; EDUCATION to enlighten an ill-informed public; and ADVOCACY to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

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Akron chapter news

Sen. Frank LaRose to speak a chapter meeting

February program speaker

Just a reminder that Ohio Senator Frank LaRose will speak at our February chapter meeting (Thur., Feb. 16 at 7:00 p.m.). Senator LaRose has represented the 27th District since 2008. A decorated veteran of both the Kosovo conflict and the Iraq war, he will cover current issues facing the Ohio Senate, as well as issues facing Ohio.

March program speaker

Our March program should be an interesting one for anyone concerned with the fact that Ohio has no law preventing job discrimination based on sexual orientation. In fact, in Ohio a person can even

be *fired* because they are gay.

Shari Hutchinson, a longtime friend of Akron PFLAGers, Jean, Verle, and Joe Gardner, will speak at the March 15 meeting (7:00 p.m.). She will share some first-hand experiences involving job discrimination and discuss options in dealing with these unfair practices.

Scholarship recipient

We congratulate Brian Wakely, the first recipient of the Akron PFLAG-LGBT Studies Scholarship at Kent State. We hope to visit with Brian in the next few weeks and will share information on his major and studies in next month's newsletter.

Cleveland chapter news

Spring business meeting times, film festival

Annual business meeting

Our chapter's annual business meeting will be held March 13 at 5:30 p.m., prior to the support group meeting at 7:30 p.m.. A light supper will be served and elections for president and vice-president will be held.



Cleveland Intl. Film Festival

The 36th Cleveland International Film Festival is March 22-April 1 at Tower

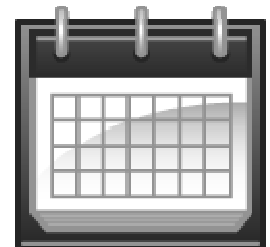
City Cinemas. Our chapter's sponsored film will be announced in the March newsletter. For festival information, call 216-623-3456 or visit www.clevelandfilm.org.

Save the date—Regional meeting

PFLAG Cleveland will host the regional meeting of PFLAG September 7-9. The meeting includes PFLAG members and friends from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Western Pennsylvania, and Northern Kentucky. More information on programming and registration coming soon.

SAVE this DATE!

The State PFLAG meeting is being scheduled for Saturday, April 14. The Lima chapter, a fairly new but very active group, will host the event. More details and registration information will be in next month's newsletter.



PFLAG National scholarship

Applications for the 2012 PFLAG National Scholarship are now available. Visit pflag.org and click on Education & Programs for info and online form.

CANAPI events

Community AIDS Network and Akron Pride Initiative

Drag Bingo

February 26 & April 29
5:00 p.m. @ Greystone Hall
103 S. High St., Akron

\$20 tickets include fabulous drag show after bingo, as well as heavy hors d'oeuvres, coffee, tea, and cash bar, plus 9 cards per bingo game for 5 games. Minimum payout \$50. Jackpot round \$250.

Advance reservations are highly recommended. Call 330-252-1559 and leave a message for a call back.



Reverse Raffle/Day at Races

A very entertaining fundraising event, the annual reverse raffle and day at the races will be held Saturday, Mar. 24 from 6:30-10:00 p.m. at St. Joseph's Center, 610 W. Exchange St., Akron.

Tickets are \$75 if purchased by March 16 or \$100 at the door. Includes raffle ticket, open bar, buffet, and admission to the races.

For tickets visit www.canapi.org or call 330-252-1648.

Advocating for safe schools

GLSEN NEO offers training class, names co-chairs

Facilitator training class



chair of the LGBT Caucus for the American Federation of Teachers.

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network of Northeast Ohio will host a 3-day training March 23-25 at Case Western Reserve University for new school facilitators interested in assuring that all K-12 schools are safe for all students.

The training will provide information on resources such as GLSEN's Safe Space Kit (www.safespacekit.com). For class info or to register: gary@glseennortheastohio.org.

Akron advocate new co-chair

GLSEN NEO also named two new co-chairs: Jeff Bixby and Gary DiBianca. Bixby is the former co-chair and founder of GLSEN Cincinnati and the co-

After 30 years in the Cincinnati schools, he has retired to Akron and has served on the board of CANAPI, Community AIDS Network & Akron Pride Initiative.

GLSEN anti-bullying message reaches Super Bowl audience

Football fans at the Super Bowl on were greeted by a message against antigay bullying on huge video billboards, thanks to a generous donation by Grazie Media to GLSEN.

The "Think Before You Speak" ad campaign features Hilary Duff, Wanda Sykes and Grant Hill speaking out against bullying and slurs.

Cuyahoga Comm. College events

LGBTs in television

Author and lecturer Steven Capsuto will present a whirlwind tour of LGBT television history on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Tri-C's western campus, 11000 Pleasant Valley Rd., Parma. Video clips, backstage stories, and more.

LGBT Art Therapy Group

The Hospice of Western Reserve The Elisabeth Prentiss Bereavement Center, 300 E. 1885th St., Cleveland, will host an on-going group for members of the LGBT community who have lost a loved one. Participants need not have had a hospice experience. Suggested \$5 donation for supplies. Meets Tuesday, Mar. 27, 6:30-8:30 p.m. To register: 216-486-6544 or email mpostotnik@hospicewr.org.



Gay Games seeks PR volunteers

GG9 needs skilled volunteers to help promote the Gay Games, which are being hosted in Northeast Ohio in 2014. They need graphics/web designers, copywriters, video producers, editors, PR and social media wizards, to target local, national, and international audiences. For more information, contact Jennifer Downey jdowney@ambiance.com or Michael Varvaro michaelvarvaro@aol.com.

Make your voice heard today

By Pat Brandt, Cleveland chapter

We, as Americans are both blessed with the right and saddled with the responsibility of democracy. It is our right and our responsibility to go to the polls and vote for our legislators. That is our power.

It is also our right and responsibility to let our legislators know how they should be voting for us, the constituents who put them into office. Perhaps your candidate of choice is not in that chair in Washington, D.C., this term, but that doesn't mean your voice should be tuned out. He still represents you and the guy who voted for him equally.

And who is to say that if he does not hear your voice that he will still be sitting in that chair in D.C. down the road? That is our responsibility.

Last November, several of us Northeast Ohio PFLAG members traveled to Washington for Lobby Day and had our voices heard by our senators and representatives in Congress. It was a good experience that I wish everyone could have. We made sure that our stories were told and our voices were heard.

But you don't have to drive for hours to inform your elected officials. Write or phone or tweet or e-mail them...some of them may be on Facebook. The safe schools legislation is being considered at both the state and federal levels. It should be important to all of us for a myriad of reasons, not just because we are LGBT friendly. This is an issue about children.



The PFLAG Cleveland website has a variety of tools

for your use to contact your legislators and let them know how important this is to you and your family. Please utilize the tools today...everything is there for you: a sample letter, contact info for some legislators, website for legislation information and contact information if your district information is not listed. It shouldn't take more than five minutes of your time.

Visit www.pflagcleveland.org to make your voice heard. Please do it. If we do not use our power, if we do not act on our responsibility, how can we expect change?

Just one voice can be heard

By Deb Kimble, newsletter managing editor

Sometimes we feel that a single voice isn't enough to change anything. I want to tell you that sometimes it can.

My family and I have a membership to a fitness center in our area. We love it and have bragged about it to many of our friends, including a lesbian couple we've known for years. In November, they attempted to get a family membership, only to be told that since Ohio did not recognize them as being married, they would need to purchase a family membership plus an individual one—basically paying double what I pay for the same membership.

I was embarrassed and angry when I learned of this. After stewing on it for much too long, I wrote a letter to the vice president of the company. I explained as calmly and as reasonably as I could that I felt partly responsible for subjecting my friends to a humiliating act of discrimination in front of

their children. I reminded him that governments rarely legislate equality until individuals and private corporations press it upon them. And I politely asked him to consider making a positive change for the community the company served.

I tried to be informative and civil, and thanked him for his consideration.

I got a call and an email from the VP that same week, who mentioned their policy "was 15 years old and probably in need of updating." The following week I was notified that the company had added a same-sex domestic partner option to their membership policy, effective immediately.

I realize the overall fight for LGBT equality will require protests, lawsuits, and tireless advocacy. But I wanted you to also know that sometimes one change can be made with just one voice.

CWRU LGBT Center art competition



Case Western Reserve University's LGBT Center is sponsoring an art competition for students enrolled at CWRU, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Graduate, professional and undergraduate students are invited to submit pieces of art that resonate with the Center's purpose to provide a safe and welcoming space for all LGBT people and their allies. All forms of visual art are encouraged, including photography, painting, sculpture, and drawing. The artist does not need to be LGBT.

Entries must be submitted, with application form, to the Center by February 29. For details and application, contact Liz at liz.roccoforte@case.edu or 216-368-LGBT.

Ohio mayors join Freedom to Marry campaign pledge

Six Ohio mayors are among a growing list of local officials who have joined Freedom to Marry's "Mayors for the Freedom to Marry" campaign, which supports marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Ohio Mayors who have signed the pledge to date are: Frank Jackson of Cleveland, Mark Mallory of Cincinnati, Don Plusquellic of Akron, Edward Kelly of Cleveland Heights, David Berger of Lima, and Sara Drew of Stow.

Mayors Michael Bloomberg of New York, Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, Rahm Emanuel of Chicago and Annise Parker of Houston were some of the big city mayors from around the country supporting the initiative.



The group released the following statement that read in part:

"As mayors of great American cities, we proudly stand together in support of the freedom of same-sex couples to marry. We personally know many gay and lesbian people living in our



cities who are in committed, loving relationships, who are active participants in civic life, and who deserve to be able to marry the person with whom they share their life...Our cities derive great strength from their diversity, and gay and lesbian families are a crucial part. Studies have shown what we know through our hands-on experience—that cities that celebrate and cultivate diversity are the places where creativity and ideas thrive."

To encourage your mayor to sign on to the Freedom to Marry campaign (or to sign on yourself) go to free-domtomarry.org.

Equality Ohio is also sponsoring public events, like a rally planned for March 24 in Cleveland (see below), to bring attention to the rights denied to same-sex couples and families in Ohio.

Marriage equality news updates

Maine

The Advocate reported last week that marriage equality advocates in Maine say they have enough signatures to put the issue back on the ballot. They have received support from Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), who called for an end to discrimination against same-sex families.

"They share homes and they raise children together, they remain committed to each other through the ups and downs of life," she said in the brief speech. "But because they are same-sex couples, they are denied the right to honor their love and commitment to each other through marriage."

The state legislature had passed a pro-marriage equality measure in 2009, but it was repealed by a voter referendum.

In an analysis of 2010 census data, the Williams Institute estimated that there are nearly 4,000 same-sex couples living in Maine, the Advocate reported in the article.

Washington

The state Senate this week passed a bill to allow gay marriage in Washington. The bill now goes to the House where it is expected to pass. Gov. Chris Gregoire, a Democrat, has said she will sign the bill if it makes it to her desk, according to news reports.

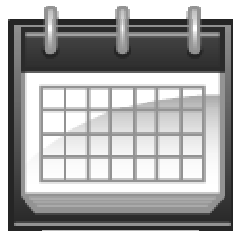
According to USA Today, opponents are expected to make a push to have the same-sex marriage issue put on the ballot for voters in November if the bill is signed into law.

Washington's so-called "everything but marriage" law survived a similar referendum challenge in 2009.

Six states currently allow same-sex couples to wed are Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York. The District of Columbia also allows it.

SAVE this DATE too!

Join the Ohio street protest for marriage equality on Saturday, Mar. 24 at 11:00 a.m. on Public Square in downtown Cleveland (intersection of Ontario St. and Superior Ave.). For more info visit www.facebook.com/MarriageEqualityOhio.



Ending housing discrimination against LGBT Americans

By Shaun Donovan, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Editors' note: This blog appears on the HUD blog site blog.hud.gov.

On January 28, I was proud to speak before the 24th National Gay and Lesbian Task Force "Creating Change" Conference, where I announced the publication of a new Equal Access to Housing Rules that says clearly and unequivocally that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals and couples have the right to live where they choose.

The need for this rule is clear, particularly when it comes to housing. According to one recent report, not only are 40 percent of homeless youth LGBT, half of them report experiencing homelessness as a result of their gender identity or expression. Even more troubling, the majority of them report harassment, difficulty, or even sexual assault when trying to access homeless shelters. That's not just wrong – it's not who we are as Americans. And as the [Injustice at Every Turn](#) report put out by the Task Force



and the National Center for Transgender Equality last year found, these challenges are all too common.

That's why HUD is working to ensure that our housing programs are open to all – the rule will open access to housing for LGBT individuals and families in four important ways:

First, an equal access provision making clear that housing that is financed or insured by HUD must be made available without regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

Second, by prohibiting owners and operators of HUD-funded housing, or housing whose financing we insure, from inquiring about an applicant's sexual orientation or gender identity or denying housing on that basis.

Third, the new rule makes clear that the term "family" includes LGBT individuals and couples as eligible beneficiaries of HUD's public housing and voucher programs – programs that collectively serve 5.5 million people.

Finally, the rule makes clear that sexual orientation and gender identity should not and cannot be part of any lending decision when it comes to getting an FHA-insured mortgage. Particularly with FHA playing an elevated role in the housing market

today, this represents a critical step in ensuring that LGBT Americans have fair access to the dream of responsible, sustainable homeownership.

Of course, publishing HUD's new rule won't be the end of the process. HUD and its fair housing partners will work to provide guidance and training, to ensure that communities across the country are following the rules.

It's clear that as critical as this new rule is, this work is just beginning. But with the rule's publication, the Obama Administration is reaffirming that the state of our union is strongest when everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules. And by ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to live where they choose, raise their families, and contribute to their communities, that's the commitment I was so proud to represent on Saturday.

UN Secretary General calls for end to homophobia in Africa

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called upon African nations to end government-sanctioned discrimination and violence against LGBT people during a speech at the African Union summit in January. According to news reports, he called such policies a violation of the UN's declaration of human rights.



"One form of discrimination ignored or even sanctioned by many states for too long has been discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity," he said, according to Agence France Press.

In December, the UN issued its first ever report on LGBT human rights, detailing how around the world people are killed or endure hate-motivated violence, torture, detention, criminalization, and discrimination in jobs, health care and education because of sexual orientation or gender identity.

You always have a home at PFLAG!