



The PFLAG Link

MIDLAND, BAY CITY & SAGINAW CHAPTER
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October 2008

This Month's Guest Speaker: Recovering, Rebuilding - and Restarting

Aging gracefully is a wonderful thing, but it's important to realize how all, gay or straight, alone or partnered, eventually reach the same "regular" life turning points. And some things, including addictions can complicate anyone's hopes for the future. This month's speaker is **Doug Solosky**. One of five sons born to a grocer, with ready access to beer, Doug started drinking at age 11; by age 34, with the help of AA, he

found the will to stop, and now, at 74, Doug considers himself a "sober alcoholic." Living quietly but happily for 36 years with his life-partner **Don**, Doug then faced the challenge of restarting his life in another way. "I was in sorry shape when Don died but I've always seen the glass as half full," Doug says. "When he was alive, I always thought if he should die before me, that would be the end - and it wasn't." But

running the two men's antique business alone was tough, especially for someone who was feeling terribly isolated. "I realized if I don't do something, I'll go stark raving mad!" Joining Perceptions in Saginaw brought Doug close friendships with other GLBT people. Join us this month, as Doug shares his life, and you'll have an opportunity to see how one person managed these very serious "regular" challenges.

October 10: Connecticut Supreme Court's Big Day for Equality

On October 10, while battles still brew over ballot initiatives in Florida, Arizona and California (see story below), Connecticut's Supreme Court ruled strongly in favor of marriage rights for LGBT people. According to **Lisa Keen**, writing in *Between the Lines*' Oct. 10 online issue, "The Connecticut decision was a 4 to 3 vote, with the three dissenting justices each submitting their own brief. The majority, however, concluded that 'our conventional understanding of marriage must yield to a more contemporary appreciation of the rights entitled to

constitutional protection.'" **Triangle Foundation** and **PFLAG National** responded with praise. In Triangle's statement, "This historic ruling will provide additional security and protections to the thousands of loving, committed same-sex couples and their children living in Connecticut... Couples who have been together for years -- in many cases for decades -- will now have access to the dignity and respect that come with being legally married." **Bernadette Brown**, the Director of Policy at Triangle Foundation, stated, "It is unfortunate that loving, committed same-sex couples

and their families in Michigan still live without these important protections." Additionally, PFLAG's executive director **Jody M. Huckaby**, said, "The Connecticut Supreme Court has ruled in favor of families, in recognition of our fundamental right to marry the person we love and in the best interest of our core belief in liberty and justice for all. All families are stronger when every family is recognized and protected by the law. No loving couple should face discrimination and prejudice and today's ruling eliminates those barriers once and for all."

It's not just happening in California

Ballot initiatives threatening GLBT equality are happening not just on the Left Coast, but in Florida and Arizona too. In Florida, even though gay marriage was previously made unconstitutional by statute, this year's Proposition 2 amends the state constitution with a clause prohibiting judges from

overturning the law - a reaction against events in Massachusetts. In Arizona, the group **Arizona Together** (aztogether.org) urges voters to reject Prop 102, which would provide similar shielding against court action, even though state law defines marriage as between a

man and a woman, and a previous proposal was defeated just two years ago. Information presenting the history of these proposals, along with viewpoints from both sides, can be found online at ballotpedia.org.

This Month's Meeting:

Sunday, Oct. 26, 2 p.m.
(Business Meeting to follow)
Unitarian/Universalist Fellowship,
6220 Jefferson at Wackerly, Midland

Speaker: Doug Solosky

Next Month's Meeting:

Sunday, Nov. 23 2 p.m.
(Thanksgiving is Nov. 27.)

Speaker: Chuck Batke

Perceptions of Saginaw Valley: 7th Annual Holiday Party, including a Silent Auction for charity, will be held on December 13 at Sullivan's Black Forest Brew Haus, 281 Heinlein Strasse, Frankenmuth (behind Bronner's.)

Are you a Straight Ally? That means you are supportive of equality even though you may not have a relative who is gay. PFLAG National would love to hear your story. Go to StraightforEquality.org, or email your story to **Julie Handy**.

You can receive the PFLAG LINK via email! Send your email address to the **Editor** and get the *LINK* a day earlier than the postal version. Our email list is confidential and is never shared.

GLBT Teens Build Resilience at CMU. GLBT and Questioning teens face special challenges at school, at home, and in the community. To help, Central Michigan University offers the STRUTS program: Strengthening Teen Resilience Under Tough Situations. STRUTS is a place for all teens, ages 13-18, to have fun, make friends and be accepted. STRUTS meets biweekly on Saturdays and is free. You can help by contributing. Call Lesa Smith, CMU Development, at 989-774-3354. If you know a teen who could use STRUTS' help, contact **Rachel** or call 774-7270.

PFLAG and its affiliate chapters are committed to diversity and to encouraging changes in our laws and society which promote equality. While we believe strongly in the rights of each individual to vote his or her conscience, we do not endorse political parties or candidates. Our meetings are open to all regardless of political, social or religious beliefs. Our meetings are at the **Midland Unitarian/Universalist Church**, but we wish to make clear that our organization has no affiliation with any church or political party, and that all are welcome.

Need help? PFLAG is here.

PFLAG TriCities supports families with GLBT children at all ages and all stages of life. We can help with

- ▶ Bullying or other harassment problems
- ▶ Family Support
- ▶ Issues Awareness and Education

Each monthly meeting is designed to address all three. Join us Sunday at 2 p.m. For help anytime, call 941-1458. Calls and meetings are always confidential. Meetings consist of a brief time for business, small group discussions of family matters or advocacy issues, and an informative presentation.

Wondering where your personal values fit in the national conversation? Find some light in a confusing realm of political rhetoric. St. John's Episcopal Church in Mount Pleasant will host Dr. Deirdre J. Good, Professor of New Testament at The General Theological Seminary of New York. Dr. Good will speak on *Family Values in an Election Year*, Monday, Oct. 27 at 7 PM at St. John's in Mount Pleasant. More at <http://www.stjohnsmtpleasantmi.org>.

Monthly Gathering for Two-Mom and Two-Dad Families

Join families from across the Metro Detroit Area at **Affirmations'** monthly Saturday morning gathering. Takes place the Second Saturday of the Month from 10am-Noon at Affirmations. Includes a secure toddler playspace, gameroom, library with age-appropriate selection and more. No age limit on children. Children must be supervised. Info available at goaffirmations.org.

Maybe That's Why Some Videos Are "Viral"

One of the stronger allegations made by opponents of same-sex marriage in California is the ultimate effect they imagine such equality will have on children in school. A video being circulated online describes the jailing of a father who refused to leave his child's principal's office, after the principal refused to provide prior notice of curricula - or even conversations - regarding

same-sex parenting. (The child was given a "diversity bag" containing age-appropriate materials describing a variety of parenting households, including one with two fathers - which led eventually to what the father claimed was an act of "civil disobedience.") Another incident happened in California when a class of first graders was released during school hours so they could attend the

wedding of their lesbian teacher. **Anne Rostow**, writing for the San Francisco Bay Times on Oct. 16, says, "Winning the Prop 8 fight will take a last-minute turnaround..." and decries the approach taken by Prop 8 opponents which did not state clearly enough that it's time for the general public to lose its collective "queasiness" about tolerance of GLBT people.

Living Authentically Means Breaking the Closet Wide Open

Portions of a guest editorial published Oct. 11 in the Oneonta, N.Y. *Daily Star* by **Jim Koury**. (Source: thedailystar.com) Saturday is National Coming Out Day, an internationally observed civil awareness day for coming out and for discussion about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and questioning issues... It took a number of broken promises and many more years of hiding, lying and being someone I was not before I decided to kick the door of my closet wide open. Not only did I knock open the door, I ripped the door frame right off the wall, never to be replaced. That was 11 years ago, and I have no regrets whatsoever.

What is life like being in the closet? I often recite a quote that epitomizes the life I and many others led and still lead in the closet. It is as follows: "The

torment of human frustration, whatever its immediate cause, is the knowledge that the self is in prison, its vital life force leaking away in wasteful self-conflict." I have always personally related to this quote. I was living a lie, two lives, which frustrated and angered me to no end. I felt like I was in prison, not by my own doing but because of a society that dictates to us who we should be and how we should act. I was wasting my life, my inherent potential, my vital life force, on worry. On this National Coming Out Day, I must again ask why some still dwell on a person's sexual orientation and insist it is a chosen "lifestyle." One's sexual orientation is not a choice. It is as natural as having blue eyes, brown hair, being tall or having a big nose. It is genetic.

Our creator made us the way we are for a reason, and that

reason cannot be discovered if we allow bigots and homophobes to continually tell us that we are sinners, that we are abnormal or need counseling, or by the grace of God can be converted to heterosexuality... [Y]our destiny cannot unfold before you until you have found your true you. I, as well as many others, am here to help you with your journey forward out of the closets in which many of you are still living. I encourage you to make this year's National Coming Out Day your freedom day _ the day you took charge of who you really are and began to outwardly manifest that true persona. Make it the day you cast off your fabricated facade that you have so carefully constructed for so many years. Come out, come out, wherever you are. It really isn't all that bad out here in the sunshine of one's true life.

TV Station Poll Shows Prop 8 Ahead Narrowly

A poll taken in the San Francisco area by television station KPIX CBS5 (CBS5.com) indicates a slight lead in favor of the ballot initiative which would strip LGBT persons of their recently-granted right to marry. In a copyrighted story published Oct. 17 on its website CBS5.com, the station said, "...[V]oters in California are slightly in favor of a ballot initiative that would outlaw same-sex marriage in the state, but the three percentage points

that separate 'yes' and 'no' on the issue suggest that it could be decided by a handful of votes on election day. The poll of 615 likely voters released Friday found that 48 percent favored Proposition 8, while 45 percent planned to vote against the measure. Seven percent said they were not yet certain. Those in the Bay Area tended to oppose the gay marriage ban by significant margins while voters in the Central Valley and the Inland Empire were the most supportive of the ban,

according to the poll's findings. The poll for CBS 5 was conducted by the research firm SurveyUSA on Oct. 15 and 16. It has a margin of sampling error of four percent." The station's report concluded: "'No' nominally led by five points on Sept. 25, while 'yes' nominally led by five points on Oct. 6. The movement over the three polling periods is not necessarily statistically significant, the pollster said."