



The PFLAG Link

MIDLAND, BAY CITY & SAGINAW CHAPTER
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www.pflag-mbs.org

December 2008

This Month's Meeting:

Sunday, Dec. 28, 2 p.m.

Unitarian/Universalist Fellowship,
6220 Jefferson at Wackerly, Midland

Speakers: Tim O'Malley & Shane McElyea. Topic: "Twenty-Somethings: The College Experience & The Emerging Couple"

Next Month's Meeting:

Sunday, January. 25 2 p.m.

Speaker: To Be Announced

PFLAG depends on its members!

If you haven't renewed your membership for 2009, now is the time! Send your check, payable to **PFLAG TriCities**, to the post office box shown at the top of this issue. Your \$40 dues provide a full year of access and support from dedicated people in your own area.

"LINK up" early! Send your email address to the Editor and get the LINK up to two days earlier than the postal version. Our email list is confidential and is never shared.

PFLAG and its affiliate chapters are committed to diversity and to encouraging changes in our laws and society which promote equality. Our meetings are open to all regardless of political, social or religious beliefs. While we meet at the **Midland Unitarian/Universalist Church**, we have no affiliation with any church or political party. **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.

"I Now Pronounce You Husband and Husband"

Tim O'Malley speaks this week about living out an expansion of the idea of "marriage"

Thumb native **Tim O'Malley** will speak in our December 28 meeting about building an internal marriage and living as an external example in the highly social setting of a university residence-hall (formerly known as "dorms.") Active in the GSA at SVSU, later obtaining a Master's from Michigan State, Tim became a full-time Residence Hall Director at Ball State in Muncie, Indiana. "There is a type of anxiety whenever I talk with people internally and externally to the university about my husband," Tim says. "Because I have a live-in position in the residence halls, people don't realize that I can have my husband live with me. One main conflict is equal



benefits within the University and recognition of our relationship outside of my supportive department." Together with his partner, **Shane McElyea**, Tim will speak about their efforts to obtain legal protection for their relationship. "The struggle for

GLBT people for marriage benefits is a civil rights issue. It doesn't matter what you believe in, there is a fundamental right to have the same legal protections for ALL Americans. Tim feels the GLBT community should know that there are people who are interested in long-term committed relationships. "Because I work closely with 18-24 year old students, many of them get caught up in unhealthy, often times destructive, romantic and personal relationships. There is stable existence if you are a Twenty-Something GLBT person!" Tim and Shane married in June of 2008, and will celebrate with a ceremony in May of 2009.

HIV/AIDS Class A Prudent Choice

OPINION by the Midland Daily News, as published by the Saginaw News on Monday, Dec. 15

A RECENT CURRICULUM proposal by the Midland Public Schools to introduce fifth-grade students to the scourge of HIV/AIDS met with a storm of criticism. At the heart of the criticisms were the assumptions that the course was being forced on students and that somehow HIV/AIDS is solely a sexually transmitted disease and that fifth-graders are "too young and immature" for that kind of knowledge... Still a death sentence after nearly 30 years, HIV/AIDS does not care for the age, sex, race, religion, country of origin, political affiliation or income bracket. And although sexual transmission is a primary mode of infection for HIV, it is by no means the only method. (When you get right down to it, even the cold and flu are sexually transmitted diseases.)

Anyone who has doubts about this can ask Ryan White's mother. Ryan White, the poster boy for HIV education, became infected through a treatment for hemophilia. When we reviewed the curriculum change proposed by the district's administration and teachers, we couldn't find fault with it for two main reasons. First, HIV/AIDS is a fact of life and will not go away or leave a person untouched because of ignorance or an overprotective community. Kids, as sub-Saharan Africa is finding out to its great tragedy, are not immune to this disease through innocence or fond wishes. Second, and just as importantly, this curriculum proposal is entirely optional. No student at Midland Public Schools would be allowed to take the course without prior

written parental permission. We are strong vocal supporters of the right and duty of parents to be the lead educators and role models not only in sexual education, but in every aspect of their children's lives. Even if parents wished to provide proper sex education to their children, most of us are not doctors, nurses or health professionals and do not have the most up-to-date, accurate information available, nor in many cases, the skills to be effective communicators in these areas. Whether fifth-graders are too young to hear about HIV/AIDS should be left up to the parents, but we applaud the district for making accurate, professionally constructed information available to those who decide to make use of it.

Presidential Inaugural: Invoking Anger Along With The Almighty

Rage attends Obama's choice of Rick Warren - but are we just surprised by an act of inclusion?

Anger erupted in the GLBT world when it was announced that Pastor **Rick Warren** of the Saddleback Church would give the invocation at the inauguration of **Barack Obama**. Pro-equality organizations reacted quickly. PFLAG wrote, "There are many welcoming, affirming people of faith who would set a proper tone for this momentous event in our nation's history, and Americans who cherish our national ideal of 'liberty and justice for all' would have benefitted from a wiser choice for this honor than Rev. Warren." **Joe Solmonese**, President of the Human Rights Campaign, wrote in an [open letter](#) to the President-Elect, "Our loss in California over the passage of Proposition 8 which stripped loving, committed same-sex couples of their given legal right to marry is the greatest loss our community has faced in 40 years. And by inviting Rick Warren to your inaugu-

ation, you have tarnished the view that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans have a place at your table." The President-Elect defended his choice, saying that he has also invited **Joseph Lowery**, a Methodist minister and civil rights leader who supports same-sex marriage and gay rights, to deliver the benediction. "During the course of the entire inaugural festivities, there are going to be a wide range of viewpoints that are presented. And that's how it should be, because that's what America's about. That's part of the magic of this country ... we are diverse and noisy and opinionated." Rick Warren also responded. Quoted on [December 21 by Christina Long](#), writing for the Associated Press, Warren said, "Three years ago I took enormous heat for inviting Barack Obama to my church because some of his views don't agree (with mine)... Now he's invited

me." Warren also expressed hope that "...individuals passionately expressing opinions from the left and the right will recognize that both of us have shown a commitment to model civility in America." The difficulty of this apparent slap in the face, coming so quickly after the sting of the passage of Prop 8 in California, was indicated by the strength of the anger expressed by the GLBT community. However, there were indications that a more patient response might be appropriate. Singer **Melissa Etheridge**, writing Monday in the [Huffington Post](#), described a meeting with Warren after both had appeared at the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Long Beach, CA. Etheridge stated, "He explained in very thoughtful words that as a Christian he believed in equal rights for everyone. He believed every loving relationship should have equal protection. He struggled with Proposition 8

because he didn't want to see marriage redefined as anything other than between a man and a woman. He said he regretted his choice of words in his video message to his congregation about Proposition 8 when he mentioned pedophiles and those who commit incest. He said that in no way, is that how he thought about gays." The LGBT Community faces a difficult choice: whether to continue to trust Obama, who has already shown a commitment to doing what he has promised - not just saying it. [According to Lucia Brawley](#), years ago, **Nelson Mandela** surprised everyone by wearing a jersey for a plainly racist rugby team - an act which began a dialogue that ended with the integration of the team and its fan base. Could this be an opportunity for engagement that - if we don't over-react - eventually breaks loose constitutional protections for GLBT people?

First, Do No Harm - to your Conscience

Under rules proposed in November by the **Bush Administration**, transgender persons could be refused health care simply for the sake of protecting the moral principles of doctors and other health care workers. According to **Robert Pear**, writing in the [December 17 online edition of the New York Times](#), "The proposed rule would prohibit recipients of federal money from discriminating against doctors, nurses and other health care workers who

refuse to perform or to assist in the performance of abortions or sterilization procedures because of their 'religious beliefs or moral convictions.'" The **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** and the **Catholic Health Association** consider it a protection for Catholic health workers who have been pressured to "perform or refer for abortions and sterilizations." But the [Human Rights Campaign](#) states "These regulations could impair LGBT

patients' access to care services if interpreted to permit providers to choose patients based upon sexual orientation, gender identity or family structure. In addition, under these regulations a provider might be able to refuse to administer an HIV test to a gay patient, and even be exempt from the statutory duty to tell the patient where else he could receive the test. Under the regulation, a pharmacist could refuse to fill a prescription for hormone

therapy if she has religious objection to transgender people." In addition, the [New York Times](#) reports, "Three officials from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, including its legal counsel, whom President Bush appointed, said the proposal would overturn 40 years of civil rights law prohibiting job discrimination based on religion." President-Elect **Barack Obama** could overturn the regulations, but that process might take from three to six months.

PFLAG Convention in 2009

Join us in beautiful **San Diego** for the 2009 National Conference Oct. 9-11 (with pre-convention institutes on Oct. 8.) For more, see PFLAG Online or sign up for email alerts from PFLAG National.

Skillman to Lead Triangle

Alicia Skillman will become the new executive director of the Triangle Foundation, assuming her duties in January. The announcement follows the departure of Triangle Interim Executive Director **Kate Runyon**, who has already begun working as the executive director of Equality Maryland in the Baltimore area. Skillman, who grew up in the Saginaw area, serves as co-coordinator of the lesbian women of color group **S.P.I.C.E.**, and has also worked with PFLAG.

Marching to Celebrate

The **Lesbian and Gay Band Association**, a musical group with members from gay marching and symphonic bands across the country, has been accepted by President-elect Barack Obama to march in the 2009 inaugural parade. "This is the first time that an LGBT group will be represented in a Presidential Inaugural Parade, truly our chance to make history," said the association's inaugural committee to members Saturday. "We will certainly have the biggest stage possible to remind people of the importance of coming out and taking part in our national community," said **Cliff Norris**, a member of the Atlanta Freedom Band, which is a part of the **LGBA**.

Laugh Riot Planned for March

Saturday, March 14th - **Michigan Gay & Lesbian ComedyFest**
6:00 pm & 9:00 pm. Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave, Dearborn. Two shows. Four national comedians. Advance tickets \$30; \$35 at the door. More information at www.comedyfest.org

Coming Out while Coming Home?

PFLAG offers guidelines for communication during the holidays (reprinted from Nov., 2007)

The holidays are a likely time for lesbians and gays to come out to their families, which is a reason to consider ways to handle family issues, as suggested by the National PFLAG. If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender...

- Don't assume you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised.
- Realize that your family's reaction to you may not be because you are GLBT. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
- Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a GLBT child. It

took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn. Let your family's judgments be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you. If it is too difficult to be with your family, create your own holiday gathering with friends and loved ones.

- Don't wait for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday. If you are transgender, be gentle if someone's use of pronouns "slips." Let them know you know how difficult it is.
- Before the visit, make a decision about being "out" to each family member before you visit. If you are partnered, discuss in advance how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one

another, if you plan to make the visit together. If you bring your partner home, don't wait until late into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements.

- Make plans in advance. Have alternate plans if the situation becomes difficult at home. Find out about local GLBT resources. If you do plan to "come out" to your family over the holidays, have support available, including PFLAG publications and the number of a local PFLAG chapter. More can be found at <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=278> Adapted from **Mariana Caplan's** book *When Holidays Are Hell...A Guide to Surviving Family Gatherings*.

Your Rights Not Valid Outside D. C.

United States joins Vatican, Muslim nations in withholding support for worldwide decriminalization of homosexuality

In an apparent wish to avoid impinging on states' rights in the U.S., the United States withheld support of a non-binding resolution calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality - joining its opposition with that of many Muslim nations, and going against the support of 66 of the UN's 192 member nations, including all 27 of the member countries of the European Union.

[According to the Associated Press](#), **Paula Ettelbrick**, Executive Director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, said, "It's an appalling stance - to not

join with other countries that are standing up and calling for decriminalization of homosexuality." In a copyrighted story published December 19, the Associated Press quoted "**Richard Grenell**, who until two months ago had been the chief spokesman for the U.S. mission to the U.N. 'It is ridiculous to suggest that there are legal reasons why we can't support this resolution - common sense says we should be the leader in making sure other governments are granting more freedoms for their people, not less,' said

Grenell, who described himself as a gay Republican. 'The U.S. lack of support on this issue only dims our once bright beacon of hope and freedom for those who are persecuted and oppressed.'" Opposition to the resolution was expressed by more than fifty Islamic countries, concerned that it could lead to the "normalization" of "deplorable acts such as pedophilia and incest," and by **the Vatican**, which expressed concern that the resolution would be used to pressure "those who believe marriage rights should be extended to gays."