



PFLAG Colorado Springs

January 2015

Rockie Sanders to Discuss Tax Issues for Married Couples, Singles at January PFLAG Meeting

PFLAG will kick off the new year with a program on income tax and estate tax issues for couples, partners and singles with special guest Rockie Sanders, a Certified Management Accountant and Enrolled Agent (www.RockieSanders.com).

The Federal Government has allowed same-sex married couples to file joint tax returns since 2012, and same-sex marriage was subsequently legalized in Colorado in 2014, raising a host of tax questions for everyone. He will also discuss some changes to the IRS Tax Code for 2015. Bring your questions.

Rockie is a Colorado native who was born and raised in Rocky Ford. He will be a familiar face for those who regularly attend concerts presented by Out Loud: The Colorado Springs Mens Chorus. An avid singer, he has



Happy New Year from PFLAG

been with Out Loud almost continuously since it was formed in 2006.

As the new year begins, we are heavily focused on the challenges faced by our trans and gender variant children, transgender adults and their families. Be sure to read the message from Inside/Out Youth Services on page 4.

Suicide of Transgender Teen Sparks National Awareness



Leelah Alcorn

On December 28, 17-year-old Leelah Alcorn posted a suicide note on the *Tumblr* social media site and then walked into traffic. Her statement has quickly sparked a national conversation about the issues faced by trans youth.

The suicide note said she had known she was a girl since the age of four, referenced her parents' refusal to accept her identity, and went on to say:

"The only way I will rest in peace is if one day transgender people aren't treated the way I was, they're treated like humans, with valid feelings and human rights. Gender needs to be taught about in schools, the earlier the better. My death needs to mean something. My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that num-

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JANUARY PFLAG MEETING

**Tuesday
January 20, 2015**

7:00 p.m.

Rockie Sanders, CMA

**Income and Estate
Tax Issues for
Couples and Singles**

**The Dwelling Place
508 North Tejon Street**

**Everyone is welcome.
Social time begins at
6:30 p.m.**

National Lobby Day Feb 9th



One Colorado invites you to join LGBT Coloradans and their allies at the State Capitol for the annual

LGBT Lobby Day on February 9, 2015! We can shape the future of equality in Colorado by making sure our elected representatives hear from us, so make sure you mark your calendar then sign up to join us. One Colorado will provide food and training for this one-day event.

Go with the Colorado PFLAG group, in a possible carpool from Colorado Springs. See www.one-colorado.org for more information and to sign up. Call Karen (719) 634-4433 to link up with other PFLAGgers.



This newsletter is published by the Colorado Springs Chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

PFLAG Mission Statement:

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) 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 secure equal civil rights.

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

PFLAG IS FOR EVERYONE

If you've never been to one of our meetings, we feel you will find it rewarding and may find it leads to a new sense of family.
Membership is not required.
All are welcome.

To join the chapter and receive the newsletter regularly, complete and mail the membership form on page four. To receive complimentary copies of the newsletter, please contact us.

E-mail address: info@cspflag.org

Support Line: (719) 425-9567

P.O. Box 49131
Colorado Springs, CO 80949

PFLAG Colorado Springs website:
www.cspflag.org

PFLAG National Office website:
www.pflag.org

Newsletter Editor: Karen Flitton Stith
E-mail: karenfstith@gmail.com

To receive your newsletter by e-mail, send a request to info@cspflag.org

PFLAG Volunteers Needed for Educating Children of Color Summit at CC

PFLAG volunteers will hand out literature and talk to participants at the one-day Summit on Educating Children of Color, to be held at Colorado College on Saturday, January 17th. Last year, PFLAGgers spoke with many teachers and counselors and handed out PFLAG literature and newsletters. This is an excellent opportunity to provide information about the TYES family network and issues trans* children are facing in school.

This event is free for parents and students and \$25 for educators. The registration deadline for participants is January 10th.

For more information about the summit, see:
www.educatingchildrenofcolor.org

Call Doug at 963-9638 if you can volunteer to help with the PFLAG table.



PFLAG and TYES will be holding another online t-shirt sale in February to raise money for the TYES program.

If you didn't get your "What's Your Pronoun?" shirt in December, watch for another opportunity in the February newsletter!

Trans Youth Education and Support (TYES)

TYES is a satellite program of PFLAG offering education and support to families with gender non-conforming children. TYES information is available at PFLAG meetings.

The TYES program headquarters is in Boulder, Colorado. To contact the Colorado Springs TYES volunteers, call PFLAG at (719) 425-9567 or send an e-mail to info@cspflag.org. The national TYES website is www.TYES-Colorado.org

Suicide of Teen (cont/)

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ber and say "that's fucked up" and fix it. Fix society. Please."

According to National Public Radio, a recent study from UCLA found that 41 percent of transgender people in the survey had attempted suicide - that is nearly nine times the national average.

Creating Change Conference in Denver February 5-8

The 27th National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change is coming to Denver, Colorado and the Sheraton Denver Downtown, February 4-8, 2015.

This is the premier annual organizing and skills-building event for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and their allies.

The conference is run by the National LGBTQ Task Force, and attracts more than 3,500 people from all over the country every year. Presenters and participants come from all walks of life and include members of the business community, elected officials, students, faith leaders and staff and volunteers of non-profit organizations.

Volunteers are needed. If you volunteer, you can attend that day's sessions for free. Go to www.creatingchange.org for more information.

Always Remember
That our PFLAG meetings are a safe space. Who you meet, and what you hear

— *Keep it confidential.*

PFLAG Thanks —
The Saponas Foundation and First Congregational United Church of Christ for their significant, ongoing support of the Colorado Springs PFLAG Chapter.



Daily Camera Article Highlights Families with Trans-Children, TYES Network

From TYES of Colorado: TYES is grateful to Alex Burness at the (Boulder) *Daily Camera* for his well researched, sensitive and thoughtful that featured adults, youth, parents, siblings, and allies of the Boulder trans* community, including TYES.

Our outreach is statewide and our wonderful families support each other through the network of Colorado PFLAG chapters.

For more information, contact your local PFLAG, or reach out to us by email (tyes.group@gmail.com) or on our support line (720-443-7708). An excerpt from the article:

Before her third birthday, Shannon Axe already had an inkling that something was off.

She was born male but, even as a toddler, never felt comfortable with gendered clothing or toys, and didn't like being called by her birth name.

The word "transgender" was still years away from entering her lexicon, but, by kindergarten, she was certain that's what she was.

"People say, 'Oh, that's too young,' said Shannon, now 14 and midway through eighth grade at Boulder's Horizons charter school. "But if you realize something this important, you know who you are. And I knew I was a girl."

As Shannon's self-awareness grew, so did her suffering, even if she couldn't articulate it as such. She was angrier and hobbled by self-doubt. Her mother, Karen Axe, recalled those early elementary years as "a drowning."

One day shortly after Shannon turned 7, her mother, who'd been researching gender identity and piecing together clues, turned to her on the ride home from gymnastics practice and asked point-blank, "Are you a girl?"

Shannon knew the answer to that one.

I said, 'Mommy, I am a girl!' It was in our minivan, and I was in my gymnastics uniform. I was 7 years old, and I'd known since I was 5."

The two drove back to their home in Highlands Ranch, and a euphoric Shannon rushed upstairs to throw on one of her older sister's dresses.

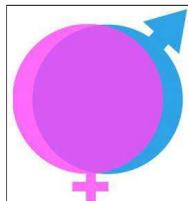
"I've been trying for seven years to try to put into words the experience of being in a room when a transgender child is permitted to be themselves for the first time," Karen Axe said, "and I can't do it because it is so overwhelmingly powerful. It's like going to Disneyworld for a month, and amplifying it times a million."

"It's like fireworks," Shannon added.

That feeling is one to which many transgender people say they can relate. However, the elation often precedes a period — and, for some, a lifetime — of struggling to fit into a society still barely warm to the idea that one's gender identity and physical appearance do not always mesh.

Even in Boulder County and other progressive pockets of Colorado, where 2014 will be remembered as a year of enormous progress toward "L," "G" and "B" equality — through same-sex marriages, most notably — many communities are still nowhere near ready to broach the matter of "T" with much literacy.

Read more here: http://www.dailycamera.com/boulder-county-news/ci_27205192/living-transgender-boulder-county-self-love-is-easy



TYES
Trans Youth
Education and
Support

Message from TYES Founder in Response to Leela Alcorn's Suicide

Boulder, CO—December 30, 2-14

As a founder of this organization, I am driven to provide a safe place for families like mine to connect and share the journey of raising healthy, happy trans* children. I am often described as "passionate" and "intense". Friends and extended family often counsel me to give up this work or at least slow down.

The article in the Boulder *Daily Camera* provides a glimpse of how this work began. In the tumultuous time we experienced when our child first transitioned, I watched as nearly every family I knew across this country (including ours) dealt with visits from social services as they defended their child's right to socially transition.

I cried with a mother many states away as her child was permanently removed from her home. And I was devastated by the suicide of a child of a parent who had lovingly stood beside our family as the media turned its focus toward us.

From those early days of supporting one another on line, most of us have moved on to support families in our own communities. We hold positions of leadership across the country. We are forever forged together by the fire of adversity.

Our stories and our efforts along with the work of a much broader community helped bring a greater understanding of the trans* experience. For seven years I have had the joy of watching laws change and support increase.

So why not stop now as many in my life have recommended? Because I can't. I take support calls from parents who are struggling with acceptance. When I take the time to listen and share my experiences, it helps.

I hear story after story after story of how, once they embraced their child for who they truly are, parents watched in awe as their child transformed before

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Message From TYES Founder (cont.)

Message From Eric Pizana, Inside/Out Youth Services 12/31

We are torn to bits about the passing of Leelah Alcorn. In response, Inside/Out Youth Services will be conducting its Fostering Awareness for LGBTIQ Youth presentation FREE for the community on January 10th at 4pm at 412 S. Tejon Street. The training will cover LGBTIQ terminology, possible outcomes of family rejection and methods of how to support your child when they come out based on research conducted by the Family Acceptance Project.

If you can't make it make it check out the Family Acceptance Project website at familyproject.sfsu.edu. They have resources for families and even have them available in Spanish!

If you know someone or if you are thinking about suicide call our friends at The Trevor Project Lifeline available 24/7: 1-866-488-7386

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their eyes, more joy, less depression. They noticed small things, like a young child who had refused to look into a camera for years suddenly stares boldly and confidently directly into the lens.

Hearing Leelah's story brought me deep sorrow, and I can't turn away from it or stay focused on the joy.

I can't help thinking how this beautiful girl should be alive today. Perhaps she would be if only her parents were able to reach out to other parents who are raising awesome children unable to survive in the gender boxes society has created. Perhaps just a little conversation, a little education would have made all the difference.

In Leelah's suicide note, she asks for donations to your local trans* support group. Make a donation in her name to your local Colorado PFLAG chapter, perhaps even earmarked for TYES. OutBoulder, and similar organizations across the state are also doing amazing work for the trans* community.

But that is not enough. What is needed in addition is an educated public and committed allies. Please consider responding with one or more of these actions.

- Educate yourself on the issues as discussed in the Daily Camera article;
- Speak up and step up when you can;

- Repost informative articles in your social media. The amazing story this week by the Daily Camera is an excellent example. Education is the key to preventing more tragedies like this and Alex Burness did an incredible job of that in his article;

- Help One Colorado and the LGBT Center with their legislative and policy agenda;

- Help us bring gender neutral bathrooms to more public facilities and thank those establishments that have already done so; and

- Request a training, panel, or story telling for your organization, company, school or community from the many competent organizations throughout the state who provide these services, including TYES. Please do not ask them to do this for free, give a fair donation either to the organization or to the individual. Nearly all our organizations run on minimal money and many of us work tirelessly without compensation.

Reading Leelah's suicide note has, once again, reminded me why I still can't stop despite the significant gains we've made in recent years. Before our children were permitted to transition, they were silently dying with no suicide note left behind for explanation, leaving a painful mystery for their friends and families to try to explain. We cannot let Leelah's sacrifice go unheard, nor her cry for change go unanswered.

- Karen Axe

BULLETIN BOARD

Feb . 4-8—Creating Change Conference—This powerful national conference is coming to the Sheraton Denver Downtown. See p. 2.

Feb. 9—National Lobby Day—All day event 8 am—3 pm at State Capitol, Denver. See p. 1.

Feb 17—Educating Children of Color Summit 8 am—5 pm at Colorado College. Volunteers are needed to help at PFLAG table. See p. 2.

Support Colorado Springs PFLAG—Become a Member

You can join at any time of the year. The current membership year extends from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015.

Name: _____

____ New member ____ Renewing member

Address: _____

- ____ Regular Membership \$ 30
____ Supporting Member—Silver 40
____ Supporting Member—Gold 60
____ Supporting Member—Platinum 100

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Each year our chapter must contribute \$15.00 for each paid membership to the PFLAG national office to support its mission.

Check here if you wish to receive the newsletter by e-mail _____

Make checks payable to Colorado Springs PFLAG and mail to P.O. Box 49131, Colorado Springs, CO 80949. Membership fees and contributions are tax deductible. All information will remain confidential. PFLAG is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization.