



A Letter to Colorado Springs PFLAG from Founder Linda (Knutson) Crear
25th Anniversary Celebration—September 28, 2019

I joined PFLAG in 92-93 when my daughter Stacy came out as a lesbian. Living in the Briargate Area of Colorado Springs we were dealing with Will Perkins who was a hateful, creepy car dealer who hated gay people. Focus on the Family, New Life Church and Cook ministries. At the time there were 80+ fundamentalist religious organizations headquartered in and around Colorado Springs.

When I found PFLAG it was an amazing organization made up of wonderful people like Bonnie and Buz Frum, Eva and Hugh McGeehan, Pat Phiffer and Lori Vollmar and at the time the President was Gerta Fletcher. Later on Inside Out Youth Services started.

Ground Zero was founded by Frank Whitworth who worked with various groups to mobilize the community to work together and fight the hateful Amendment 2 which the Supreme Court ultimately overthrew.

As president I had the opportunity to be liaison with the media and other organizations that included the Pikes Peak Court, Gay Rodeo, and some of the local night clubs (True Colors & Hide & Seek. My family and I had the opportunity to represent a very conservative-looking traditional family when they were trying to make us all look like villains. We used our privilege to advocate and educate on behalf of those who most needed it. We all came together to sponsor and promote our GLBT Parade and Pridefest in Acacia Park in downtown Colorado Springs. An emotional moment for us was having GLBT people come up and hug the PFLAG parents saying their parents wouldn't hug them and they need a "mom" or "dad" hug.

One of the biggest and most successful events was having the author Reverend Mel White come to Colorado Springs and protest at Focus on the Family. I believe he was there for a full month and fasted during that time. One of the favorite things I remember was he wanted to change the interstate sign on I-25 to Focus on the Family - Extreme Right. One of the most powerful activities was when we (all the GLBT groups) walked in a huge circle around the entire FOTF property protesting their hatefulness.

I left the chapter in 2006 when I moved to Minneapolis for work.

My daughter Stacy transitioned to my son Samuel in 2008. Since then, Sam has been an advocate for transgender rights and for youth since his family has been loving and supportive of his transition. He has done inclusion training for the large insurance company he worked for and continuously provides input to the company he works for now as they develop transgender insurance coverage and benefits within their organization. Sam has become the absolute best uncle that ever walked the earth. He is cherished by all immediate and extended family in that role. He also is the best dog father that ever happened and currently is raising Murphy.

My daughter Jessica who many of you remember as being an activist in high school has continued in that role throughout her career. After graduating with a masters degree from the University of Nebraska in Political Science, she relocated to Tucson where she led the campaign to defeat an anti-marriage amendment in Arizona. Her life's work has become ensuring all have access to healthcare with the American Cancer Society and now Be The Match the national marrow donor program. She and her husband Adam are the proud parents of 2 1/2 yr old Abbi, who is already on the road to becoming an outspoken active feminist leader following in her Great grandmother, grandmother and mother's footsteps.

I transitioned in my career into organizational training and development. And had the opportunity to work for several excellent organizations here in Minnesota. I retired from that career in March 2017 to become a full-time granny nanny to Abbi. My every day is filled with joy spending time with her.

As Sam and Jess and I discussed writing this information for you we realize how important each of you and our time in Colorado Springs was to helping us become the people we are today. We wish you all the best and thank you for continuing on the amazing work you do.

I'm sorry I can't be there with you tonight.

All the best, hugs and love,

Linda