



PFLAG Colorado Springs

Parents, Families, Friends, and Allies United
With LGBT People to Move Equality Forward

September 2018

Film: "Breaking the Silence" - Making the Classroom Gender Inclusive

At the September PFLAG meeting, participants will see a new film titled "Breaking the Silence—Honoring the Voices of LGBTQ Youth and Allies in Supporting our Teachers".

The film was produced by a Queer Endeavor, a program of the School of Education at the University of Colorado. A Queer Endeavor seeks to educate classroom teachers about the LGBT youth who are bringing new identities and a whole new vocabulary into the schools.

In June, 100 educators attended the first summer Institute run by a Queer Endeavor at the University in Boulder. *The following are excerpts from a report prepared by Colorado Public Radio Education Reporter Jenny Brundin and aired on August 28..*

How do you make the Classroom Gender Inclusive? These Teachers Went to Summer School to Find Out.

- By Jenny Brundin

The second standard of the six that Colorado teachers are supposed to follow is to make their classrooms a safe and inclusive environment for a diverse population.

But when it comes to LGBTQ students and those who don't identify as male or female, many teachers say they're lost. They fumble around, don't know how to respond when a student doesn't use a "him" or "her" pronoun, or they don't confront anti-gay bullying.

A new generation is redefining the meaning of gender identity and sexuality and teachers haven't caught up.

"When they realize, 'I don't know what I'm doing,' [do] you know how vulnerable it feels?" asked Bethy Leonardi, a former classroom teacher and co-founder of a Queer Endeavor <https://bit.ly/2LXI98L>, an initiative housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education. "It's a big deal. They need support."

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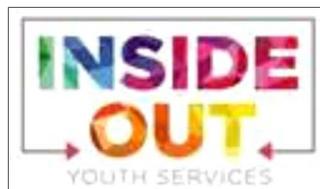
A Queer Endeavor

"We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers. Our power is in our ability to make things unworkable." - Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights and Gay Rights Activist

"Love the Skin You're In" - Ally Up! Breakfast October 3 Fundraiser for Inside/Out Youth Services

The staff and youth of Inside/Out welcome everyone to a breakfast fundraiser on Wednesday, October 3 at The Antlers Hotel, 40 South Cascade Avenue. Check in is at 7 a.m., breakfast and program run from 7:30—8:30 a.m.

This is an amazing opportunity to get acquainted with the youth of Inside/Out, ages 13-22. Learn more about their challenges and the programs they enjoy in the wonderful safe space that Inside/Out provides 4-5 days per week at 223 North Wahsatch Avenue.



SEPTEMBER PFLAG MEETING

Tuesday
September 18, 2018
7:00 p.m.

Program:

"Breaking the Silence"

A film produced by
a Queer Endeavor

School of Education
University of Colorado
Boulder

The Dwelling Place
508 North Tejon Street

Social time starts at 6:30 p.m.

Dessert, coffee
Everyone is welcome

Reservations are required. The breakfast is free, and a thoughtful donation is requested. Plan to sit with PFLAG. Reserve your place by calling Cheryl Prichard at (719) 550-9235.

Special Guest speakers will be Logan and Laila Ireland, a transgender military couple from Colorado Springs. PFLAG members met them in April when Air Force Academy Professor Col. Gary Packard brought them to PFLAG and showed a short documentary film about their service and their relationship. The film may be viewed with this link: <https://bit.ly/2pLCCDJ>

Inside/Out has taken a leap forward since its new Executive Director, Jessie Pocock, arrived last January. She gave a spirited talk at the August PFLAG meeting, and will offer a vibrant program for the breakfast. We look forward to seeing you there!
I/O website: www.insideoutys.org



This newsletter is published by the Colorado Springs Chapter of PFLAG.

PFLAG Vision Statement. PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

PFLAG Mission Statement: By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

Support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ

Education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ

Advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ.

To join the local 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.

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A Message from the Editor

We are so busy, all of us, that sometimes it takes a sharp wakeup call to bring a crisis to our attention.

The suicide of nine year old Jamel Miles in Denver last week was a wake up call to teachers, schools and parents that bullying around issues of gender identity in the schools and classrooms must be stopped. Teachers trying to deal with these situations need help.

Jamel was only in his first week of fourth grade, but he already had a sense that he might be gay. In the past, he would probably have thought he was the only one with such feelings, and shame or fear would have kept him quiet. But today, LGBT issues are in the open, younger children know much more, and Jamal thought he could say at school that he thought he was gay. The consequences were rough.

This month we will learn about a program at CU in Boulder aimed at helping teachers deal with LGBT issues in their classrooms. Spread the word – forward this newsletter to a teacher or a parent.

Thank You

To the Saponas Foundation, First Congregational United Church of Christ and the Ruskey/Bianchi Family for their significant, ongoing support of Colorado Springs PFLAG.

Trans Youth Education and Support (TYES)

TYES is a PFLAG affiliate that offers education and support to families with gender variant children. TYES information is available at PFLAG meetings.

TYES families in the Pikes Peak region keep in touch by phone and through a private Facebook page. To contact the Colorado Springs TYES volunteers, call PFLAG at (719) 425-9567 or send an e-mail to info@cspflag.org.

The TYES program originated and is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado.

More information is available at the national TYES website www.TYES-Colorado.org

Annual Meeting—Membership

The September 18th PFLAG meeting is the annual meeting of members at which the board of directors is elected.

September is membership renewal month. Please support PFLAG by your membership. Either mail the form delivered to you with this newsletter, together with your check, OR—and this is NEW — go to the PFLAG website and make a secure payment online. Go to: www.cspflag.org. Thank you!

LGBT Homeless Shelter

Homelessness is a growing epidemic in the United Kingdom. The number of people in the country living on the streets (or “sleeping rough”) increased dramatically between 2010 to 2016, leading a committee of lawmakers to declare the issue a “national crisis”.



Carla Ecola, once homeless herself and a self-described queer homelessness activist, witnessed firsthand the lack of adequate resources for LGBTQ homeless people in the U.K. when she was homeless in her early 20s. After her five-year experience going from one insecure living condition to another, Ecola decided to help others facing circumstances she had once endured.

Last year, Ecola created The Outside Project, the U.K.’s first LGBTQ homeless crisis shelter. With funds raised by a crowdfunding campaign, she bought a 12-bed bus — the former tour bus of an English rock band — to house some of London’s most vulnerable LGBTQ homeless residents.

“We put up flowers, flags, fairy lights, queer literature and art everywhere to make it nice for guests,” Ecola explained. She said many LGBTQ people have dealt with prejudice at traditional crisis centers and in mainstream shelters.

As Ecola expected, there was a massive overrepresentation of trans people accessing the shelter, which was in operation from Dec. 2017 to March 2018.

Thanks to the success of the initial four-month program, the London mayor’s Rough Sleeping Innovation Fund (RSIF) announced earlier this month it would fund a permanent LGBTQ community center and shelter.



Breaking the Silence— Creating Gender Inclusive Schools

(Continued from page 1)

In order to prepare teachers to navigate these topics of gender identity and orientation in the new school year, Queer Endeavor and Boulder Valley Schools hosted the inaugural LGBTQ-Inclusive Educational Practices Institute in June. See <https://bit.ly/2NfJpZz>. The two-day Boulder conference brought together more than 100 educators from 15 school districts to support inclusive curriculum and share resources and practices to support transgender and gender-expansive youth.

In deference to Colorado's teacher standards, Leonardi said that by "supporting LGBTQ students, you're actually doing your job."

It's a significant number of students.

The 2017 Health Kids Colorado survey found 8 percent of teens identified as bisexual, nearly 5 percent were unsure of their sexual orientation and 2.5 percent gay or lesbian. In gender identity, 95 percent identified with their sex assigned at birth (cisgender), about 1 percent was transgender, and another percent was unsure.

Lisa Durant, from the Adams 12 Five Star district in the north Denver suburbs, Durant said her students were using words like "asexual, or gender fluid, and I had no idea what they were talking about."

She also remembered a student who arrived from another district after intense bullying. Later, the student took time away from school and transitioned from male to female during that time. The student informed Durant which pronoun she wanted to be called by and they talked about the lesson material she'd missed.

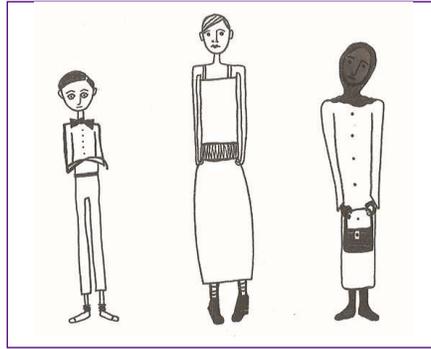
Durant looks back at the interaction with regret. She didn't ask "how can I support you, what do I need to do to make you feel more comfortable in a group setting in this classroom? I just didn't know the questions to ask."

And sometimes, not knowing how to support or validate students can end up hurting them.

PFLAG meetings are always a safe space.

Who you meet, and what you hear ... **Must** remain strictly confidential.

- Thank you.



In Colorado, LGBTQ kids report rates of electronic bullying that are at least double that of heterosexual or cisgender youth. Bullying victims, whether in person or through social media, chat or online, often miss classes or even consider suicide.

Durant has already committed to visiting her school's gay straight alliance club to let students know who she is and learn who they are. The veteran teacher is also hopeful her district will soon provide clarity and curriculum on what she can talk about in class.

Teachers at the conference gleaned other tips: Avoid using "ladies and gentlemen," "boys/girls" and otherwise gendered language to address students. Other creative non-gendered ways to address them include: "scientists, readers, athletes, writers, artists, scholars, awesome-sauces, etc." (More tips—see <https://bit.ly/2Q5v28K>)

Teacher Kari Allerton had always lived the mantra that it doesn't matter who you love or how you identify, "you're all my students and I love you all," but after an institute session where they watched the short film, "Breaking the Silence," she had an insight.

"Saying [to a teenager] that I don't care if you're gay or straight or trans, it's almost like when people say 'I don't see color,'" she said, it's dismissing them instead of "validating and seeing them."

She remembered a young male student who, by the end of the school year, sported earrings, pink hair, and lipstick "and I didn't say anything to him." Many teachers struggle with what to say. A fellow teacher sug-

gested: "It's so much fun watching you become who you are."

Queer Endeavor's Sara Staley, who is also a research associate at CU Boulder, asked teachers to imagine LGBTQ students walking into their classrooms this fall.

"How does that change the way that you call role, how does that change the posters that you put on the wall, the kinds of books and stories you choose to read, who becomes really visible in your curriculum and whose voices are left out," Staley asked....

A familiar complaint among LGBTQ students is that many teachers — including some who attended the conference — don't intervene when students are being bullied or when classmates utter slurs.

Recent high school graduate Asher Cutler, who identifies as "gender fluid," made this plea to those in attendance: Go for it, please. Your role as an authoritative figure means that you can save someone's life. Teachers are mandatory reporters; they have to report things like self-harming.

"And these comments are the little things that build up over time and you have to, as a teacher say, 'no, we don't talk like that in my classroom.'"



Bill Oliver, Lori Vollmar and Elaine Myers Supporting Drag Queen Story Hour at Penrose Public Library

Drag Queen Story Hour came to the library on Saturday, September 1. Nic Grzecka and Nick Shelton of Club Q reserved a room so that local drag queen Sarah Bellum could play and read stories (some about diversity and inclusivity) to children and their parents.

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Colorado Springs Story Hour (cont.)

Family Policy Alliance, a ally of Focus on the Family, started a petition and lodged its objection to the event with Penrose Library and City Council, collecting a reported 400 signatures urging authorities to deny use of the library room for the event.

Colorado Springs PFLAG responded by sending a letter of support to Club Q, the Penrose Library Board, City Council and County Commissioners. In addition to those in the photo, PFLAGgers Cindy and Steve Waldmann and Karen Stith came to the event to show support. They were welcomed by numerous families and others who came.

So many families with children showed up (the room was full with over 60 participants for the first hour) that Sara provided a second story time and Q&A session for the large group that waited to hear her.

This was the first Drag Queen Story Hour in Colorado Springs. PFLAG thanks Club Q for this outreach. Drag queens are wonderful, joyful performers about whom most members of the public know little. PFLAG also warmly thanks Penrose Library for allowing the event to go forward and providing many welcoming and professional library personnel to manage the large group of families and others who enjoyed the event.



Story Hour in New York City

Drag Queen Story Hour Puts the Rainbow in Reading

By Una LaMarch—New York Times May 2017

(Excerpt) Story hour, long a mommy-and-me staple, had never looked so colorful.

She stood well over six feet tall, the reader at the Hudson Park branch of the New York Public Library in Greenwich Village, her height aided by six-inch heels on purple patent leather boots. Her outfit was an oxymoronic neon camouflage bodysuit and a purple tutu. A tuft of fuchsia hair curled from under a spandex headdress with fabric-covered cylinders lined up in a row, like a Keith Haring-inspired Mohawk.

As she entered, the adults clapped politely, but the preschool- and kindergarten-age children huddled on a rug went wild. With the elation typically reserved for a "Frozen" character, one toddler screamed "Yay!" and clapped furiously, squirming in his mother's lap.

"My name is Harmonica Sunbeam," the reader said, in a voice used to loud rooms. As a warm-up, she had the children sing "This Land Is Your Land" and then march vigorously in place. "I'm getting you ready for Zumba," she said to laughter from the over-6 set.

She sat down and read aloud from "Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress" by Christine Baldacchino. The book is about a boy who wore a beloved dress to school eve-

ry day. At one point, Morris's friends inform him that he isn't allowed to play on their imaginary spaceship, because "astronauts can't wear dresses."

"Yes, they can!" one child cried out.

"No, they can't," said another.

"Boys can't wear dresses," a third added.

The debate continued as Harmonica Sunbeam listened. Then she leaned down, addressing the children in a conspiratorial stage whisper.

"Has anyone ever said anything mean to you?" she asked. The children responded with yeses and nos. "Sometimes it happens."

Later, as the last of the children filed out the door, she said "We all learn every day in life, and there's a lesson in everything you do. Sometimes we just have to sneak it in."

This is Drag Queen Story Hour. The brainchild of the writer Michelle Tea and Radar Productions, it is exactly what it sounds like: drag queens reading stories to children. It began in San Francisco in December 2015.

See: <https://www.dragqueenstoryhour.org/>

Support Colorado Springs PFLAG—Become a Member

You can join at any time of the year. The current membership year extends from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.

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: _____

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

E-mail _____

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

Join and pay online at www.cspflag.org OR send this form and a check payable to Colorado Springs PFLAG to Colorado Springs PFLAG, P.O. Box 49131, Colorado Springs, CO 80949. Membership fees and additional donations are tax deductible. All information will remain confidential. PFLAG is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization.