



# PFLAG Triangle

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons, their families and friends though:

- SUPPORT—to cope with and adverse society;
- EDUCATION—to enlighten an ill informed public; and
- ADVOCACY—to end discrimination and secure equal rights.

### EVENTS OF INTEREST:

- **1-1-09**  
Happy New Year!
- **2-5-09**  
Support Group



### MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: JANUARY ISSUE

Welcome to the January 2009 edition of the PFLAG Triangle Monthly Newsletter!. As we embark upon a new year, PFLAG Triangle thanks you for your support, advocacy and action in 2008 to support the goals and mission of PFLAG Triangle. In the last year as a nation, a community, a special interest group and advocates for LGBT persons and their families, much has happened. As a community, we end this year thankful for progress, hopeful for change and grateful for a community of people that support each other.

Wishing you and yours a Happy New Year!  
PFLAG Triangle Board of Directors

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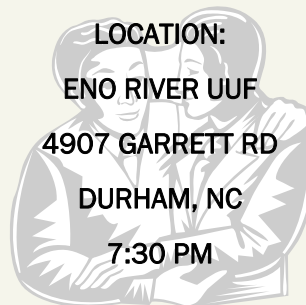
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There will not be a support group meeting in January.  
Our next support group meeting will be held on Feb. 5, 2009.

### SUPPORT GROUP GUIDELINES

PFLAG offers a confidential support group to share pain, joy, and concerns around same-sex orientation of one-self or a loved-one. This is an opportunity to share time with other caring people in a ongoing movement toward justice of LGBT persons. Please



come whether you need help, can give help, or like most of us, fall into both categories.

All PFLAG meetings are confidential and are held in a supportive comfortable, environment.



## STUDY: FAMILY BEHAVIOR KEY TO HEALTH OF GAY

SAN FRANCISCO - Young gay people whose parents or guardians responded negatively when they revealed their sexual orientation were more likely to attempt suicide, experience severe depression and use drugs than those whose families accepted the news, according to a new study. The way in which parents or guardians respond to a youth's sexual orientation profoundly influences the child's mental health as an adult, say researchers at San Francisco State University, whose findings appear in Monday's journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"Parents love their children and want the best for them," said lead researcher Caitlin Ryan, a social worker who directs the university's Family Acceptance Project. "Now that we have measured all these behaviors, we can see that some of them put youth at extremely high risk and others are wellness-promoting."

Among other findings, the study showed that teens who experienced negative feedback were more than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide, nearly six times as vulnerable to severe depression and more than three times at risk of drug use.

More significantly, Ryan said, ongoing work at San Francisco State suggests that parents who take even baby steps to respond with equanimity instead of rejection

can dramatically improve a gay youth's mental health outlook.

One of the most startling findings was that being forbidden to associate with gay peers was as damaging as being physically beaten or verbally abused by their parents in terms of negative feedback, Ryan said.

In the two-part study, Ryan and her colleagues first interviewed 53 families with gay teenagers to identify 106 specific behaviors that could be considered "accepting" or "rejecting." For example, blaming a youth for being bullied at school, shielding him from other relatives or belittling her appearance for not conforming to social expectations fell into the rejecting category.

Next, they surveyed 224 white and Latino gay people between ages 21 and 25 to see which of the behaviors they had experienced growing up. The responses then were matched against the participants' recent histories of severe depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse and unsafe sexual behavior.

While the results might seem intuitive, Ryan said the study, funded by the California Endowment, was the first to establish a link between health problems in gay youths and their home environments. She has used the information in workshops with parents and other caregivers who have strained relationships with their gay teenagers, and said many were alarmed enough to make immediate changes in their interactions.

Ryan recalled a teenage girl whose mother forced her to date a boy and sent her to live with her grandmother when she learned her daughter was a lesbian. After hearing about the connection between parental attitudes and suicide, the mother

stopped arranging the dates with the boy and instead inquired about her daughter's girlfriend. "She was really concerned," Ryan said. "She saw that her daughter had become increasingly withdrawn and that she was contributing to these feelings of isolation and sadness."

In her paper for the journal *Pediatrics*, Ryan recommends that medical professionals ask young patients how their families have reacted to their sexual orientations and tell parents that negative reactions may prove harmful even if well-intentioned. Such conversations are necessary because young people have been coming out at younger ages. Consistent with other studies, the youths in Ryan's study were on average under 11 years old when they first experienced a same-sex attraction, were just over 14 when they realized they were gay and came out to their families before they had turned 16. Doctors, in a misguided attempt to comfort parents, may tell them a child who isn't sexually active couldn't know if he were gay or not, Ryan said.

"When providers and adults and family members think of gay people, they think of sex. They don't think of emotional attraction or social interaction or spiritual connectedness or deep-rooted psychological feelings," she said.

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### PFLAG TRIANGLE MEMBERSHIP

Your dues and financial donations help continue the work that PFLAG Triangle does each year. Please fill out your ap-

plication today. You may fill out a paper application or visit our Online Store to submit your application and dues online. Membership

dues as well as donations may be made securely at our website. Thank you for your contribution to PFLAG!

### LOCAL NEWS

Get local news, updates and other LGBT events provided by the Raleigh Cultural Report. To subscribe visit:

<http://home.att.net/~raleighlgbtreport>

## IN A FIRST, GAY RIGHTS ARE PRESSED AT THE U.N.

**UNITED NATIONS —** An unprecedented declaration seeking to decriminalize homosexuality won the support of 66 countries in the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday, but opponents criticized it as an attempt to legitimize pedophilia and other “deplorable acts.”

The United States refused to support the nonbinding measure, as did Russia, China, the Roman Catholic Church and members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Holy See’s observer mission issued a statement saying that the declaration “challenges existing human rights norms.”

The declaration, sponsored by France with broad support in Europe and Latin America, condemned human rights violations based on homophobia, saying such measures run counter to the universal declaration of human rights.

“How can we tolerate the fact that people are stoned, hanged, decapitated and tortured only because of their sexual orientation?” said Rama Yade, the French state secretary for human rights, noting that homosexuality is banned in nearly 80 countries and subject to the death penalty in at least six.

France decided to use the format of a declaration because it did not have

the support for an official resolution. Read out by Ambassador Jorge Argüello of Argentina, the declaration was the first on gay rights read in the 192-member General Assembly itself.

Although laws against homosexuality are concentrated in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, more than one speaker addressing a separate conference on the declaration noted that the laws stemmed as much from the British colonial past as from religion or tradition.

Navanethem Pillay, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, speaking by video telephone, said that just like apartheid laws that criminalized sexual relations between different races, laws against homosexuality “are increasingly becoming recognized as anachronistic and as inconsistent both with international law and with traditional values of dignity, inclusion and respect for all.”

The opposing statement read in the General Assembly, supported by nearly 60 nations, rejected the idea that sexual orientation was a matter of genetic coding. The statement, led by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said the effort threatened to undermine the international framework of human rights by trying to normalize pedophilia, among other acts.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference also failed in a last-minute attempt to alter a formal resolution that Sweden sponsored condemning summary executions. It sought to have the words “sexual orientation” deleted as one of the central reasons for such killings.

Ms. Yade and the Dutch foreign minister, Maxime Verhagen, said at a news conference that they were “disappointed” that the United States failed to support the declaration. Human rights activists went further. “The Bush administration is trying to come up with Christmas presents for the religious right so it will be remembered,” said Scott Long, a director at Human Rights Watch.

The official American position was based on highly technical legal grounds. The text, by using terminology like “without distinction of any kind,” was too broad because it might be interpreted as an attempt by the federal government to override states’ rights on issues like gay marriage, American diplomats and legal experts said.

“We are opposed to any discrimination, legally or politically, but the nature of our federal system prevents us from undertaking commitments and engagements where federal authorities don’t have jurisdiction,” said Alejandro D. Wolff, the deputy permanent representative.

Gay-rights advocates brought to the conference from around the world by France said just having the taboo broken on discussing the topic at the United Nations would aid their battles at home.

“People in Africa can have hope that someone is speaking for them,” said the Rev. Jide Macaulay of Nigeria.

By: Neil McFarquhar



### Driving Directions

Our website has been updated with Google Map directions to our meeting locations and other important events. Plug in where you’re coming from and let us help you get there!

## ACTIVISTS PIN HOPES ON OBAMA BANNING TRANSGENDER BIAS

Six months ago, a highly decorated retired Army colonel told Congress of instantly going from "hero to zero" in the eyes of a prospective employer when she disclosed that she was in the process of changing gender.

Since that hearing, Congress has done nothing to protect transgender workers, despite evidence of outrageous job discrimination.

But a federal judge has stepped in to say that the Library of Congress broke the law against sex discrimination by rescinding the job offer it had made before learning David Schroer was becoming Diane. "The evidence establishes that the Library was enthusiastic about hiring David Schroer – until she disclosed her transsexuality," James Robertson, a U.S. district judge for the District of Columbia, ruled in September.

"The Library revoked the offer when it learned that a man named David intended to become, legally, culturally, and physically, a woman named Diane. This was discrimination 'because of ... sex'," the judge continued.

Schroer's transition is being followed by an-

other one in political Washington, of course. And the American Civil Liberties Union, which is handling her case, is hopeful that the new administration won't fight the decision. Already, the judge is preparing to order remedies, such as requiring the Library of Congress to hire Schroer and pay her back wages or monetary damages.

But the ruling, while a groundbreaking warning to other employers that they might be sued and held liable for similar discrimination, doesn't automatically protect anyone beyond Schroer. In fact, federal judges disagree over whether federal sex discrimination laws cover transgender Americans.

A growing number of companies as well as 13 states – California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington – and the District of Columbia have enacted transgender protections. But most transgender workers are on their own in a workplace or job interview.

The ACLU is heartened, though, that President-elect Barack Obama's transition team, in an historic first, includes "gender identity" in its nondiscrimination policy for appointment-level jobs in the next administration.

The legal group hopes, as president, Obama will take the next step – signing an executive order formally banning job discrimination based on gender identity within the federal civilian work force.

President Bill Clinton signed a similar order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in civil service jobs. The ACLU wants Obama to expand it to cover government contractors as well, both based on gender identity and sexual orientation. That still, unfortunately, would leave transgender workers vulnerable at private companies.

So the ALCU and other gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups are urging the Democ-

atic-led Congress and Obama to fulfill campaign promises by outlawing job discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity – whether by Uncle Sam or his private-sector sisters.

Schroer's ongoing legal battle over a job to provide expert policy analysis to Congress on terrorism underscores the need for swift action next year.

As David, she gave her country 25 years, including 16 in Special Forces with 450 parachute jumps and combat experience in Panama and Haiti, followed by directing a 120-person classified Pentagon organization that tracked and targeted terrorists. It's only right that the government repay Diane – as well as other transgender Americans – with equal job opportunities.



## STUDY: FAMILY BEHAVIOR (CONTD.)

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Sten Vermund, a Vanderbilt University pediatrician who became interested in Ryan's work this summer when she presented her research at the international AIDS conference in Mexico City, agrees that doctors should be encouraged to talk with parents about responding to a child's sexual orientation in a supportive way.

"So many families of children who are gay, bisexual or transgender, particu-

larly families of gay male youth, think that if they are tough on the kid and tell him how unsatisfactory his gay lifestyle is to the family, he will have it knocked out of him," Vermund said. Vermund said he also was impressed by Ryan's finding that a little bit of familial acceptance could go a long way in increasing a child's chances for future happiness.

"The Southern Baptist doesn't have to become a Unitarian," he said.  
 "Someone can still be uncomfortable

with their child's sexual orientation, but if they are somewhat more accepting and do the best they can, they will do the youth a lot of good. That to me is an important message."

### Other Triangle Area PFLAG Chapters News

Rocky Mount PFLAG. Meets the Third Tuesday of each month. lchesson@aol.com or call 252-442-7423.



PFLAG Triangle  
 PO BOX 51776  
 Durham, NC 27717

info@pflagtriangle.org  
<http://www.pflagtriangle.org>

**Support Phone #'s**

Durham	(919) 929-0192
Raleigh	(919) 434-3080
Rocky Mount	(252) 442-7423
Transgender	(919) 781-3316

**Support Group Meeting Location**

Eno River UUF  
 4907 Garrett Road, Durham, NC  
 7:30pm—Rooms 1 & 2

## CONTACT PFLAG

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