



THE NEWSLETTER

July 2014

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VOLUME 21



THE TREVOR PROJECT



Please join us for our general meeting on **Monday, July 28** at 7:00 pm at Jewish Family Service (JFS), 8804 Balboa

Avenue, San Diego. Our guest speaker is Amanda Cook, who is a volunteer San Diego Ambassador of The Trevor Project. The Trevor Project is the leading national organization

providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning young people, ages 13-24. They offer accredited life-saving, life-affirming programs and services for these youth that create safe, accepting and inclusive environments over the phone, online, and through text.

Please join us for support groups, then the cookie social, followed by Amanda's presentation.

THE PFLAG BOARD'S SUPER TRANS ADVOCATE



Although all the PFLAG Board members are advocates for the LGBT Community, **Courtney Ware** has devoted an extraordinary

amount of time being personally involved with the Trans community.

"I have been involved with helping the LGBT community since I heard about Matthew Shepard in 1998. I began educating my friends and classmates about Matthew and other injustices in the community. I wanted to volunteer and help the LGBT community, but the town I lived in was small and rather conservative. Once I moved to San Diego in 2007, I found my calling.

First, I volunteered for San Diego Pride in 2011, working at the information booth at the festival and helping to carry the 300-foot rainbow flag at the end of the parade. There I met some wonderful people who took me under their wing and introduced me around town. I made lots of new friends in the community and learned about all of the different LGBT organizations.

I knew as an ally, I wanted to join PFLAG. I had always known about the wonderful support, but never knew how to get involved until then. I attended my first meeting in January of 2012. I found the supportive atmosphere very welcoming. After attending meetings regularly, in June of that year, I was voted onto the Board of Directors.

My passion is working with transgender youth. Two years ago, I volunteered for Camp Aranu'tiq, a week long summer camp for transgender and gender variant youth, ages 8-15. I loved the experience so much that when I came home, I enrolled myself in graduate school to become a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. I continue to volunteer for Camp Aranu'tiq and will be going for the third time this August. I continue to volunteer around the community, most recently with the Hillcrest Youth Center. I am happy with my place as an ally of the community, and am looking forward to all the positive changes we are working towards together."

HAPPY SILVER ANNIVERSARY

The 25th annual AIDS Walk San Diego is **SATURDAY** (first time ever), **September 27**. This event is San Diego's largest one-day HIV/AIDS fundraiser and the biggest non-governmental financial provider for HIV/AIDS in San Diego County. Dozens of agencies - serving thousands of clients - rely on funds raised at the annual Walk to help provide essential prevention and care programs to thousands of men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS.

The 5K Walk starts at 8:15 am and begins at Normal Street and University Avenue (new starting location this year). The registration fee is \$35 (\$25 for 17 & under and 60+). If we have at least 10 walkers registered by September 22, we will qualify as Team PFLAG and be able to walk with the prestigious sneaker sign with PFLAG on it. Any PFLAGer participant who has "walked the walked," knows what a big deal it is to be able to carry our PFLAG sneaker sign.

To register, go to www.AIDSwalksd.org and select Register at the top of the page, then Join an Existing Team. Either enter PFLAG San Diego or Search for a Team and find PFLAG San Diego. Click on the Join button and follow the instructions.

Even if you can't walk with us, please register so we can meet our 10 person and financial goals (\$1000).

More details to following in the coming newsletters. If you have any questions, please contact Sherry Cohen-Richards, 858-349-6269 or scohenrichards@pflag.com.



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UPCOMING MEETINGS

July 21, 28, August 4, 11, 18:

Mi Familia Support Group
Patti: 619-227-6092

August 4:

North County Coastal Support Group
Larry: 760-224-2178

August 11:

East County Support Group
Bob: 619-334-8214

THANKS!

General Fund Donation

Linda Melikian

Providing Refreshments for our Meeting

Mallory Hoac
Mike Minnick

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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CONDOLENCES

Deepest condolences to board member, Beverly Lavalley, on the loss of her father and to former board member, Ron Goetz, on the sudden death of his wife, Diane.

FEATURING



Past president Linda Bessemer proudly presents the John Bessemer Memorial Scholarship to Laila

The recipient of the **John Bessemer Memorial Scholarship** is **Laila Al-Shamma**. Laila will pursue her degree at Stanford University in the fall. A community organizer from the get-go, most

of Laila's accomplishments were achieved while in high school at La Costa Canyon High. She was named GLSEN's Student Advocate of the Year. In addition, she spearheaded her GSA's Safe Space Campaign, "Care Campaign," which focused on crisis prevention, and the "Words Hurt" initiative.

"My school used to be less than welcoming of LGBTQ students and their allies. I'm proud to say that this is no longer true. The toughest challenge I've faced as a member of the LGBT community is changing my school climate.

As a closeted and insecure freshman, I felt uncomfortable on campus. The Gay Straight Alliance was small and inactive and the more conservative student body clearly opposed some of our activities. For example, on the Day of Silence, our club members wore red, and another group of students wore white in support of "purity."

BE PART OF THE PARTY

Join the festivities at South Bay Pride Art & Music Festival on **Saturday, September 13** from noon-10:00 pm at Bayfront Park. There will be live entertainment, DJ's and dancing, Art of Pride in the Park, great food, water sports, beverage gardens, children's entertainment, and much more!

Bayfront Park is adjacent to "J" Street Marina in Chula Vista.

As I grew more comfortable with my identity and worked through my own fears, I became more involved with the Gay Straight Alliance. By my sophomore year, I was vice president of the club and I ensured that meetings were held weekly. That year, I focused on gathering the support of all the teachers. To achieve this, I spoke at an all staff meeting about the importance of supporting LGBTQ students. It was during this meeting that I came out of the closet to the staff.



Their reaction was slow, at least slower than I wanted it to be. It took another six months or so for them to really jump on board and begin actively supporting the GSA.

My junior year, I continued to increase visibility and activity of the GSA, now as the president of the club. Our club ran a Safe Space campaign to encourage the teachers to make their classrooms safe and welcoming to all students. Today eighty percent of the teachers have visible Safe Space stickers. That same year, we started an anti-slurs campaign; we discussed with as much of the student body as possible the negative effects of homophobic slurs. A few months later, we ran a positive Day of Silence, and it was well received by our community.

The most effective step I took towards changing my school climate came in the spring of my junior year. I came out publicly in an Op-Ed to the school newspaper. I openly discussed the issues I had faced as a closeted teen and I encouraged my peers to make a change on our campus.

And change has finally come. The GSA is celebrated as a positive club on campus, teacher and student allies frequently share their support in and out of the classroom, and I do believe that LGBTQ students feel safer at my school. In fact, this past October, my peers elected me as the Homecoming Queen. I'm an openly gay student and my peers publicly accepted me for just being myself.

Throughout high school I've developed a passion for activism and advocacy. My work with the GSA and my involvement in the LGBT community have opened my eyes to the greater battles that need to be fought in the rest of the United States and around the world.

I fully intend to pursue activism in college and in my career. I want to lead the cause for equal rights for LGBTQ people. This scholarship and my college education will prepare me for a more successful career in this field."





Equality is the soul
of liberty,
there is, in fact,
no liberty without it.
Frances Wright



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