



# THE NEWSLETTER

August 2015

ISSUE 8

VOLUME 22

## FREED HEARTS



Please join us for our general meeting on **Monday, August 24** at 7:00 pm at Jewish Family Service (JFS). We've moved next door (west) to 8788 Balboa Avenue.

Our guest speaker, Susan Cottrell, hails all the way from the Austin, Texas chapter of PFLAG where she is vice-president.

Along with Susan's husband Robert, they are the founders of FreedHearts -

helping faith parents learn to unconditionally love, accept and affirm their LGBTQ children; helping heal parent-child and church-based wounds; and standing against the hate coming from the church.

They also lead workshops at regional PFLAG events, dealing with how to understand and best support faith parents visiting PFLAG.

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

## AMAZONS AND THEIR MEN



This play will be appearing at The Divisionary Theatre from **September 3-October 4**. It is considered a subversive new play and was inspired by the life of Leni Riefenstahl, a filmmaker for Hitler (one can only hope it wasn't by choice). From The Divisionary: Go behind the scenes of The Frau's next masterpiece: A film adaptation of a mythic Amazon Queen's love-and-war affair with Achilles. But as a real war brews outside the doors of her sound stage, history's most notorious filmmaker must choose between her artistic ideals and the fascist regime bankrolling her career. Art and war collide in this darkly comic.

For ticket info, go to [www.diversionary.org](http://www.diversionary.org). If you use the CODE PFLAG, you will save \$5 per ticket.

## INVITATION FOR EDUCATION

Self-Harm Among Youth is the topic of The North County Youth Partnership Biannual Training Symposium. The event is open to all educators and anyone interested on this important subject. Susan D. Writer, Ph.D. from the Aurora Behavioral Health Care will be the presenter, followed by a brief panel discussion. Kathie Moehlig, North County Inland facilitator, will be on the panel. The event is **Thursday, August 27** from 1:00-3:30 pm at the North County Regional Education Center, Comm. Labs 2 & 4, 255 Pico Avenue, San Marcos.

If you are interesting in attending, please RSVP to Annette Ottone by August 17 or ASAP: [northcountycoastal@pflag.com](mailto:northcountycoastal@pflag.com).

“YOU COULD MOVE.”

-Abigail Van Buren, "Dear Abby"

Dear Abby's response to a reader who complained that a gay couple was moving in across the street and wanted to know what he could do to improve the quality of the neighborhood.

## THE BAN IS LIFTED - SORTA

Although he was more or less forced into it, on July 27, Boy Scouts of America President Robert Gates announced that the national executive board ratified a resolution removing the national restriction on openly gay leaders and employees.

While it sounds good on paper, "This resolution will allow chartered organizations to select adult leaders without regard to sexual orientation, continuing Scouting's longstanding policy of chartered organizations selecting their leaders," local troops will still be allowed to make the decision on whether to allow gay leaders. Religious chartered organizations can continue to choose adult leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own. Some religious organizations have their panties in a bunch. They say the decision goes too far. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said in a statement that the organization

is "re-evaluating" its relationship with the Scouts. "The Church has always welcomed all boys to its Scouting units regardless of sexual orientation," the statement reads in part. "However, the admission of openly gay leaders is inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church and what have traditionally been the values of the Boy Scouts of America."

From the LGBT perspective, Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin said, "Today's vote by the Boy Scouts of America to allow gay, lesbian and bisexual adults to work and volunteer is a welcome step toward erasing a stain on this important organization, but including an exemption for troops sponsored by religious organizations undermines and diminishes the historic nature of today's decision. Discrimination should have no place in the Boy Scouts, period."

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# Current Events

August 17 | Monday  
Mi Familia Support Group

August 24 | Monday  
San Diego General Meeting  
and Support Groups

August 27 | Thursday  
Symposium: Self-Harm Among  
Youth (see article)

September 3-October 4  
Diversionary Theatre  
(see article)

September 12 | Saturday  
South Bay Pride (see article)

September 14 | Monday  
PFLAG Support Group  
North County Coastal

September 14 | Monday  
PFLAG Support Group  
East County

September 17  
PFLAG Support Group  
North County Inland

September 21 | Monday  
Mi Familia

September 26 | Saturday  
AIDS Walk SD (see article)



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

## 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.

## 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.

# SUPPORT GROUPS

## SD COUNTY GENERAL MEETING & SUPPORT GROUP

Meets every fourth Monday at 7:00 pm, at Jewish Family Service, 8804 Balboa Avenue, San Diego in Kearny Mesa.

**For further information, contact the Info Line:  
888-398-0006 or [www.pflag.com](http://www.pflag.com)**

## NORTH COUNTY COASTAL

Meets the first Monday, at 7:00 pm, North County LGBTQ Resource Center, 510 North Coast Highway, Suite C, Oceanside.

**Contact [northcountycoastal@pflag.com](mailto:northcountycoastal@pflag.com) or  
Annette Ottone, 760-518-3345.**

## NORTH COUNTY INLAND

Meets the third Thursday at 7:00 pm, Windermere Homes & Estates, 16783 Bernardo Center Drive, Rancho Bernardo.

**Contact Kathie Moehlig: 858-382-9156  
or [northcountyinland@pflag.com](mailto:northcountyinland@pflag.com)**

## EAST COUNTY

Meets every second Monday, at 7:00 pm, Summit Unitarian Universalist Church, 8778 Cottonwood Avenue, Santee.

**Contact Bob Dryden: 619-334-8214  
or [bdryden@pflag.com](mailto:bdryden@pflag.com)**

## SOUTH BAY

The Support Group is not presently meeting. For a private meeting for support and concerns, you can do so by appointment.

**Contact: Patti Boman, 619-227-6092  
or [pboman@pflag.com](mailto:pboman@pflag.com)**

## MI FAMILIA (Spanish)

Meetings are the third Monday of the month from 6:30pm - 8:00 pm at The Center, 3909 Centre Street, Hillcrest

**Contact Patti Boman, 619-227-6092**

## TRANSGENDER SUPPORT


For more information on the Transgender Support Group

**Contact Kathe Dunn, [ftm\\_mom@yahoo.com](mailto:ftm_mom@yahoo.com).**

## NEXT IN LINE



**Andria Montgomery** is the recipient of the **Rob Benzon Memorial Scholarship**. The **Rob Benzon Foundation** has proudly donated scholarships for the past 10 years. Foundation Board Secretary, Dan Ferbal, presented the scholarship to Andria.

Andria's essay is aptly named: The Light at the End of My Rainbow 

"Discrimination nearly destroyed my life. My name is Andria Montgomery, and I'm a 17-year-old senior at Patrick Henry High. I am proud to be a member of the LGBT community. My quest to embrace my personal path has been traumatic. I went through physical and mental abuse, depression, low self-esteem, and deep levels of emotional pain. There are *no words* to describe the feelings of isolation and desolation that came with being rejected by my 'step-family' based on my sexuality. The dark and murky road, which was my life, is now changed. I now walk a path of hope and freedom. I know that I will make it. I'm a survivor of sexual discrimination and much more. My vision is to earn my high school diploma, get a college education, and major in Child and Family Development. My dream is to become a teacher and counselor, and help the next generation of LGBT kids just like me.



Andria and Dan Ferbal

Shrek, the 2001 Disney Movie, aptly described my life experiences:

Shrek: Ogres are like onions.

Donkey: They stink?

Shrek: Yes. No.

Donkey: Oh, they make you cry.

Shrek: No.

Donkey: Oh, you leave 'em out in the sun, they get all brown, start sproutin' little white hairs.

Shrek: NO. Layers. Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. Onions have layers. You get it? We both have layers.

Donkey: Oh, you both have layers. Oh. You know, not everybody like onions.

I love this because it portrays the attitude the some have toward the LGBT community. In my world, my 'step-family' hated *onions*, or my sexuality. My story: I was born to a single mother, who was addicted to drugs and alcohol. I never met my biological father. My mother then married an abusive man, also an alcoholic and a drug addict. They had two children (male and female step-siblings), and the three

of us suffered untold emotional, physical, sexual and verbal abuse. My brother, sister and I were neglected in the full sense of the word. We lived through extreme violence, visits from police, and intervention from Child Protective Services. At age 10, after a horrible custody battle, we were sent to live with my step-grandparents. I thought life would be better, but it was more of the same neglect and abuse. This was not a home, and they were not my 'family.' It was hell on earth. It was *awful, awful, awful!*

To the lucky kids, *home* is a place where one lives and thrives. It is an environment that should offer children love, support, security and happiness. But *I was not* one of lucky ones, and neither was my brother. He is also a member of the LGBT community. My step-grandparents hurled hurtful names at him like 'faggot' and 'queer.' His life was unbearable. At age 15, he ran away. He was my rock, and his absence destroyed me.

During that time, I knew that I was a lesbian, and was too terrified to come out. I kept my secret from my '*step-family*' or more aptly called, '*caretakers*.' Then in my sophomore year, I openly dated a girl. Once word got to my caretakers, I was their target for abuse and discrimination. They pummeled me with brutally negative names, sexual slurs, and inappropriate comments. I was told I was 'not worthy to live on this earth.' I was at my limit. If I stayed, I felt that I would die, so the only option was OUT. Anywhere. I ended up in homeless shelters, a group home, and couch surfing, when faced with no other options. There were times I rode the trolley just to stay dry from the rain because I had nowhere else to go. A good night's sleep and safety were luxuries, not a part of my daily existence. It was really hard, but it was my path to personal and sexual freedom.

Bullying and abuse were omnipresent in my life, as well as my step-brother's life, due to our sexuality. The caretaker's sharp words hit us in such personal ways. My brother was in and out of mental hospitals and later landed in foster care. I, on the other hand, did what I could to survive. I was lucky to receive help and support from amazing teachers and school counselors. Although we couldn't do much to correct the issue at the time, we did the best we could...we stood up for ourselves. That was the end of abuse, and the start of our new lives.

My brother was recently released from foster care, and I was in need of a new roommate. We both have jobs and financially support ourselves. Barely. We have money for food and rent. That's it. I work 5 to 6 nights a week at a fast food restaurant right after school. Sometimes I get rides to work, other times it's the bus or I walk, but it's not that safe late at night. I study after work at 11:30pm. I'm always exhausted, but I do the best I can.

I plan to go to Grossmont College for two years and then

*Continued on Page 5*

## TRANSGEDER TEENS, SUICIDE, AND A TALE OF TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS BY JOSHUA LAZERSON

The following was written by North County Coastal PFLAG parent, Joshua Lazerson. At the time he wrote it, there were two deaths by suicide in the North County area. Unfortunately, now there are three and we hope this is the end of these very sad occurrences.

“In the past month or so I have attended memorial services for two teens who took their own lives in our county. Fourteen and sixteen years old respectively, these teens had a number of commonalities. Both were lovely, creative, caring young people with passion and great promise. They were very much loved by those who knew them well. Both also were transgender – people whose gender identity is different than that assigned to them at birth.

The first child to take his life was my only child’s best friend, and I am pleased to say that the environment he found at the high school he and my child shared was a tremendously welcoming one for all children, no matter their interests, outlooks, or gender identification. This public school has created a culture characterized by openness, inclusion, creativity, and mutual respect. I believe that this school exemplifies the best that adults can do when they take responsibility for creating a place where all children feel safe and valued. In my mind, this is what ‘values education’ means at its best. It means that bullying and ostracism based on differences of any kind are not tolerated. It is an ethic that, exercised daily, leaves little room for demeaning practices.

When adults embrace the right of all children to be themselves, and when adults take the lead in promoting this as a core, organic value, children themselves will embrace this value, and will stand up for it. This happens at the high school I speak of. When my child’s friend took his own life, the administrators and teachers there moved rapidly, and with openness and sincerity, to address this tragedy, to inform the community, to ensure that all students had access to crisis assistance. They made a special effort specifically to look out for those students deemed at greatest risk in the aftermath of the death of their dear friend. By their actions, they lived the value I speak of, and in doing so potentially saved other young lives. This school could not save this child, but was in no way responsible for his decision to end his life.

### NEXT IN LINE (CONTINUED)

transfer to a four-year university. I want to become a teacher and help troubled LGBT youth with their special life circumstances. I know what they’re going through. I’ve been there. I know how important it is to have support from somebody who really truly cares. It would be such a rewarding career. I’m prepared to devote my life to helping youth so that I can mend their broken hearts, and show them new and safe places to call ‘home.’

The experiences of the second child at a different high school in San Diego County provide a stark counterpoint to those of the boy above. The YouTube videos in which the second child discusses her travails at her high school suggest that the culture she found there was anything but accepting. She was taunted and bullied mercilessly, to the point where, shortly before taking her own life, she re-adopted the outward appearance of a boy in hopes of reducing the ostracism she faced. The adults best positioned to create a climate that would have made her school a safe place to learn and grow, for her and all children there, apparently did not believe that this was among their responsibilities. It is my understanding that she raised these issues with staff, and nothing was done. I wish I could be corrected in this understanding, but I don’t believe the facts would support such a revision.

As adults, we often talk about ‘teenage problems’ including substance abuse, pregnancy, and delinquency. It seems to me that this child bore the brunt of an adult problem: the unwillingness of ‘responsible’ adults to look out for her, in the context of a high school culture that placed little value on openness, inclusivity, and mutual respect. We know she felt alone and burdened. The responsibility for alleviating these realities falls on all of us who care about children – all children – without regard for who they are, what they look like, or how they identify themselves.

My hope is that the school district with which she was associated in life, and with which she will remain associated in death, and all those districts in our region that have not done so, will think seriously about what it means to create a school culture favorable for all children. There are many resources to help them do so, including the LGBTQ centers in our region, community health center educational programs, and organizations such as PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). I hope these districts will take advantage of these resources, and gain the knowledge and empathy necessary to make their schools safe places for all of their students. This is, in a part, a selfish hope on my part, as I have no desire ever to attend another memorial service for a child.”

Thank you for your consideration. This scholarship would enable me to fulfill my educational and life dreams. I have limited financial resources, but with your help, *I can* make a difference. I want to *pay it forward*, and help other kids learn how to embrace their sexuality without fear of discrimination...and that’s everything!!!!”

## A LITTLE RAIN NEVER HURT ANYONE

However, a big thunderstorm hurt a little, but did not dampen spirits. It was a Pride Weekend we soon won't forget. We all got soaked to the bone and signs will definitely have to be re-made for next year. Even water proof markers didn't survive. We had a large contingent which included Nathalie Allain Djerrah, who is president of Les Enfants d'Arc en Ciel - l'asso! (Children of the Rainbow) which is the equivalent of PFLAG in France. Nathalie was there with her wife and their two children. There were also members of Temecula PFLAG, S. Orange County PFLAG, Long Beach PFLAG, El Centro PFLAG and Bakersfield PFLAG.

As for the festival, much of the time, there was a river running through the booth, rain pouring off the tent top, more rain dripping from the banners and the tables covered with water. But everyone weathered the storm beautifully with their wonderful PFLAG spirit.

Please see acknowledgements on page 8. Note that there are still more rainbow earrings and they will be for sale at the next PFLAG general meeting. What a deal at \$5.00/pair.



## IMPORTANT DATES TO SAVE

### AIDS WALK 2015



Put on your sneakers and get geared up to walk with PFLAG on **Saturday, September 26** for the 26th Annual AIDS Walk San Diego. 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 7:35 am and begins at Normal and Harvey Milk Streets (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 21, 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 walk," knows what a big deal it is to carry our PFLAG sneaker sign. **HELP!** As of early August, there is only one walker signed; please sign up soonest.



To register, go to [www.AIDSwalksd.org](http://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).

If you don't have internet, call 619.692.2077 x 247 (Ian Johnson) to participate. For questions, please contact Sherry Cohen-Richards, [scohenrichards@pflag.com](mailto:scohenrichards@pflag.com) or call 858-349-6269.

### SOUTH BAY PRIDE

Join the festivities at South Bay Pride Art & Music Festival on **Saturday, September 12** from noon-8:00 pm at Bayfront Park. There will be live entertainment, DJs 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 always, PFLAG will have a booth. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Patti Boman: [pboman@pflag.com](mailto:pboman@pflag.com) or leave a message on the info line (888-398-0006).





*Luan D. Andrews, M.A.*

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Recipient John Kenny and  
his mom, Georgia Kenny  
Tom & Sue Johnson  
Sherry Cohen-Richards

### Festival Coordinator

Bobbi Harwood  
Please note, she promises  
perfect weather for future  
Pride weekends.

### PRIDE Donations to the General Fund

Rick & Lindy Miles  
Mary Thomas  
(Mary's granddaughter  
made rainbow earrings and  
all proceeds have been  
donated back to  
PFLAG SDC.)

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