Denver Gay Men’s Chorus To Sing at Inauguration

Jared Polis, Colorado’s first openly gay man elected to the governorship, will be inaugurated on Tuesday, January 8, on the west steps of the Capitol building.

The Rocky Mountain Arts Association is proud to announce that the Denver Gay Men’s Chorus has been invited to sing at the inauguration ceremony. The Denver Gay Men's Chorus has also invited Take Note, the 16-person a capella group from the Denver Women's Chorus, to participate.

The public viewing area (standing room only) is located on Lincoln Street between Colfax and 14th Avenues. Chorus performances are scheduled for 9:30 - 10:10 a.m., and the swearing in at 11:00 a.m.

Changes in Membership Form, Executive Team

By Blanca Leos

The PFLAG Denver Membership Drive will start on February 1 with a new and improved membership form that will go out with the next newsletter.

In the next two months PFLAG Denver will be changing their executive team on the Board of Directors. Mia Furtado will be the new President, Jaime Marston-Cook will be the new Vice-President, and Curtis Halbach will be coming into the position of Treasurer.

Our Secretary position is still open and we are currently seeking a new person to fill this position.

The duties/responsibilities are as follows:
- Serves on the Executive Committee.
- Keeps copies of the organization's bylaws and the Board's policy statements.
- Ensures that there is a quorum at Board meetings.
- Keeps accurate minutes of meetings.

We appreciate all the hard work of all of our past executive leaders, and recognize their many contributions to the chapter.

Roxann Salem Honored at Holiday Party

At the Holiday Party on December 6, the PFLAG Denver Board honored member, treasurer, and longtime volunteer Roxann Salem for her years of unusually devoted service to the chapter.

The gift that you see Roxann holding is a handsome clock, inscribed with this message: Thank you for all the years of dedication to the PFLAG Denver Chapter. With love-your PFLAG family!

See Roxann’s lovely note of thanks on page 2.

2019 PFLAG National Convention in Kansas City

Message from National: Join us in Kansas City on October 25-27, 2019, where we will gather to learn, to strategize, and to be in the company of passionate, compatriot change makers from across the country.

Our best rates – $185 for members, $270 for non-members – are in effect right now. Get registered and take advantage of this early-bird offer, which will be in effect until March 29.

We Are the Change will provide major opportunities for networking, while offering workshops, panel discussions, and nationally renowned speakers to be motivated by and learn from. You’ll also enjoy our PFLAG National Awards ceremony during which we will honor those who are making a difference and from whose efforts we can learn – and mirror – in the coming years.

In between sessions, you’ll have free time to enjoy all that Kansas City has to offer, whether you’re a foodie, a BBQ aficionado, a craft beer lover, a history buff, an art lover, or all of the above!
The Denver Women’s Chorus will present their 2019 winter concert, Nevertheless, We Persist: Singing Our Stories for 35 Years, on January 25 (7:30 p.m.) and January 26 (2:00 and 7:30 p.m.) at the historic Central Presbyterian Church in Denver. Now at 159 members strong, this women’s ensemble will celebrate themes of perseverance, community and women’s empowerment, as well as highlight the 35-year history of the DWC.

The Denver Gay Men’s Chorus, along with treble voices from multiple choruses in the Denver area, will bring the profound piece Street Requiem to Fort Collins on January 19, to benefit three charities in the area that address the challenge of homelessness. 7:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 1005 Stover St., Fort Collins.

Letter to the Board and membership:
Last month at the Holiday Party I was surprised and humbled by the gift of a beautiful mantel chock presented to me by Blanca on behalf of the membership for my over ten years of service to the chapter. As I stated then, although it was given as a token for my service to PFLAG, it shall serve to remind me of gratitude I feel for all that I have received. My life has been so blessed by your compassion and kindness, acceptance and respect, love and friendship. The PFLAG family shall always have a special place in my life and in my heart, as I am so very proud of the work that we do and the way we touch so many lives, often in ways we will never know, for the common good. So go forth, my mighty warriors, on to change the world, with peace on your mind and love in your heart.

With love and gratitude, your faithful servant, Roxann Salem

Volunteer voices
By Lisa Telk

Happy New Year to all volunteers!!

Thank you all volunteers who helped us at the Denver Chapter! We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to working more with each and every one of you in the New Year!

Also, thank you to all our volunteers who helped us at our scholarship award ceremony. This was a special day for many youth, and you all helped make the day memorable for the youth and their families.

A special thanks to Jake for taking over our social media, it was such a gift.

Also, a special mention of one special volunteer, Becky, who literally helped us at almost every event – PRIDE, the scholarship award ceremony, envelope-stuffing, and our Holiday Party. Thank you, Becky!

All volunteers are very special to us at the Denver Chapter! We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to working more with each and every one of you in the New Year!

KEEPING UP WITH CHAPTER
Support – Education – Advocacy

SPEAKERS’ BUREAU – No engagements.

HELPLINE — The office/ Helpline received 35 calls in December.

SUPPORT GROUPS — Total attendance at the regular and trans support groups in December was 48.
A Heartwarming Story from the Heartland

By Sara Winter

My sister Beth lives in a northeastern Kansas town, population 3,300. She has been a loyal supporter of PFLAG for many years, and she keeps me informed of LGBTQ+ issues that come up from time to time in her conservative community.

She mentioned not long ago that she had attended a picnic honoring the recently married transgender daughter of a couple with whom she volunteers in the community. It took me by surprise to hear that parents in this small town had a transgender child, and that they had openly staged a wedding reception for her. I asked Beth to put me in touch with those parents, Linda and Jim, and they readily agreed to talk with me. (I asked Rebecca Reynolds to help me with appropriate questions I might ask them, and her advice was invaluable.) I have had a lengthy and delightful phone conversation and email exchange with Linda and Jim, and they have given me permission to tell their story in our newsletter, as has their daughter Zia.

Zia came out as possibly transgender to her parents just before her first year in college, when she was 18 or 19 years old. The parents responded that it was her decision, and they would provide emotional support. Zia found support and information through college and high school counselors and from the Kansas State University campus ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Linda and Jim turned to books and online resources (this was in the early 2000s, when Internet information was more limited).

Linda says she knew what transgender meant, but not a great deal more. She was a biology science major in college, which helped her to understand that the spectrum of sexuality is varied. She and Jim acknowledge that it took them a long time (about two years) to begin to tell relatives and friends, partly because they were waiting for Zia to step out publicly on her own. Linda made a telling comment: “Holding secrets sucks the life out of you.” They describe themselves as private people, although they were active in community activities, particularly the local theater group and volunteer organizations. They describe Zia as a very kind, gentle person. During grade and middle school, she was bullied because her classmates perceived her as “different” (in Linda’s words, “because she was a science nerd very smart spacey gifted different kid”). She found solace in theater, debate, scholar bowl, and forensic activities. In high school she found her place and close circle of friends; by her senior year she was accepted but not popular or included socially.

As a sophomore in college Zia presented as male, and she found and committed to K’La, a fellow student. Their situation took a complicated turn when K’La became pregnant. Linda and Jim counseled the couple that their first responsibility was to their child, if they chose to keep it, which they did. When in 2006 Grace Elizabeth was born, all parties rose to the occasion: Zia and K’La were good parents, and Linda and Jim were thrilled to have a grandchild.

All this happened more than a decade ago. Here is what has happened since:

Zia earned a degree in electrical engineering at Kansas State University in 2010. She transitioned to live full-time as female after graduating college, when she moved to California.

She has had a succession of jobs and is now working full-time at a daycare/school, a position that brings her special satisfaction. Zia and K’La separated as romantic partners shortly before Grace turned one year old. While K’La was supportive of Zia’s decision to transition, she realized she wanted to have a life partner who was biologically male. Zia and K’La have remained close, and co-parent their daughter amicably. K’La formed a relationship with a student named Drew (whom she eventually married) and earned an MSW degree at UC Berkeley. All four of them – Zia, K’La, Drew, and Grace – formed a family unit and lived together in student housing in California for several years, as a way to help each other. Five years ago, K’La and Drew had a son. Grace, now 12, calls Zia “Daddy,” and Zia and K’La continue to share parental duties in raising her. She spends a month with Linda and Jim every summer.

Zia subsequently fell in love with Piper, a preschool teacher and now a seminary student whose family does not accept her lesbian “lifestyle,” although her mother is very supportive. Jim and Linda attended the wedding of Zia and Piper in June 2017, in Berkeley, CA, along with a few other family members and many friends. Later that summer, back in Kansas, they hosted a picnic reception to introduce Piper and affirm their marriage.

Linda and Jim have encountered few negative reactions. One set of grandparents makes remarks and can’t remember to call their granddaughter Zia, but they have generally been accepting. A few people have shown an inappropriate desire to know details. Linda gets most of the questions, and a typical one is, “What does Jim think?” Her reply: “He just loves Zia so much ….” Most of their friends have seemed to shrug, as if to say “Whatever,” and certainly Zia’s classmates think it is no big deal.

I have learned at least three important lessons from my interview with this family:

First, don’t stereotype Kansas or any other rural locality; people there deal with the same issues as people elsewhere, and handle them as well (or poorly) as anybody else. Linda comments, “I agree with this absolutely, we see more and more youngsters coming out as ‘different’ with better support than 20 years ago. Still there is stigma and religious dogma here.”

Second, the coming-out process for transgender individuals and their parents has many similarities with that for people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. There’s a universality to the stages involved: you start with ignorance and denial, and transition to self-education, acceptance, sharing, and affirmation. (Of course, the process varies from person to person, and many never make it to the affirmation stage.) However, there are major differences, such as changing names, changing pronouns, getting medical and surgical treatment, to name just a few.

Third, society is making progress, and Linda, Jim, Zia, and all of us in PFLAG should be proud for having been a part of it.