Update from the Scholarship Committee

By Brett James, Scholarship Committee Chair

While the Scholarship Committee works to select its 2019 recipients, we thought we would send our members a short history and overview of the Scholarship Program.

The PFLAG Denver Scholarship Program began in 2010 when then chapter president Deborah Stone was inspired by the PFLAG National Scholarship Program and wanted to bring it to Denver. Since its creation our scholarship has recognized Colorado high school and college students who are standard bearers in their service to their LGBTQ+ communities. In addition to recognizing students for their past work, scholarship recipients must commit to continuing their work of promoting PFLAG’s values of support, education, and advocacy.

Every fall PFLAG Denver sends application information to high schools, two- and four-year colleges, universities, trade schools, and vocational schools throughout the state of Colorado. High school seniors and college freshman and sophomores are invited to apply.

Ours is a service-based scholarship rewarding students for their work in their LGBTQ+ communities. Applicants write three essays detailing the social justice work they have done and how they plan to continue that work in their lives. They must also submit two letters of recommendation. There is no minimum GPA needed to apply, but applicants must prove current enrollment with a current transcript.

The application review committee is comprised of volunteers from the Denver area. Once all applications are received the committee reads and reviews every application and scores each essay. The committee has one final meeting where it looks over the top scoring students and makes its final decision for scholarship recipients.

It is a powerful experience reading applicants’ essays and letters of recommendations. So many have already completed incredible work focused on support, education, and advocacy. Committee members will tell you how moved and inspired they are by our applicants’ personal journeys. We would easily double the amount of scholarship money we award or increase the number of applicants who are awarded scholarships, were we able.

Nine months of dedicated work culminates in the PFLAG Denver Scholarship Award Ceremony every spring. Committee members have the honor of introducing each recipient to the audience, but the highlight comes when each applicant is given time to speak about her, his, or their work, about what got them to this stage in their lives, and about what they plan to do in the years ahead with their education and their advocacy. Our applicants make PFLAG Denver proud.

If you would like to share in this experience, please consider becoming a committee member. You may contact our office for more information.

Our scholarship is 100% donation dependent, so if you would like to make a donation please visit the Scholarships tab of our web site.

Mother and Daughter Attend Trans Conference

By Rebecca Reynolds

On the second weekend in March, CU Boulder’s Center for Inclusion and Social Change hosted their 13th Annual TRANSforming Gender Conference, in Boulder.

Nine hundred fifty-five people from 13 states attended and ranged in age from 12 to over 70. The conference offered over 50 different workshops and presentations during the two days and covered a host of different topics. It was the largest attendance seen in the 13-year history, with 57% of the attendees identifying as trans/gender expansive and more parents attending than in previous years.

My daughter Lexi and I attended a variety of sessions ranging from Queering Biology to Native and Indigenous Trans Identities. The workshops all provided strategies for working together to create a safer and more affirming world for our LGBTQ+ loved ones.

Morgan Seamont, the conference organizer, said he has received feedback from parents saying that, for some of them, this was the first time they had met other parents of trans children. Others said that being able to connect with the community has helped them gain a better understanding of how to support their trans child and given them a greater sense of well being for their child’s future.

This was the first year that my daughter attended the conference and I had to drag her home! Thank you to Morgan Seamont and CU’s Center for Inclusion and Social Change for this opportunity to learn and connect. We are already excited for next year!
Legislature May Ban Conversion Therapy

By Esteban Lee-O’Neal

Colorado is trying for the fifth time to ban conversion therapy for anyone under the age of 18. If finally passed, House Bill 19-1129 would protect children 18 and under by forcing disciplinary action by the appropriate licensing board for anyone who attempts to impede the natural manifestation of a child’s sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

The practice of “conversion” or “reparative” therapy exists primarily in religious contexts where religious leaders and parents do not accept the natural course of a child’s healthy growth, based on religious texts and religious expectations.

Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide. According to the Human Rights Campaign, persons forced into these programs are, “…more than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide. Nearly 6 times as likely to report high levels of depression, more than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs, and more than 3 times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs.”

My personal experience in the Mormon Church’s conversion therapy program for 12 years in Denver resulted in 5 out of 15 fathers committing suicide, and also my own depression and suicidal thoughts. It was a terrible ordeal, and I participated as an adult father of three children. Imagine how horrific it is to be a young child forced into this type of child abuse. We must all protect these young LGBTQ+ kids – they are our future accepting religious leaders, business leaders, parents, friends, and mentors – by passing House Bill 19-1129.

Editor’s Note: We await the outcome of this bill in the legislature, and in the May issue we will describe in more detail what the bill, if passed, will and will not do.

Stacey Shigaya Joins Board

Our newest Board member is Stacey L. Shigaya. She is the proud mother of a cisgender pansexual daughter and a cisgender straight son.

Stacey was born and raised in Denver and earned a BS in Human Development and Learning from Christian Brothers University and an MS in Counseling and Personnel Services from The University of Memphis. Upon completion of her graduate degree she moved back to Denver, which she has always considered “home.”

Stacey is the Program Director for Sakura Foundation and Sakura Square LLC. She is responsible for the development, management and implementation of projects and programming which fulfill the charitable mission of Sakura Foundation, including the Annual Cherry Blossom Festival which is co-presented with Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temple. Within the realm of Sakura Square LLC, she contributes to the strategic planning, human resources services, and management of Sakura Square and its current redevelopment project, located in the heart of downtown Denver.

In addition to being a board member of PFLAG Denver, Stacey is involved in the Japanese-American community and is a Trustee at Simpson United Methodist Church, which is rooted deeply in the Japanese-American culture and experience.

Being a mom has always been the single most defining and significant role in Stacey’s life. Her daughter’s amazing spirit has opened the door for Stacey to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community, listen to stories of joy and sadness, and understand the need to be involved. Marsha Aizumi, President of PFLAG San Gabriel Valley Asian Pacific Islander, has also been an inspirational role model for what happens when caring hearts become active allies.

Stacey feels it is a privilege, honor and responsibility to advocate as an ally for the LGBTQ+ community and is grateful to PFLAG Denver for the opportunity to offer hope and support.

Volunteer Voices

By Lisa Telk

Hello, PFLAG volunteers. Since spring is in the air, I want to encourage you all to start thinking about PRIDE on June 15 and 16. This is the event that we need the most volunteers.

Please email me at Lisa@pflagdenver.org or email to pflagden@tdcif.com if you are interested in helping us in the booth this year. Thank you so much!!

We look forward to having you be a part of this event. It really is a fun-filled weekend!
The Denver Women’s Chorus (DWC) will celebrate its 35th anniversary with a banquet on Thursday, April 4, at the DoubleTree Stapleton North Hotel in Denver. Special guests include past and current members, and also the founder of DWC, Carol White. The keynote speaker for the event is Leslie Herod, the first gay African-American to be elected to the Colorado Legislature.

Invitation from PFLAG National — Please join us for a special PFLAG-chapter-members-only Webinar to hear from—and connect with—our new Executive Director Brian K. Bond. All you’ll need is a computer or mobile device.

Brian joined PFLAG National in February 2019. He’s got a strong and inclusive vision for PFLAG’s future, and it centers on our PFLAG Chapter Network and PFLAGers’ incredible stories. Peer-to-peer support that PFLAGers provide in their communities, the education they offer to members and newcomers, and the passionate advocacy PFLAGers engage in at every level of government — all of these are the foundation on which PFLAG will build as we look toward the 50th anniversary of PFLAG’s founding, coming in 2023.

There are two opportunities in April to join the webinar:
- Wednesday, April 10 – 8:30 PM ET/ 5:30 PM PT: https://cc.readytalk.com/r/hnuza7znk7k&em
- Thursday, April 11 - 3PM ET/Noon PT: https://cc.readytalk.com/r/exw6mmuf2b66&em.

In this conversation, Brian wants to meet and hear from YOU. He’s looking for your ideas on how to support the work you’re doing in your communities — no idea is too big or too bold.

You’ll learn more about Brian, his previous work, and why he was passionate about PFLAG long before he became Executive Director. Plus, you’ll hear more about Brian’s exciting vision for PFLAG’s future, and learn more about how PFLAG National will continue to provide support to the chapter network to accomplish important goals, including passage of the Equality Act.

Because Brian’s focus is on hearing from you, the majority of our time will be focused on your feedback and questions. Your voice is a critical part of the session, so be ready to share your thoughts.

Mariposa at the Althea Center is launching its First Wednesdays Series with a social event and screening of the romantic comedy, Oy Vey! My Son Is Gay!, on April 4, 6-9 p.m., in the SoulShine Theater on the lower level of the Althea Center, 1400 Williams St., Denver. RSVP to Program Director Tim Wilson at tkwdeo@icloud.com or 720-987-3072.

See the flyer at right.

PFLAG Denver is looking for a new home!

Because of problems with scheduling and maintenance issues, the Board has decided to leave the CHUN mansion. Please help us find a new place for our chapter.

Requirements:
- Minimum of 250 ft²
- Up to $700 a month
- Conference room area for our monthly group meetings (10-20 people)
- Small event space (20-40 people)
- Available/easy parking
- Fully accessible, if possible

If you know of any office spaces that meet our criteria, please email us at pflagden@tde.com or call 303-573-5861.