

TORONTO PFLAG

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

January 2012 Newsletter #15

www.torontopflag.org

office@pflagtoronto.org

TORONTO PFLAG VISION

Toronto PFLAG is a charitable organization that speaks for a more accepting Canadian society by providing support, education and resources to all people who wish to grow in their understanding of sexual and gender diversity.

Toronto PFLAG actively assist in the recognition and growth of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer and questioning persons, and their families and friends, within their diverse cultures and societies.

Next Support Meeting

Wednesday
February 1, 2012
7:30 p.m.

Kimbourne Park United Church
200 Wolverleigh Blvd.,
Toronto, ON M4C 1S2



Ernie watching from the balcony



Michael Burgess sings

A message from your President

January 30, 2012

This edition of our e-newsletter is reminiscent of our After Pride edition – full of pictures – this time to encapsulate a sense of our Award Reception on January 16th. One phrase has been repeated most often by our guests and refers to the amazing atmosphere of being welcomed into a warm and supportive group of friends and family. It was indeed very much a PFLAG family event, with everyone being made most welcome.

The Honourable Bill Graham, one of our guest speakers, has kindly written an article which you can read on page 9. Marla acknowledges our volunteers on page 12 and the pictures, for the most part, speak for themselves.

This event truly was a collaborative process and all Board Members, Bev, Marla, Pam, Bryn, Ernie, Gary, Michael, Robert and myself are grateful to all who contributed to making it such a success.

Wonderfully enjoyable as the event was, it also served as an opportunity for all present to hear more about Toronto PFLAG's goals for 2012; and how they can help us achieve them.

Needless to say, no sooner was the event over than our volunteers were back at work doing outreach and support in Toronto, and reading three articles of interest.

1) Good News – American Airlines released results of a poll on top cities for gay life – and Toronto is included, after Tel Aviv and New York. Toronto's third place came with this quote "The Historical gay merchant Alexander Wood would be proud of the queer home his city has become." Toronto also came 3rd in the category of Best Pride.... let's show them in 2012 that Toronto Pride is a worthy contender of San Francisco the 1st Place winner!

2) What's in a Name? Part 1 Cynthia Nixon is also in the news, and being taken to task for her use of words last week when she said she was in a same-sex relationship, by choice; although her precise words were "For me, it is a choice. I understand that for many people it's not, but for me it's a choice, and you don't get to define my gayness for me."

This article mentions the spectrum between gay and straight and the grey area with bisexuals in the middle, and reminded me that Minister Kathleen Wynne, another of our guest speakers mentioned how narrow and exclusive are the accepted definitions of male and female attributes with no consideration of aspects of masculinity or femininity over a larger spectrum.

The Toronto Star article is interesting and I am glad Cynthia Nixon spoke as she did and enabled a learning opportunity for this Toronto PFLAG mum to continue to listen and explore other perspectives.

What's in a Name? – Part 2

In recent days, as we gear up to take our presentations into more schools, we read that Catholic consultants finally decided on an acceptable name for school groups against homophobia. The name

chosen is "Respecting Difference" clubs. "Gay-Straight Alliances" were seen as too politicized for a system whose faith disapproves of the homosexual act.

The 15-page blueprint says the clubs are not to be a forum for "activism, protest or advocacy of anything that is not in accord with the Catholic faith foundation of the school".

Nancy Kirby, Pres. Of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, says "We have nothing against (homosexual) people, but it's the act that is in contradiction of the teachings of the church". She said "gay-straight alliance" is an American-made term for groups that lobby for adult issues that go beyond the mandate of a school club.

You will recognize the name, Leanne Iskander. This young woman has shown more courage, sensibility, understanding and maturity than any of those who have spoken out against gay-straight alliances in Separate Schools, regardless of their positions or stations in life. Leanne says about the new name "It highlights the differences, rather than the similarities, and it should be about more than just respect – it should be about accepting people as they are."

N.B. at PFLAG we also would hope that 'accepting' be recognized as the first step, to be closely followed by 'supporting', when talking about diversity of any sort.

Leanne's school also disallowed a Gay-Straight Alliance and allowed a club called Open Arms.

Nancy Kirby also noted students bullied because of sexual orientation have higher suicide rates than their heterosexual peers.

At what point is that last sentence not understood by those who refuse to allow students who identify as gay, to be named as gay; and for students who are straight to ally themselves, in an aptly named club, with those who are gay?

If statistics are not enough, what sign are they waiting for?

Yours in Pride and Hope,

Irene Miller

I often mention how impressed I am by the youth I meet whilst doing outreach and support, and those who attended our Award Reception are no exception. Straight or gay, they are incredibly intelligent, caring individuals, who at an early age are already making a difference in their extended families, schools and communities to the benefit of all. I devised a short quiz of quotes pertaining to youth. Enjoy!

Fun Quiz: Who said the following? **Answers on page 12.**

- 1) Call things by their right names
- 2) The duty of youth is to challenge corruption
- 3) Almost everything that is great has been done by youth
- 4) Let not our proposal be discarded on the score of our youth
- 5) What is permissible is not always honourable
- 6) The arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth.

Options:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) Virgil, 70-19 B.C. | (b) Edmund Burke, 1729-97 |
| (c) Kurt Cobain, 1967-94 | (d) Benjamin Disraeli, 1804-81 |
| (e) Robert Hall, 1764-1831 | (f) Cicero, 106-43 B.C. |

Mr. Brian Burke received the Toronto PFLAG Ally Award
at the Ed Mirvish Theatre, Toronto
January 16th, 2012



Greeting guests on arrival were 3 members of the Mounted Police Force on their mounts, Spencer (not shown), Honest Ed, and in the foreground Moose, who was donated to the force by Brian Burke in honour of his late son Brendan.

Riding Moose is Police Sgt. Jim Patterson.

Inside volunteers Fran, Gary, Patricia, Crystal and Jared welcomed our guests →



Guests were treated to delicious hot and cold hors d'oeuvres created by Absolutely Famished – and served by their wonderful volunteers



Raffle Prizes – from our generous Donors



Irene and Maria welcome Ron MacLean the Emcee for the Event →





Harpist Lori Gemmell filled the theatre lobby with beautiful harp music as guests arrived, and entertained during the event with musical interludes.

Seneca College grad, Patricia Humphreys coordinated the Seneca Students who volunteered during the Event and enjoyed getting to know Ron MacLean

Andrea Houston of Xtra interviews Brian Burke



Det. Con. Mark Topping, YRP, and Ron MacLean

BareFoot Wines – Wesley & Sharon



Ron MacLean and Seneca College Students who volunteered to help Toronto PFLAG during the Award Reception – Allies! →

Lindy, Ron MacLean and John Gallagher – Allies! ↓





Ron MacLean kept everyone engaged as he introduced our guest speakers: Minister Kathleen Wynne, MPP who delivered a message from Premier McGuinty as well as her own personal message of support; Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, whose opening words had the crowd laughing and whose message of encouragement and support were heartfelt; the Honourable Bill Graham, whose historical stories of the journey to equality also touched home to many of us; and Detective Constable Mark Topping, YRP, who spoke of the benefits of partnering and the presentations on which we collaborated in 2011.

Each guest speaker has been an advocate for equality, a strong ally and a supporter of PFLAG, for which we are most truly grateful.



Brian Burke and
Kathleen Wynne



Kristyn Wong-Tam and
Michelle DuBarry



Parents, Families, Friends - Allies. Look who came to enjoy a wonderful evening and join with Toronto PFLAG in honouring Brian Burke. Here are pics of our friends including officers, in and out of uniform from various forces including Toronto Police, York Regional Police, OPP, friends and supporters from Pride Toronto, Toronto City Council, Proud FM, the Marriott Hotel, Delta Chelsea Hotel, local businesses and organisations with whom Toronto PFLAG partners and who have continued to support us over the years, and our own families and friends who understand why we do what we do, and proudly stand beside us.



Entertainment - what a treat! Wonderful performances from gifted artists!

Ron MacLean kept us entertained throughout the evening; the music of Lori Gemmell, the Cast of My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding, Michael Burgess and David Warrack offered something for everyone; and the comedy clip of Rick Mercer had everyone in the room in stitches laughing.



The talented cast of My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding had the whole room moving to the beat as they sang a Gay History of Canada, and the extra verses about e Brian Burke and Toronto PFLAG had everyone cheering!



The audience were enthralled when special guest Michael Burgess sang The Impossible Dream and You Raise Me Up, accompanied by David Warrack.



Rick Mercer presented his message to Brian and Toronto PFLAG via video clip, and quickly had everyone laughing.



Mr. Brian Burke,
Toronto PFLAG ALLY



throughout the evening Brian Burke met with Toronto PFLAGers – families and volunteers who walked alongside in Pride in 2010 and 2011, and wanted to say 'Thank You'.

Press mingled with friends and allies – everyone there with one purpose – to honour an Ally who acknowledges that ... *It's Time to Make a Difference!*





Hon. Bill Graham
discusses the importance
of the Ally Award
presented to Brian Burke

Toronto PFLAG'S recent presentation of its "Ally Award" to Brian Burke for his work and dedication in fighting homophobia and bullying sends a powerful message to two important elements of our society: our youth and sports. We are all too familiar with the tragic consequences of homophobic bullying of adolescents seeking to understand their place in this world. Sports occupies an important place in that world and the leadership of people like Brian and other sports heroes provides significant reinforcement for gay and lesbian youth as they struggle with personal issues leading to adulthood.

The field of sports has had a complex relationship with this subject; few sports icons are willing to be associated with it. It is a conservative world and one where deeply sensitive matters are rarely pursued for fear of misrepresentation or loss of prestige. Yet for that reason alone it is even more important that Brian Burke's example be followed and encouraged.

Some years ago it was my privilege to serve as our country's Defence Minister. The Canadian military is deep and rich in tradition which has served it well. It too is a conservative society where the term "conservative" is used in its highest sense; the men and women who serve are willing to risk their lives

as they defend and conserve the nation's fundamental values. Some years ago a courageous young captain challenged the military's prevailing reluctance to deal with this issue. Her fight was difficult but in the end the greater value of respect for the other and a willingness to recognize the sacrifice and service that gay and lesbian Canadian have made and continue to make with honour and valour alongside their companions prevailed over deep rooted prejudices. In the space of a decade enormous change took place to the extent that I was pleased to be our Defence Minister at a time when military personnel came to be married by military chaplains in religious services respected by all. Other militaries in allied countries have seen similar evolutions, most recently the Americans with the terminating of their highly contested "don't ask don't tell" policy. Surely if our militaries in the great Western democracies can achieve this level of recognition of the intrinsic value of each and every one of us, the sports world should not lag behind?

As Canada's Foreign Minister I was similarly proud to point to Canada's record of recent years in freeing our country's laws from prejudice toward gay and lesbians as an example of how a country can enrich the lives of all citizens and serve as an example to the world.

These administrative and legal changes represented a political challenge that came to fruition after years of debate before our parliament and courts. Toronto PFLAG's work today seeks to ensure that what is today accepted in our institutions becomes reflected at society's core and in our daily attitudes. This greater struggle for fundamental change is necessary if we are to ensure true equality and respect for all. And for this we salute and support Toronto PFLAG's contribution to our collective welfare and wish it well as it brings to each one of our young people a sense of their individual worth.

Bill Graham

January 16, 2012

Toronto PFLAG Award Reception EVENT SPONSORS, DONORS AND ENTERTAINERS

Toronto PFLAG wishes to acknowledge, with thanks, the generosity of those who contributed to making this Award Reception a success, and asks you to remember that these individuals and companies have shown their support for Toronto PFLAG and the work we do in and for Toronto's LGBTQ community.

Event Sponsors:



Entertainers and Special Guests:

Mr. Ron MacLean

Lori Gemmill

Rick Mercer

Michael Burgess

Kathleen Wynne, MPP

The Cast of My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding

Hon. Bill Graham

Det. Con. Mark Topping

Raffle Prize Donors:



Award Trophy:

The Award presented to Mr. Burke was handcrafted by artisans Susan Allen- Sandblasting, and Marilyn Ellison, Borealis Stained Glass Studio, incorporating the beautiful Toronto PFLAG logo designed by Kalynn Friesen.

We are most grateful to **all** who contributed to our Award Event.
Yours in Pride and Gratitude,

Michael Ain, Bev Belanger, Ernie Lacasse, Marla Green, Bryn Hendricks, Gary Miller, Robert Tomas, Irene Miller

Toronto PFLAG Board of Directors
At the Heart of Toronto's LGBTQ Community:
Keeping Families Together

THANK YOU

Toronto PFLAG wants to offer a heartfelt 'Thank You' to the wonderful people who have recently made a donation to PFLAG Toronto. Your donations are allowing us to continue offering our 24/7 Telephone Support Line, our Monthly Support Meetings and our ongoing outreach and community support. If you would like to help, you can make a donation through the secure servers at CanadaHelps.org (charitable donation receipts are issued automatically), and if you wish you can specify that your donation remain anonymous, or you can choose to honour someone or a special occasion. Or you may send a cheque to

PFLAG Toronto, 200 Wolverleigh Blvd., Toronto, ON, M4C 1S2.
(charitable donation receipts will be issued for amounts of \$20+)

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THANK YOU to our volunteers!

The event that we had to honour Brian Burke could never have happened if not for the help of an amazing group of volunteers. We at Toronto PFLAG are so lucky to have a group of committed individuals that we can call upon. Their dedication and enthusiasm cannot be overstated. Thanks to all who helped out.... those at the front door, coat check, taking photos, directing guests, selling raffle tickets, setting up/cleaning up, signing up new members, and those who were where they needed to be when they needed to be there!

Please know how much you are appreciated. We hope you had a wonderful evening!

Marla Green
Volunteer Coordinator
Toronto PFLAG

Fun Quiz Answers:

- 1) - (e) Robert Hall, English Clergyman
- 2) - (c) Kurt Cobain, musician
- 3) - (d) Benjamin Disraeli, British Statesman
- 4) - (a) Virgil, Roman Poet
- 5) - (f) Cicero, Roman Statesman
- 6) - (b) Edmund Burke, Irish Statesman