



February - March 2008

Newsletter

Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Melbourne, VICTORIA

www.pflagvictoria.org.au

PFLAG Committee

President: Ian Glascott

Secretary / Treasurer:
John Chamberlain

General Members:

- Jeff Jellis
- Glenys Chamberlain
- Kerrie Beitzel
- Victoria Zahra-Territo
- Teresa Finocchario
- Jim & Diane Murphy
- Kim Sinclair
- Michael Hourigan



The PFLAG contingent made their presence known at the Annual Gay and Lesbian PRIDE March in St Kilda on 3 February. We may have been at the back of the line but we sure got a rousing reception!

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday 25 March
7.30pm
Toorak Bowls Club
Mandeville Cres
Toorak

Reminder
Memberships for 2008 are now due!
Your ongoing support is crucial.
See page 4 for details

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President's Report

January & February Meetings

The first two Family Meetings for 2008 have been excellent meetings. The number of PFLAGers attending has been very pleasing and we have welcomed some new families into the fold for the first time.

It has been very gratifying that the newcomers have felt comfortable enough within the group to discuss their concerns with us at such an early stage of their journey. They have all seemed to greatly appreciate the group discussions, suggestions and advice, and to share similar experiences that we have all been through at different stages in our own journeys.

Kim & Fin's son Tristan came to the January meeting; he was a wonderful contributor to the night's discussions and was instrumental in helping one of the new fathers in particular come to terms with some issues that had been worrying him.

The February meeting was unusual in that quite a large proportion of the group were in fact young gay/lesbian, this added a different dimension to the night's discussions. To have some young gay people at our meetings certainly helps the new parents to understand the issues facing their gay sons/daughters in 'coming out' and offers a different perspective than that from us parents. It makes us realise just how important our acceptance of our

children's sexuality is to their future and wellbeing.

And how great it was to have Jason & Danny at this meeting - they always add so much to our meetings with their compassion and sense of humour.

And of course, a special thankyou to Michael and Victoria who regularly provide this support at our family meetings; we are all so grateful.

Carnival Day & PRIDE March

As part of the Midsumma Festival, PFLAG was again involved in both the Carnival Day and the Pride March down Fitzroy Street. There were changes to both events this year: Carnival Day was held earlier in the festival this year,
 (continued inside)

President's Report (cont)

not being the final event as in previous years. To our delight (and I think to most people) it was again held at the Alexandra Gardens. PFLAG had a prominent position for its stall and it was a very successful and rewarding day. We gave away heaps of PFLAG brochures and booklets and talked to many people of all ages, background and cultures - spreading the PFLAG word as it were! Thank-you so much to all the volunteers who helped man the stall on the day, it was a great team effort.

The Pride March was the final event in this years Midsumma Festival,

excluding the party in the gardens following the march of course - but we leave that for the young ones !! This year, PFLAG was the last group to march, followed only by the Midsumma marshals and volunteers. We assume it was a case of " saving the best til last" !!!

It was a long wait, but we still received a fantastic reception from the crowd as always. The feeling of marching with PFLAG is amazing and very rewarding - it makes all the work and effort we all put into the PFLAG group so worthwhile. A huge THANKYOU to those families who joined us.

On a sad note..

Our sincere condolences go out to Aileen and her family, and in particular to her son and daughter-in-law who tragically lost their baby girl Ava to a fatal genetic condition recently.

As requested, rather than flowers, PFLAG has made a donation to the Spinal Muscular Atrophy Association (SMA) in Ava's name in the hope that it may help prevent other families from experiencing such sadness.

Ian Glascott
PFLAG President

For your diary..

PFLAG Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 22 April at 7pm

(prior to the Family Meeting)

All welcome. Only financial members can vote / nominate.

Borrowed a book?

There are a number of library books that have been on loan for an extended period. If you have one it would be great if you could bring it back to the next meeting!

Choir Master a Local Hero

Jonathan Welch, best known for his work with the Choir of Hard Knocks, was recently awarded this year's Local Hero Award as part of the Australia Day Honours List.

While Welch is well known for his appearances in musicals and operas, he is best known in the GLBTI community for his time at the helm of the Melbourne Gay & Lesbian Chorus and the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir.

PFLAG Brisbane plans another ad

Shelley Argent of PFLAG Brisbane is planning another large advertisement for The Australian newspaper to draw attention to the new Federal Government's pre-election promise to end economic discrimination against same-sex couples.

The tentative date for the ad is Saturday 5 April.

It won't be cheap, so if you'd like to contribute there are many ways to do so. You can write a cheque or money order to PFLAG and post it to PO Box 1372, Eagle Farm QLD 4009. Alternatively, donate directly into the PFLAG Brisbane bank account. Details are: Bank of Queensland, BSB 124-011, A/c: 2023-8607.

You can contact Shelley on 0409 363 335 or at pflagbris@hotmail.com



Did you know...?

Our committee President Ian and his wife Jan were filmed marching in last year's Sydney Mardi Gras. They were interviewed mid-march and commented on the importance of loving your gay children. The footage made mainstream television and appeared on the Sunrise show!

Check it out at <http://www.mardigras.org.au/internal.cfm?sub=Parade&nav=Mardi%20Gras%2008>

Congratulations!

PFLAG Committee members John and Glenys Chamberlain recently became grandparents to a baby boy, Zach Charlie Chamberlain. Congratulations John & Glenys!

A Message from ALSO

PFLAG members are entitled to join ALSO as an Associate Member for the discounted fee of \$25 pa (normally \$35).

Associate Members of ALSO enjoy all the benefits of ALSO membership - except voting rights. You can become an ALSO Member by completing the secure online membership application form found on our website www.also.org.au or by calling the ALSO office on (03) 9827 4999 and a form will be sent to you.

FEATURE

PFLAG Stories - A PFLAG Mum goes to Mardi Gras

In each edition of our newsletter we publish a story from a PFLAG parent, family member, friend or even child. In this edition our story comes from a PFLAG mother who recently marched in the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney. What an inspiration!

All year I said I will not be attending the 2008 Mardi Gras. However, when my son asked me in the middle of February "why don't you go, you always enjoy it?", it was just the encouragement I needed!!

Checking in at the airport I was asked what did my PFLAG badge mean and when I explained to the lady she said she was a mother of 3 and would have no problem whatsoever if her children told her they were gay. I did laugh to myself as many years ago I thought I was even cooler than her and would have no problems either!!!

On the plane I chatted to a couple, two young girls; it was their first Mardi Gras and they were as excited as I was. When I explained that every year it is as exciting as the first time I attended they were surprised. I hope it will always be this way for me!

Arriving in Sydney the city was on a huge high and people were wishing each other "Happy Mardi Gras" wherever I went.

Late in the afternoon, I headed down to Hyde Park to meet the other PFLAGers in our usual assembling area and I could just feel the 30th Anniversary of Sydney's Mardi Gras was going to be very special.

While I was waiting I decided to buy a pink Australian Flag to wave during the march and to keep as my 2008 Mardi Gras souvenir. My son and his friend decided to surprise me so they left their hotel early and joined me in Hyde Park before we all had to head off to the restricted marshalling area.

Each year before the parade starts I go for my usual walk in the marshalling area quietly looking at all the people and taking in the atmosphere.

A young girl asked me if she could have her photo taken with me and she became quite emotional as her mother could not accept her and she was very confused as her mother had a lot of gay friends.

I thought about the lady at the airport that morning and how each of us have a road to travel.

The parade began at 7.45pm to a huge roar from the motorbikes and from us the marchers - I don't know which was louder! As I watched the parade, I thought as always, people from the GLBT community had spent endless hours decorating their floats and creating costumes which would have done justice on the catwalk during the International Melbourne Festival!

Around 9pm the time arrived for us to start our march. The record crowd estimated at 300,000 was made up of many young families, the GLBT community, older people - everyone was represented. I had goose bumps walking along waving my Pink Aussie Flag and proudly carrying the PFLAG Victoria placard. In some sections the crowds were 15 deep, it was the largest crowd I had ever seen at the Mardi Gras and it matched the record number of 10,000 entrants. The response in some sections to our float was deafening.

I was getting very excited knowing I was getting closer to seeing my son in the BGF section. This is the only section of the parade route where you pay to watch and all proceeds go to the BG Foundation. (The Bobby Goldsmith Foundation is Australia's oldest HIV/AIDS charitable organisation. Established by a dedicated group of Bobby Goldsmith's friends in 1984, the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation has helped thousands of men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS. Today, their core purpose is to help people living with HIV/AIDS to live their best life through practical, emotional and financial support.) It's a very worthwhile cause.

I passed the section and was extremely disappointed to not see my son but I thought to myself, be grateful you are here marching in this amazing parade and you did see him earlier in the evening.

Suddenly I heard my name being shouted above the roar and there was my son and his friend. I couldn't believe my ears and then my eyes.

Here was my beautiful boy with his happy carefree face, full of love. I hugged him and told him how much I loved him and thanked him for making this night possible for me and yes I cried and I am crying again as I write these words.

I then hugged my son and his friend again and the girl had let my son take her place on the front barricade so I could see him, I hugged my son again and then rejoined the rest of our group.

As I marched the last section I was floating on air as tears gently fell down my face. Mardi Gras night is my happiest night of the year for being a mum, it is very hard to put in words as the depth of emotions are so deep.

In this day and age when the words 'honoured' and 'privileged' are used so frequently by celebrities and the like, the meaning of such words can lessen but I was so deeply honoured to be a PFLAG member and to be allowed to march. My courageous son, since he has come out, has given my life such a new depth and it is such a privilege to be his mum. It has been the most wonderful journey.

I am sitting in my office with my pink Aussie flag and planning the trip back to Sydney's 31st Mardi Gras next year. And in the meantime, whenever I want to feel the emotion like no other, I will just close my eyes and remember last Saturday night when I saw my son during the 2008 Sydney Mardi Gras.

Would you like to share your story?

Feel free to approach any Committee Member at the next Family Meeting, or email your story to: contactus@pflagvictoria.org.au All stories are printed anonymously and with permission.

More PFLAG PRIDE..



The view from the back of the PRIDE March!



Time to celebrate - the PRIDE March ended where the party started.

2008 PFLAG Memberships are now due

PFLAG Victoria Memberships are currently down. If you have forgotten to renew, please do so using the Membership Application below. Alternatively, you can renew using Paymate on our website. It's easy!
Your ongoing support is greatly appreciated!

CONTACT



Mailing Address

Level 1
6 Claremont Street
South Yarra
VIC 3141

email

contactus@pflagvictoria.org.au

Phone Help Line

(03) 9827 8408

Phone Contacts

Jeff Jellis
Carmel Richardson
Ian & Jan Glascott
Kim Sinclair
Teresa Finocchiaro
Glenys Chamberlain



Membership Application

Enclosed is my subscription to assist PFLAG in its work of **KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER**

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone:

Email:

Amount enclosed:

- \$25.00 Family membership (2 adults at same residence)
 \$20.00 Single membership (waged)
 \$15.00 Unwaged or concession

Inclusive of GST

Signature:

Optional donation: \$..... Receipt required (tick)

Send to: The Treasurer
PFLAG Victoria
Level 1, 6 Claremont Street
South Yarra VIC 3141

You can also sign up or renew your membership online
www.pflagvictoria.org.au