



**Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders**

**November 2004**

**NEWSLETTER**

**Brewster, MA**

## **Modern Reality Cannot Be 'Amended'**

[Excerpted from article by Wayne Besen, *PFLAG Alert* 11/4/04]

Conservative leaders earned the right to rejoice after voters approved Constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage in 11 states. But after the party ends, conservatives may find these to be hollow victories that accomplish little and serve as a catalyst for the advancement of gay rights in America.

On Election Day, Amendments were passed in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah.

Presumably, the two goals of conservative groups who pushed these amendments were to shove gay people back in the closet and take a stand for traditional marriage. I don't believe they succeeded on either count.

Certainly, gay and lesbian Americans went to bed Tuesday night somewhat depressed over the rout at the polls. By morning, however, the political dust settled and many of these citizens kissed their life partners and went to work, just as they always have. The defeat did not magically turn gay people into heterosexuals, nor did any same-sex couples break up because of these referendums.

So, nothing really changed; the 1950's didn't suddenly reappear. Gay people are here to stay, and no Amendment or conservative political posturing is going to return gay people to the closet. Instead of rolling back the gay rights movement, these bigoted belches will energize the thousands who voted against these Amendments and offer gay rights organizations an unprecedented platform to discuss same-sex marriage.

With grueling Amendment battles behind them, gay activists can now transition from political fights to the kinder terrain of public education, turning America into a giant classroom on same-sex families. The educational process may take ten or even fifteen years, but demographically time is on our side. Polls show that people under 30 are much more likely to support same-sex marriage. And once the discussion over same-sex relationships truly begins, it is inevitable that most Americans will eventually come to favor same-sex marriage. As people meet more gay couples, the current system of relationship apartheid will unravel.

People will not want to see their friends suffer discrimination and be denied equal benefits such as pensions, inheritance and hospital visitation rights. Americans will recoil when the children of same-sex couples are left vulnerable because the one parent with legal custody dies unexpectedly.

Americans have yet to hear from the many adults who grew up in same-sex households who will demand an explanation as to why their first-rate parents are being treated like second-class citizens. And as more gay people come out, an exponentially high number of families will start demanding equal marriage rights for their gay sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.

As for the conservatives' other goal of saving traditional marriage, even less was accomplished. I'm not sure how many heterosexual women woke up the day after these votes and said, "Gee, now that marriage has been saved from homosexuals, maybe I shouldn't ask my third husband for a divorce after all?"

Or how many guys said, "Now that gays can't get married, I can finally respect the institution, marry my girlfriend, and take care of our four out-of-wedlock kids."

Instead of helping to rehabilitate the institution of marriage, the polarizing debate over these Amendments served as distractions. Bashing a minority is a lot easier and more lucrative for "pro-family" groups than facing true threats to the family like divorce, abuse, addiction, unemployment, and infidelity.

Now that the Amendments have passed and gay people can no longer be scapegoated, will these pro-family groups offer any substantive plans to fix the real problems that end marriages? If not, it reveals that they are not pro-family, but simply anti-gay.

America has changed for the better, with gay families no longer invisible. There is no hateful Amendment that can amend this reality.

## 65,000 Lesbian and Gay Americans Serving in Armed Forces

[Excerpted from *PFLAG Alert* 11/11/04]

A new report from the Urban Institute estimates that, by even conservative counts, 65,000 lesbian and gay Americans are serving in the United States Armed Forces, on active duty, in the reserves, and the National Guard. The report, "Gay Men and Lesbians in the U.S. Military: Estimates from Census 2000," finds that the length of service for gay men is equal to their heterosexual colleagues, while lesbians typically serve longer than their straight counterparts. The Urban Institute's estimates are based on an analysis of year 2000 census data. The data is subjected to a rigorous review by the Institute, a non-partisan economic and social policy research organization.

According to the Urban Institute, conservative estimates suggest 36,000 gay men and lesbians are serving on active duty. When the National Guard and reserve are included, the number grows to 65,000. According to the report, lesbians comprise 5 percent of all female military personnel, while gay men account for 2 percent of all male military members. The total number of lesbians and gays serving represents 2.8 percent of the nation's military forces.

In 2003, the Institute also reported that approximately 1 million lesbian and gay veterans were living in the United States. The three states with the largest population of gay and lesbian veterans are California (137,000), Florida (67,000) and Texas (66,000). Approximately 10,000 service members have been discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" since its passage in 1993. Copies of the Urban Institute report are available online at [www.sldn.org](http://www.sldn.org).

---

## Shift in Military Attitudes Toward Gays

[Excerpted from *PFLAG Alert* 11/11/04]

Fifty percent of junior enlisted service members say that gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve openly in the military, according to the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey. The number is a significant increase since 1992, when two similar surveys found 16 percent of male service members held the same view.

Those who support allowing gays to serve openly do so because they believe sexual orientation is unrelated to job performance. Twenty-nine percent also believe allowing gays to serve is an issue of equal rights.

The Annenberg poll also reflects other recent polls finding widespread public support for lifting the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ban on lesbian and gay personnel. Annenberg reports 67 percent support among civilians for allowing gays to serve openly [The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is available online at [www.naes04.org](http://www.naes04.org)]

---

## Fly American Airlines & Support PFLAG!

You can support PFLAG every time you fly American Airlines. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, you can call (800) 433-1790 and use PFLAG's Business ExtrAA account number: 527590. You can also use this special code when booking flights online at AA.com or if you use a travel agent. You earn your personal American Airlines AAdvantage Miles AND help PFLAG at the same time!

## Liberals Dismayed by 'Moral Values'

[Excerpted from AP, 11/8/04]

"Family values," "traditional values" and now, "moral values." Most American adults would say they have them, and yet that two-word phrase is the focus of an ideological tug-of-war heightened by President Bush's re-election, with conservatives declaring principal ownership and liberals scrambling to challenge them.

"We need to work really hard at reclaiming some language," said the Rev. Robert Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches. "The religious right has successfully gotten out there shaping personal piety issues, civil unions, and abortion as almost the total content of 'moral values,' ...and yet you can't read the Old Testament without knowing God was concerned about the environment, war and peace, poverty. God doesn't want 45 million Americans without health care."

Proponents of same-sex unions, for example, believe it is moral to afford partnership rights to two men or two women who have committed themselves to each other and, in many cases, are raising children.

Similarly, abortion-rights advocates believe it is moral to allow the option of abortion to a poor, newly pregnant woman, rather than compel her to bear a child she didn't plan for and cannot afford to raise.

"When the religious right co-opted the term 'pro-life,' that was a coup," said the Rev. Carlton Veazey of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. "Sometimes 'choice' sounds too casual. We have to go back and examine what we are we saying, why is it not resonating. We don't just cave in and say they've got a monopoly on morality."

The Rev. Stephen Bouman, a New York-based bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, worries that conservative Christians' definition of "moral values" may be too narrow to accommodate those of different faiths and backgrounds, including new immigrants. "One thing Jesus was absolutely clear about was helping the poor, and the welcoming of strangers," Bouman said. "Maybe this election was a wake-up call to have a serious conversation about what morality means, to look at what sort of country we're becoming."

---

## News From All Around

**North Carolina:** When the legislature convenes in January, for the first time in the state's history, there will an openly gay state legislator in Raleigh. The citizens of New Hanover County said "no" to negative politics of bigotry and division, and "yes" to an outstanding new State Senator. County Commissioner Julia Boseman defeated appointed State Senator Woody White with 51 per cent of the vote.

**Georgia:** Leaders and Voters File Lawsuit Seeking to Strike Down Amendment on Marriage

**United Kingdom:** The House of Lords passed a law giving same-sex couples the right to legal recognition and the same rights and responsibilities that married couples receive.

### Sandals Resorts Ends Single-Sex Policy

Sandals, which operates 12 couples-only resorts in the Caribbean, has ended a policy that excluded same-sex couples. The resort chain has refined its policy to include all adult couples. The company's "Beaches" resorts have always welcomed children and same-sex couples.

# Coming Out for One of Their Own

[Excerpted from Anne Hull, *Washington Post*, 11/14/04]

Sand Springs, OK -- The fliers arrived late October. Some came over fax machines of local churches, and others appeared mysteriously around town. Printed in bold was the heading "Westboro Baptist Church." No seeming cause for alarm. Sand Springs, population 18,500, is a Christian stronghold in the gently rolling hills of eastern Oklahoma.

But the message that followed was a rant against a 17-year-old Sand Springs resident named Michael Shackelford and his mother, Janice, the subjects of a recent *Washington Post* series examining Michael's struggles as a young gay man in the Bible Belt. The fliers posted a photo of Michael, called him a "doomed teenage fag" and announced that followers of Westboro Baptist in Topeka were on their way from Kansas to stage antigay protests in Sand Springs.

Oklahoma could never be mistaken for a liberal blue state. President Bush grabbed the seven electoral votes like a sack of candy, winning 60 percent of the popular vote. A state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage passed by a 3-to-1 margin. Sand Springs is the essence of pious Oklahoma. Downtown, a veterinary clinic with loudspeakers on its roof plays a taped carillon of hymns and patriotic songs. Michael and Janice Shackelford attend a large evangelical church where lots of worshipers bring their own Bibles.

In the eyes of Phelps, any church that allows an openly gay person to attend Sunday worship is weak. "Was there no Gospel preacher to tell Michael that sodomy is a monstrous sin against God that will destroy the life and damn the soul?"

When Phelps announced that his group was coming to picket several churches and the high school, fresh battle lines were drawn. To many in the town, homosexuality was a sin, but Michael Shackelford was *their* sinner.

After Michael's story was published, the Human Rights Campaign, the country's largest gay advocacy group, invited Michael to attend its national dinner in Washington.

"Oh, great," Janice remembers thinking. A year and a half after discovering her son was gay, Janice still held hope that he would renounce his homosexuality. She worried for his safety, especially after renting a video about Matthew Shepard. Mostly Janice worried about Michael's salvation. Attending the dinner in Washington might reinforce his belief that he is gay. "I felt like allowing him to go was condoning the lifestyle," she said, "and it would propel him to that even more." It was decided that Michael would be accompanied by his 23-year-old sister, Shelly.

In Washington, a tux was waiting for Michael in his hotel room. He took a disposable camera to the dinner and asked a male model if it was okay to take his picture. The next day there was a luncheon and sightseeing. A lesbian couple with a 3-year-old daughter took Michael and Shelly to dinner in Dupont Circle. Walking around the gay neighborhood, Michael was in awe. "It was like being around family," he said. "Seeing all those successful people, that could be me."

Shelly, who shared Janice's views against homosexuality, was also in shock. "Men were holding hands with men, women were holding hands with women, and no one was yelling at them," Shelly said.

When they got back home, Janice listened to their stories. "There's a life out there," Michael said, before racing off to the drugstore to have his film developed.

Janice took the books Michael brought home -- "Always My Child" and "The Gay Face of God," among others -- but was not ready to read them. She piled them on a table in the living room, which is where they were still sitting when she received a call from her pastor. "Janice," he said, "We got a fax."

Janice listened with growing anxiety as her pastor explained that Westboro Baptist was coming to protest Cornerstone for allowing Michael to worship there. The pastor had known Michael was struggling with his sexuality, but

seeing Michael in church meant there was still a chance that he would turn away from homosexuality. He was disturbed by the fliers' hateful message, and he saw an opportunity. "I get to speak about the grace of God," he said. "No matter what the sin, God loves you. He is saying, 'Come on, come back to the family.' I was an alcoholic and a drug addict. I can see the possibility of change."

The week before the protest, the pastor announced from the pulpit that they were in the midst of a spiritual battle. "We are family," Eubanks said. "We are going to stand united as a family." The response surprised Michael, who thought he would be cast out. People were being nice to him. Only a few weeks earlier he'd been called a "queer" at Arby's. Now there was a new menace in Sand Springs, and it was Fred Phelps.

As more fliers circulated around Sand Springs, Janice knew it was time to talk to her 88-year-old mother, a fervent Baptist with a weak heart. All this time Janice had never told her mother that Michael was gay. After Wednesday night church, Janice drove to her mother's house. "I've been keeping a secret from you," Janice said. Just tell me, her mother said. "Michael seems to think he's gay."

"Janice," she recalls her mother saying, "I'm a tough old lady. You should have told me sooner." And that was that.

The Sunday of the protest arrived. The Phelps entourage had left Topeka at 3 that morning and unloaded in front of Cornerstone in time for the 9 o'clock service. There were nine in all. Fred Phelps had sent his 51-year-old son, Fred Jr., and his daughter, Shirley Phelps Roper, 47. Under the watchful eye of several Sand Springs police officers, they spread out along the public patch of grass in front of the church.

They raised their signs: "Fags Are Worthy of Death. Fags Doom Nation. Fag Church. Your Pastor Is Lying." Other signs involved obscene drawings and references to excrement. One of the protesters dragged an American flag on the ground.

Phelps gestured toward the church marquee that scrolled the message, "I hate the sin but love the sinner -- God!" "It's a play on words, the sin and the sinner," he said. "You can't separate the two. There are some people in this world who are made to be destroyed."

Worshipers drove through the bottleneck, refusing to engage. Inside the church, the congregation was standing and the six-piece guitar band was rocking. The music and energy built until Pastor Eubanks bounded onstage, "Welcome to the reign of life," he said. "Amen?" "Amen!" the crowd shouted, whistling and clapping. "There is darkness and there is light and we are in the middle of the light," Eubanks said, to more thunderous applause. "Say it: God loves us all. All of us!"

After the service, several people came up to hug Janice. A burly man with a crew cut gave Michael a thumbs-up. "Man, you be who you are," he said, holding his Bible. "We got your back."

---

## Lesbian Couples Raise Well-adjusted Teenagers

[*NewScientist* News Service, 11/15/04]

Teenagers raised by lesbian mothers show no developmental differences compared to those brought up by heterosexual parents, according to the first large national US study.

Researchers found no differences in terms of depression, anxiety, self-esteem, and school grades.

The single most important predictor of the teens' well being, the study showed, was their relationship with parents--regardless of family type.

As a result, the authors write that their findings "provide no justification for limitations on child custody or visitation by lesbian mothers" and "do not support the idea that lesbian and gay adults are less likely than others to provide good adoptive or foster homes." Journal reference: *Child Development* (vol 75, p 1886).

## Note from PEM

2004 has been a good year for our local chapter. Thanks to a great board, generous donating members, and a fine cooperative scholarship venture with Anne Toran of Falmouth, much has been accomplished.

Plans are in the works for the coming year of 2005! In January, Pem from PFLAG and Scott Fitzmaurice from CIGSYA (Cape and Islands Gay and Straight Youth Alliance) will team up to present a diversity training workshop for staff of local mental health group homes, with a follow-up for the residents of a Harwich group home. We are also hoping to have a MOVIE NIGHT at the new Shaugnessy Theatre in Hyannis, showing an appropriate diversity-sensitive film as a fund raiser.

In the spring we will work on the annual SCHOLARSHIP program for local students who are active in gay/straight alliances. Most of our fundraisers and special contributions from donors support this scholarship project. In late spring we will have our second annual concert fundraiser featuring the PROVIDENCE GAY MEN'S CHORUS.

We also have MENTORS from PFLAG who volunteer at CIGSYA house!

DO YOU KNOW OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A DIVERSITY PRESENTATION? If so, call Pem at 508-432-8119.

---

## Straight Spouse Support Group

In as many as 2,000,000 marriages, a spouse has come out or disclosed that he or she is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. When this occurs, the straight spouse and children frequently go into their own closets. They may not feel comfortable sharing this news with friends or family. They need to know they are not alone and there is a safe place for them to find help.

Cape Cod now has this safe place for straight spouses. Allied with the national Straight Spouse Network ([www.ssnetwk.org](http://www.ssnetwk.org)), a support group is forming where straight spouses can safely discuss their feelings of loss, betrayal, confusion, anger, and all of the other emotions they may be experiencing. The group will address the issues unique to the straight spouse, lessen the feeling of isolation, promote healing, and foster understanding.

The local group meets on the first Tuesday of each month, 7-9pm, at First Parish UU Church in Brewster. (Route 6A near intersection of Rte 124) For more information contact Pam Paine (508) 896-2620 or email [ssncapecod@yahoo.com](mailto:ssncapecod@yahoo.com).

---

## GLSEN Boston Educator Retreat

Network with other educators and talk about what it is like to be out—or not—at your school. January 28-30 in Provincetown. Call 617-536-9669 for more information.

---

## GALE Fund Reception 12/2

The GALE Fund will host a reception at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in Dennis from 6 to 8 pm on December 2. This reception is being held to celebrate the successes of the past year and to introduce new friends to the GALE Fund.

## GLBT Group Meetings

**PFLAG/Brewster** every third Monday, 7pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Parish Church  
**CISGYA**, 56 Barnstable Rd., Hyannis, 7pm Wed & Thur  
**Freedom to Marry Coalition of CC:** [cctfmc@yahoo.com](mailto:cctfmc@yahoo.com)  
**Lesbian Connections:** 1<sup>st</sup> Fridays, 6:30-8pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Parish Barn  
**Metropolitan Community Church:** 1st & 3rd Sundays, 6pm,  
Chapel in the Pines, Eastham 508-398-6471 or 432-8361  
**Straight Spouse Group:** 1st Tuesdays, 7pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Parish, 896-2620  
**Transgender Support:** 2nd Sundays 2-4pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Parish; 362-4435

---

## Dates to Remember

**Dec 20, Jan 17, Feb 21: Brewster PFLAG, 7 pm**  
**Dec 7, Jan 4, Feb 1: Straight Spouse, 896-2620**  
**Dec 12, Jan 9, Feb 13: Transgender Support 362-4435**  
**Dec 2: GALE Fund Reception**  
**Jan 28-30: GLSEN Educator Retreat, P'Town, 617-536-9669**  
**Apr 9: Boston PFLAG "Pride and Passion" party**

---

## PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster

PO Box 1167 Orleans, MA 02653

**MISSION:** *Promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, their families and friends, through Support, to cope with an adverse society; Education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and Advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights.*

**MEETINGS:** 7 pm on the third Monday of each month at First Parish Church, Brewster; everyone is welcome. For information call 508-240-2737 or 508-432-8119.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Dues-paying members support the efforts of PFLAG both locally and nationally. Ten dollars goes to PFLAG National (includes subscription to *Pflagpole*), and the balance is used for our own Newsletter and the purchase of pamphlets, books, and videos. Our fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

**OFFICERS:** Co-Leaders, Pem Schultz & Rob Lewis; Treasurer, Martha Berndt; Corresponding Sec'y, Betsy Cochran; Publicity, (volunteer needed); Newsletter, Joann Figueras and Doris Scherbak; Program, (volunteer needed); and Library, Randy Kendell;. Additional Board member Joanne Hush.

**NEWSLETTER:** Published four times a year. Send articles to PO Box 1167 or e-mail [joann@pflagcapecod.org](mailto:joann@pflagcapecod.org).

**WEBPAGE:** [www.pflagcapecod.org](http://www.pflagcapecod.org)

---

\_\_\_\_\$35 Family \_\_\_\_\$25 Individual \_\_\_\_\$15 Limited income

\$\_\_\_\_\_Additional donation for local chapter

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_State,\_\_\_\_Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to PFLAG/Brewster. Mail to Martha Berndt, 2 Englewood Dr. H-5, Harwich, MA