

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA



Parents, Families, Friends, And Allies United with LGBTQ+ People



**February Sharing Meeting
Sunday, February 19th
1:00 – 2:30**

Currently, Sharing Meetings are held virtually via Zoom on the third Sunday of most months. You do not need an account to join. Leave contact information at 716-883-0384 24 hours or more before the meeting and we will get you the codes.

**PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara
P.O. Box 617
Buffalo, New York 14207
Helpline-(716)883-0384 info@pflagbuffalo.org
www.pflagbuffalo.org www.facebook.com/pflag.niagara**

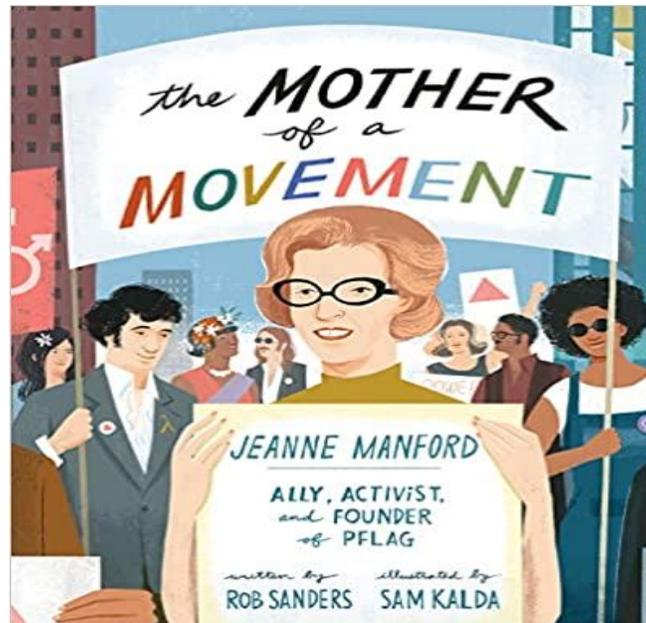
We meet because we have learned someone very close to us has come out as LGBTQ+. We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner. Although we do not always agree, we try to be understanding. We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others. We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable for us.

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BOOK CORNER

A MOST FITTING RECOMMENDATION



PFLAG exists because of Jeanne Manford. That's it, plain and simple. This year marks five decades of PFLAG support for families and friends of loved ones who come out as LGBTQ+.

We have shared Jeanne's story before, but we recently became aware of a book that tells the story of Jeanne, her son, and PFLAG, plainly and simply. A children's book, but like the best of that genre, it tells a story and has a message for all ages. It is lovingly and well-written; it tells not just the story of PFLAG, but of Jeanne, her son, and the events and times that created PFLAG.

We highly recommend *The Mother of a Movement*, by Rob Saunders with illustrations by Sam Kalda. It is a book to read, to share, to gift, to read again, to read aloud to others, and to cherish.

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A HOBBY CAN BE MORE THAN A SIMPLE PASTTIME



On January 6th, www.them.us posted Stephanie Nieves' article, *7 Queer People on the Hobbies That Changed Their Lives*. The seven subjects discuss the opportunities for self-expression and joy that they enjoy through their hobbies. With permission from the and thanks to *Them*, we share this piece.

7 QUEER PEOPLE ON THE HOBBIES THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES **By Stephanie Nieves**

Not all queer folx are the same, but we do have one thing in common: we were born into a world that tries to tell us who we are before we had a chance to discover ourselves.

From how to act, to how to dress, and even how to be, we're burdened by the weight of outside expectations, many of which come from critics who know who they *want* us to be, but not who we actually *are*.

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This can make finding joy difficult. As advocates for our own existence, experiencing pleasure is a radical and necessary practice for queer and trans people. That's why finding a hobby you love is so important — and sometimes, it can even be life-changing. Below, *Them* spoke to seven queer folx about the hobbies that bring them joy, fill their free time, and have changed their lives for the better.

Sofia Aguilar (she/they) Writing

Sofía Aguilar is a bisexual femme Latina based in Los Angeles. She quickly took to writing as a child, channeling her anger and pent-up emotions into journaling.

"I became intoxicated with the power of words on a page, and how they transported me to other places without requiring me to take a step out of bed," they tell *Them*. "I was writing short stories, poetry, and observations about my life, my loved ones, and the world around me."

Now, they transport others through their own stories, in the form of short prose, poetry, and articles. She currently runs the online magazine, [Mag 20/20](#), which showcases writing, artwork, and mixed media from 20-somethings-year-olds around the world. They also authored and self-published the poetry chapbook, [STREAMING SERVICE: golden shovels made for tv](#), in 2021 and its sequel, [STREAMING SERVICE: season two](#), in 2022.

"Writing is a fun source of joy, grace, and tenderness towards myself," they say. "Both a community and a celebration. I'm literally living the dream I fantasized about as a child, and I couldn't be more grateful."

Nicolas Stewart (he/him) — Painting

For Nicolas Stewart, better known as "[Nick Stew](#)," his hobby wasn't just life-changing; it was life-saving. "I had \$40 in my account when I decided to sell my first painting," he tells *Them*. "I sold enough to end up with \$400 by the end of the day, and I just studied and grew as time went on. I didn't realize it would become a success."

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As the saying goes, "art [isn't] supposed to look nice; [it's] supposed to make you feel something." While Stew's work does both, he says it didn't always bring him the joy and abundance that it does today.

"I initially *hated* painting," Stew says. "I started off as a charcoal artist in college. A studio art professor of mine would give me Ds on every painting I'd turn in, but I stuck with my craft and was supported the whole way.

That changed my whole perspective on how I interpreted art and understood mood and movement on canvas."

Now, Stew sells his artwork online, where it can be purchased in the form of canvas prints, iPhone cases, laptop stickers, folding chairs, and more.

"Obviously life is stressful and time is scarce, but I'm glad that I found something that gives me peace and enhances the feeling of home," he tells *Them*. "Painting has allowed me to connect with people who give me a sense of purpose, and the proper way to thank them is to walk in it."

Dakota Ramppen (she/they) – Dancing

By day, Dakota Ramppen is a human development and sex education teacher to middle school students. By night, they offer relationship advice through their Get Real With Dakota podcast, Boundary Boss workbook, and Get Ready & Stay Ready Relationship course. But while she's able to change lives through her work, she says dancing is the passion that's changed her own.

"I started dancing from a young age," they tell *Them*. "Hip-hop, modern, contemporary, ballet — for like a week, 'cause *ow* — and a lil' bit of jazz. My mom would catch me dancing in the mirror, catwalking around our tiny apartment in heels I most definitely did not fit in."

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What began as a simple relationship to dance became more complicated when they started discovering their gender.

"Dancing allowed me to lean in and out of my masculine and feminine sides with excitement and curiosity, but sometimes discomfort. I would spend my nights as a child watching BET and MTV, waiting for my mom to come home from working long hours, and I would imagine being Ciara in her 'Like A Boy' music video.

It became my sense of entertainment, a source of confidence, and the permission I needed to take what was inside and translate it to every nerve, muscle, and bone in my body."

By exploring her queerness through movement, Ramppen was able to show up for herself in a way that no one else can. "I could spend all day discussing relationships and how to communicate your needs to your partner, but at the end of every day, I give *myself* time," Ramppen says.

"Time to move and feel rather than think, like my Virgo sun loves to do."

Sven Salvador (they/them) – Drag

Meet Sven Salvador: the mastermind behind Regen with Sven and Queer Counter Culture, queer HGTV-esque Instagram pages showcasing home and garden work. When they're not building a community in the kitchen or classroom, you can find them at home made up in drag.

"For me, doing drag king makeup with my brother and wife has been life-changing," Salvador tells *Them*. "I feel a stronger sense of confidence when I'm in it because it blurs the line between what it means to be a man or a woman.

As a non-binary person, I can exist unapologetically in this space." From mint mermaid makeup to gold glitter goatees, Salvador's not afraid to express themselves in every color of the rainbow. "Just a few different lines of contour and *voilà* — you're completely transformed into a new face. Yet under all

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the layers, we are more alike than different. I feel a greater sense of pride in the feminine and masculine parts of myself from this form of art and expression.”

Salvador says they *might* perform in drag one day, but that might be a ways into the future. “For now, I’m just enjoying having fun with it,” they say. Isn’t that what having a hobby is all about?

Kwame Ampadu-Nyarkoh (he/him) – DJing

When the pandemic was declared in 2020, many people were forced to stay at home. The quarantine gave some of us a lot more time to ourselves, allowing us to discover new ways to pass the time. For Kwame Ampadu-Nyarkoh, this extra time allowed him to explore the world of DJing.

“What turned out to be an apocalyptic situation created fertile grounds for me to water my passion for music,” he tells *Them*. “I decided to take a few classes to help me stand out in the field.

I was coached by Fast Eddie, an American house producer and hip hop musician, who was familiar with the roots of my musical taste (Jersey club and soulful house).”

Ampadu-Nyarkoh has always been inspired by nightlife. Growing up, he would marvel at the party-goers and graffiti artists outside his window. As he got older and was able to attend those parties himself, he fell in love with music and how the right mix would incline people to abandon their facades and surrender to the rhythm and sounds.

“When I click play, I get a rush of adrenaline and excitement to the point where I struggle to contain myself from behind the decks,” he says.

“To share that sense of freedom with people who are depending on me to have a good time brings me so much joy and gratitude. I’m thankful to be able to cultivate a community of people who feel empowered to feel their best, experience radical joy, and dance like no one’s watching.”

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Fallon Davis (they/them) – Hiking

As queer folk, our bodies play a critical role in how we view ourselves and experience the world.

“My relationship with my body began as a playful one,” Fallon Davis, CEO of Steam Urban, tells *Them*. “As a kid, I spent summers away at camp learning the art of sleeping in cabins, swimming in the lake, and singing songs by the campfire. It was heaven on earth to me.”

But like all things in life, change is inevitable. “As I got older, life became more heartbreaking: I was losing loved ones to drugs, prison, and death from illness,” Davis tells *Them*. “Time seemed to be going so fast and I was losing grip of my childhood.

I had resorted to toxic relationships, unhealthy eating habits, and I wasn’t grounded in the Divine like I’d previously been.”

Their life began to turn around when they discovered hiking. Years of intentional decision-making and community care led Davis back home to their body.

“During this time, I joined a Black hiking group called ‘Hikeolution’ and decided to challenge my inner warrior and reconnect with my Indigenous roots through nature,” Davis says.

“I also took my first parent/child trip with my mother, and she arranged for us to hike through the Grand Canyon. When I stepped out onto that land, I heard the call of my ancestors loud and clear. I was honored to be there, I was at peace, and I was in *love*.”

Now, Davis leads a green life, engaging in sustainable practices, products, and produce. “I hike regularly when the weather calls for it, I plant my own fruits and vegetables, and I practice self-love through nourishing my body,” they say. “Hiking

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helped me develop a greater sense of self, a renewed foundation, and a deeper connection to the planet and my place in it.”

Eddy Moukoumbi (he/him) – Dancing

Queerness is fluid and so is dancing; that’s why Eddy Moukoumbi is so drawn to it. “It was definitely not easy growing up queer in my home country of Gabon,” he says.

“Nothing of the sort is tolerated nor accepted over there, so being proud out loud feels like both a birthright and privilege.”

His love for dance came from watching his mother and sister express themselves, particularly their femininity, through their bodies.

“I wasn’t always an outgoing person — not until I started dancing in public with my sister,” Moukoumbi tells *Them*.

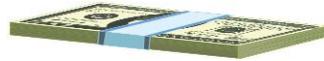
“I loved creating choreography for us growing up. But I couldn’t hide behind her forever. I had to find the strength and inner confidence to own my own body, from how it moves to what it feels like.”

According to his [colorfully curated Instagram profile](#), it looks like he found the confidence he was looking for. [One particular reel](#) shows him dropping it low at a public event in a dazzling two-piece set.

“What I love about dancing, when you’re doing it for you, is how there’s no right or wrong way to feel the music,” he says. “As long as it’s done with passion, it’s done correctly.

It’s the joy and liberation that spills from the inside out. The positive energy that’s exchanged between dancer and viewer. And the quiet way I welcome others to live their most authentic lives just by living mine.”

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PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara offers grants to local high school clubs that support the LGBTQ+ community and allies. If teachers, counselors, or advisors would like financial support for projects, supplies, books, or field trips, they may apply for these funds. Visit pflagbuffalo.org and follow the tabs to Scholarships and Grants. Spread the word!

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