

# **PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA**

## **November Sharing Meeting**

**1:00-2:30**

**November 21st**

**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Number 555 112 0003**

**Pass Code 700**



**In addition, outside of our virtual group sharing/support meetings, New Parent Virtual Meetings can be scheduled for those in need of support and information between monthly meetings. Call our Helpline to request a meeting. Please reach out. We are here for you.**

**PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara**

**P.O. Box 617**

**Buffalo, New York 14207**

**Helpline-883-0384**

[info@pflagbuffalo.org](mailto:info@pflagbuffalo.org)

[www.pflagbuffalo.org](http://www.pflagbuffalo.org)

[www.facebook.com/pflag.niagara](https://www.facebook.com/pflag.niagara)

**We meet because we have learned someone close to us is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. 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.**

**THE POWER OF SAFE SPACES  
and  
REMEMBERING JAMEY RODEMEYER**



A local PLFAGer was on Twitter on September 19<sup>th</sup>, browsing the comments which range from personal to local to national, when one caught her eye.

Colin Dabkowski tweeted a “thread” of 14 “tweets” (aka comments or thoughts). Colin is a former reporter for the Buffalo News who now teaches English at Alden High School. Recently he became the advisor for the Prism Club, the student school of LGBTQIA+ and allies.

He gave permission to share this thread. It honors the lessons a teacher learns, the value of caring students and staff, safe spaces, and most importantly, honors and remembers Jamey Rodemeyer. Jamey was a local teen whose death ten years ago is attributed to the bullying and cruelty he underwent in and out of school.

This is the Twitter format for a thread. If you are not familiar, please persist. Tweets must be under 300 characters so writers use multiple tweets for longer messages.

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

Last week, which was exhausting and overbooked and overbusy, one of those moments stuck out and I have to write about it here before it evaporates. 3/

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

On Thursday afternoon, I hosted the first meeting of  
@AldenPrism

@hs\_alden

's LGBTQIA+ student group, in my classroom. I was a minute or two late after a meeting with my principal. When I opened the door what I heard and saw nearly knocked the breath out of me: 4/

Colin Dabkowski

@colindabkowski

23m

A full classroom, nearly every desk occupied. Huge, whole-hearted greetings and happiness from students who needed and wanted a place to be themselves. 5/

Colin Dabkowski

@colindabkowski

23m

As a new teacher and club advisor, I have no idea how to meet the needs of those kids. I'm starting with the basics: making them feel welcome and safe in my class, trying to create the atmosphere for them to be themselves and perhaps create something new. 6/

Colin Dabkowski

@colindabkowski

23m

In that room, at that moment, it was hard for me to keep it together. I thought back to my own time in early high school, when I felt not only ignored or overlooked but genuinely miserable, filled with shame, and actively hated. /7

Colin Dabkowski

@colindabkowski

23m

So did all the other kids like me. We did not have a club. We did not have a room. We did not have a space that felt anything close to safe. Instead we had our own tortured minds, isolated from one another, pointing in darker and darker directions. /8

Colin Dabkowski

@colindabkowski

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23m

So outwardly I smiled, and cajoled, and helped to run the meeting. But inside I was overwhelmed with the beauty of this new possibility for these kids and for the futures they can finally imagine for themselves. /9

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

Yesterday, when the alert came up on Facebook reminding me that it was the 10th anniversary of Jamey Rodemeyer's death, I felt numb. How had I forgotten about it? /10

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

Every year around this time, I look back and think back to Jamey's suicide and I become filled with impossible rage about the abuse he suffered from bullies at school and from himself and from his own exquisite sense of shame about who he was. /11

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

This year I was too busy to be angry about it, too busy to get lost in that feeling. I was busy watching the kids at my school come together over difference, and trying to create a space for them to build something new out of that knowledge. /12

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

I don't really know why I'm writing this. Mostly, I think, because if I don't I'm worried the gravity of what this signifies will be lost. And because I want to keep talking and writing about Jamey and kids like him (like me), for as long as possible. /13

Colin Dabkowski  
@colindabkowski

23m

Whatever the reason, I'm so grateful for my school and for the LGBTQIA+ community there, for everything they taught me this week about the importance of coming together and everything I'll learn from them in the future. Thanks. See you at the next meeting. /14

***TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW WITH JAMEY'S PARENTS TEN YEARS AFTER***



***<https://time.com/6099086/jamey-rodemeyer-death-parents-interview/>***

***Please click or cut and paste this link to the recent article in Time about Jamey Rodemeyer his life, and his legacy. It includes multi-media link with clips Jamey had posted and an current interview with Jamey's parents. It is a difficult but important piece.***

***May Jamey's memory and legacy continue to be a blessing.***

## **PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA GOAL: GET THE WORD OUT!**

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara has been a presence in the region for decades. PFLAG has been and is a force for good: being there for people who discover a loved one is LGBTQ+, speaking at school and community events, and advocating for important LGBTQ+-related policies, to name a few of the things our group does.

Because you are receiving this newsletter, you are aware of all that we do; we guess that at times you have shared our name to others who may have needed us.

But recently, talking to school personnel and local people connected to the community, we found that some were unaware of PFLAG and many others did not have a clear idea of our mission and how we help. We decided to get the word out there to those unfamiliar and also to remind those who know of us but need to be reenergized to use us as a resource.

One step we took was to renew our materials. We revised and streamlined our brochure, and we updated our bookmark (small but loaded with info). We then made goodie bags (more accurately, Sharon Barrett, board member, made them). Each bag included a cover letter to school counselors and GSA groups, brochures, bookmarks, and "bling," PFLAG pencils or beads. We gave these to The WNY School Counselors Association for distribution. We also will reach out to other schools that may not be a part of this group to get our name and materials to them as well.

More to come! We will let you know further steps we take to make PFLAG a more well-known resource. Though we look forward to the day when there is no longer a need for us, we know that the support our group gives to others is so important still and want to be accessible for all.

If you would like some of our materials or have an idea about how we can further publicize PFLAG B/N, let us know at [info@pflagbuffalo.org](mailto:info@pflagbuffalo.org) or via our helpline, 883-0384.



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