

# PFLAG

**BUFFALO/NIAGARA**



## **April Sharing Meeting**

**Virtual meeting; details on following page**

**Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> 1:00-2:30**

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

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara

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### ***SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE SOON***



For years, a dream of PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara was to offer scholarships to high school seniors. Almost ten years ago, this dream became a reality. At first, two scholarships were offered. Later, a third was added. PFLAG B/N is proud to be able to support three graduating high school seniors each June and fulfill its longtime dream.

The Elizabeth “Babs” Conant Memorial Scholarship is a \$600.00 award this year, as funds were donated by Kay Patterson and Susan Clements to increase the award given in their friend’s memory. The Mary L. Hewitt Memorial Scholarship and Marvin L. Henchbarger Scholarships are \$500.00 each.

This year, in addition to awarding funds to students attending college in the fall, students planning to attend approved career training and vocational programs can also receive scholarships.

Applicants must fill out the information sheet, write an essay about current and future support of the LGBTQIA+ community, and include a letter of reference.

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Hard copy applications (email submissions not accepted) must be received in PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara's post office box BEFORE May 1<sup>st</sup>. Please encourage students to apply in a timely manner. Late applications will be disposed of unopened in a secure manner.

Use <https://x.com/maddow/status/1385307723554775048?s=20> to print the application. We hope to have many deserving seniors apply. The committee looks forward to reading the applications and learning about our area's fine seniors.

### **LOCAL PFLAG MOM SENDS STRONG MESSAGE TO SCHOOL BOARD**



**PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara was asked by a WNY district school board member for support when book banning was on its agenda. PFLAG B/N sent a letter and asked longtime member and local author Linda Drajem to send a letter as well. Please read Linda's powerful and eloquent letter.**

Dear School Board Members and Superintendent:

As a former public school English teacher, I am appalled at efforts to selectively remove books from our school libraries. Students need to see a wide range of literature from many different groups. To remove books one does not approve of is to oppress and cause harm to others who need to see themselves represented. Of course parents are the final arbiter of what their children read, but a few parents cannot and should not make decisions for all others in a district.

After my career in the Buffalo Public Schools, I was a professor at Buffalo State College charged with teaching courses to prepare future English teachers. One of the most eye-opening experiences for me was when student teachers returned to campus for a meeting to relate their experiences in a variety of school districts. They spoke of their concern because some of their students were in the LGBTQ community and were suffering greatly in schools where other teachers, students, and even their parents did not understand or help them. A book like *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson would have helped both the students and the wider community immeasurably. This lack of understanding is why there are so many suicides in the LGBTQ community. As the mother of a trans student told me, "I'd rather have a live trans child than a dead one." I presume no one would want to be the avenue for such life altering despair.

As the mother of a gay son, I have an even greater reason to want to see representation of LGBTQ people in school curricula and school libraries. My son and his husband have children. To remove such material impairs my grandchildren's experience of their family. In addition, my son told his father and me how he suffered in high school because he did not see himself in his school. How I would have given anything to protect my son from such suffering. I presume these parents who are objecting are receiving very misguided information on LGBTQ literature. I imagine they want the best for all students as well as their own. Being gay is not a choice no matter what anyone claims. Even if you burn every book related to gay themes, young people will still be gay, even one's own children.

I urge your district to take a stand for inclusion. Today young people are very sophisticated. They receive lots of information about sex on their media devices. Much of the internet information is wrong and harmful. It is important to have a healthy antidote. *This Book Is Gay* is one such book. Of course it is appropriate only for high school students. Certainly if parents find this book too objectionable for their child, they will have the right to exclude it. I urge you to not make decisions for everyone based on a few objections.

Sincerely,

*Linda Drajem*

Linda Drajem, Ph.D.

*Linda and her son Christopher are the authors of "Wandering Close to Home: A feminist mother and her Gay Son's Journey to Transform Their Lives and Family."*

### **GRANTS APPROVED**

Recently, two grants were approved for local student alliance groups. A grant of \$500.00 was approved for Nathan Monaco, teacher and advisor at the Charter School for Applied Technologies (CSAT). Nathan's student alliance is holding a "Day of Recognition" bringing middle and high school together.

A grant was awarded to Maggie McKean of East Aurora Middle School. Maggie's students will be doing a craft project; requested funds will be used for the items needed.

Grantees will write a short article for this newsletter about the funded event or activity.

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### **MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**



Thank you to all readers who became members during the February Membership Drive. You may have already or should be receiving your Goodie Bag/Pride Kit. You will also receive information about the May Board voting for which you are eligible.

If you support PFLAG B/N outside of the drive timeline, you can still have the benefits listed above. We thank all readers for their support of PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara as well. Reading this newsletter, following our posts on Facebook, and checking our website help us stay connected and up to date. We appreciate every one of our members, supporters, and followers.

#### PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Board of Directors

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