



# 20 YEARS AND STILL GROWING

SUMMER 2005

## Thoughts From The Prez:

Congratulations..... To Our Ten Scholarship Winners!!!!

Out of a field of 39 candidates, Rick Stackpole and his committee chose ten deserving winners. These young people are dedicated and committed to working for equality for GLBT people. They are proud examples of their dedication to furthering the cause of equal rights. To everyone who supported the scholarship fund, the banquet committee, and all of our fine volunteers, all of you should be very excited to think that the future is in the hands of these fine scholars. I wish them well and good cheer in the coming school year!!!

As if this wasn't enough to celebrate, the Pride Alive event was a huge success with the greatest number of people attending ever in the history of Pride in Cincinnati. Beginning with the Rally on Fountain Square, the Pride events were celebrated in style all over the city; in the local bars; at the Drag Races on Court Street, The Court's Pride Comedy Night, along with the first Mr. & Miss Glitterball Pageant. PFLAG cheerleaders led the rally in Burnet Woods before the parade and the Pride Parade was a sight to behold with 60 floats

and marching groups. It was exhilarating to hear the cheers all along the parade route as PFLAGers marched towards Hoffner Park. With an estimated 13,000 people at the festival, our PFLAG booth was well attended and there were many, many compliments about the Cincinnati Chapter and the wonderful work we do. It made me so proud of us. A positive atmosphere was present everywhere you went. It was great fun!!!

I would like to thank all our PFLAGers who volunteered to work during the Pride festival. None of this would have been possible without the hundreds of volunteers that donated their time and effort to help make Pride Alive 2005 a complete success.

As the summer moves on, and we pack our bags and head out on vacation. I would like to thank each and every one of you who are a part of the Greater Cincinnati Chapter of PFLAG. We have so much to be proud of. I want you to relax, enjoy the rest of the summer and I look forward to seeing you at our chapter meetings.

A PFLAG hug to all!!!

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## MEET THE PARENTS III

By: June Delph

On May 15, 2005, The Court (I.S.Q.C.C.B.E) held "Meet the Parents III, Final Chapter" at The Dock. The proceeds from the evening were donated to the Paul Lee Delph Memorial Music Scholarship Fund. That Fund is now \$1,405.55 richer because of the loving and generous people who make up The Court. The Court performers for "Meet the Parents III" were magnificent - beautiful costumes, wonderful music, and flawless performances by all!

I want to send many thanks to those friends and supporters who contributed their hard-earned dollar bills so cheerfully to the show. We were thrilled at the number who attended.

The Delph family has come to know many of the officers and members of The Court and they are all just super human beings. We've never seen a group that works harder. The mission of The Court is to raise funds for local not-for-profit organizations. They have diligently



MISSION STATEMENT

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gender persons and their families and friends, through support, to cope with the adverse society, through education, to enlighten an ill-informed public, and through advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure civil rights. PFLAG provides an opportunity for confidential dialog about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human dignity. Meetings are open to all and are completely confidential.

About the PFLAG Cincinnati Chapter:

Our regular meetings are always held on the second Tuesday of each month at Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, 103 William Howard Taft Rd., from 7:00 – 9:30 P.M. Meetings are open to parents friends and family of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons, as well as to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons.

Board meetings are held on the same night as regular meetings, starting at 6:00 P.M. Please contact a Board Member for information about attending meetings.

From the membership committee

Please remember to check the mailing label on this issue of the newsletter. We have included the date of expiration on your mailing label to send a gentle reminder of when your PFLAG dues expire. The date will also include a letter indicating the type of membership dues you have paid. If a date does not appear on the label that either means that you are not yet a member or that our records do not show when you last paid your dues.

Your dues are our only source of revenue. Our only other fundraiser is the annual banquet and the proceeds from that event are earmarked for scholarships. We depend upon your generous support through your dues.

If it is time to renew your membership, please use the form included in this newsletter to do so.

Thank you for your help!

Tom Jenkins, Membership Chair

PRIDE IS FOR FAMILIES TOO!!!

As straight supporters and supportive family members, the pride holiday is special for you too.

- Be proud that you chose to learn about what it means to be a GLBT person.
• Be proud you had the courage to face the issue and not sweep it under the rug.
• Be proud you took the time and effort to work through your feelings about your GLBT loved one.
• Be proud you stepped forward to be part of PFLAG.
• Be proud of every time you stood up for your GLBT child.
• Be proud you went outside your own comfort zone to understand what your loved one has been though.
• Be proud you reconciled your religious beliefs with the truth about GLBT people.
• You've come a long way since the day you 'found out'! Be proud of yourself!!!

(This is an excerpt Columbus Newsletter and I wanted to pass it along to each of you):

WHEN YOU NO LONGER NEED PFLAG;
PFLAG NEEDS YOU



## A Look Back as President

By: Judy Schmeling-Arnette

It has been almost 15 years since our eldest son came out to my late husband Gene and me. Brad chose Mother's Day for this revelation! The PFLAG Family was our mainstay to help us through those especially difficult firsts that came with our coming out as parents.

When I continue to hear those tired anti-gay arguments, the same old stereotypes, discouragement sets in. Just Briefly. I have only to read in the Spring 2005 Cincinnati PFLAG Newsletter to celebrate how far we have come and how much we have accomplished. It was especially moving to read the stories of past presidents and remember their courage, perseverance, and friendship.

When Gene and I first came, quite timidly, to PFLAG most of the current accomplishments were in their infancy, with the vision, but not yet the fruition of today. Our numbers were smaller, our budget much slimmer. Those programs and ideas were improved, enhanced, promoted, and supported by each successive term of talented and dedicated officers, boards, committees, and members, growing better and more effective each year.

Countless memories of PFLAG popup. (you're spared because space is limited!!) Making gallons of lemonade for the PFLAG booth at the Dock, which followed the early Pride Parades through mostly-empty downtown Cincinnati. Our hearts glowed at the appreciation of those who

stopped by more to talk to a gay friendly Mom and Dad than to buy lemonade.

Finally seeing PFLAG notices in the Enquirer, subsequent publicity of our scholarship opportunities, and even a photo now and then.

Being at the board meeting when we decided to add the last names of the officers in the newsletter, previously we were only identified by only first names. The PO Box and the help line were the only two references. Take a look at the current list full names, phone numbers and email address, plus a local website!

Seeing more teenagers and their parents at our meeting as the coming out age is lowered, and gay/straight alliances were established. The BT was added to GL to welcome GLBT families. Our advocacy grew in importance with events such as Article XII, Matthew Shepherd's tragic death, and a stronger National PFLAG to help monitor issues and legislation. All these brought new challenges for information and support to our local chapter

Lastly, I cannot forget, as can any of you, the heart and greatest strength of PFLAG the time together at each meeting when we can speak freely of the joys and heartaches of your personal journeys. We may count members or funds raised, but we will never know the far reaching effect or influence of the words of empowerment, love, and support shared in those magic circles of PFLAG.

## Meet the Parents con't

pursued and fulfilled this mission over the past 10 years. The Court's generosity has benefited a host of local organizations including PFLAG, AVOC, AVNK, and Caracole, to name just a few.

Under the leadership of Roberta Bigg, Empress XIV, and Tom Wherry, Emperor XIV, "Meet the Parents III" was excellent. The Delph family wishes to publicly express our deepest gratitude to Roberta and Tom for including Paul's scholarship fund in their

list of designated non-profit recipients for the current year. As I write this, Roberta and Tom are nearing their goal of raising \$100,000 for the 2005-06 year. I have no doubt they will meet that goal!

## Cooking with Tim Mudslide Cake

1-dark chocolate cake mix  
1-box instant chocolate pudding  
Coffee,  
1-Can butter cream frosting  
1/2 cup-Coffee flavored liqueur

2 shots-Irish cream liqueur  
1/2 bag mini chocolate chips  
Mix cake as directed on box except substitute coffee for the water, mix in the pudding and coffee liqueur . Bake in 2 round

cake pans. When cake is cooled mix the Irish cream in the frosting and frost cake, garnish with chocolate chips on the top and sides

## A Time of Pride & Joy

By Linda Arnest

I was privileged to be president of the Cincinnati chapter of PFLAG from 2000 to 2003. My parents, Harold and June Delph, were co-presidents and handled many important details for the chapter. Without them, I could not have adequately handled the job. We have many fond memories of those years and the wonderful people we met.

Shortly after becoming president, I attended a PFLAG regional conference where I met Dan Tepford from the Dayton chapter. When I mentioned that Cincinnati didn't have a web site, Dan, who managed the Dayton site, launched our site within a couple of weeks. Soon after, nearly every membership meeting brought new people to us; people who were struggling to accept a gay loved-one. Thanks to Dan, most of them learned about our chapter via the web site.

After much discussion internally and with GLBT community members, we opened our scholarship program to straight supporters. It took a couple of years before we received the type of applicant we were looking for – a true activist. The first straight supporter scholarship was awarded to a deserving young woman last year and this year we were proud and pleased to see my daughter, Caitlin, receive a PFLAG scholarship in recognition of her work as a straight supporter with GLSEN, the Youth Summit and her high school GSA.

Due to the volunteer efforts of Dan Parsley, our quarterly newsletter was transformed into something our chapter became quite proud of. Dan solicited writers and also wrote a large number of original articles. He included pictures, poems and a "Did You Know" section that kept us informed of little-known GLBT facts. The newsletter became a publication that truly reflected the special nature of our chapter. Dan's vision is carried on to this day by other devoted PFLAG volunteers.

During my time as president, the chapter embarked on a project to produce an educational video about PFLAG and the Cincinnati chapter. This short film includes interviews with several long-time members of our chapter. Each

family talked about their experience as their son, daughter or they themselves came out to their family.

This video was the vision of our current president and my dear friend, Marti Kwiatkowski. Marti wrote a grant proposal and received \$5,000 from the Josephine Schnell Russell Charitable Trust for the project. Fortunately, our then treasurer, Joe O'Flynn, was a professional documentary producer. He had the talent and connections to create a very slick production with our very small budget. In fact, he convinced his professional friends [camera and sound by Jim Prues and Kurt Angermeier (Panoptic Media) and editing by Lance Moody] to donate their time to the project. The end result was amazing – beautifully edited to convey a powerful message of love, acceptance and even joy.

The video project was so extensive that, by the time it was finished, Marti had taken over as president. Although I served as co-producer, the real credit goes to Marti and Joe for their vision, creativity and heart.

And then there was our counter-protest. When P&G withdrew their advertising from the Dr. Laura show, the gay community learned that the Reverend Fred Phelps, the anti-gay Baptist minister from Kansas, was coming to protest in downtown Cincinnati in front of P&G headquarters. We had all seen Phelps' ten-gallon hat and "God Hates Fags" signs, if not in person, on television. The consensus within the community was we had to make a statement.

The GLBT community organized a fundraising event. We all donated P&G products that were distributed between five local not-for-profit organizations. While donations were being collected and a service held in a downtown church, our PFLAG chapter stood on Sycamore Street across from the Fred Phelps group. They held their signs, "AIDS Cures Gays," and we held our banners "We Love Our Gay Children – We're Proud of Who You Are." My daughter, Caitlin, who had neon-blue hair at the time, held a hand-painted sign she made herself that read: "God Loves Everyone, Even Fred Phelps." We stood with pride in silent opposition to the hate that infil-

trated our city that day.

My proudest moment by far, was the 2002 PFLAG banquet when Reverend Dr. Mel White was our keynote speaker. This was a time of great trouble and strife within the local GLBT community. The race riots and the resulting boycott of the city were hot topics. There were those within the community who supported the boycott and others who felt the community should instead stand behind those few city councilmen who were GLBT supportive. Stonewall Cincinnati fell under this divide and the community was depressed and disconnected at a time when we needed to rally and organize our campaign to remove Article XII from the city charter.

Mel White was the healing balm we needed. He and his partner, Gary Nixon, came and stayed with us for several days. Not only did Reverend White deliver a keynote banquet address that had the house on its feet, but he also spoke to the congregation at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church, to a group of GLBT supportive ministers, GLBT community leaders and to the congregation at Metropolitan Community Church. His message was simple: "Stand strong and stay the course." He told us that we were not the only U.S. city to have an Article XII in its charter (an embarrassment to us all); rather, we were the first and that other cities would follow. He said we were ground-breakers who would ultimately show other GLBT communities how to overcome such discrimination.

Not only did Mel calm our hearts and bring a few tears to our eyes, he also raised more money for the PFLAG scholarship fund than we had ever before procured with our scholarship banquet.

We lost my dear brother, Paul Delph, to AIDS in 1996. A testament to the remarkable person Paul was are the three generations of gay rights activists in our family today. Our years as PFLAG Cincinnati president and all of the work my family continues to do is done in Paul's memory. It gives us some peace with his loss and hope for a better future for GLBT people everywhere

The Power of Love

by: Mike Neubecker

After dragging our barbecue grill out of the storage shed and getting ready to grill some bratwursts for a Memorial Day outdoor feast, I noticed what looked like a nest of cotton on the right side of the grill underneath the main grate. Looking closer I saw five tiny mice that were barely an inch long, not counting the tail. My first instinct was destroying the nest so they could never enter the house and suddenly, the mother mouse popped out from under the burner cover with bugged out eyes as though she was staring me down.

I called for Jan to come and look at the home they made for themselves in our grill. We discussed some strategies for getting them out of the way of our barbecue plans. Although we had a problem in the past with a mouse in the house after leaving a basement window open, I knew we had to let them

live... but obviously somewhere outside of our house.

I removed the main grill cover and figured a good strategy might be to first get the mother mouse out of the way so I could carefully remove the babies. I grabbed the grill scraper and banged the handle against the side of the grill and thought that would get her running for the hills. She remained by her little ones.

So I proceeded with another plan of temporarily lighting the left side of the grill, which was away from the mouse family and the sight of fire would surely flush the mother out and then I could turn the flame back out and remove the youngsters without the mothers interference. Well, wouldn't you know it, even in the face of fire, the mother stood her ground and still wouldn't leave her babies.

I figured it was time for a new strategy... remove the babies and the mother would follow. Jan brought out the "deluxe gopher" device with it's handy rubber cups that can delicately pick up anything from a distance. One by one, I was able to grab each mouse toddler by the tail until all five were placed next to a nearby bush where they took their first steps to hide underneath. Only after all were removed was the mother mouse ready to jump out of the grill and into the bush to be reunited with her litter.

After a long cleaning and warm up of the grill I completed my barbecue mission and we enjoyed our backyard picnic. It felt good showing mercy when it was so tempting to do destruction.

I think what touched me the most was the defiance of the mother when protecting her young

Schedule of Events

- **August 9 6pm**  
PFLAG Meeting  
**Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church**
- **September 10 6pm**  
ISQCCBE Coronation  
**Millennium Hotel**
- **September 13 6pm**  
PFLAG Meeting  
**Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church**
- **September 17 8 am**  
AVOC Red Ribbon Walk  
**Sawyer Point**
- **September 30**  
Pride Night  
**Kings Island**
- **October 11 6pm**  
PFLAG Meeting  
**Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church**
- **October 17 7:30pm**  
MUSE, Resounding  
Voices of Feminism  
**YWCA, Walnut Street**
- **November 8 6pm**  
PFLAG Meeting  
**Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church**





**PFLAG's 2005 Scholarship Winners**

For the 13<sup>th</sup> year, PFLAG has offered financial support for high school and college students through the Scholarship Award program. Eighty-two deserving students have received over \$74,000 in scholarship awards since the program's inception.

The Scholarship Program aims to encourage and reward gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and intersex students as well as their straight supporters, especially those who strive to foster understanding and acceptance in the community.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered and intersex persons, their families and friends through: SUPPORT -- to cope with an adverse society; EDUCATION -- to enlighten an ill-informed public; ADVOCACY -- to end discrimination and to secure civil rights.

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church, the 2005 PFLAG Scholarship winners were announced. The winners were Scott Nass, Rebecca Hardin, Amy Miller, Caitlin Arnest, Joshua Peaslee, Justin Brogden, Sarah Koerner, James, Mize, James Crowley, and Dara Lind.

The experiences and community involvement were rather interesting and proves that students from Cincinnati or going to school in Cincinnati are tomorrow's advocates. Community involvement and activism is extremely personal and dear to each of the recipients. Please allow me to highlight the candidates.

Scott Nass is a tireless advocate for LGBT issues and has brought a visibility of tremendous value to the American Medical Students Association's LGBT Premedical community. Through his leadership positions, he regularly collaborates with regional premedical students and represents Ohio at national conferences and events. His dedication and interest is apparent in his willingness to work for the University Hospital ER as well as his work in the psychological research department. As a future physician with an M.D. he hopes to be able to provide the level of care to the underserved urban population. He feels with this degree will allow him to get his hands dirty and work with each patient to solve problems one at a time.

Rebecca Hardin has made some excellent progress in the LGBT realm at the College of Mount St. Joseph. FOLKS, the LGBT and allies group was started two years ago. But the two leaders graduated or left the school. Rebecca brought to the Mount her positive experiences with the Gay straight alliance at Walnut Hills. She discovered the group early in her college career and has spearheaded the group since then. She has been directly responsible for two major events at the college....She organized a forum that included speakers regarding the psychological, legal, theological and personal issues regarding LGBT sexual orientation. She also organized and coordinated the first celebration of the Day of Silence at the College.

Amy Miller is a recent graduate of Milford High School and plans to enter college to study Business as well as English, with the hopes of someday opening her own book store geared

written by GLBT authors. She was the president and founder of Milford Gay Straight Alliance that began with 6 of her friends to a group that is now 50 strong in a conservative community. This experience as well as volunteer work with Citizens to Restore Fairness campaign as well as the 2005 Youth Summit make her a great candidate for this award.

Caitlin Arnest is also a 2005 PFLAG Scholarship award recipient. She is currently a Chemistry and Biology double major at the University of Cincinnati with a long list of GLBT advocacy work under her belt. In the past 5 years she has worked with the Gay Straight Alliance at Walnut Hills, worked on several youth summits, and volunteered with GLSEN as well as supported the repeal of article 12. She has been seen posting political signs, attending rallies and fundraisers and even some picketing. She has been recognized as a consciousness raising speaker that routinely supports the rights of all people on many occasions. I recommend that you talk with her to find out about all the activities she takes on considering she is an excellent student with many time commitments. She started her advocacy work at a very young age and it appears that this is just the beginning of a life-time advocacy.

Dara Lind is a recent graduate of Sycamore High School and intends to pursue a degree in English at Yale University. Dara has done very well in her academics at Sycamore maintaining a GPA over a 4.1. In addition to an excellent academic record, she has been active in the life of her school and community. She has been involved in vocal music, Sycamore Theatre Arts Group, a literary magazine, National Honor Society, the Gay-Straight Alliance, and has volunteered with Caracole. Let's hope that she continues this service to the community in New England but returns to share here knowledge and passion for the LGBT community here in Ohio when she's done!!!

Continued on page 10



**Pictured left to right**

**Sarah Koerner, Amy Miller, Scott Nass, Rebecca**

**PERFECTLY GOOD**



- There was an excellent volunteer turn out with over 100 volunteers
- No complaints
- No problems with security
- Northside businesses were very happy about the changes to the event this year and want to work with us again next year.
- The Park Department had zero complaints this year.
- Great support from everyone with a positive attitude
- Estimate the attendance to be around 12,000 which is twice the amount of last year.





## KNOW THEATRE TRIBE WANTS YOU!!

The know theater Tribe wants your true stories, essays, recollections, memories, anecdotes, etc. about as a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and the challenges faced for our Second Annual Production of

**OUT! True Coming Out Experiences.**

Authors receive credit (or may remain unknown), no pay; producers reserve the right to edit for length. You can e-mail your submissions to [info@theknowtheatre.com](mailto:info@theknowtheatre.com), or mail them to The Know Theatre Tribe, 1425 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Submissions are due in by August 10

Visit [www.knowtheatre.com](http://www.knowtheatre.com) for more information on the Know Theatre

Ken Chappell, president of the Queen City Careers Association, INC is trying to put together a fall festival 2006 -- anyone interested in helping out can visit the Q website @ [www.qcaainc.com](http://www.qcaainc.com) or email [Ken@Kenchappell.com](mailto:Ken@Kenchappell.com) and let him know you are willing to help out

### The Power of Love, continued

from danger when I could have easily squashed her. I saw her care, concern and courage and could only find compassion in my heart. Perhaps it was a simple matter of instinct, but I saw "love" for her family and willingness to die in their defense.

After the meal, I thought about the many PFLAG mothers and fathers who, head-on, challenge society's discrimination and hatred against their loved ones. The hate, scorn and social shunning is not enough to keep them from standing with their children to protect

them from harm. No amount of threats will scare them off or make them run for cover but only embolden them to take further measures to protect those they raised by visiting legislators and writing letters to the editor to educate the public.

I don't know how much of this is instinct, but I see "love" for their families and a willingness to die if necessary, in their defense. As PFLAG members take their stand and speak out, others will see this same kind of care and concern for their offspring's well being and from all my

experiences, I trust that most people have sufficient compassion in their hearts to be moved and question their attitudes.

But it really has to be more than instinct with us humans because not all parents respond in such a protective way. Perhaps the power of stigma, religious conformity and the need for social acceptance are far too strong for some. From the many family stories of PFLAG people I have heard, I do know the power of love is much stronger, it just may take longer for some.

### OUR FAMILY MATTERS

Writing an obituary is a difficult and emotionally draining task. This past April my husband and I composed the death notice for his mother. For us, it was a soul-searching exercise as well.

Her passing, though unexpected, was not a shock. As she aged, her medical chart grew thicker and thicker and the list of her medications grew longer and longer. Each additional diagnosis became more serious and less manageable at home. Alzheimer's forced our hand and she was nursing-homebound for the last six years as she slipped away from us bit by bit. With each call from the staff and each trip to the emergency room we rehearsed for this day. We talked about how we would write her final notice.

The funeral director who helped us with the arrangements was a high school classmate of mine. I had not seen Ann in more years than either of us cared to admit. When last we met, raging hormones meant parked cars and drive-ins. Now they meant hot flashes and night sweats.

Ann and I shared a cliff-note version of our lives including, but not limited to, kids, careers and grandkids. Then we settled in to work on the obituary. We faced the challenge of condensing her 91-year life into a few paragraphs for the local newspaper. Reducing her life to bare bones. Sorting through memories. Determining which parts of her story to share and which to hold in our hearts.



Our Family Matters;  
continued

The past was simple. We had a list of the important dates—when she was born, married and widowed. Her Depression-era education was considered complete at the age of 16. We listed her four deceased siblings in the order of birth.

We moved on to the present. The list of survivors required more thought. Our family. Bill, her only son, her only child. And me, his wife Jane. Simple enough. Then on to our children, her grandchildren. How would handle them? Our second son is easy—her grandson Kevin and his wife Melissa. Our daughter is single, no problem—her granddaughter, Jennifer. Great-grandchildren Jacob and Rachel were a snap. The stickler was our elder son, our firstborn, and her first grandchild. Our gay son. Our gay son with a partner. What should we do?

We had already weighed our options. The first was to simply ignore the situation and list only our son Greg. We could always apologize to him later for omitting Mike. Attribute the oversight to grief, memory loss, or a cell phone induced brain burp. There is some short-term comfort in denial. But in the long run, I have found that denial creeps up on me like ill-fitting underwear and I rue my decision.

Our second option was to lie or delegate the blame. Or we could always follow the example of politicians and combine the two. We could claim to have given the information to the funeral home and they somehow screwed it up. And there was always the newspaper computer glitch possibility. Or better yet, Phil Burress was now censoring obituaries and banned its printing. This, we decided was another underwear scenario.

We settled down to serious discussion. We talked about our reservations first. Bill had not told his co-workers about Greg. He decided he was ready and this would be the time and the way.

The next concern centered on religion. We are Catholic and have heard the stories of priests refusing communion to gay rights supporters. Though we knew of no cases in Bill's mother's parish, we were concerned that this obituary could open the door.

We moved on to what mom might want. She was in her mid-seventies when Greg

came out to us. We debated on whether or not to tell her. How would she react? Would she understand? Would she be hurt? Would she be upset? In time Bill did tell her and she reacted without hesitation. "We just love him," she said, "We just love him."

We talked about our family. Who we are. What binds us. What brings us together. We thought about mom's last years. How she loved receiving gifts and tore gleefully through the wrapping paper that last Christmas. How surprised she was at her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party. How she loved the attention. How she loved the cake. We recalled the faces sharing those moments with her. With us. And Mike's was always among them. Our thoughts drifted to other family events. Our granddaughter's baptism. Our son Greg as godfather. Mike taking charge of the video camera. Bill's surgery. The hours I spent in the waiting room flanked by my sons and Mike.

We became philosophical. Society often defines a life by what is left behind. The bank accounts, the trust funds, the stock portfolios. Time and declining health had consumed mom's earthly possessions. We cleared her room, donated her clothing to other residents, and were able to tuck all of her belongings into a cardboard box. *The Wall Street Journal* would not take notice of our loss. There were no funds left to memorialize her—no new hospital wing or scholarship fund.

Some of us escape mortality transplanted in the body of another. Her death did nothing to shorten the waiting list of organ donors. Her kidneys served her well but had shut down on her last day with us. Her heart was scarred from several previous attacks. Her body was at rest. We had no usable parts to pass on.

Maybe this obituary could be a gift to someone. Someone still in the closet. Someone whose child has just come out. An affirmation that they are not alone. A declaration that though all families may not all look alike, they love alike. A statement that a gay partner is as cherished as an in-law.

In the end, there was only one option for us. Greg's partner Mike is family. Just as is our daughter-in-law Missy. We have embraced them for loving our children. They have

embraced us for giving them someone to love.

I'd like to say that the rest was a piece of cake, but that would be less than truthful and my nose would surely grow an inch or two. Making this decision in the privacy of our home was simple. We were so sure. Sitting face to face with a funeral director who knew me when I wore a blue uniform skirt and white blouse to the Notre Dame High School was a little unnerving. The assortment of Pope John Paul II holy cards fanned across the top of her desk added to my edginess. It didn't help knowing that in 24 hours it would be in print, never to be retracted.

Ann asked for our children's names in order of birth. Greg was first.

"Married?" Ann asked.

"No." I took a deep breath. "He's gay. His partner's name is Mike. We'd like him listed."

"Oh." Ann nodded. She didn't flinch. "Have you thought about this? Are you sure?"

"Yes, we are sure. Do you run into this situation often?" I asked.

"More than you might think. We could be creative and call him a friend of the family." She said. "You're sure you want it this way?"

"We're sure."

"People can be so judgmental, you know. A lesbian couple lives across the alley from here. Lived there for years. Great neighbors. I think they should have medical benefits and equal rights."

We moved on to the other children and grandchildren. My breathing returned to normal. My hands unclenched. There was no battle to be waged here.

Continued next page



Our Family Matters

Continued

Our next stop was to meet with the deacon at mom's parish to prepare for the funeral mass. We wanted to bury her from this church. This church where she was baptized, received her First Communion and married. Where would we turn, if our son and Mike were not welcome? We had no Plan B.

The obituary appeared in the Hamilton Journal News the next day. Greg and Mike's names weren't in bold 16" print. No

italics or special font. Just regular type. Just like Kevin and Melissa. And, there was no call from the church office.

We met the priest shortly before the service. It had been a busy day for him and he already had one funeral and one prayer service under his belt. We had no way of knowing whether he had read the obituary. I like to think that he had but that is my personal fantasy. The reality is that I'll never know. He offered his

condolences to Bill and gave me a hug. He met the rest of the family with warmth and kindness.

We trailed mom's casket down the aisle. Bill and I went first with our daughter between us. Greg and Mike fell in line. Kevin and Missy followed them. All of us family. Her family. She was home. And we were home free.

**PFLAG's 2005 Scholarship Winners, continued**

Joshua Peaslee is the current co-president of Spectrum, Miami Universities LGBT student organization. His work within the university community aids in raising awareness about LGBT issues along with providing support and recognition of difference. Joshua's willingness to collaborate with other multicultural organizations on campus affords an environment rich in critical thinking and intellectual development surrounding LGBT issues. Joshua not only offers his support for Spectrum but is heavily involved as a resident assist in the residence halls. As an RA, Joshua supports first year students living on campus through programming and mentorship along with balancing his studies, providing testament to his commitment to the university community and beyond. For example, Joshua assisted with Spectrums annual awareness week, which informs Miami students about significant issues that affect the LGBT community. Joshua booked Danny Roberts from MTV's "REAL WORLD" and his partner to discuss DON'T ASK DON'T TELL policies and same sex marriage to a sold out audience.

Justin Brogden is a recent graduate of Walnut Hills High School and plans to attend Oberlin College here in Ohio. He plans to study political science and law. His advocacy work includes being a member of a gay straight alliance, work with GLSEN and participating in the Citizens to Restore Fairness organization as an associate Field Organizer. His mother wrote a touching recommendation and talks of his journey as a young gay male. She has seen many changes in her son and is extremely proud of the work that he has done to become a healthy, politically minded advocate for LGBT issues. She has seen him grow from an extremely shy introverted person to an outgoing individual participating in a campaign to repeal article 12. He worked side by side with other workers, made phone calls and went door to door to inform the community about local issues. I think we all can recognize that this is not an easy task for a shy person. Through this he has found a group of lifelong friends and associates. I think we would be proud to welcome him and his family to our PFLAG family.

Sarah Koerner is a senior at Xavier University and a long time volunteer for GLSEN. She has been known as a defender of classmates who were targeted for their perceived differences.

During her time at Xavier, she has volunteered regularly at Children's hospital. Sarah has done a lot of work with GLSEN including research, database entry and mailings. She helped to create a youth resource guide and she created and continually updates GLSENS lending library and single handedly maintains the membership database. This resource guide has been a long time coming since Sarah worked on it for the past two years. She made content decisions, formatted and edited it. It will contain LGBTQ friendly organizations and businesses, useful legal information, a list of suggested readings as well as political activism information. Sarah too has volunteered her time for the repeal of article 12. Her educational goals include becoming a clinical psychologist once completing her education at Wright State University.

James (Derek) Mize is a current UC student obtaining a degree in Women's Studies with plans to attend law school. Derek was the facilitator of the M4M Support group at UC which provided attendees with guidance in regards to being GBT on campus. He has been a big resource for the Women's Center often speaking at special events. One particular event involved a campus wide training program that supported a safe environment for all GLBTQ persons. Derek spoke out in regards to his experience as a gay athlete on campus. Always an advocate, Derek too, has participated in the successful Repeal of Article XII, an active member of UC's Alliance, and yet another sounding board for persons wanting an ear to listen.

James Crowley is a current student at Cincinnati State and Technical College. James has many volunteer activities under his belt including fundraising for GLBT persons, campaigning for the Repeal of Article XII, and volunteering for a foodstore. His advocacy started in high school in Kentucky and although he regrets not being able to volunteer more while working full time and going to school, his recommendations state that he is a compassionate, responsible individual that acts as advocate or confidante to any individual that may need some help. Not only is James cognizant of his partner and their goals together, he understands the world in which he lives and makes time to celebrate. His partner and he share a special first date every Wednesday to "keep it real".



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Change of Address

**Membership Type**

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
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<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	\$ _____

Comments:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send all mailings blind

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