



# Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Greater Cincinnati Chapter, INC Quarterly Newsletter

VOLUME 22, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2007

## Notes from the Top

**Amore! 15 Years of Love, Laughter, and Leadership** – mark your calendar for the annual banquet on March 3, 2007 as we celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> year of leadership in providing scholarships for deserving students. Do these three things to enhance the success of this fund-raiser:

**Encourage donations!**

- to the auction and raffle
- to program advertising
- to the scholarship fund.

**Come to the banquet!** Invitations go out in January.

**Enjoy local performer Chris Collier!** and the company of good friends at the banquet.

Many friends of PFLAG have already contributed to the scholarship fund. They will be recognized in the banquet program. You too could be recognized. Wouldn't it be great if we could raise \$15,000 this year? Our good friends of the ISQCCBE have once again presented PFLAG with a handsome scholarship donation raised from their awesome shows! Be sure to watch for



That's

their shows in the PFLAG announcements.

The March banquet is a prelude to the 2007 scholarship process, which concludes at the June PFLAG meeting when scholarships are awarded. A successful scholarship program requires strong candidates as well as strong funding. Spread the word about our scholarships. The application deadline will be in April, but it is not too soon to alert potential candidates and schools to our program.

It's hard to believe that 2006 has drawn to a close. In writing the annual report to PFLAG National, I was reminded of the many contributions our members have made, and of the many people that we have reached. Within our chapter and beyond, efforts ranging from individual support to national dialog move us toward a more safe society for our gay loved ones.

See you the next 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

**Dorothy Byers, President**

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## Marc Adams' presentation

December 12, 2006

Marc Adams spoke to a group of over 50 people at the December PFLAG meeting. Marc Adams is founder of Heartstrong, Inc and author of *The Preacher's Son* and the recent book *(lost)Found*. Marc talked about his life growing up as the son of a fundamentalist Baptist minister in rural Pennsylvania, where he endured a childhood of physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. The homophobic attitudes of his family and religion taught him that he needed to change, which he hoped to do at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. He went there against his parents' wishes, who felt the University was too liberal.



Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons and their families and friends, through **support**, to cope with an 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 Thursday before our monthly meeting, starting at 7:00 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!

**Nuts & BOLTS**

- This is your newsletter! If you have story ideas or would like to contribute, please contact Tim Gross.
- The PFLAG Library has many great books, videos, and other resources about homosexuality, coming out, GLBT issues for children and families. Be sure to check them out at our next meeting.
- The Cincinnati Chapter of PFLAG is happy to provide a speaker for your group or organization, business, school or church. Please contact the PFLAG Help Line at 513-721-7900 to obtain details about requesting a speaker for your group.
- If you have any announcements you would like to include in the newsletter, email them to Tim Gross at [pflagtim@yahoo.com](mailto:pflagtim@yahoo.com). Submission deadline the first week of January, April, July, and October.

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**SUBSCRIBE TO THE WEEKLY!**

Wanna know what's going on in Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky's GLBT and supportive communities each and every week? Subscribe to "The Weekly." It's a free service presented by "Greater Cincinnati GLBT News" and the Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Cincinnati which will send you an email calendar of events every Friday night. The Weekly includes listings for community organization meetings, social ad support group gatherings, theatre and arts events, sports leagues, nightlife happenings and much more. To subscribe to this great FREE service, please visit [www.greatercincinnati.glbtnews.com](http://www.greatercincinnati.glbtnews.com) and click on "The Weekly" button on the home page.

**WHEN YOU NO LONGER NEED PFLAG  
PFLAG NEEDS YOU**

Cincinnati's Own Chris Collier to Perform at Banquet  
2007 Scholarship Banquet



When thinking of entertainment for this year's PFLAG banquet on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, we decided to stay at home and have Chris Collier perform her version of our theme, "That's Amore." Little did we know at the time that Chris's family has an Italian background!

So many of Chris Collier's songs speak of love and family that we thought it would be a good combination, since that is what a lot of PFLAG is about. She has performed locally and regionally for almost 10 years and has produced four CD's, the last of which was a double CD, "Over Twenty."

"Over Twenty" was recently recognized by the Cincinnati Post as one of the areas Top 10 CD's for 2006. Chris was also honored this year with a Cincinnati Entertainment Award nominee for best Folk Artist from Citi Beat Magazine.

You can get more information about Chris by visiting her website at [www.ChrisCollier.com](http://www.ChrisCollier.com) and hear clips of some of her music. Chris is excited to perform and we at PFLAG are excited to have her.



And we are all excited to have YOU at the annual PFLAG banquet!!! Remember, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Look in this newsletter on ordering information for tickets.

## Banquet—How to Help

Again this year we are going to continue with our silent auction and raffles. If you didn't receive our mailing for solicitation of items to, we will gladly accept donations of merchandise, new items you have that you would like to give away, or gift certificates. Use your imagination, be creative, if you are a crafty person create us one of your masterpieces.

Also consider making a cash donation in memory or in honor of someone.

To donate for the raffle and silent auction contact

Dan Parsley 513-281-9840 [hikerdan@fuse.net](mailto:hikerdan@fuse.net)

To advertise in the program contact

Tim Gross 513-826-4341  
[cincinnatiPFLAGbanquet@yahoo.com](mailto:cincinnatiPFLAGbanquet@yahoo.com)

To make a cash donation contact

Monica Plett 513-293-1626 [mplett@fuse.net](mailto:mplett@fuse.net)

General inquiries

Dorothy Byers 513-559-0271 [dfbyers@fuse.net](mailto:dfbyers@fuse.net)



Adams Con't

.While at Liberty University Marc worked in the student recruiting/ university relations department and mastered the “company line.” But his feelings did not line up with the company line, and he began to think for himself by reading books in the library about all religions. Eventually he realized he did not need always to gain acceptance from others, gathered the strength to leave Liberty University, and later came out to his family, a family that has never accepted him (with the exception of his paternal grandmother!) because they thought they were right in their beliefs and would not follow their own hearts and minds. He has learned to create and value “real” family, a family of choice, consisting of friends that love and honor him for who he is.

Marc explained that Heartstrong Inc. is a non-profit educational organization for GLBT students of religious schools, colleges and universities. Many of these schools are not open in their policies, and some are outright cruel. He speaks on campuses and hopes to reach students who cannot get help any other way. Heartstrong is the only such outreach of its kind in the world.

Marc signed and sold his books at the PFLAG meeting. Some are in the PFLAG library.

His writing goes well beyond the content of his presentation and this summary. Check them out!

### The Tefpers Speak out on Marriage

At the November 14 PFLAG meeting, Dan and Nancy Tepfer spoke to over 50 attendees about marriage equality. Nancy is president of PFLAG Dayton and Dan is on the national PFLAG Board of Directors. They used personal poignant stories interspersed with humor to provide insights about gay and lesbian people. They presented a history of marriage including its varying characteristics over the course of time, and from society to society. Arguments for same-gender marriage and reasons why people of faith should be supportive were also discussed. The talk was very informative and enthusiastically received by those attending

### PFLAG at the Youth Summit

On December 16 the Greater Cincinnati GLBTQ Youth Summit was held at the University of Cincinnati in Tangelman University Center from 9 a.m. to 11 pm. This year GLSEN and Your Forefront collaborated to put on the event. About 100 attendees came to attend 20 different sessions ranging from GLBT history to gay marriage. Lynne Bowman from Equality Ohio was the keynote speaker, and also led a session on lesbian issues.

PFLAG had a literature table at the Summit. A big thank-you goes to Robin and Steve Kuennemeier, Lynne and Kent Lefebvre, and Tom and Marie Jenkins for volunteering at the table. Tom and Marie also agreed to lead the PFLAG support circle, a scheduled session. But we found that many students had already left by 4 pm, some to change attire and prepare for the evening dinner and drag show.

### Schedule of Events

- **January 147 pm**  
The Family Returns . . .  
PFLAG  
**ISQCCBE**  
The Dock Complex
- **January 247:30 pm**  
aMUSEing: An Evening of  
Laughter and Music  
**MUSE**  
Newport on the Levee;  
Funny Bone
- **January 278 p.m.**  
Sweet Fundraiser  
**Cincinnati Men's Chorus**
- **February 36:30 pm**  
5th Annual Gala  
**MUSE**  
St John's Unitarian  
Church, Clifton
- **February 13 7 pm**  
**PFLAG Meeting**  
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian  
Church
- **March 3**  
15th Annual Scholarship  
Banquet  
**PFLAG**  
Madison, Covington
- **March 13 7 pm**  
**PFLAG Meeting**  
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian  
Church
- **March 10 8:07 pm**  
**March 11 3:07 pm**  
"Women We Love"  
**Cincinnati Men's Chorus**  
Gallagher Student Center  
Theater, XU
- **April 10 7 pm**  
**PFLAG Meeting**  
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian  
Church.

## Getting to Know You Jane Biddinger

Christmas Eve was wonderful this year. Our entire family was together to celebrate. My husband and me. Our son and his wife. Our two grandchildren. Our daughter. Our son and his partner.

Presents were stacked high. Even though the Bengals had lost, spirits were high. I was wearing my favorite Christmas socks. (I have socks for every known holiday or occasion. My Christmas ones require a separate shoebox.) As we exchanged gifts, I sat back for a moment and took it all in. I sighed. Family. Maybe not as Norman Rockwell would have pictured, but our family nonetheless. There was a time when I would not have dreamed it possible.

When our son first came out to us, I dealt with his sexuality by praying that it would change—my personal version of denial. Gradually, I opened my mind to the probability that he was gay and might remain that way. Eventually, I grew to accept the fact that he was gay. It was the way things were and would always be.

I did not think of him solely as gay. I did, however, think of him gay solely. I didn't ask about his friends. I didn't ask if he dated. I didn't ask him where he went. My conversations with him were limited to sports, work, the weather, and his cat. An in depth discussion with him would consist of talking about how his Super Bowl picks for the office pool were affected by the weekend weather forecast, followed by questions about the cat's hairball tonic. I assumed he was the only gay person I knew. In my mind, he was a normal person, a chemical engineer who would be lost at sea in a world of hair designers and fashion consultants. I wasn't ready to wrap my mind around my son with other gay people. Those thoughts and images terrified me, so I held them at bay. I had this denial thing down pat by this time, and I was fairly content with the status quo. I had come a long way, but I wasn't eager to take the next step.

Then we joined PFLAG. We met many wonderful people. There were parents on the road to acceptance, and all were on various legs of the journey. Hearing their stories comforted us and gave us hope. We drew strength as they shared their wisdom and experience. There were gay persons there too. In some ways, we learned the most from them. They gave us insight into our son and his needs. They calmed our fears about the gay community. They had no more or no fewer quirks than our other friends and family and fell under our heading of normal. There might be hope for our son after all. And us too. Over the course of time, we realized that we were asking our son to live two separate lives. One when he was with us. One when he was with his gay friends.

In October *Les Mis* came to town. It was one of our son's favorite shows, and my husband and I asked him to join us. We bought four tickets. Two for us. Two for him and a guest. On the one hand, I hoped he'd bring a woman from work. It would be safe. It would be comfortable. If we met anyone at the theater, introductions would be simple. On the other hand, it was time for us to merge our world with his. This was a small first step. When he said he had invited Tim who was "just a friend", our son eased my hand holding, kissing, and groping fears. Then for just a second or two, he elevated them to red alert when he said we would be certain to recognize Tim as he would be the one in pumps and a blue skirt. "Just kidding, Mom." My son knows me.

At PFLAG meetings we had listened as other parents told of meeting friends and partners of their gay children, but this meeting was extremely personal. This was our son. This was our life. This was our story. We were outside the friendly walls of Mt. Auburn Presbyterian. In that haven, gay persons are always welcome, never considered an oddity, and stares and sneers were never a concern. Although our son and Tim were not a couple, no one knew this but us. This night we were in the real world. As we took this step, we were publicly acknowledging our son's sexuality, a fact that we had so painstakingly hidden for so long. It was real. It was tangible. We were out. We were with our son. We were out with our son.

As we drove to the theater, we were nervous. So far our experiences with gay persons had all been positive. Would this be the first exception? Would be a radical activist with blue hair? Would we be able to relate with him? What would we talk about?

When I had thought my son to be straight, I never questioned his judgment concerning friends and companions. But now I was leery. In hindsight, I realize that I had succumbed to the stereotypical thinking that we at PFLAG try so hard to refute. When my children were small, I told them that the only way to overcome fear was to meet it head on. I tried to convince myself that this was true.

We arrived at the theater ahead of our son and Tim, and we paced the lobby as we waited. We spotted the two of them as they came through the door. We sized up Tim. He was a nice looking, clean cut young man. No blue hair. No protest signs in sight. A pretty normal looking fellow.

We made our introductions and shook hands. I glanced around. No one was staring. No one was watching us. Here we were at this groundbreaking moment, and no one even noticed.

We talked as we waited for the lights to dim. Our son said that Tim had something to show me. As I watched, Tim lifted his pant leg and revealed his favorite Halloween socks. We compared footwear, and I knew right then and there that this guy was okay.

The evening went well. Tim was charming and easy to talk with. We had a great time. During intermission and coffee afterward, we learned that he was an engineer. He was a bowler. He was a devoted uncle. And he had Christmas socks too.

This meeting with Tim was a springboard to getting acquainted with more and more friends. I baked Christmas cookies with some. We picnicked and watched fireworks with others. In time, we met a partner, but that's another story for another time.

My husband and I have been to the theater untold times. We've listened to music that touched our souls. We've seen performances that brought us to our feet. But that night at *Les Mis*, it was the offstage experience that opened our eyes and, in time, added another son to my Christmas list.







## Goofy Loves Frankenstein

Submitted by: Donnie McGovern

There are certain expectations of first-born sons of working class families in Kentucky. Having a gay son typically isn't on top of the list. Traditionally, being gay falls somewhere below getting your teenage girlfriend pregnant and becoming a convicted felon, the former increasing the odds that your son may indeed be straight (and virile). I understood these expectations from an early age as I waited patiently for my hormones to kick in and start becoming interested in the opposite sex (as promised). That never happened.

After years of depression and denial, and years of dating a woman what I was sure would be my future wife, I finally succumbed to the odd feelings I got while looking at men's underwear models in my mom's Sears catalog, and the odd feelings I *didn't* get from the female swimsuit models in my dad's Sports Illustrated magazines. But for me, being gay really wasn't an option. It wasn't good or bad, or anything – it simply wasn't an option to even consider. I couldn't be gay. My mom wouldn't allow it.

That was the overwhelming fear in my coming-out process; that my mom and dad would find out about my "condition" and react in a terrible way. Which way, I didn't know, but the fear was so strong, I knew in my heart that I would, in fact, never come out to my parents. I was convinced that I could maintain a lie that would last my entire life. I would invent girlfriends and engage in conversation that would give my parents every possible reason to believe that their son was strong, healthy, manly, and straight as an arrow. There was no other option.

This wasn't a conscious decision. I honestly believe that I truly wasn't aware that I was gay. Yes, I was attracted to men, and yes I was terribly depressed all the time, and yes, I was miserable but I just couldn't put my finger on the reason why. When I started making a plan to throw myself off a tall flight of stairs (with full dramatic affect, of course), I decided my parents probably would prefer a gay son over a dead son (but who could be sure?). I signed up for therapy.

I came out, as many good fairies often do, to my therapist, Marty. Marty didn't look like a 'Marty.' He was d-r-e-a-m-y. He was a body builder and looked just like Fabio – except better looking - more 'manly.' He had thick long hair, and a constant five o'clock shadow (very sexy in the early 90's). He could make Pat Robertson come out of the closet. I can still picture his tight, tight pants . . . .

Anyway, the moment that the closet doors flew open for me was after one of the many sessions we had dealing with my suicidal feelings (which I could tell he was bored with). I wanted to bring up the topic of homosexuality so badly, but just couldn't do it. At the end of one of our sessions he must have noticed my contemplative demeanor and asked me, "Donnie, what's on your mind?"

Marty had asked me that question before, but this particular session I had decided it was time to take the figurative plunge. I continued staring at the floor, I couldn't look up. I remember eventually looking up at him and smiling, and having sudden tears in my eyes and looking back at the floor. Instead of ending the session on time (which he always did), he just let the silence continue. I remember it took me at least ten minutes to say the word "I'm-". Then I broke off, I couldn't say

the next word. I just couldn't bring myself to say it. But something inside of me told me it was now or never. For the next twenty minutes, I kept saying "I am" repeatedly, and Marty just sat there in silence – allowing the moment to continue. Marty later told me that it took an hour and a half for me to finally say "I – have – feelings – for – other – men."

As clichéd as it may sound, saying those six terrifying words felt like a ton of bricks had been lifted from my shoulders. I remember visualizing a wall of cinder blocks crashing down to the ground – leaving me in a pile of dust and rubble. Almost everything after that immediate moment is a fog. I know that I was crying, and I know that Marty gave me a hug (oh that hug . . .).

Finally, he let go of me, looked right into my eyes, smiled his beautiful smile and said in his deep husky voice; "Well, it's about time!" I knew then that somehow everything would be alright. But that didn't stop me from panicking that my mom would eventually find out. I made Marty swear that he wouldn't tell anyone. He told me that he told his supervisor and no one else. So, there were two people in the world who knew my secret. Suddenly, I worried that Marty or his supervisor would run into my mother (whom they had never met), strike up a conversation, and casually mention that they had just met this boy named Donnie who was a ho-mo-sex-u-al!

We worked for a few weeks on a plan for "coming out." We decided it probably was a good idea to let my girlfriend know that things probably wouldn't work out, but probably not a good idea to make her the first person that I come out to. Marty surmised that my girlfriend might not be as kind and understanding about my newfound sexuality as he was. So I came out to a few friends first, and as difficult as it was – they were surprisingly supportive.

I was shocked at how "not" shocked they were. One of my friends actually repeated Marty's exact words: "Well, it's about time!" This was both comforting and alarming at the same time. If other people knew this whole time, why didn't they bother to tell me!? Of all the reactions I got from folks, the first question I got was "Have you told your girlfriend?!" As much as I dreaded it, I knew I had to tell her as soon as possible, there was no point in putting off the inevitable.

Not surprisingly, she didn't take it well. We fought, and we cried, and somehow I convinced her not to tell her parents or friends the reason why I suddenly broke things off with her. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I became depressed again, because I truly cared about her – but it had to be done. Years later we became friends again, best friends even – but to this day she tells me that was the biggest heartbreak she ever had.

This also raised the number of folks who knew my secret to roughly seven. The odds that my parents would find out were increasing. So what did I do next? I went to Disney World – literally. I decided the best thing I could do was to move (escape) to Florida away from my folks and from Kentucky, so I could find out who I really was – and what this gay thing was all about. I actually took a job working for Disney as "Goofy", which was probably the best thing I could have done. There were hundreds of gay boys and girls crawling out of Cinderella's Castle walls.

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Still I was afraid to publicly announce that I had more pixie-dust in my bag than most boys, I was still afraid that my mom would find out.

I remember having lunch with a few of my fellow cast members on "Main Street" and they kept asking me loads of personal questions. I was (and still am) incredibly naïve. I don't remember their specific questions, but eventually the conversation led to something like this:

"Donnie, you're really animated."

"Thanks" I said, assuming they were referring to my portrayal of "Goofy". While this was a rather strange statement, I decided to take it as a compliment.

"So," they continued. "Which team do you play for?"

I was confused, I remember hearing about an employee softball league at orientation, but I had been there for less than a week, and had not been approached to join. Again, this line of questioning seemed really strange. Besides, I hated sports.

"I don't play for any team" I said. "I don't really like softball."

They all snickered. "Seriously, which team do you play for?"

I was getting nervous; I honestly had no idea what the hell they were getting at – really. I was really naïve.

Noticing my increasing anxiety, someone finally blurted: "Donnie, do you like boys, or do you like girls?"

This hit me like a lead balloon in my stomach; no one had ever asked me that before – at least in such a blunt manner. It seemed so personal, so rude, yet oddly exciting. So I answered with some hesitation, still not knowing where the conversation was heading. I said, "I'm not sure."

They all squealed, "See, I told you!!!" Apparently, any answer other than 'I like girls' meant immediately that you were gay. So I was officially deemed a Disney "princess." This led to some of my first gay experiences, healthy and unhealthy. Sometimes there were exciting cheap thrills but most times there were unfulfilling lows. Other than my fellow cast members most of these relationships were relatively anonymous. It felt like a world only I belonged to. I figured I was safe here and my mother would likely never find out. I thought I could live like this forever – which was relieving and saddening at the same time.

Everything changed when I fell in love. I met my partner Ron while in Florida and I experienced what I wasn't sure would or could happen in my relationships with other men - true love. It was the kind that I wanted to talk about to anyone who would listen. I wanted to tell people why I constantly had a smile on my face - why I was suddenly so damn happy all the time. But, of course, I couldn't. My mom might find out.

My first professional employment was working at a community college in Orlando. At work I would hear co-workers discussing their everyday lives; their travels, restaurants where they ate, arguments they had, etc. I wanted so badly to discuss these same kinds of anecdotes, but was too scared.

I invited Ron to a Halloween party I was organizing for the students. I had an extra Frankenstein costume that I somehow convinced him to wear (something he would never do today). The costume included a rubber mask that he sweetly wore all night, because I was scared that folks would ask questions. One of my students took a picture of us together (with Ron in full costume, of course) and gave it to me following the event. I framed the picture and put it on my desk. It was our first official



picture together and I felt safe having it up at work. I didn't have to answer any questions as to who this "other man" was, and why I looked so happy with him. In my head, I would think, "Well duh, I'm in love with Frankenstein!" And I'd smile. Ultimately, however, it broke my heart - because I really wanted to see his face.

Not too long following the Halloween party, I decided that keeping my secret life a secret was just plain silly. I was happy, happier than I ever remembered being; I planned on being with Ron for a very long time. It was time to start planning my 'coming-out' process. Little by little I tested the proverbial waters, and noticed that it really wasn't that bad. And I figured out quickly that anyone who really cared about me seemed to be just fine with my sexuality. Folks who had a problem with it weren't worth being friends with, and most, after further exposure and education, eventually came to understand and accept me for who I was.

I was still afraid of telling my family– I was so scared that they might completely reject me that I remained tightlipped. I was living with my cousin Roger at the time. Roger was the kind of guy who had dreams of playing in a rock-n-roll band. He had long hair until it started falling out and he decided to shave it bald. Roger never held a job or dated a girl longer than a few weeks, drove cars that didn't belong to him, smoked like a freight train, and carried all the money he had in his wallet. We were very close.

I decided to tell Roger. This was a daring move considering we were dirt poor and shared an air mattress. I was terrified that Roger might hate me or want me to move. To my amazement, when I told him I was gay - he cried. He was "honored" that I would come out to him first – the first of my family members to know. It was scary, but a huge relief, knowing that Roger was okay with my secret. It was also encouraging as I began to tell other extended family members – all swearing secrecy – so that it wouldn't get back to my folks.

It was also refreshing to know that Roger had noticed my sudden happiness. He said he was thrilled that "for once in your life you seem genuinely happy." He said he'd never seen me like that before.

I started coming out to more and more people, eventually coming out to my co-workers at the community college. My relationship with Ron continued to grow and I finally decided it was time to tell my parents. As scary as this proposition sounded, Ron and I had already spent several holidays apart, and were determined to not let that happen again.

I thought through this process very carefully and decided that I needed to tell my folks in person, not by letter or phone. This meant telling them when I went home for a visit like Christmas or another special occasion. I didn't want my visits home to be "tainted" with bad news. My only other option was to tell them on our upcoming summer vacation. I figured that my folks would be in relatively good spirits and the vacation spot was on neutral ground – not at home.

I insisted that Roger come with me for moral support. I don't remember much about that weekend except for being freaked out, totally scared, and my stomach in knots just about the entire time. Roger kept egging me on, but I was too damn nervous – I could think of nothing else.

On the last night of the vacation, my heart pounding as the impending meltdown approached - I decided the time was right for me to come clean. It was 3:30am. I had to work the next day, so I had to be in my car by 6am in order to make it home in time. So I marched into my parent's room where they were sleeping peacefully and dreaming of their perfectly happy and simple lives, and I woke them up. I had never done this before – not even as a child.

I had hoped that I would just say what I had to say and they would not be surprised at all. I had hoped that my mom would take Marty's words and say, "Well, it's about time!" And my dad would say, "Well Donnie, you always were animated." And that we'd all hug and cry and that they would say they loved me. And then they'd snicker and mom would say to dad "See, I told you so."

That's not how it happened.

The details are fuzzy. I remember they turned on the lights and knew something was wrong. Just like in Marty's office, I struggled to say the words. I cried. My mom cried – probably thinking the worst because they had never seen me so distraught (or manic). When I finally told them, I think they may have been relieved that I didn't give them worse news (related to my health or safety). But the heartbreak in the room was palpable. I think they were in shock. My mom, just kind of stared at me and I remember at one point she whispered: "I knew it." My dad could barely process what I was saying. All he could manage to say was: "Are you sure?" And the more direct "You're sure?" over and over – as if I might change my mind while I stood there.

At one point they asked me if I liked to wear women's clothes and then proceeded to ask questions related to gay stereotypes and dangerous behavior. I decided it was important to let them know that I was, in fact, in a healthy and stable relationship – which was the reason why I choose to come out to them in the first place.

Mostly, I think they thought they were dreaming. While the situation wasn't ideal, their fuzzyheaded confusion contributed to a muted reaction on their part. The only harsh words that they managed to say included swearing that I not tell my grandfather (who was alive at the time). Mom also said that she never wanted to see Ron, or ever wanted me to speak of him, ever. That part broke my heart, but at the time – it seemed rational and reasonable.

All in all I thought the entire episode went as well as could be expected. We did hug, and they told me they loved me as I drove away in my escape car. But it was awkward. The days that followed were the hardest. After several unreturned phone calls (me thinking the worst) – my dad finally called me back and said that mom had been crying for three days straight and that I 'ruined her vacation.' He also said that they couldn't talk to me for a while and repeated their warning that they never wanted to see Ron or hear anything about him, ever.

That was the worst of it – as painful as it was from that point on it didn't matter what anyone else thought – my mother already knew. I'm glad to report that, with time, my parents calmed down a bit and even started asking questions about Ron. I started to push the envelope further and further – even freely mentioning his name and our activities in weekly phone conversations. They began to recognize that for the first time in my life I was actually happy and healthy and successful. They even said they were proud of me.

Page 8 A few years later, my very uncomfortable parents met

Ron – at my graduation ceremony when I received my Master's Degree. They decided to drive separately to the ceremony but due to limited seating, they had to sit in reserved seats, next to Ron. We had planned to have my parents meet him immediately before the ceremony, but traffic was heavy and I was running late (I barely made it). So Ron (God bless him), met my parents for the first time without me, in the bleachers of the auditorium, and made small talk with them during the three-hour ceremony. As difficult as it was, it was probably a good thing that my parents met him without me. That way, hopefully, my parents wouldn't find themselves having embarrassing mental pictures . . .



Since then Ron has been to visit my family on several occasions. We've even managed to spend Christmas and other major holidays there as well. My mom considers him part of the family and actually gets disappointed when I make visits home without him. It wasn't easy, and it has been a long eight years to get there (and it's still not always peaches and sunshine), but ultimately it was the best decision I could have made.

My story isn't all that unusual. There may have been some quirky bumps and scrapes along the way, but the reason I feel compelled to tell my story is to show yet another example of a 'successful coming-out-story-with-a-happy-ending.' Marty, Roger, my mom and even my ex-girlfriend all came to peaceful terms with my sexuality.

I think the strongest weapon gay folks have is actually coming out. Most bigotry that I have ever known regarding gay people came from ignorance or misunderstanding from people who had (or thought they had) never been exposed to gay people in their life (including my parents).

That's why I feel a responsibility as a gay man to be the best positive role model that that I can be. Its not easy and not all of us want that responsibility or burden, but the more people become exposed to gay men and women and become educated about what 'being gay' *really* means, and what we *really* want – the more those stereotypes will be chipped away.

That's why I display my Human Rights Campaign sticker on my car, and why I participate in gay causes and share my coming out story. Most importantly, that's why I keep a picture of me and my beautiful Ron (without his Frankenstein mask) proudly on my desk at work.





## Cooking with Tim Chocolate Pistachio Hearts

1 cup butter  
2/3 cup packed brown sugar  
1 tea vanilla  
1 egg  
2 1/4 cup flour  
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
3/4 cup finely chopped pistachios  
3/4 cup chocolate chips  
1 table shortening  
1/2 cup ground pistachios

In sauce pan mix butter and brown sugar, use low heat until butter is melted. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla, cool 15 minutes. Stir in egg, flour and cocoa. Mix well. Stir in chopped pistachios. Divide dough in 1/2 cover and chill for 30 minutes.  
On floured surface roll out 1/2 of dough to 1/3" thickness Use a 2" heart cookie cutter, cut cookies and place on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake at 350 for about 9 minutes or until edges are firm. Transfer cookies to a wire rack, cool.  
In a sauce pan chocolate chips and shortening using low heat until melted. Remove from heat. Dip half of cookie into the chocolate then roll the edge into the ground pistachios.

## 15th Annual Scholarship Information

The Greater Cincinnati Chapter of PFLAG has been granting scholarships to well deserving GLBT and supportive students from the greater Cincinnati community for 14 years. The scholarships are a reflection of our community's commitment to academic excellence and public service. The recipients have worked to make Ohio a better place for the GLBT community. Monies for the scholarship have been obtained through fundraising events such as the annual Scholarship Banquet and all the wonderful friends of PFLAG that show their support in every possible way.

The scholarships are awarded based upon a demonstrated, genuine interest in learning, strong academic achievement, success in extracurricular activities and leadership. During the months of April and May, the PFLAG Scholarship Committee chooses several finalists based on their academic record, leadership capabilities, and overall potential. Over \$90,000 has been awarded to some amazing students.

The scholarship deadline this year is April 15, 2007. Scholarships are awarded in June at the monthly PFLAG meeting held at the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church located on William Howard Taft Road in Cincinnati.

You may obtain scholarship applications through the website at [www.pflagcinci.org](http://www.pflagcinci.org) and once the application has been completed, mail applications to: PFLAG, P.O. Box 19634, Cincinnati OH 45219-0634

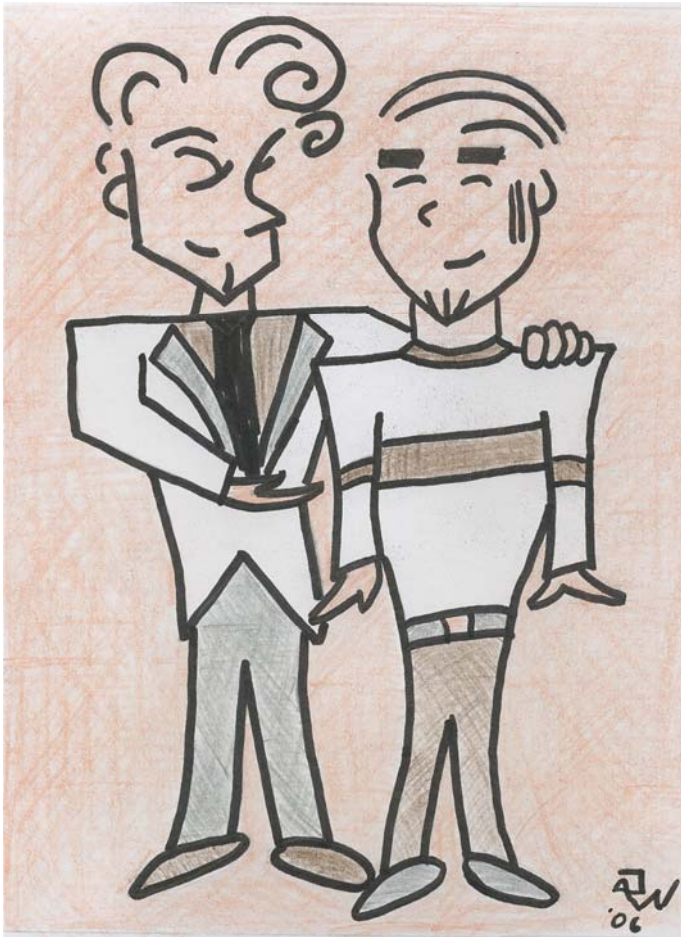
All applications must be postmarked by April 15, 2007 to be considered.

Applications will be reviewed/awarded by the PFLAG Scholarship Committee. It is imperative the applicants communicate their acceptance as soon as possible. Awarded applicants have through the next academic year to utilize their well deserved scholarship. All checks will be payable to the appropriate institution's Bursar's Office. Therefore, please be complete with all necessary information to avoid complications/delays.

## OHIO PFLAG CONFERENCE TO BE SPONSORED BY CINCINNATI AND DAYTON CHAPTERS

PFLAG Cincinnati and PFLAG Dayton will host the Ohio PFLAG Conference on Saturday April 21, 2007 at the Antioch Inn in Yellow Springs. The conference program will feature Jean-Marie Navetta, Assistant Director of Communications, and Elizabeth Brown from PFLAG National. They will discuss media training. Details will be forthcoming, but the state conference typically runs from 9 am to 4 pm and includes breakfast as well as lunch. The registration fee has not been set, but will probably not exceed \$20. This is a great opportunity to meet members from other chapters around the state, to get great ideas from colleagues, and to learn something about reaching the public via the media. Stay tuned for further information.

*That's Amore!*



*15 Years of Love,  
Laughter, & Leadership*

*PFLAG Cincinnati*  
*Presents*  
*the 15th Annual*  
*Scholarship Banquet*

*Saturday, March 3, 2007*

*@ The Madison, Covington, KY*

*Cash Bar 6:00 p.m.*

*Sit Down Dinner 7:00 p.m.*

*Raffle /Silent Auction*

*Complimentary Valet Parking*

*Tickets \$40.00 /Student \$25.00*

*For more information call 513-923-1626*

*Proceeds will benefit the Cincinnati PFLAG Scholarship Fund  
and other activities*



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General Membership Application

Check below for

- New
- Renewal
- Change of Address

Membership Type

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- Please send all mailings blind
- Please contact me for Volunteer Opportunities