

# Youth

## P-FLAG/Church Partnership Addresses Suicide Problem

Right-wing religious and political leaders who wave the banner of "traditional family values" are a major impediment to overcoming the teen suicide problem, according to a parent-church-educator coalition that recently announced a prevention program focused on gay and lesbian youth.

The project, "Respect All Youth," is being undertaken by the Federation of P-FLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, with financial assistance from the United Thank Offering Fund of the Episcopal Church.

The principal function of the project will be to develop and furnish training materials to those who work with youth, according to Paulette Goodman, President of Parents FLAG. The organization's anti-discrimination efforts were endorsed by First Lady Barbara Bush earlier in the year.

Governmental studies show that lesbian and gay teenagers are up to three times as likely to attempt suicide as other young people because of the stigma society places on them. Nevertheless, Congressman William Dannemeyer (R-CA) recently prevailed upon Louis Sullivan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to disavow the studies in the interest of "traditional family values."

"We in Parents FLAG love and respect our gay and nongay children equally," Goodman said. "We value the lives of all our children. It is tragic that many of us only learn of our child's homosexuality after a suicide attempt.

"One of the lessons learned in World War II is that it is evil to discriminate against any human being and to think that lives are expendable. America, land of the free, is no place for the bigotry and intolerance that perpetuate hatred and violence.

"Parents FLAG values the lives of all

children. We strive to keep families in loving relationships. The conservative right wing does not have a monopoly on traditional family values."

Goodman said the project will alert youth counselors, school administrators, and church educators of what needs to be done to "counteract the devastating effect of society's anti-gay attitudes toward our children."

Speaking strongly in support of the Parents FLAG announcement were the Right Reverend Oliver Bailey Garver, Jr., Suffragen Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles; and Jackie Goldberg, President of the Los Angeles City School Board. Goldberg's district undertook the first program in the nation to initiate counseling for gay and lesbian high school students.

Also endorsing the program were Virginia Uribe, Director of Project 10; and

Mary Griffith, a mother whose son died because of her earlier misguided religious beliefs and lack of information. Griffith, a Northern Californian mother of four, said that her gay son, at her urging, resorted to prayer and "reparative" therapy with religious counselors in the vain attempt to become heterosexual. At the age of 20, convinced that he was evil in the eyes of God, he threw himself off an overpass and into the path of an 18-wheel semi-trailer.

It would not have happened, she is now convinced, if there had been programs at school and elsewhere that "could have offset what he was told by me at home and by others in our church."

Griffith is now President of the Mount Diablo, California, chapter of Parents FLAG. Her object, she said, is to help other parents avoid the tragedy that befell her family. The "Respect All Youth" program is a positive step toward that goal.

## OUTRIGHT Names New Co-Coordinator

OUTRIGHT VERMONT, an organization dedicated to the needs and issues facing gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth in the state, recently announced the hiring of Lynn Goyette as Administrative Coordinator.

Lynn will serve as Co-Coordinator with Josie Juhasz. Together, the coordinators will share the responsibilities of organizational management and direct services.

Lynn comes to OUTRIGHT with an extensive background in business, education, administration, and counseling. She is also committed to fostering social change which will enable young people to experience themselves without oppression.

This new position has been made possible through funding support from the

Office of Drug and Alcohol Prevention. The financial assistance will allow the organization to initiate long overdue services in other areas of the state.

OUTRIGHT has also recently received a donation of over \$1100 worth of books to their library. They are asking for volunteers to build or donate bookshelves and to catalogue the new titles.

A committee has also been formed to plan monthly chem-free events for OUTRIGHT members and the community at large. Anyone interested in helping should contact OUTRIGHT's office.

Volunteers are still needed to staff the OUTRIGHT Hotline, which should be in operation early next year. Training will begin sometime in January.

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