

# Central PA Equality Foundation Newsletter

"STRENGTHENING THE REGION'S LGBTQ COMMUNITIES AND THEIR ALLIES"

volume 1 • issue 1

Serving the Counties of:

Clearfield, Cameron, Elk, Jefferson, Indiana, Cambria, Blair, Centre, & Clinton

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## *PFLAG Meeting*

*Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup>*

*407 Bigler Ave, Clearfield PA 16830*

*PFLAG is an extraordinary grassroots organization with a growing network of members in the United States and abroad. The foundation of this network is our chapters. A chapter is defined as three or more individuals working together to further PFLAG's goals. Our chapter network is currently 400 strong, and continues to grow every year. Chapters benefit from the credibility and stature built by more than 40 years of work from PFLAG members. As a chapter leader, you'll join an extended family of people working together to make all of our communities fair and safe places.*

*Come Join us*

*For more information call 814-762-5974*

## Central PA Equality Foundation

Welcome to the start up of the Central PA Equality Foundation, which serves the LGBTQ community and its allies in Clearfield, Cameron, Elk, Jefferson, Indiana, Cambria, Blair, Centre and Clinton Counties. The foundations intent is to foster a welcoming environment where everyone is celebrated for who they are. We will be seeking to offer the LGBT communities of our area health and wellness programs; arts, entertainment and cultural events; recovery, wellness, parenthood and family support services.

Our community faces numerous health disparities, including higher rates of drug and alcohol use. The foundation is committed to addressing these challenges by providing you and your loved ones with LGBT-specific recovery resources and support. We look forward to working with everyone in all of our communities.

## **A Very Special Birth Announcement**

**Birth announcement- almost 20 years late (written with the permission of the kid in question)**

**February 28, 2014 at 10:59pm**

Nineteen and a half years ago, I gave birth to beautiful baby girl with lots of dark hair and a quiet little disposition. Despite some very early suspicions that something was "not quite right", we flung ourselves into the profound and often gross job of parenting.

Who knew that her little mind and body would be so troubled so early? Almost since she could talk, she spoke about worries far too big for her age. Fears about death before pre-school turned into a 7-year-old's written plan for suicide. Finding a psychiatrist for a fourth-grader who tried to run out in traffic to end constant panic, anxiety, and relentless obsessional thoughts of disaster proved horrifyingly impossible.

Throughout the years we learned to survive, if not live, between the crises. In the span of 10 years we experienced entire seasons where life was regular, and regular was good. But inevitably she was dragged back into soul-crushing depression and a desire to live in any reality but the once she was in. And in the worst of times we learned to live an hour- sometimes half an hour- at a time. We existed in increments of time and degrees of despair. Still, over time, hospitalizations got - not easier, exactly - just less catastrophic. And we always found one small precious nugget of humor to cling to.

This would be our saving grace and her greatest gift. So my reaction to the news that my kid is, in mind, body and soul, a male, was not the need to mourn the daughter I am losing (like the books say.) That poor daughter's life was often pretty fucking miserable, frankly. I don't feel a need to mourn a life lived in concealment and suffering. In fact now that I know that one more week as a 'daughter' might have pushed him to the brink of suicide I'd just as soon say goodbye to the female identity that was more of a prison than a person, and get excited about the rest of my life with a son living as his true self.

Therefore, I'd like to announce the "birth" of my son, Dennis. This time, the labor was much easier, and I only gained half as much weight as the first time. And the child sitting next to me is happier than I have seen him, probably ever. It is new enough that I still need much practice using "he" and "him" instead of "she" and "her" and "Dennis" instead of "Maddie".

I imagine it will be even more difficult for family and friends who haven't had a front row seat to his journey. This is why I am writing this note here.

Because the people I call "friends" are people of integrity, compassion, and humor, and I know you will accept this and him without reservation.

I would hope that any parent in a similar situation would be able to look past the potentially thorny path ahead for their child and give them the support they deserve. And maybe recognize that in the end it's a pretty simple choice. As I told my kid shortly after he shared this news with me - If my choice is between a dead daughter and a live son? I'll take the son, and count myself lucky. And if you are reading this and you don't agree with that sentiment, a) please feel free to unfriend me on Facebook, and b) I hope you will try to expand your heart.



Finally, to my son: I can't tell you how it makes me feel as your mother to see you finally living the life you should have been living all along. The smiles, laughs, and jokes seem to be so close to the surface these days. I will be with you every step of the way. Even when the path is difficult. Remember what I've been saying to you since you were tiny: "I love you forever-no-matter-what." I'm sure I probably didn't link this correctly, so if not, then listen to the Katy Perry song "Unconditionally." That Katy...nailed it.

Thanks for picking me as your mother.

## Contributing to Central PA Equality Foundation

"We believe our communities should be safe for LGBTQ individuals and that sexual orientation and gender identity should not be the basis for social alienation or legal discrimination."

Center the QR Code on your cell phone or tablet to make a donation today!



## Our Mission

Central PA Equality Foundation is a volunteer-led effort to create a regionally representative community resource that is a unifying point for central Pennsylvania's large, diverse, and multi-county LGBT population.

The mission of the Central PA Equality Foundation is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

We seek to:

Create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment

Provide and support comprehensive programs throughout the community

Embrace diversity, health, and wellness

Central PA Equality Foundation

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