



# PFLAG OMAHA

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

**MOVING EQUALITY FORWARD IN THE HEARTLAND**

## From the President

### 'WE ARE EDUCATING OUR COMMUNITY'

Millard North High School counselor, Carmen Hippen and Chandler View Elementary School counselor Erin Malm were our April 12 meeting speakers. In February both ladies took time away from their family and work to attend the only school counselors conference in the nation that focuses solely on working with and supporting LGBTQIA youth.

Fortunately, they received a scholarship funded by Robert Stoffer-son, PFLAG Omaha, GLSEN Omaha and the Nebraska School Counselor Association, which covered the majority of their travel and conference expenses.

Ms. Malm and Ms. Hippen spoke passionately about the conference and how much they learned. They talked about how this conference will make a difference for them in their work and help them connect better with their students and their students' families.

They also spoke highly of our PFLAG Omaha speaker's bureau and that the information they learned from our program was reinforced at the San Diego conference. Ms. Malm specifically mentioned a presentation by Caitlyn Ryan of the Family Acceptance Project and said that the information presented at that workshop made a great impact on her. We know Dr. Ryan and the Family Acceptance Project's work intimately and have been using their research in our presentations and handouts for well over a year.

Hearing these ladies speak about what they learned was rewarding for me for two reasons, the first being that we can help support the

work of all educators that are passionate about making school and life better for LGBT kids. It's also rewarding to know that the hard work our PFLAG Omaha speakers bureau committee continues to do to tailor and constantly update our presentations and handouts is making a difference. Those who attend our presentations and panels are learning valuable information about the LGBT community. We are accomplishing our mission – we are educating our community and changing hearts and minds.

Speaking of our speaker's bureau, we are always in need of panelists and presenters. If you're a PFLAG Omaha member, please consider joining our speaker's bureau team. For more information about our speaker's bureau visit our website [pflag-omaha.org](http://pflag-omaha.org) and click on the Speaker Bureau link; or you can email [speakersbureau@pflag-omaha.org](mailto:speakersbureau@pflag-omaha.org) or call (402) 291-6781.

Please join us for our May 10 meeting when we will announce our first PFLAG Omaha scholarship winner. Our program speaker will be Ruth Marimo, author of the book "Freedom of an Illegal Immigrant." We'll meet at our usual location, Countryside Community Church, 8787 Pacific Street, in Memorial Hall. Please use the Truhlsen Community Center entrance. Come at 6:30 p.m. for pre-meeting refreshments and socializing. Support time will begin at 6:45 p.m. followed by our program beginning at 8 p.m.

**Carrie Spencer,**  
**PFLAG Omaha President**

## May 2012

**PFLAG Omaha meets the second Thursday each month.**  
Countryside Community Church  
8787 Pacific St., Memorial Hall  
Truhlsen Community Center  
Entrance

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday, April 28**

**PFLAG Coffee Social**

9:00 – 11:00 am – Urban Abbey, 1026 Jackson (inside Soul Desires) Informal social/support.

**Tuesday, May 1**

**PFLAG Board Meeting**

6:00 pm – 2712 S. 87 Ave.

**Thursday, May 3**

**GOglbt Professionals** 5:30 – 7:00 pm – Delinea Design, 701 S. 15th.

**Thursday, May 10**

**PFLAG General Meeting**

6:30 pm – Socializing

6:45 pm – Support time

8:00 pm – Speaker,  
author Ruth Marimo.

**Saturday, May 19**

**Tom Mahony Pride Prom**

7 -- 11:00 pm – Cary Hall, First United Methodist Church, 70 and Cass; LGBT and Ally youth 13-23

**Saturday, May 19**

**New Trans Group**

Noon – 2:00 pm – Second Unitarian, 3012 S. 119; support/social group for transgender people, any age, friends and family as well. If interested, email: [ferialpearson@hotmail.com](mailto:ferialpearson@hotmail.com)

**Sat., June 9, 7:05 pm**

**Sun., June 10, 4:05 pm**

River City Mixed Chorus Concert – Strauss Performing Arts Center, UNO, 6001 Dodge.

**Saturday, June 30**

**Heartland Pride 2012**

10:00 am – 10:00 pm – Stinson Park at Aksarben Village, 67th and Center; parade tentatively at 10 am.



**Heartland Pride  
United In Pride  
Saturday, June 30  
Stinson Park, 10 AM - 10 PM  
Aksarben Village  
67th and Center St.**

The location replaces the downtown sites of recent years and offers diverse options including dining, shopping, ample free parking, access from three bus lines and handicap parking.

Tentatively, parade registration will begin at 9 a.m. in the Scott Conference Center parking area on the UNO South Campus, with the parade tentatively scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. The tentative parade route goes through Aksarben Village, ending at Stinson Park.

The park has a built-in state-of-the-art amphitheater, and offers an outstanding atmosphere and a superior green space. Bring your lawn chair or blanket and enjoy all that is PRIDE.

From the beer garden and drag entertainers to live music, community booths, merchandise, artists, family area and entertainment, the 2012 PRIDE Parade and Festival is geared to have something for everyone in our diverse community.

### **GET INVOLVED!**

Want to lend your talents, voice and time? Fill out our volunteer application by clicking here or call us at 402-965-1539 or email us at [info@heartlandpride.org](mailto:info@heartlandpride.org) This e-mail address is being protected from spambots.

### **PFLAG OMAHA**

**Address:** P.O. Box 390064  
Omaha, NE 68139  
**Helpline:** 402.291.6781  
**E-mail:** [info@pflag-omaha.org](mailto:info@pflag-omaha.org)  
**Website:** [www.pflag-omaha.org](http://www.pflag-omaha.org)

PFLAG Omaha is a nonprofit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code

### **OUR VISION**

We, the parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Only with respect, dignity and equality for all will we reach our full potential as human beings, individually and collectively. PFLAG welcomes the participation and support of all who share in, and hope to realize this vision.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**President:** Carrie Spencer  
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### **VOLUNTEERS**

**Speakers Bureau:** Michele Fischer  
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**Transgender Coordinator:** Ashley Swartz  
**Proud Horizons:** Barb Johnson  
Tom Johnson  
**Supplies:** Mary Gardner

### **NEWSLETTER**

**Editors:** Bob Dorr  
Vicki Neild Wiese

Please submit articles to:  
[vneildw@gmail.com](mailto:vneildw@gmail.com)

# SECOND SON: A MEMOIR ON BEING TRANSGENDER IN NEBRASKA

By Ryan K. Sallans

At the age of 24, my life as I knew it changed while standing in the aisle of a LGBT bookstore in Boston. At that time I was female-bodied and in a lesbian-identified relationship. I knew that I loved my partner, but I wasn't comfortable in my body and how she saw me. As she stood behind me in the aisle, my fingers started flipping through the pages of a book exploring transgender men. As I looked at the men's eyes, scruffy faces, chest reconstructed from female breasts to male pectorals, I realized I too was transgender. It was at that moment that I fell back and asked myself:

***Where do I turn now that I've discovered my core identity goes against everything I was led to believe was true?***

How do I come out, and then move forward, when I know that who I am is not what my family, community and peers have assigned me to be?

These questions along with the emotions that follow are some of the stories I candidly share in my memoir "Second Son: Transitioning Toward My Destiny, Love and Life".

While growing up in the small town of Aurora, Nebraska I knew I was "different," but as a goofy child and then depressed teenager I didn't realize that my difference is something that pushes the bounds of what my community and broader society are still grappling to understand.

When writing my story, I didn't want it to just be about my transition. I wanted to share all facets of my life and how my struggles with understanding aspects of my sexu-



Ryan K Sallans

ality affected my relationships with my own body, family, friends and romantic partners. As an insecure female college student I nearly died from an extreme case of anorexia. The only thing that saved me was my inner spirit begging for a chance to live. I was able to recover from anorexia by allowing my spirit to live, but I didn't begin a true healing process until the moment I discovered my transgender identity. Through my transition I finally learned how to listen to my spirit, and I was able to move forward and listen to my heart.

Second Son is a story that shows the empowerment I achieved as I underwent gender reassignment surgeries and traces my evolution into manhood. At a time when fighting to find oneself is popular, I believe that my story will resonate with people everywhere who are journeying to find their own destinies, love, and life.

**Please join me on June 14 at the PFLAG-Omaha meeting** where I'll read from *Second Son*, share my current observations surrounding the transgender community, and discuss where the future is heading for transgender rights and healthcare access. Copies of *Second Son* will be available for purchase and signature at this event.

To follow *Second Son* or Ryan, please visit these websites: [www.secondsonmemoir.com](http://www.secondsonmemoir.com) and [www.ryansallans.com](http://www.ryansallans.com)

"An important and vital book... terrific read. His honesty about his transition is one we don't see often and it's very refreshing."

—Larry King,  
Talk Show Host

## SECOND SON



Transitioning Toward My Destiny, Love and Life

RYAN K. SALLANS

**'SECOND SON'**  
**BOOK RELEASE PARTY**  
April 28, 5:30 – 9 p.m.  
inCommon, 1258 S. 13th, Omaha  
Books available for  
purchase, signing

## 'ONE LOSS IS TOO MANY' IOWA YOUTH, 14, TAKES HIS LIFE AFTER RELENTLESS BULLYING

*Editor's note: Kenneth James Weishuhn Jr., 14, took his own life on April 14 after relentless bullying at his school and on Facebook. He had told his family and fellow students a month earlier that he was gay. He lived in the rural community of Primghar, Iowa, population 900, in northwest Iowa, about 70 miles northeast of Sioux City. He was a high school freshman in nearby Paullina, Iowa. He hanged himself in the garage at his home. Calla Rongerude, One Iowa interim executive director, released this statement:*

On Saturday, April 14, our community suffered a great loss. The death of Kenneth Weishuhn is tragic and heartbreaking. This young man had a bright future ahead of him and by all accounts, he was a great friend, both loyal and supportive. He was fun-loving, had a sunny-disposition, and an even brighter smile. But Kenneth was in pain.

What Kenneth endured is something that no one should have to go through. Kenneth made the brave choice to live his life openly and fully when he came out as gay, and his family opened their loving arms to him. But after coming out, Kenneth was targeted at school with hurtful remarks, painful attacks online, and even death threats that were sent to his cell phone. It is unfathomable what this young man endured. My heart breaks thinking about the pain and isolation Kenneth must have felt.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the Weishuhn family and to the community of Primghar in this time of grief.



*Kenneth Weishuhn*

Kenneth had a favorite quote that he would often repeat:

**"Be Buddies Not Bullies."**

Let's honor Kenneth with a commitment to be buddies, not bullies. No one, especially the most vulnerable members of our community, should face bullying and threats of violence simply for being who they are.

We have a responsibility as a community to foster acceptance and love for all of our youth. We need to make sure that students have the support and resources they need to thrive and grow. As a community, we must do better. So today, I call on you to be a resource. Be the source of acceptance and understanding for a young lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) person. Make sure that they know you are there and that you care. By simply listening, you can make a tremendous difference to someone who is isolated, struggling, or is in pain.

It's important that if you or someone you know is being bullied that you report it to the school administration or contact Iowa Safe Schools. If you ever need someone to talk to - call The Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386 to speak with a trained counselor who can help you. You can also visit [www.trevorproject.org](http://www.trevorproject.org)

LGBT young people need know that there is help and that there are people who care and we have a duty to become that resource. Stand with us in support of young people across Iowa and the country.

***Because one loss is too many.***

If you need support, please call the  
**Trevor Lifeline: 866 488 7386**

**The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth**

# A NIGHT ON THE RED CARPET

SATURDAY, MAY 19

7:00 TO 11:00PM

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CARY HALL-7020 CASS STREET

MUSIC BY DJ JP  
& DJ GOMEZ  
OF JP ENTERPRISES

FORMAL/  
SEMI-FORMAL  
ATTIRE

ADMISSION  
\$6 OR \*\$5

\*WITH A CAN FOOD  
DONATION AT DOOR

AGE 13-23

ID MAY BE REQUIRED

TOM  
MAHONY  
PRIDE  
PROM



TOM MAHONY  
PRIDE PROM

SPONSORED BY PROUD HORIZONS

PFLAG OMAHA / GLSEN OMAHA

METROPOLITAIN OMAHA GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

FOOD DONATIONS TO  
BENEFIT MCC FOOD BANK  
PROVIDING SERVICES TO  
NEBRASKA AIDS PROJECT

Prom poster designed by Teagan Thomas.

## 'I WAS STARTING DOWN A DARK PATH' BEN GRAY GOT LUCKY BREAK, TURNED HIS LIFE AROUND

By Bob Dorr

When Omaha City Councilman Ben Gray graduated from high school in Cleveland, his future didn't look promising—to put it mildly.

By his mid-teens, Gray's parents had died of cancer and he was living with an older sister. He stole autos and burglarized homes. He was arrested and spent six months in a youth confinement center before pleading guilty to two burglaries and three auto thefts, a fraction of the true number. Gray got probation. By his senior year in high school he was into the drug-dealing business. Once, a drug dispute caused Gray to wait outside a house with the intention of killing a man. Friends found him and talked him out of doing that, Gray said.

Gray barely managed to graduate, ranking 420th out of 433 in his high school class. "I was starting down a dark path," he said in a recent interview.

Jump forward 43 years. After a career in television photo journalism, Gray became the Omaha City Council member who introduced a work place anti-discrimination ordinance giving legal protections to gay and transgender persons. He saw that ordinance narrowly defeated, later reintroduced the ordinance and vowed that he wouldn't give up until work place equality became reality in Omaha.

The City Council voted 4-3 to pass the ordinance in March, with Councilman Garry Gerandt providing the crucial fourth vote.



*Ben Gray*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons now can file a claim with the City of Omaha if they believe their employer fired them or otherwise treated them unfairly because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The victory showed that the LGBT community in Omaha can seek the support of the city's elected governing body and have a chance to get an equal-rights measure passed.

Around the time of his 1969 high school graduation, Gray began to think about his future. He concluded that he wouldn't live long if he stayed in the illegal drug business. Further, he decided he was putting his friends and family members in danger.

Ben Gray joined the Air Force. He thrived in a military culture of discipline and high expectations. He was assigned to a course that taught him photography and lab work. That was the lucky break of his life. He became the only honor student in his photo class of 19. After graduating, he was assigned to Offutt Air Force Base south of Omaha where he served the rest of his enlistment as a photo lab technician.

In 1973, before leaving the military, Gray began working as a photo-lab assistant at KETV-Channel 7 in Omaha. After a few months, he advanced to photo lab manager. Later he became a photographer-reporter for KETV. In 1977, Gray became one of a group of eight KETV employees to take the unusual step of filing a complaint against their employer with the Federal Communications Commission. They sought non-renewal of the station's license to operate. It was the first time nationally that a group of employees had objected to the license renewal of the station that employed them, Gray said.

The FCC dismissed the complaint but it did find merit in the employee group's argument that KETV telecast public affairs shows only in early-morning or late-night times, Gray said. In response, the station improved the times of public affairs programs. The station also responded to other parts of the complaint by, for example, hiring the station's first primetime female anchor.

In 1979, as part of his KETV duties, Gray began a long run as

(Continued from page 6)

host and producer of the station's weekly community public affairs show Kaleidoscope, discussing public policy issues with panelists on the air. The show helped make Gray a public figure in Omaha. The show, incidentally, was broadcast April 15 for the last time. KETV says Kaleidoscope will be replaced by a new show that will include in-depth reporting and panel discussions featuring experts on issues.

Ben Gray has been a mentor to at-risk youths in Omaha and believes his own rough growing-up years have made him better able to help others. "I never forgot what those early days were like," he said.

Gray, who is 62, left his job at KETV to run for the City Council in 2009,

defeating incumbent Frank Brown. Gray's wife, Freddie Gray, an Omaha native, is president of the Omaha School Board.

He considers his sponsorship of the anti-discrimination ordinance "a no-brainer" given his strong belief in equal rights. He was surprised at the extent of the opposition to the ordinance in his heavily black northeast Omaha Council district. It is ironic that many African-Americans opposed his efforts to pass the ordinance when blacks benefit from similar civil right legislation, Gray said.

Much of the opposition has been centered in black churches. Gray himself is not a church member, although he considers himself a spiritual person.

**He says he doesn't worry about the possibility of losing his City Council seat in the 2013 city elections. "If they fairly judge the body of work I've done, I will get reelected," he said. The equal employment ordinance "is among the things that I'm proudest of," he said. "I would do it again in a heartbeat."**



## **TRANS GROUP STARTED ON THIRD SATURDAYS**

**A Trans Group has started to give support for people who are transgender of any age.**

**Current members range from 11 to 70 years old. It is a social group for friends and family as well.**

**We meet the third Saturday of every month at Second Unitarian Church, 3012 S. 119th St., from noon to 2 p.m. We've had two well attended meetings**

**Those interested can email [ferialpearson@hotmail.com](mailto:ferialpearson@hotmail.com)**



**SECOND UNITARIAN CHURCH**

***A Welcoming Congregation***

**Join us for Sunday Services**

**Worship Hour • Sunday School**

**9:30 & 11:30 am**

**3012 S. 119th St • (402) 334-0537**

**[www.2uomaha.org](http://www.2uomaha.org)**

***Celebrating Diversity***



**Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays**

## RAINBOW OUTREACH CENTER

Education, Information, Social Services  
For All People, but Primarily GLBT Individuals

[www.rainbowoutreach.org](http://www.rainbowoutreach.org)  
402-341-0330

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SUPPORTING THE  
GLBT COMMUNITY

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**IF THEY SMOKE,  
YOU SMOKE.**

Choose smoke-free housing.  
It's the only effective way to avoid the  
dangers of secondhand smoke.



*A better choice for everyone.*

[RentSmokeFree.org](http://RentSmokeFree.org)

This project is supported in part by Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare through funding provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services/Tobacco Free Nebraska Program as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement.

GO **glbt**

Greater Omaha GLBT Network  
[www.GOglbt.org](http://www.GOglbt.org)

Dr. Carol Beaty, Life Coach  
[lifeunleashedcoaching.com](http://lifeunleashedcoaching.com)  
[Carol@lifeunleashedcoaching.com](mailto:Carol@lifeunleashedcoaching.com)  
402-332-8215

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*Serving the GLBTQ Community in the Greater Omaha Area*