

InsideOut:

The Quarterly News Letter of Blind Friends of Lesbians and Gays (BFLAG)
December 2005/January 2006

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SPECIAL NOTICE

The BFLAG board apologizes for the tardiness of our Newsletter, InsideOut. Unfortunately, some people didn't follow through on their commitments to BFLAG. We hope you understand and we will have 2 more issues coming out before the convention in July. That will be a total of 3 issues for the year.

FROM PRESIDENT BUTCH ARNOLD: BFLAG ON THE MOVE

Since our convention in July, BFLAG has been on a rollercoaster. President Connie David resigned right after the August board meeting, which set the board back 60 days. I moved into the office of President, and Jason Perry was elected Vice President. Tom Depauw was elected to the board to fill Jason's member at large position. We thought all was well. I left most of Connie's appointments in place.

The board met in Baltimore in October and had 2 long days of working sessions. Some of the outcomes of that meeting are:

A working relationship was set up with CCLVI. We had 3 of their leaders attending and the groundwork was set up for some joint sponsored programs at the 2006 convention and a continuing working relationship in the future. Look for more about this great relationship in the March newsletter.

National leaders of "PFLAG" joined us for one of our sessions and we will be building on this relationship. We are working to make PFLAG's literature accessible and will utilize PFLAG's existing network to spread the word about BFLAG. PFLAG and BFLAG will be sending a joint national Press Release out in January stating how the two organizations will work together and compliment each other's work. It appears that we will have PFLAG working with us in Jacksonville this summer.

The board spent quite a bit of time planning for our web site, BFLAG.org. We are moving it to another provider and the site will be up and running at it's new host soon. We will also be providing a new location for our List Service that will return control back to the board. Watch for more details on this.

Meka White was appointed to chair our newsletter committee, and many articles were in her hands by October 15th with all intentions of having our newsletter out by October 25th. It is with deep regret that nothing has come of her intentions. The Board offers its apology for the lack of information coming out so far this year. Vice President Jason Perry will be stepping in as of our December board meeting to temporarily replace Meka as our editor. Please submit your newsletter offerings to him and he will make every effort to include them in our next issue.

Also, at the board meeting we finalized our first Directory and it has gone out to all members who have opted to be listed in it. The board requests that all members notify us if your contact information changes so we can keep our records up to date. Our membership records are, in my opinion, organized far better than ever before and as of this date we have 83 paid members for the 2005-2006 year. It is our goal to have 150 members by our July meeting, and the only way to get new members is to ASK people to join. I challenge each member to get two new BFLAG members in the next 90 days. It's not hard; all you have to do is ASK them to join.

BFLAG has a nominating committee this year. The committee has been charged with producing a viable slate of officers to lead our organization. Jason Perry is chairing the committee. He is looking for individuals to serve on the committee as well as individuals to run and commit to the job of leading BFLAG. The Offices up for election this year include President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Member At Large to the Board.

The board spent quite a bit of time hashing out the 2006 BFLAG convention program. Although we have lots of ideas, we do not know what programming will ultimately be feasible in Jacksonville. We do know, though, that we will be streaming our session via the internet again. Moreover, we will put together individualized programming for both men and women. We need and want everyone's input so let us know what YOU would like to do and what YOU don't want to waste your time with.

The board also went to CLUB WET in Washington DC to thank the Club for its financial support for our 2005 Convention. Our past President Rob Hill left his mark and now CLUB WET is the proud owner of the "Rob Hill Memorial steps". Fortunately Rob was only slightly hurt from his fall. Regretfully, the concrete at the bottom is cracked.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP FROM FORMER BFLAG PRESIDENT CONNIE DAVID

Dear BFLAG Members,

I am sure that you have noticed a few changes in the Board of Directors over the past few months. One of those changes took place shortly after the July convention. Due to some health and work-related issues, I needed to step down as your president. I do apologize to all of you for not making this decision in time for you to have a voice in who my replacement would be, but the constitution does provide for this event.

I have served on the BFLAG Board of Directors since its formation in 1999. I have been the treasurer, secretary and president. I have seen many changes in the organization, and I have been involved in them from various positions. This gave me a chance to help sculpt the organization, and for 3 years, to guide its development and progress.

My decision to step down was not made lightly. I do believe that it was the best decision not only for me, but also for the organization. I am still available to Board members as a sounding board, but I am no longer playing a role in BFLAG's governance.

I want to thank all of you who supported this organization during my tenure as president. You helped us raise funds, move in new and expanded directions, and become an organization of which all of us can be proud. I have enjoyed serving this organization, and I wish the new board well in its future endeavors.

MEET BFLAG'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Butch Arnold

Butch is a graduate of The Maryland School for the Blind and holds a BA from Anderson University as well as certifications from other institutions. Butch has lived most of his life in Baltimore Maryland where he owns "3A Enterprises", a full service licensed Real Estate Company. Butch also serves as a commissioner on the Baltimore City Commission on Disabilities and has served on several state committees. Butch is also a member of the American Council of the Blind of Maryland. He is an Eagle Scout and served with distinction as Lt. Governor of his Kiwanis division in Baltimore. Butch was the advisor to the Johns Hopkins University Circle K club for 10 years and has been active in the Maryland School for the Blind Alumni since his graduation many years ago.

Butch joined BFLAG in 2002 at our Houston Convention and has been on the board ever since. He has served as Member At Large, Vice President and now President. He has chaired the convention, fundraising, public relations and logo committees. Butch looks forward to the day when everyone knows about BFLAG and its membership is an excess of 1000 members.

VICE PRESIDENT

Jason Perry

Jason Perry is a graduate of Milton-Union High School in West Milton, Ohio and holds a BS in Rehabilitation and Business from Wright State University. He is currently pursuing advanced degrees in law and rehabilitation at Ohio State University, where he is three classes from graduating.

Jason has lived most of his life in Ohio, but has spent considerable time traveling around the country. Congenitally blind, he has a passion for disability equality and civil rights and rejects the nonsense that blind people are inferior. Employment is of particular interest to him. Jason is currently an assistive technology consultant and the President of the National Counsel for Support of Disability Issues.

SECRETARY

Bonnie Pugh

Bonnie, whom we playfully regard as middle-age and crazy, says this of herself. "I am a 60-year-old female. I have been disabled for about 20 years. I am a graduate of Parkville Senior High School. My main occupation was in the health field where I specialized in Geriatrics and Special Children. Specifically the blind and multiple handicapped. I was at one time a Senior Houseparent at the Maryland School for the

Blind. In more recent years I have worked with Butch Arnold in his business and in such organizations as Kiwanis and in convention planning and publicity for the ACB and BFLAG. I also served as Secretary/Treasurer for the Towson Chapter of the Women of the Moose."

ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY

Dennis Ober

Of himself, Dennis modestly writes: " I was born and raised in an area outside of Baltimore, Maryland. I graduated from high school in 1989 and have been working for the Baltimore County Public School system for 17 years as a computer operator. Part time, I drive a tour bus for Rohrbaugh's in Manchester, Maryland. I've been driving for seven years.

I have traveled quite a bit even though I only drive on weekends or I take off from my full time job to do a bus run when things are slow at my full time job. I've been to New York City, Atlantic City, and in Canada -- mainly in Toronto and Niagara Falls. I enjoy being a part of BFLAG, even though I'm not blind. I have a couple of dear friends that belong to BFLAG, and I've made even more friends since joining BFLAG's noble cause. My responsibility is to assist the secretary or other officials with accomplishing important tasks or projects."

TREASURER

Larry King

This is not the guy on CNN, but Larry is a king in his own right. As an accountant, Larry is good at crunching the numbers. And, while he doesn't conduct interviews, he surely enjoys talking.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Rob Hill

Rob was one of the founders of BFLAG. He works as a social worker in Tulsa, Oklahoma, assisting those in need to find food and shelter. In his leisure time, Rob enjoys singing and travel.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Darryl Roberts and Tom Depauw

Tom and Darryl operate a radio station in Illinois, which runs programming geared at a wide variety of audiences. They joke that they run stuff that other stations are afraid to run. Both are active in BFLAG's efforts to stream BFLAG programming and develop an accessible website.

BFLAG IN THE COMMUNITY

BFLAG AND ITS BOARD STEP UP TO THE PLATE TO ASSIST PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

By Jason Perry

As the cleanup from one of the deadliest natural disasters in U.S. history rages on, Blind Friends of Lesbians and Gays (BFLAG) and its Board of Directors are providing a helping hand in a variety of ways.

BFLAG's Board of Directors voted unanimously to appropriate \$500 to a Houston-based LGBT group that is active in Katrina relief efforts. This group, which is being headed up by BFLAG member Sam Stewman, is providing medications to people with HIV and other assistance to people displaced by Katrina. "It is absolutely crucial to assure that people with HIV infection have an uninterrupted supply of medications to prevent worsening of their condition," observed Rob Hill, BFLAG's ACB liaison.

BFLAG has several members in the Baltimore area who are coordinating quite a relief effort. Butch Arnold, Baltimore businessman and President of BFLAG, has a two-bedroom apartment in the Baltimore area, which he has graciously offered as temporary housing for people displaced by Katrina. Butch is also actively seeking donations for the afore-mentioned Houston-based LGBT support group. Bonnie Pugh, care-giver and BFLAG secretary, coordinated a relief effort with St. Ersula church, which delivered thousands of dollars of food, water and clothing into New Orleans. BFLAG member Augie Dorsette assisted Bonnie on this effort, coordinating deliveries and obtaining donations. Last but certainly not least, BFLAG member Pat Anderson, sister of Bonnie Pugh, donated \$200 in cash to the St. Ersula relief effort. "BFLAG has a moral obligation to do its part to help," observed BFLAG President Butch Arnold. Secretary Bonnie Pugh hit the nail right on the head when she stated that every little bit helps.

Not to be outdone by the "Baltimore bunch" yours truly (Columbus, Ohio business man, lawyer to be and BFLAG Vice President) Jason Perry is providing temporary housing for five families whose homes were destroyed by Katrina. Perry, who enjoys renovating properties in distressed communities, is housing three families at his townhouse in San Rafael, which is approximately an hour South of San Francisco by car. Two to three more families will be housed at another of Jason's properties. "There's no place like home," Perry said, "but the least that we can do after a mega disaster like Katrina is to help make those displaced comfortable until they can get back on their feet."

If there is anything positive about a tragedy like Katrina, it is that it brings people together. On behalf of the BFLAG Board, I urge you to dig deep and help in any way you can.

HOUSEKEEPING AND REMINDERS

First, our member directory will be updated monthly, and Secretary Bonnie Pugh requests that new and existing members get their contact information to her before the 20 of every month.

Second, secretary Bonnie Pugh would like to thank her assistant Dennis Ober for all his work on the membership directory.

Finally, President Butch Arnold has recently obtained his Realtor Broker's license. Congrats Butch!