

OUTREACH

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TOGETHER WE CAN! —NELLIE HUGGINS

I grew up in a small town in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago, and moved to the city to pursue my passion for comedy and writing. I work full-time as a nanny and also produce, write and perform comedy in my free time.

The Gayla began as my reaction to the unjust passing of Proposition 8 in 2008. The looks on the faces of my gay friends and family as they watched the news coverage broke my heart. I began going to protests and writing letters, but I knew it wasn't enough. I wracked my brain for a way to help, and I started thinking about how Prop 8 had managed to pass in the first place: money. I decided to fight fire with fire and do exactly as the extreme right had done. I would donate as much money as possible to the cause. As I lay awake one night, desperately trying to figure out a way to raise money, the idea hit me like lightning. I could produce a comedy show, it's what I knew best.

Comedy and activism have always been two of my biggest passions, so why not combine the two? I immediately set to work. I had no idea what I was doing; I had only been living in Chicago for



Gay & Straight: Activating Change Together

7 months and hadn't produced any shows on my own. I sent emails, made phone calls, gained sponsorships and donations, and connected with Equality Illinois. Somehow, less than a month later, a show fell together.

The turnout for the first Gayla was more than I could have ever hoped for. We filled the venue; the response was overwhelming. People who I had never met showed up, having seen the event listed in the press. The show was a huge success.

We raised almost \$1,000 that first night, and have donated almost \$1,500 to date. 100% of the proceeds from the Gayla go directly to Allied for Equality and PFLAG. As the producer of the Gayla, I don't make a profit, and the performers all donate their time and energy to the cause.

I will continue to do whatever I can, financially and otherwise, to ensure that nobody feels like a lesser human solely

based on the way they love another person.

It is completely mind-boggling to me that someone's sexual orientation could ever be grounds for a hate-crime, discrimination, lack of civil rights and a general disrespect. It embarrasses me to watch and I refuse to tolerate it.

I will continue to fight for what I believe is right. I will also encourage other allies to speak up and get involved; I would like to think that, if the tables were turned, I wouldn't have to fight alone.

I know there is still a long road ahead, but if my contribution makes even one person laugh while making them feel that they have someone on their side as they fight this ridiculous battle for equality, I will feel as though I have done my part.



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Allied for Equality is a joint project of:



Equality Illinois and



Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays

More info on this year's Gayla comedy show (Wednesday, September 15), on page two...

GAYLA 3.0

When: WEDNESDAY, September 15th—doors open at 7PM

Where: Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark, Chicago)

Details: Tickets are \$10 at the door and proceeds benefit Equality Illinois and the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois.

CAROLINE'S CORNER

SENATOR PAUL SIMON
FEDERAL BUILDING



Before our meeting about ENDA with Rep. Costello's staff (Carbondale)

I always feel like I have to cram a lot of ideas in a small space and this time is no exception! First off, I have to say thanks to the UP Center, who organized the Champaign Urbana Pride Festival as well as CIADE, who organized Peoria Pride! Both were spectacularly well attended events. Thousands of people were on hand to sign letters in support of ENDA and civil unions as well as learn about who we are.

Don't forget! **There is an election Nov. 2 so email or call me with any questions pertaining to voter registration, early voting or voting absentee.** If you aren't registered, do it now! You have until Oct. 5 if you want to vote on Nov. 2.

Also, Illinois passed a law recently allowing registered voters to vote via absentee ballot. You just have to request the ballot via a form (based on the county you live in). I can make sure you get that form—just ask! We will definitely be out encouraging Illinois voters to vote by mail/absentee ballot (more details to come).

Hope to see you at one of the events in the coming months! *FYI: There will be a deputy voter registrar training for anyone in Cook County who has interest in being a registrar on Thursday, September 16 at 7PM at the Center on Halsted.*

3 THINGS YOU CAN DO

- 1. Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA—H.R. 3017 / S. 1584):** Please CALL the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), ask for your Representative (you just need your zip code) and tell them to pass ENDA now! You can also contact Caroline to get a template of the letter we have been collecting asking Congress to support the bill. We have collected hundreds of letters from across the state and will be collecting more! ENDA would protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in the workplace (nationally). **If you want to participate in an in-district meeting (pic above) let me know!**
- 2. Civil Union Bill (SB 1716):** Tell your Representative and Senator that Illinois can't wait any longer. CALL your legislators or contact Caroline to get a template of the letter we have been collecting asking the Representative/Senator to support the bill. If you are willing to go door to door, stand outside a Farmer's Market, etc—Caroline is willing to go with you and ask people to sign the letter supporting the bill. We have collected thousands of letters from across the state and will be collecting more! Call or email if you are interested!
- 3. The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (H.R. 1283 / S. 3065):** The U.S. House of Representatives voted to authorize the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) and the Senate Armed Services Committee passed it out of committee in May of 2010. Call the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), and urge your Senators to repeal DADT without WAITING. Please go to www.sldn.org for more information.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

September PFLAG Meetings:

Please go to www.pflagillinois.org for a COMPLETE listing of meetings and info

PFLAG DeKalb: Sept 13 from 7-9pm
(Unitarian Church of DeKalb-158 N. Fourth St, DeKalb)

*meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month

PFLAG Gurnee/Lake County: Sept 13 from 7-9pm
(Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center-4275 Old Grand Ave, Gurnee)

*meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month

PFLAG Joliet (NEW): Sept 19 from 2-4pm
(Good Shepherd Church & Preschool-25 Alexander Circle, Romeoville)

*meets the 3rd Sunday of each month

Equality Illinois Events

For more info visit: www.eqil.org

Dining Out for Equality: Sept 29 (Check participating restaurants at www.diningoutforequality.com)

Carbondale Community Pride Picnic: Oct 2 from 11am-4pm
(Church of the Good Shepherd-515 S. Orchard Dr, Carbondale)

LGBTQ Rights Discussion: Oct 6 from 7-8pm
(OCAD-1608 2nd Ave, Rock Island)

Check out www.alliedforequality.org "EVENTS CALENDAR" for a full listing of events!

CONTACT INFO

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INVITE YOUR FRIENDS!

Twitter: [allied4equality](https://twitter.com/allied4equality)

Facebook: search "Allied for Equality"

Stories From the Heartland:

We need allies to participate in Stories from the Heartland! Tell us why you are an ally of the LGBTQ community in a video clip that is 30 seconds or less and help advance equality!

If you want to send us your own footage, email Caroline at cstaerk@eqil.org. If you want us to come and video tape you, email or call Caroline at 773-477-7173.