

# OUTREACH

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## TOGETHER WE CAN! —O. RENÉ DILLARD

I saw a PFLAG button recently which read “Someone you know and love is Gay,” and the sentiment has stuck with me ever since. As the sister of someone who is gay, I must say that this statement epitomizes our relationship together. As siblings, we didn’t always get along or see eye to eye on even the most trivial of topics. At times, I felt the only thing we had in common was our genealogy and the fact that we awoke each morning to the same view. When my sister came out at the beginning of her sophomore year of college, we began the long and arduous process of getting to know each other again. Or shall I say, for the first time.

Looking back, I truly believe that the sister I was raised with was a mirage; a self-projected image of who she thought she should be in order to conform to society’s standards. To be honest, I didn’t really like that person - probably because I myself don’t choose to conform to what society says I should say, look like, or the manner in which I should behave. My lesbian sister is the sister I was meant to have, the person I was missing in my life during my formative years, the person I like not just because she is my sister but on a deeper, more fundamental level. If only she and more importantly society had felt it



Gay & Straight: Activating Change Together

okay to let this person be out of the closet and in my life.

Recently, I had the honor and privilege of working with Equality Illinois for a summer through an internship organized by my University, and since then I have been more active than ever in LGBT current-issues. Why is it that we need someone to push us to do the right thing, when we should be self-motivated enough to do the right thing when anyone is being pushed around, ridiculed, or denied the basic freedoms and rights we all should enjoy. I know now that in situations where I feel quick to defend my sister and the LGBT community, the best thing to do is to combat harsh words with logic and love, remember that the pen is mightier than the sword, and know that the downtrodden are completely united against those that wish to abuse them. We are a force to be reckoned with, and as long as the conversation is still going, the quest for marriage equality nation-wide will cease to end.

My relationship with my sister is why I am a proud, flag-waving ally. I want to

shout it from the rooftops and thank the LGBT community for giving me a sister and welcoming her and I with open arms. Recently, I received a startling phone call from her, upset over experiences with homophobia in our home state of Texas. Now, Texas isn’t exactly known for the ethical and tolerant treatment of people, but I had hoped that larger cities such as Dallas would be a little more redeeming. To this, I say that it is more important than ever that allies stand tall with the LGBT community and work to end the hatred and intolerance expressed by far too many people.

Someone you know and love is gay, and rather than forcing them to conform to what we think they should be or who society says they should emulate, we should love one another wholly as we were created and meant to be.



O. René Dillard from Hyde Park, IL.

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Allied for Equality is a joint project of:



Equality Illinois and



Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays

## CAROLINE'S CORNER

It has been a busy summer, which is why you haven't heard from us in a while—we were busy! We have been to pride festivals across Illinois, including Springfield, Belleville, Champaign Urbana and the Quad Cities asking Illinoisans to get involved!

Through the help of Ben Serrano, our intern from Tufts University, Equality Illinois and other partner organizations and volunteers were able to fight homophobic and transphobic bullying in multiple ways this summer. Not only did we ask Illinoisans to sign anti bullying pledges at various pride festivals and gatherings, we also held a "Week of Action" at the end of July which focused on anti-bullying educational and pledge activities in various parts of Chicago, Springfield and Bloomington/Normal.

During this "Week of Action" (and at pride festivals and gatherings), Illinoisans learned about the epidemic of bullying and signed a pledge stating they would intervene when they saw anti-LGBT harassment occur at work, in school, or in the community/neighborhood. The pledges were then sent to Representatives in Congress to raise their awareness of bullying and also express the need to pass current legislation in Congress to help combat this epidemic. The project focused on empowering young adults (ages 18-25) to take leadership roles and become actively involved in their communities.

Through our efforts this summer, we were able to get hundreds of anti-bullying pledges signed! However, the work doesn't stop here. We will continue to work on getting pledges signed throughout the upcoming year, so if you would like to participate let me know.

Also, as part of our outreach to faith communities, we have put together a variety of resources for the LGBT community. We have a list of clergy who are willing to perform a civil union up on the Equality Illinois website ([www.eqil.org](http://www.eqil.org)) and will have an updated faith resource guide as well as a NEW best practices guide for communities of faith posted online soon!

## 3 THINGS YOU CAN DO

- 1. The Respect for Marriage Act:** Contact your U.S. Representatives and Senators today to help voice your opinion and ensure the passage of HR 1116/S 598 - The Respect for Marriage Act. The Respect for Marriage Act ("RMA"), would repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act ("DOMA") and restore the rights of all lawfully married couples—including same-sex couples. Send an email (<http://tinyurl.com/respectformarriage>) and urge your Congressperson to become a co-sponsor today!
- 2. Student Non Discrimination Act:** Contact your U.S. Representatives and Senators to voice your support for the Student Non Discrimination Act (SNDA - H.R. 998 / S. 555), which was introduced by U.S. Representative Jared Polis (D-CO) and Senator Al Franken (D-MN). The Student Non Discrimination Act would prohibit discrimination and bullying in schools nationwide based on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. SNDA creates express protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students similar to those available under existing federal discrimination laws for other protected classes. Send an email (<http://tinyurl.com/supportSNDA>) and urge your Congressperson to become a co-sponsor today!
- 3. GOOD NEWS!** "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was finally lifted from the books on September 20, 2011 thanks to the certification of repeal that President Obama, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen signed.



Ben and Zach at the Springfield Farmer's Market after getting anti bullying petitions signed

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EQUALITY**

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### October PFLAG Meetings:

Please go to [www.pflagillinois.org](http://www.pflagillinois.org) for a COMPLETE listing of meetings and info.

**PFLAG Hinsdale:** Oct 2 from 2-4pm  
(Unitarian Church of Hinsdale-11 W. Maple, Hinsdale)

\*meets the 1st Sunday of each month

**PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley:** Oct 9 from 2-4pm  
(New England Congregational Church-406 W. Galena Blvd, Aurora)

\*meets the 2nd Sunday of each month

**PFLAG DuPage:** Oct 16 from 2-4pm  
(St. Paul Lutheran Church-515 S. Wheaton Ave, Wheaton)

\*meets the 3rd Sunday of each month

#### Equality Illinois Events

For more info visit: [www.eqil.org](http://www.eqil.org)

**Night of 100 Drag Queens:** Oct 25 & 26 from 7pm till Midnight (Sidetrack—3349 N. Halsted, Chicago)

**Fall Women's Social:** Nov 5 from 4-7pm  
(Flourish Studios—3020 N. Lincoln Ave, Chicago)

Check out [www.alliedforequality.org](http://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](mailto:cstaerk@eqil.org). If you want us to come and video tape you, email or call Caroline at 773-477-7173.