

The following is a summary of the PFLAG meeting held on January 10, 2012.

Early in the morning on Christmas Day, a 20-year old man was savagely attacked and severely beaten by two men outside a tavern in Oshkosh. The assault occurred near PJ's Bar, 1601 Oregon Street, Oshkosh. The victim suffered massive injuries to his face and jaw and injury to his brain requiring emergency surgery.

The criminal complaint alleges that the assault was due to the victim's sexual orientation and that the assailants made statements pertaining to the victim's status as a gay man. The two alleged assailants have been arrested and charged with causing great bodily harm and burglary, both as a party to the crime. The battery charge was enhanced by a hate crime modifier, which increased the penalties. If convicted of all charges, the defendants face 23 1/2 years in prison and fines that may total \$40,000.

On Tuesday, January 10th, the Oshkosh Chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) held an open public meeting to discuss this incident. Approximately 30 people were in attendance and included educators, clergy, parents, middle and high school students, gay and straight men and women, and concerned citizens of Oshkosh and the surrounding area. The discussion covered a range of topics from efforts taking place in the schools (both public and private) at all grade levels and the need for expanded community-based efforts to raise attention and awareness to harassment and mistreatment on the basis of a number of factors including sexual orientation and gender identity.

At the end of the meeting, everyone attending the meeting was invited to sign a statement that included the following sentiments:

1. The assault was a very distressing development. It provides a "wake up call" of sorts for the people of Oshkosh.
2. If a savage attack like this can occur here, in our community, there is a need to take actions to help prevent a reoccurrence of anything even remotely similar to this.
3. Based on information shared in the meeting from a representative from the Oshkosh Police Department and PJ's Tavern, it is clear that a number of individuals and offices deserve recognition, commendation and praise for the immediate efforts taken to deal with the life-threatening conditions and to apprehend the assailants.
4. Additionally, actions taken by the District Attorney in the charging decision included in the criminal complaint also provides a basis for optimism that this crime will be prosecuted to the full extent allowed under the law.
5. We have hope that the courts and the criminal justice system will find a measure of justice appropriate to the crime that occurred. A clear message needs to be sent to everyone in our community.

Those who signed also believe that additional actions and steps need to be taken by everyone from the typical Oshkosh resident to educators, social service providers, those who own local businesses, and those providing media coverage to the people of this community.

This crime was not only an assault on the victim – it represents an attack on everything that our community should stand for. For our part, PFLAG will continue to work toward educating and informing the public on LGBTQ issues along with supporting LGBTQ individuals and their families. Our meetings will remain open to the public and we welcome anyone willing to help make Oshkosh and our community a safer and more inclusive place to live, work and spend time.

As Harvey Milk said, "Hope is not silent." Thank you to all who participated in last night's meeting

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