

## Families speak out on gay rights

### Awareness billboard's goal

By **ROB MORITZ**

*Staff Writer*

Gene Floyd says she wasn't aware her son was gay until he announced it publicly several years ago.

"I never thought about it, it never occurred to me, I didn't know," she says, adding that at the time she doesn't think she knew anyone who was gay.

In her own way, Floyd said, she dealt with the news by showing her love and support for her son.

Because of her experience, and those of others in the Nashville Chapter of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), the organization is putting up a billboard today along Interstate 40 to honor those who support their gay and lesbian loved ones and encourage others to do the same.

The sign says, "Someone You Know and Love is Gay!" and is located near the Charlotte Pike exit.

"The billboard is just pointing out the truth," Floyd said yesterday. "It's not provocative, it's not attacking anyone. ... It's time for us to come out and say how we feel."

The billboard will be up for at

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least three months, to commemorate Gay Pride Month in September, along with the National Coming Out Day in October, and the beginning of the holiday season in November, according to a PFLAG press release.

The billboard is being put up to help families cope when a family member announces he or she is gay or lesbian, the press release said.

"We're for people who think they don't know any gay people and they do. They're citizens, taxpayers, and should be respected," Floyd said.

Members of PFLAG hope the billboard accomplishes three things:

- Makes Middle Tennesseans aware that PFLAG exists.
- Stimulates discussion. The organization hopes the billboard's message will counter recent large ads purchased by conservative religious groups in other newspapers, such as *USA Today*, that have attacked gays and lesbians.
- Instill a sense of pride in the gay and lesbian population in Nashville.

The phone number for Nashville's PFLAG chapter is 366-0888. ■