



CENTER IN FOCUS



the Center the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual &
Transgender Community Center

2009-2010

www.gaycenter.org





Rider from Braking the Cycle, our three-day bike ride that benefits our life-saving HIV/AIDS Services

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center provides a home for positive personal growth and fulfillment for all members of the LGBT community. Located in the heart of gay New York at the crossroads of Chelsea and Greenwich Village, the Center enters its 28th year with bold new leadership and a fresh outlook on the future. We at the Center envision a world where all people are treated equally, with respect and dignity. It is a world where we can walk down any street holding hands with the one we love and feel safe, where we can build our families as we see fit without added legal or financial barriers, where coming out will be a celebration, and LGBT people will no longer face discrimination or isolation because of who we are and whom we love.

THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN FILLED WITH EXCITING CHANGES & TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

We appointed the first woman in Center history to be named Executive Director.

Glennnda Testone, an inspiring social justice leader in the community, brought her impressive credentials in LGBT and gender activism and spirited energy to the Center's leadership last November. In only a few months, she has made enormous strides in reigniting passion and commitment among the Center's constituents.

The Center also welcomed **Mario J. Palumbo, Jr.** as our new Board President. Mr. Palumbo has been a driving force in the financial and organizational success at the Center for over seven years. His vision continues to expand our understanding of the importance of LGBT families and the myriad ways in which our community enriches our lives.

One of the most promising highlights of the past year is the creation of the **Young Leaders Council (YLC)**. The YLC, 30 members strong, seeks to build an active and diverse community of young New Yorkers committed to the community and the Center, engaging its demographic as Center supporters, members, volunteers and leaders.

OVERCOMING HATE AT THE CENTER

On April 14, 2010 at 8am, Center employees arrived at work and discovered a rainbow flag torched and hanging on the poster display case near the building's entrance. Investigators from the local police precinct were called and a Hate Crimes Unit was dispatched. Investigations are still underway. Sadly, our experience was merely one incident in a world of persistent homophobia and countless hate crimes. Flag-burning transmits a clear message of intolerance and is an act determined to overpower and intimidate the gay community. However, we insist on living proudly and openly.

In opposition to the flag-burner's intentions, we have emerged brighter and braver than ever. The Center, along with the help of social justice leaders, NY City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Center employees & volunteers participated in a community rally drawing more than 200 people. Crowds flooded to West 13th Street as we unfurled brand new rainbow flags. The Center stands as a beacon of hope for our entire community.



Unfurling of new rainbow flags



YES at Camp



Center Families
Summer Play Date

The Center's **Youth Enrichment Services (YES)** is a dynamic community-building program that offers after-school, Saturday, and summer programs and activities. We are dedicated to supporting the healthy development of LGBTQ young people, ages 13–22. YES services reach diverse gender, ethnic, age and socio-economic groups. More than 30% of the youth we serve live in communities identified by the NYC Department of Health as having the highest rates of HIV infection and about 30% have been through the foster care system or have been homeless.

YOUTH HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR:

YES served 1,020 youth, with an average of 52 youth at the Center every day, and took 72 youth to our Summer Community Camp. We assisted youth at risk for dropping out of high school by helping them transfer to our partner schools James Baldwin HS & Humanities Prep. HS, where we started Gay/Straight Alliances and taught classes in Dance, Painting, and Shakespeare for more than 150 students.

Youth Pride Chorus membership reached record numbers (over 30 singers) and performed for its first sold-out crowd in December 2009.

YO: Youth Organizing is an exciting new internship that has selected ten young people who have experience in the City's foster care system to help conduct trainings to staff at foster care agencies in LGBT cultural competency.

ONE EXAMPLE: Francois, 17, came to the Center after testing positive for HIV, feeling isolated and frightened. He sought out YES HIV support services and joined "Working It Out," a sex-positive group. Francois says that without the Center he is not sure where circumstances would have led him.

Center Families (formerly known as Center Kids) serves LGBT parents and their children as well as LGBT youth and their parents. In its 20 year history, *Center Families* has served thousands of people who are, or would like to be, parents. This program helps keep families together when they are struggling with their children's sexual orientation; assists family-serving agencies in meeting the needs of LGBT families; and provides opportunities for families to safely meet for socialization, education and empowerment.

FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR:

More than 100 clients per month attended seven different ongoing support groups, including Genderqueer and Transgender Parents, and Circle of Youth (focused on LGBT kids in foster care). In September, the annual Planning Biological Parenthood for Men seminar had over 300 attendees.

The LGBT Foster Care Project is a collaborative project between the Center and the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) along with select foster care agencies. This project trains foster care agencies so that they can provide safe, high-quality and sensitive services to LGBT youth and LGBT parents in the foster care community.

ONE EXAMPLE: Ben and his partner Mike had been together for eight years when they decided they wanted a child. They came to the Center and attended the year-long series *Planning Biological Parenthood for Men*, which helped them understand surrogacy. After hiring a surrogate, they welcomed their darling little girl, Lily, in April 2010.



Staff and Interns at our Center CARE Recovery Rally



Prom Queen and GIP Staff & Interns at our 6th Annual Trans Prom

Adult Services includes all mental health and social service programs, activities and services available for adult Center clients, including Center CARE Recovery, licensed substance abuse and chemical dependency treatment services; Center CARE Wellness; the Gender Identity Project; HIV and substance abuse prevention services, including immigrant support services; Foundations for LGBT Recovery, recovery support and maintenance services; SmokeFree Project, smoking cessation services; mental health outreach, assessment and referral services; Positive CARE, support services for HIV+ people; the Lesbian Cancer Initiative; Project Link, offsite substance abuse screening and intervention; and The Center Training Institute.

ADULT SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR:

Spring was a busy time for Center CARE Wellness' **Support Services for LGBT Immigrants**, a population prioritized in the Center's Strategic Plan. Demand for individual and group services remains high, and the program's second annual LGBT Immigration Fair & Cultural Event brought more than 400 attendees with 35 different community-based organizations to the Center. Also, in April the Center added its voice to the growing movement for immigration reform. George Fesser, Coordinator of Immigrant Support Services, testified before the New York City Council's Committee on Immigration about the unique barriers LGBT immigrants face.

Center CARE Recovery recently completed three successful years of treating people who are recovering from alcohol and substance abuse. The program was just awarded an operations license from the state of New York for two more years. In the past year, the number of clients served increased by 150%.

The Center's **Gender Identity Project (GIP)**, which works to foster the healthy development of transgender and gender non-conforming people, partners, family and community, maintained a nurturing and productive atmosphere for community-building, wellness, self-care, and leadership development. The Trans Prom, an event put on by the GIP in June 2010, was hugely successful and broke all previous attendance records.

In addition to distributing literature or safer sex materials, Adult Services staff, interns and peer-providers spoke with and provided public education to 4,000 persons at more than 30 settings and events during **Pride** month in June.

ONE EXAMPLE: *Van*, a 30 year-old gay man, came to the *SmokeFree Project* having recently been diagnosed with HIV and extremely anxious about his health status. In recovery from multiple addictions, Van was extremely ambivalent about giving up his last escape: cigarettes. Because of the holistic, peer-group Commit to Quit model, Van found the support he needed to give up smoking. Through the intensive interpersonal work he completed during the six week intervention, Van found the strength to get and stay connected to the critical mental health and medical services he needed as a person newly diagnosed with HIV.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: *Lisa*, a 35 year-old lesbian, came to the *Lesbian Cancer Initiative* after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Her doctor recommended a support group at a hospital, but Lisa felt misunderstood and judged by the straight women who complained about the lack of support from their husbands and boyfriends. Lisa found a supportive and caring community of survivors and caregivers at the Center who helped her move from panic to a newfound resourcefulness that allowed her to seek culturally competent cancer care providers and connect with a network of advocates for LGBT cancer support.



At our *Speaker Series*,
"Glee" star Jane Lynch
shared the challenges
and responsibilities of
being an out lesbian
in Hollywood



At our *Second Tuesdays*
Series, artist Kalup Linzy
performed his video art
pieces satirizing the tone
and narrative approaches
of soap operas



At our *Literature Series*,
Malinda Lo discussed
her entrancing and
romantic book *Ash*; a
classic Cinderella story
about the connection
between life and love



The Center's **Cultural Programs Department** presents LGBT and allied audiences with compelling and thought provoking leaders, newsmakers, artists, authors and performers who inspire, educate, celebrate and shape LGBT culture. Our programming is concentrated in Literature, Cinema, Visual Arts, Speakers and Performance. Our programs range from high-profile offerings that attract broad audiences, to intimate readings, lectures, and performances that reflect the diversity of our community.

The Center has been a home for a vast array of cultural programs and performances over the past 27 years. One of the most important functions of the Center's Cultural Programs is to provide a forum and audience for up-and-coming, emerging artists and authors. Among the guests we welcomed this past year: filmmaker Kimberly Reed, who appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show and directed the film "Prodigal Sons"; Benoit Denizet-Lewis, author of American Voyageur: Dispatches from the Far Reaches of Modern Life; Dr. Blas Falconer, a poet and author of A Question of Light and Gravity; and Carmelita Tropicana, an Obie-Award winning performer and author of I, Carmelita Tropicana: Performing Between Cultures.

CULTURAL PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR:

Then and Now: An Exhibition Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Center Show.

This exhibit commemorated the original 1989 Center Show, a legendary effort in which famous and emerging artists created site-specific works on the Center's walls, including the famous Keith Haring bathroom.

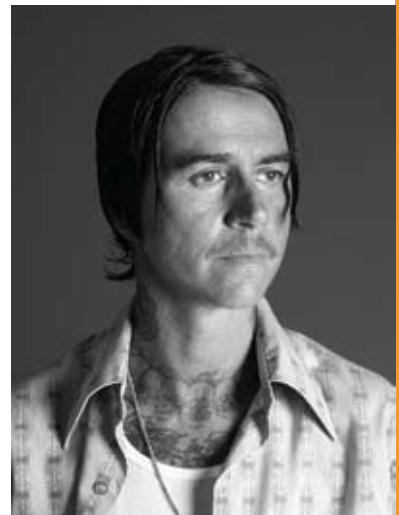
Photography Exhibitions: *Welcome Home: Building the Michigan Womyn's Festival and The Tattoo Show* providing a vivid and expansive portrait of the culture of the tattoo.

In November, we presented "An Evening with Jane Lynch" featuring a wide-ranging discussion between Jane and *New York Times* book editor Billy Goldstein. Ms. Lynch is a seasoned, versatile writer, actress, comedian and singer, currently starring with rave reviews in the Fox comedy "Glee" as aggressive cheerleader coach Sue Sylvester.

"An Evening with Mr. Joe Mantello" presented the legendary director and actor joined by actor Ben Whishaw with *New York Magazine* Editor-at-Large Jesse Green leading the conversation.

"Out Trailblazers in Media" presented a fascinating panel discussion with Center Women's Event 11 honoree Lisa Sherman, Executive Vice President and General Manager, Logo; Tabatha Coffey, star of the Bravo hit *Tabatha's Salon Takeover*; Nathan Hale Williams, Founder & President of *iN-Hale Entertainment*; and *New York Times* Advertising Columnist, Stuart Elliot.

Broadway at the Center featured "La Contessa," a musical revue featuring Broadway's new-comers like Michael Rosen from *West Side Story* and *Mamma Mia!* stars Jon-Erik Goldberg and Frankie James Grande.



Catherine Opie
Pig Pen, 2009

We are proud to share with you this information about the Center, highlighting our successes and triumphs from the past year. As we both have assumed new positions of leadership in this thriving, vibrant organization, we are in awe of the wonderful diversity and vitality we find in every corner of Center life. Together with our dedicated Board we have recently completed a new Strategic Plan for the Center and set an exciting course for our future. We are delighted to share our vision with you.

Established in 1983, the Center has grown to become the second largest LGBT community center in the world. Despite our size, we are a close-knit community. Many consider our rooms and offices a second home. And how apropos—we are the only LGBT organization in New York City open 365 days a year to provide our vital services, positioning us to be one of the most consistent and reliable resources for our community.

The Center provides life-saving and life-affirming programs and services to LGBT people that cover a wide range of interests and needs. Thousands of people are helped each week with a broad range of social services offered through Center CARE and through our Youth Enrichment Services (YES). Our trained staff has developed innovative strategies to provide outreach and enhanced services with an emphasis on underserved and often disenfranchised populations including transgender people, people of color, immigrants and women. As more and more people in our community welcome children to their families, we are investing in and strengthening our family programming. Additionally, we look forward to unveiling a slate of cultural programs that aim to connect, educate and excite our community members who may not be in need of social services. We are deeply excited about our vision for the future. Our future is informed by three main objectives: Providing top-notch social services to those in need, regardless of income; Presenting enhanced and eclectic cultural programs that celebrate and educate LGBT communities; and Gathering and engaging our community in advocacy.

It is our sincerest hope that you will join us in the coming year. We invite you to maximize your use of the Center. We are certain there is something for you within our doors. We think you will find a space to nurture and celebrate who you truly are.

All the best,



Glenda Testone
Executive Director



Mario J. Palumbo, Jr.
Board President



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