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OutCenter March 2015 Newsletter

1 message

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Thu, Apr 2, 2015 at 12:40 PM

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Serving the LGBT Community in Southwest Michigan

OUT & about

Newsletter

March 2015

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Teen Pride GSA Hosted Jen Hsu at their March 21 Meeting!



And Teen Pride Prom is set for May 23rd at the Krasl Art Center!

[Stay tuned for details!](#)

Meetings through the 2014/15 School Year are listed below.

Join us in learning how to create safe and accepting environments within schools.

All are welcome!

Apologies!

Dear Everyone,

I wanted to let you all know that due to a family emergency, I have been unable to respond to many requests or be on site since March 18. Things are going really well now and I hope to return to the office Monday, April 6. This also meant that you're getting our March Newsletter in April.

Thank you for your continued support of the OutCenter and your patience! Thanks, too, to the Board, Jenifer Keller, Jennifer Hsu, Chris Lacefield, the Whole Lives Healthy Lives team, and all other volunteers who have kept things going so very well!

See you all soon!

Mary Jo Schnell
Interim Executive Director

Community Meeting with State Representative Al Pscholka, Monday, April 13, 4 PM at the OutCenter

The OutCenter Board asked for a community meeting with State Representative Al Pscholka after the comment he made during a speech on the floor of the Michigan House, stating that California is "the land of fruit and nuts." He has since apologized for this comment and committed to a community meeting at the OutCenter.

Since that time we have seen other issues emerge around us. Perhaps most alarming was the State of Indiana's passage of a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) that reminds us of the State of Michigan's attempt in late 2014. Thankfully, the response to Indiana's action has been swift and momentous, providing an unanticipated opportunity for all of Michigan to witness the repercussions of harmful legislation. So many care so deeply. We are not alone.

The OutCenter remains committed to bringing equality home to Southwest Michigan. Part of that work includes educating everyone including elected officials about how such legislation negatively impacts the community we serve: LGBT people and their families living and working in Southwest Michigan.

Please join us Monday, April 13 at 4 PM to hear from your representative and discuss issues and concerns important to you.

[Please visit the Facebook Event for updates and to confirm your attendance.](#)



Let's work together to make Southwest Michigan a whole community.

Meet the OutCenter's newest Board members!



Tracy Braman came to us through Norma Tirado and the training work with Lakeland. She is Director of HR at Lakeland, and a committed and amazing ally.

Todd Dockerty is one of the OutCenter's lead individual donors, and was also the lead community member who helped make the first ever Teen Pride Prom happen in 2014.



Beth Haire-Lewis is a long-time ally, and is well known and respected for her work in Benton Harbor on a number of fronts up to and including her work with CARES and Michigan Rehabilitation.

Frances Porter Snyder possesses more than 35 years of experience in the nonprofit sector and is helping lead the way for the LGBT Cultural Competency training to an inter-faith group on April 25 at [Berrien Unitarian Universalist Fellowship](#).



Berrien County Gay-Straight Alliance 2014/2015 meetings!

LGBTQ teens & allies (ages 14-18)
Become a leader and be the change you want to see!
 Stop by, too, for fun activities & hang out with amazing people.
 Next door to the OutCenter
 The Phoenix Café
 124 Water Street
 Benton Harbor, MI 49717

When?
 September 20, 2-5 PM
 October 25, 5-8 PM
 (Philadelphia, PA 19104)
 November 15, 2-5 PM
 December 13, 2-5 PM
 2015
 January 24, 2-5 PM
 February 21, 2-5 PM
 March 21, 2-5 PM
 April 18, 2-5 PM
 May Teen Pride Prom! TBD

269.925.8330

Keep up to date at the Teen Pride Facebook Page:



Whole Lives, Healthy Lives: Adult Support Group

Whole Lives Healthy Lives 2014 thru 2015 Schedule
 Adult Support Group

Weekly Monday Meetings Resume 7-9 PM
 September 8, 2014 thru May 18, 2015

- 1st Monday of the month with Margo Runkle
- 2nd Monday with Ron Robinson
- 3rd Monday with Sandy/Larry Feldman
- 4th Monday with Ron Robinson

(Stay tuned for updates during the Holidays.)

Monday Evenings 7-9 PM

A great opportunity for adults to connect with others in a supportive and healthy environment. Attend and find out more about this great group of folks!

Foundation Support



Frederick S. Upton Foundation



Quick Links Our Website

Can you help this site?

[Please contact us with any offers to fund or provide services for re-doing the OutCenter website.](#)

OutCenter on Facebook:



[Forward this email](#)

Thoughts on Michigan and Marriage By Leanne Chambers

In early November of 2014, the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals denied same-sex couples the right to marry in Michigan-as well as in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. This decision came after a brief window of legal same sex marriage within Michigan which resulted in over 300 marriages. While the same-sex marriages that were performed during this window are being recognized, the fact that Michigan has reverted back to declaring same-sex marriage unconstitutional is upsetting. Marriage discrimination is just the latest addition to the long list of injustices that LGBT persons face in Michigan.



And while legislation to amend the Elliot-Larson Civil Rights Act in order to protect the LGBT community from housing and workplace discrimination must come from within Michigan's legislature, the right to marry will most likely come from outside of Michigan. In April, the Supreme Court will hear *DeBoer v. Snyder*-as well as three other cases concerning same-sex marriage rights-in order to decide once and for all whether states have the right to ban same-sex marriage as well as have the right to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed in another state. This appeal comes from two Detroit area nurses, April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, who wish to overturn the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling.

Although the majority of Americans believe that same-sex marriage should be legal-53% according to a CBS News report in early 2013-the four states involved in these hearings, including Michigan, will not let this statistic keep them from arguing the constitutionality of the ban. According to SCOTUS Blog, lawyers from these states will plan on arguing their cases by stating that the Supreme Court already settled the issue of same-sex marriage back in 1972 when they heard *Baker v. Nelson*. In addition to this, lawyers will argue that federal courts have no jurisdiction to rule on domestic matters, this includes marriage, and therefore, the right to decide that whether or not to ban same-sex marriage should be left to the states. A final ruling is not expected to be reached until sometime in June.

If the Supreme Court rules that states do not have the constitutional right to ban same sex marriage, then same-sex marriage will become legal nationwide. However, if the Supreme Court rules in favor of the four states then not only equality, but a basic human right will be denied to the LGBT community as the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has already demonstrated.



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