



Serving the LGBT Community in Southwest Michigan

OUT & abOUT

Newsletter

November 2013

In This Issue

Upcoming events

10 Year Anniversary Holiday Celebration

OutCenter in need of Volunteers

Thats So Gay

Berrien Community Foundation Awards

World AIDS Day

Individual donations amount to over 70% of all donations to nonprofits!



Help the OutCenter become more sustainable today!

Your donation will help the OutCenter serve the LGBT community and its allies in Southwest Michigan.

All amounts count!
Please donate today!

Quick Links

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Programs & Services
Resources

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Upcoming events



Next Saturday is the BIG DAY!

The fabulous West Michigan Gay Men's Chorus will be "singing in the holiday season" at The Heritage Museum and Cultural Center on Saturday, November 23. Join in celebration of the OutCenter's 10 years while kicking off the holiday season!

Buy Your Tickets Today!



We have so much to celebrate and even more to hope for given the wave of national support for LGBT equality. And while the OutCenter has made great strides over the past 10 years establishing many crucial "firsts" in Berrien County and Southwest Michigan, LGBT adults, youth and their families in Southwest Michigan continue to face challenges that their straight peers do not.

We still reside in a state where you can be fired from your job



Joshua Nowicki photos on display--new images installed this week! **Joshua Nowicki** Josh has offered 20% of sales of this work as a donation to the OutCenter!

Teen Pride: Berrien County Gay-Straight Alliance Ages 14-18, 2-4 PM at The Phoenix Cafe, 124 Water Street, Saturday, December 14, hang out, celebrate LGBTQ people and ALLIES! (Text BCGSA to 69301 to be added to the text messaging list.)



Whole Lives, Healthy Lives Adult Support Group meets Thursday evenings at the OutCenter, 7-9 PM. A great opportunity to connect and find a supportive environment. Please do stop by Thursday evenings to find out more and join a great group of folks!

OutGirls A Christmas holiday at the Arts District featuring the Art Hop and some food at "The Library." Time 7:00 p.m. December 13, 2013. Please RSVP Gloria at 269-982-1702 . She doesn't want to be sitting there alone on Friday the 13th.

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for being gay, and we reside in a county where only one active and school supported campus group exists for LGBT youth.

That is why the OutCenter exists. We provide a "Community Gay Straight Alliance" for all youth at vulnerable times in their development, we support and host the Whole Lives/Healthy Lives Adult Support Group, and we work with "sister" agencies to develop more inclusive and non-discriminatory practices.



November 23 will be an exceptional opportunity to join a large and growing number of people in Southwest Michigan who support the OutCenter and LGBT equality.

OutCenter event sponsors and supporters include: Schu's, Olive Cart, Combined Insurance Agencies, Darlene Getz DDS, Travel Leaders, American Homes Real Estate, The Splendid Dog, Edgewater Bank, Prime Timers of Grand Rapids, South Shore Health & Racquet Club, Keller Williams Realty, Santiago Moreno Real Estate, Home Again Resale, Chemical Bank, Easy Street Inn, Cetera Financial Specialists, Kries, Enderle, Hudgins & Borsos, Harbor Town Interiors, Modern Dentistry Associates, First Congregational UCC-Coloma, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, United Federal Credit Union, Margo Runkle, LLP, JD, Harbor Shores, Denise A. Barowicz/Edward Jones, Paul Hix/Edward Jones, Todd Dockerty, Lisa Hubbs, Meijer's in Benton Harbor, John & Sandra Nye, Kevin J. Geiser, PFLAG of Berrien County, Judy Bibbings, Karen Prins, and Brian Savage.

OutCenter in need of VOLUNTEERS!

All hands on deck! Are you committed to the OutCenter mission and want to be a part of creating change in Southwest Michigan? The OutCenter is now in the process of seeking and training volunteers who are committed to the mission and able to staff 3 hour shifts during the week and on Saturdays. Please call or email the OutCenter with your interest. The time is now and the need is great! So is the opportunity! 269.925.8330 info@outcenter.org.



Foundation Support



West Shore AWARE



Frederick S. Upton Foundation



Thats So Gay

By MacKenzie Carlock

"That's so gay!" NOT!

"Ugh, I was up until 2 AM doing English homework last night, it was so gay!" complained the boy who sits behind me in class. "I can't believe my mom won't let me go to that party next weekend, this is gay as hell!" shouts the girl in the back of the class. Being a senior in high school, I hear lines like this way too often. Many peers would argue that when saying "that's so gay" they don't mean to sound homophobic. What they do not realize is that they are using the word 'gay' as a synonym for lame. Many would argue that they have gay friends, so it is okay for them to say that's so gay. They may even venture to say that their gay friends do not mind them using the phrase. Whether or not their gay friends mind the phrase, most LGBT members are highly offended by it.

The problem is that when someone says something is "so gay" they are using the word gay in a negative connotation. Using the phrase gives off the impression that there is something wrong with being gay, or that gay is a literal synonym for lame. According to merriam-webster.com, gay means "to be sexually attracted to someone who is the same sex" or "happy and excited; cheerful and lively." So really, unless the boy behind me in class meant to say staying up until 2 AM doing English is happy and exciting, he used the word gay incorrectly.

Ash Beckham, an LGBT advocate from Boulder, Colorado made an interesting flow chart at the Ignite Boulder 20. "Are they a person?"

Are they self-identified as gay or are you describing their happiness? Is it a place? Like a gay bar or pride, for example? If not, gay is not the right word for you. You are using it in a derogatory way," she said.

When something gets said so often, it spreads. Everyone just picks up on the phrase. That's why so many people have started saying "that's so gay." People have heard it so often they have become accustomed to it.

Certain teachers at Saint Joseph High School have called students out on using the phrase "so gay", and I think something should be said about the courage they are showing to their peers. I would just like to see their peers be as courageous and step up just as much on this issue.

I worry that if people don't start standing up for what's right, "that's so gay" will be a normal catchphrase. Next time you hear someone those words whether they are your friend or some random stranger behind you in line somewhere, don't refrain from telling them why it is offensive.

Berrien Community Foundation Awards Support to the OutCenter!

The OutCenter is pleased and honored to receive a grant from the Berrien Community Foundation and proud to have had the opportunity to present to the Foundation's Youth Advisory Committee! <http://www.berriencommunity.org/youth.html> Mary Jo Schnell was joined by Zachary Bauer of the Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center (KGLRC) for the presentation. The OutCenter will be partnering with KGLRC <http://kglrc.org/> and Jen Hsu of WMU's LGBT Student Services <http://www.wmich.edu/lgbt/about> to educate and provide support services to area agencies and institutions in order to increase awareness about LGBT inclusiveness and work toward equality for all.

World AIDS Day is December 1

The OutCenter is working in collaboration with CARES <http://caresswm.org/> and Planned Parenthood Mid and South Michigan's Peer Educator Program <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/midsouthmi/peer-education-21384.htm> Watch the OutCenter windows for more information!

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