



Celebrating 25 Years

SACRAMENTO GAY & LESBIAN center

Proudly serving the LGBT community



A Vibrant 25 Years

This year, the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center celebrates its 25th anniversary as the oldest and largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender center in California's Central Valley.

The Center serves more than 30,000 people each year, giving them a place to meet in a safe, non-judgmental and comfortable setting. Programs serve ages 13 and up and offer education, outreach, peer support, activities, referrals, and include events such as Sacramento Pride. As a result of programs and events like the Center's, the LGBTQ community is an integral part of the wonderful diversity that makes up the Sacramento region.

While there has been much forward momentum in the rights of the LGBTQ community over the last 25 years, there is still much to be done. The Center is looking toward the future with its eyes on maintaining and improving its current programming and making program additions to meet the ever-changing needs of the LGBTQ community.

As Interim Executive Director, I am pleased to be able to bring you this supplement that profiles a few of the people the Center has helped over the years, the donors and volunteers who keep the Center going, and the programs and partners that make the Center such a vibrant part of Sacramento.

Sacramento Pride is produced by the Center and is our largest annual source of funding for our programming and day-to-day operations of the Center. Please join us on June 4 – the parade begins at 10:00am and the festival runs from 10:00am - 6:00pm.



Sara Freid
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Fast Facts

- The Center answers nearly **22,000** phone calls and emails a year from people needing information and referrals to other service providers.
- The Center serves more than **7,000** people a year with its programs.
- The Center works with **1,300** people annually who walk in for help.
- Pride, the Center's main fundraiser each year, has more than **300** volunteers on the day of the event and a dozen or so year-round.
- Some **50** or so volunteers work at the Center each week.
- The Center usually is open **60** hours a week for programs and activities.
- **12** programs meet at the Center weekly.
- The Center also hosts **7** additional programs.
- The Center has **1** full- and **2** part-time employees as well as **6** independent contractors for specific projects.
- In general, the Center serves more men than women, and more teens and young adults than older adults or seniors.
- The Center was founded in **1986**.

Center Takes Root, Grows with Community

By Anna Barela

In 1984, the late activist Timothy Warford and the Reverend Jerry Sloan, along with other community leaders, teamed up to transform the George Sand Community Fund into the Lambda Fund and open the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center. Since the doors first opened in 1986, the Center has provided critical programs, services, referrals and events for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

It all started with seed money Sloan won in a lawsuit. The story goes that televangelist Jerry Falwell defamed Sloan's church, the Metropolitan Community Church. Sloan confronted Falwell on national television. Falwell denied the allegation, promising to pay \$5,000 if Sloan could prove it. When Sloan produced an audio recording, Falwell refused to pay and Sloan successfully sued.

along with cultural services like theater, and health services such as the Stop AIDS Project.

Sloan said, "There've been thousands of young people [who've] come to the youth group – confused gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender kids. They learned that they were ok – that there was nothing wrong with them. They have moved on to become successful citizens."

The Center and the Pride festival had various homes over the years. The small festival at McKinley Park grew and moved first to the Capitol steps, then to Southside Park, where it grew again with the parade marching from the Capitol. The festival became the largest source of revenue for the Center, with hundreds of community volunteers coming together to make it happen each year.

Faces club owner Terry Sidie heard, he teamed up with founding board president Marghe Covino and original founder Jerry Sloan to revive the Center and move it to another house on L Street that Sidie owned – next door to the original house.

"It's absolutely necessary for the Center to exist," said Covino. "There has to be a place for people to network and make connections."

In 2007, Jacob Rowe donated a brilliant rainbow flag and flag pole to the Center. Scores of community members added their signature to the flag and it was raised ceremoniously by Sloan and 2006 Youth Leadership Award recipient Josh Anderson.

In 2010, the Center sponsored a reception for Center and Pride donors. Staff and volunteers worked to diversify revenue sources, managing to boost donations – even during economic downturn – and establish an endowment fund.

2010 also marked the second annual Queer Prom, the kick off of the Center's Second Saturday Art Show, participation in the NorCal AIDS Cycle, Co-sponsorship of the Sacramento Valley AIDS Run/Walk, resurrection of the Lavender Angels Nite Guide Program in partnership with the Midtown Business Association and the Sacramento Police Department, a new Holiday Open House, and workshops on LGBT youth, gay/straight alliances, and queer advocacy.

Future Center plans include a new Homeless Youth Initiative in response to the unique and underserved needs of LGBT homeless youth. They will partner with existing organizations to educate and support those poised as first contact with these youth.

Interim Executive Director Sara Freid said, "The Center has had a long and interesting history. Stability and long-term planning are now the focus, as well as growth. We must meet the needs of our community and with the help of the members of our community, I've no doubt we'll continue to thrive."

They rented a big yellow Victorian house on L Street, and the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center opened its doors in August of 1986.

Sloan and Warford kicked off Center planning with the first Pride festival. The festival added vendors, music and festivities in McKinley Park following the existing annual parade through downtown Sacramento. The parade and festival commemorate the June 1969 Stonewall riots that launched the gay-rights movement in the United States.

After the first festival, Sloan and Warford focused attention on opening the Center. They rented a big yellow Victorian house on L Street, and the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center opened its doors in August of 1986 under the name Lambda Community Center. The first program launched was a women's group. Men's and youth Groups followed,

In 2010, Pride moved to its current home on Capitol Mall – that long stretch of green between the state Capitol and the river. During the festival, booths with information from organizations connected to the LGBT community and many businesses, along with live music, food vendors and a children's play area filled this large, open space. With the parade marching to the Capitol from Southside Park, about 10,000 attendees made 2010 Pride the most successful festival to date.

The Center has kept pace with Pride festival progress. After the yellow house on L Street, they set up on 21st Street briefly. But the Center lost ground here, nearly going under. When community activist and



Dennis Mangers: Building a Community

Dubbed the "Gay Godfather" by some, Dennis Mangers has supported the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center and the gay community for decades. Before he realized he was gay, Mangers was already an activist, educator, politician and family man. Since coming out, Mangers has put his natural tenacity for activism to work on behalf of the gay community.

"I had no clue I was gay until I was in the legislature and about 36 years old," said Mangers.

Born in the 1940s, Mangers never dared question his sexuality growing up. He joined the Navy, married his college sweetheart and raised two children. He worked as an elementary school teacher, then a principal after attaining his master's degree in education administration. He served on committees and boards and eventually joined the political arena.

After his election to the California state Assembly brought him to Sacramento, Mangers encountered openly gay individuals for the first time in his life and for the first time questioned his own sexuality. "I did wonder if life as I knew it was over," Mangers recalled. But he turned any potential for guilt and regrets into action and got involved.

Though he remained in the closet through his legislative term, it was after he transitioned to a career as a lobbyist for the cable television industry that things snowballed for Mangers. He was outed to his family by a younger colleague who saw him at a gay pride event. Weeks later, he was outed to his boss.

But his boss was supportive, even recommending him as president of the board later. Mangers ended up with a 27-year career with the California Cable Television Association. He re-entered politics as a senior advisor to now California Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg. He even made peace with his family – he and his former wife are close friends.

“Neither incident ruined my life,” said Mangers. “In fact, it steeled my courage to come out and take a stand.”

Mangers worked tirelessly through the 1980s to develop a political and cultural infrastructure for the gay and lesbian community. He helped form the Capital Political Action Committee, helped found the Sacramento Men’s Chorus and supported developing institutions including CARES – an AIDS treatment clinic. He also supported the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center.

According to Mangers, “If you’re involved in a human rights struggle, there needs to be a central location to which everyone can go when there is a crisis – a court case, important legislation. You can rally, show people how to write letters, go to the Capitol and protest, and do all the nonviolent things every other oppressed minority in this country has ever had to do to secure rights.”

Today Mangers is retired and lives in Carmichael with his partner of 20 years. The couple has married three times. The first time was an unofficial ceremony with friends and family. The second time, they were swept to San Francisco in the excitement of the city legalizing gay marriage only to have it nullified by courts. Finally, they married in front of the press and Legislature as a political statement when the courts first legalized same-sex marriage in June 2008.

Mangers feels lucky to be part of historical moments. He remains active in his community, serving on boards and councils beyond the gay community to promote diversity. He continues to support the Center as part of the 365 Club of monthly contributors. Mangers’ nickname of Godfather fits – not in a scary, mobster way, but in a caring, protective and paternal way. **A.B.**

**Dennis Mangers’
nickname of Godfather
fits – not in a scary,
mobster way, but in a
caring, protective
and paternal way.**



PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Wayne Panepento: Inspired by Youth

Wayne Panepento gets emotional when he talks about why he donates to the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center. After losing his partner, his mother, his best friend and his dog in the course of six months, he began donating and volunteering because that’s what his late partner, Chuck, wanted.

Panepento lived in Folsom for many years with his family. He and Chuck raised their adopted daughter there, and after retirement the home became the base for world travel. It also was here that Panepento nursed Chuck during his long, losing battle with diabetes. At the end, his hands were deformed, he was crippled and blind.

“Chuck and I talked about when he passed away what to do with what we had,” said Panepento. “And that is to help the kids that nobody else seems to want. This is the place that’s doing their best to take care of the kids.”

His first donations were artwork and jewelry collected on the couple’s travels to sell in the Center gift shop. Later, Panepento donated his time to help remodel the Center. He continues monthly financial donations as part of the 365 Club and helped sponsor a fundraiser for the Center’s new Homeless Youth Initiative.

Panepento feels this initiative is needed because there are many youth on the streets who have been kicked out of their homes because of their sexuality. On the streets, they get beaten up for it, too.

**“This is the place
that’s doing their
best to take care
of the kids.”**

Religious grounds for the persecution these youth face make no sense to Panepento. He has a Christian background himself, has read the Bible several times and sites biblical instructions to embrace your enemy as yourself. He doesn’t see kicking children to the streets as Christian behavior.

“I cannot imagine not loving my daughter,” he said. “What reason could there be? Even if she murdered somebody – God forbid, I mean she would never – but you still love that person, no matter what, and help them any way you can, especially if it’s your own flesh and blood.”

Discrimination has followed Panepento throughout his life. He said, “I’ve been fired from my job, I’ve been beaten, I’ve been robbed – only because I lived with Chuck for 36 years in a monogamous relationship.”

He feels blessed that his own parents have always accepted him. He wants to turn what he has been given into helping those who didn’t get that support. He has always had a heart for unwanted children – he adopted his daughter when she was 12 and living on the streets.

He met his daughter while working at Beale Air Force Base in a program where employees worked with kids from local schools. He noticed her sitting in the corner crying every day at lunchtime. He began sitting with her, and learned her mother had died of cancer and her alcoholic father pushed her out to make room for a new girlfriend and son. He felt a special connection with her, and he and Chuck adopted and raised her together.

It’s been four years since Chuck passed, but Panepento still tears up when he says, “I miss him.” His daughter is grown with children of her own, and he is ready to move on. He is in the process of selling the Folsom home and plans to rent an apartment downtown – close to the Center.

Panepento is modest about his contributions. He credits the Center’s success to numerous other donors. But the Center always places him near the top of its donor list. **A.B.**



Saturday, June 4th

Parade starts at 10am
Festival 10am - 6pm

\$10 per person
Kids 5 and under free

On Capitol Mall
SacramentoPride.org

- FEATURING -

MISS COCO PERU
Comedian/Performer



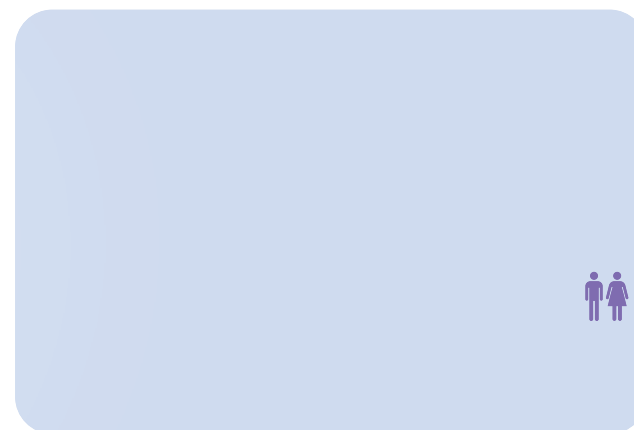
LUCIANA
Recording Artist

TOM GOSS
Singer/Songwriter



RAQUELA
Recording Artist

JOY



4th Street

CAPITOL MALL

DRINKS

STAGE

► **PARKING**

Kid

PA



VI RADTKE
Local Poet



XAVIER TOSCANO
Recording Artist



Proudly produced by
SACRAMENTO GAY & LESBIAN center
Proudly serving the LGBT community



Emily Bender: Spreading Love

Emily Bender has always been passionate about helping youth. So when Bender's friend, who facilitated the Friday Night Youth Group at the Center, left for the Coast Guard, she encouraged Bender to take over. Nine years later, Bender still facilitates the group and is active in many aspects of the gay and lesbian community.

Until her friend invited her to the youth group as a potential facilitator, Bender had never been to the Center. She was barely older than the oldest youth and still in the process of coming out herself. Bender had crushes on female teachers and girls at school from the time she was four years old. But she hid it from everyone.

"I knew I was different," said Bender, "I knew though that I couldn't say anything. I'm an only child, my mom was a single mom, and I'm Latina – from Central America. I knew that culturally and religiously it didn't make sense for a girl to like a girl like that."

So she put all her energy into school, sports and community service. She attended Catholic Church and wore two crosses around her neck. In high school she was in eight different clubs. While studying her undergrad at the University of California, Davis (UCD), she avoided the campus LGBT Center.

After graduating from UCD at age 21, Bender spent two months backpacking in Europe. When she came back, she said, "I just couldn't keep it in anymore. I told my mom."

Bender describes her mom going through all the stages of grief within a couple of hours, from blame to anger to denial. She insisted Bender not tell the rest of the family back in Nicaragua, where homosexuality was illegal until 2008 and there are no anti-discrimination laws.

"I think my mom still wishes I wasn't gay," said Bender. "But I think she has become tolerant."



Bender went back to school for her master's degree and now works with the Sacramento/Yolo Mutual Housing Association as a community organizer. She owns a home in south Sacramento, is mother to a golden retriever named Gia, and still finds time to continue her volunteer work and "just help friends" in the community.

"Our community is pretty small here in Sacramento," said Bender. "We all help each other out."

Bender tells a story about a time she helped with the Pride festival. Anti-gay protestors were on hand, shouting at people coming and going. They had small children with them and it was a hot day, so Bender decided to fight hate with love. She brought a case of ice cold water and began passing it out to the protestors. One parent took the sealed water bottle out of her child's hand and said, "Don't drink it, it might have AIDS."

Bender doesn't let these kinds of incidents slow her down. She maintains her sense of humor and continues to spread love with her volunteer work. In addition to facilitating the Friday Night Youth Group, she helped create the Center's 20-Something Group, is on the board of the Sacramento International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and she just joined grassroots human rights group Equality Action Now.

"I'm trying to make up for those years of self-hate," said Bender. "I think I've pretty much paid that off! Now I just do it because I really enjoy it." **A.B.**

Emily Bender decided to fight hate with love.

Homeless Youth Initiative Launches

By Anna Barela

Evidence of the need for LGBTQ youth homeless services was found sleeping on the porch of the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center last year – the 18-year-old had been kicked out of his home for being gay and felt he had nowhere else to go. This youth inspired Center leaders to introduce a new Homeless Youth Initiative. The project kicked off with a fundraiser earlier this year and will partner with existing organizations to provide services targeted specifically to homeless LGBTQ youth.

The percentage of homeless youth that is LGBTQ is disproportionately high.

"It's still new, but we're really excited about it," said Interim Executive Director Sara Freid. "There's such a need. When you think about being homeless, you think of the basics – food, shelter and clothes. But people aren't just that. We all have our own 'stuff' to carry around, and part of that is being a minority."

Freid explains that the percentage of homeless youth that is LGBTQ is disproportionately high. She points to statistics quoted by Shahera Hyatt, MSW, that 5 to 10 percent of the general youth population is LGBTQ, while in homeless youth populations this percentage jumps to 25 percent, even 40 percent in some cities. In addition to the hardships of homelessness, harassment due to sexual orientation or gender identity adds to the challenges these youth face.

Hyatt completed her master's thesis at California State University, Sacramento on homeless LGBTQ youth. She said, "They are exposed to higher rates of victimization while on the streets when compared to their heterosexual peers. These risks include physical and sexual assault, including hate crimes."

Since many of these youth have been kicked out of their homes on religious grounds, Freid says they hesitate to approach church-based homeless outreach programs. Although local homeless outreach programs want to help, many are ill-equipped to deal

with bullying or trained to counsel youth on LGBTQ issues.

With this new initiative, the first step in solving the problem is creation of an executive committee in partnership with existing organizations. Next, the initiative will support and educate existing organizations in LGBTQ competency. The priority will be assessing the homeless youth population and establishing a housing plan. Moving forward, the initiative will continue support with life skills and job training.

Nearly 200 people turned up for the initiative kick-off fundraiser at Beatnik Studios in March. Sponsored by the California Endowment, John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, Wayne Panepento Family Trust, Mary Hernandez and many others, the event raised almost \$18,000 in seed money for the project. Supervisor Phil Serna issued a challenge to the community: Raise another \$5,000, and he will match it.

Donations are held in a restricted fund for the initiative. The Center website, www.saccenter.org, includes a link to donate to the Homeless Youth Initiative.

Young and Gay Today*

- 10% identify as LGBTQ
- 31% report being bullied, threatened or injured at school
- Gay slurs are heard 26 times per day, which is 1 every 14 minutes
- LGBTQ youth are 2 to 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers
- 28% of LGBTQ teens drop out of high school, which is 3 times higher than their peers
- 4 of 5 LGBTQ youth say they have no adult to trust

*www.nmha.org

Many local LGBTQ youth find a home at the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center.

Your donations can help make the world a better place for them—and you.

Please visit our website at www.saccenter.org.

LAVENDER ANGELS

Protecting the Community
By Anna Barela

Programs Empower Youth

Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center youth groups provide a safe and welcoming environment where LGBTQ and questioning youth can gather for support, discussions, or simply join in fun activities without concern about sexual orientation or gender identity. Two different youth groups have their own space in the basement of the Center, and can join fun events like Queer Prom.

Youth ages 13 to 17 meet on Wednesdays at 6pm and focus on coming out and general topics. Ages 17 to 21 meet on Fridays at 8pm and expand into topics such as current politics, getting involved, gay history and gay culture. Facilitators keep it fun with activities like Gay Jeopardy.

According to facilitator Emily Bender, youth are free to talk about anything. She said, "Maybe at that moment in their life they really need to talk about something else. They'll pull me aside and we'll go outside and sit on the stairs. They'll share with me the struggles they're going through."

The group mixes it up with fun events. On the last Friday of the month, Slam talent night gives youth the opportunity to showcase their skills in poetry, music, artwork, comedy and dancing. They meet on scheduled days and times even on holidays, and often plan holiday activities.

This year, more than 168 youth from the groups and from area high schools and colleges turned up for the third annual Queer Prom. Complete with live entertainment, photographers and yummy dessert, Queer Prom provided a queer spin on the traditional youth party.

Youth travel from south Sacramento, East Sacramento, Natomas and as far as Elk Grove, Solano and El Dorado Hills. Some are foster kids.

Some are "couch surfers" – kids displaced from their homes who sleep on friends' couches. Others come to the Center confused, depressed and dealing with school bullying or unsupportive families. The Center helps these youth blossom into vibrant community members and activists. **A.B.**

On September 21, 2008, the body of Ruby Molina was found floating face down and naked in the American River just southeast of the Highway 160 bridge. Molina, a transgender woman, was just 22. Though a bruise under Molina's right eyelid and ruptured blood vessels suggested a more sinister circumstance, drowning was the official cause of death.

The woman's death was a catalyst for change in the life of Tara Golden. Being transgender herself, Golden was angry when the girl only got a "little blurb" in the media. She wrote a poem about it, which she performed at the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Golden describes performing this poem as the dawn of a new era for her.

"The poem went viral," she said. "It was performed all over – New York, Philadelphia, Chicago. Just by doing that I became a leader in the community, because a lot of trans people don't speak up. A lot of trans people are very closeted. I became the voice, sort of, of the trans community because there were no others."

Golden became concerned as she heard about more and more violence and muggings in the midtown area. Then a close friend said something that resonated with Golden: "We've gotten to know enough people in the community that next time this happens to somebody, it's going to be one of our friends. Are we going to be able to go home and say, 'I did everything I could to stop this?'"

Golden knew she must act. She met with the director of the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center for ideas on how to help with the problem. Their meeting ended with Golden in charge of resurrecting an old protection program called the Lavender Angels.

The Lavender Angels were legends back in the 1980s, headed by Midge Marino. But they no longer existed. With support of the Center and the Midtown Business Association, Golden brought the Lavender Angels back in fall 2010 to protect people on the streets of Midtown Sacramento.

"It's been a lot of fun getting it going," said Aja Uranja-Foster of the Midtown Business Association. "Lavender Angels are so important to the Lavender Heights night life. It's been a pleasure to work with the Gay & Lesbian Center to develop the program."

The Lavender Angels were legends back in the 1980s

At first it was just Golden patrolling the blocks between I Street, Capitol Avenue, 17th Street and 24th Street alone. The mandate was simply to watch and call police or paramedics if there was a problem.

She has help now – the Lavender Angels include anywhere from two to 16 volunteers on a given patrol night. Golden makes sure the volunteers follow the rules of observe and report only. But sometimes just being there saves lives.

In the first month of working as a group, Golden and the volunteers spotted a man laying face down on the railroad tracks one evening. He was an older black man wearing all black clothes, and had apparently passed out from too much liquor. Just as they got him picked up, they heard the steady chug-chug and familiar whistle of an approaching train.

Golden is officially employed to run the Lavender Angels two nights a week. Golden spends time receiving training in first aid, working on getting her guard card, and taking police and FBI classes in self-defense.

Uranja-Foster helps Golden train the volunteers in self-defense, even though the point is to avoid needing it. They are prepared to protect, administer first aid, or even just counsel a distressed or intoxicated individual. They have a direct line to local police, paramedic and fire departments, but it takes time for authorities to arrive.

Golden and the volunteers find satisfaction in their work because they know they make a difference. They intervene or call for help when fights occur outside the scope of club doormen. They walk people from clubs, bars and restaurants to their cars so they feel safe, or walk them home if they are too drunk. Golden is confident they save lives frequently.

Golden said, "Living matters when you realize you haven't done much, but you've done something."

To reach the Lavender Angels, call 916-798-1093.

PHOTO BY BRIAN DONAHUE

Kyle Bodolay: Overcoming School Bullying

Outed by an angry friend during sophomore year at a Catholic high school, Kyle Bodolay turned to the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center for help dealing with the bullying that ensued. The Center helped Bodolay overcome depression and become active in the community.

Before other students knew Bodolay was gay, he was on the football team and had few problems. Close friends knew, but kept his secret. Then one night at a birthday party, one friend got mad at him and decided to tell everyone in attendance – the entire football team and half the school. From that moment, Bodolay was harassed constantly by fellow students.

"I was being threatened that they were going to kill me," he said. "They were going to crucify, lynch, you name it, they were going to do it. When I went to the administration, they said they would handle it. They never did."

Students harassed Bodolay when he tried to use the restrooms, blocking entry or banging on the stalls. Reluctantly, some teachers allowed him to use staff restrooms. Bodolay lived in fear that he would suffer the fate of a friend at another school who was sexually assaulted by students in sixth grade when they found out he was gay.

"I do it for the youth, that way they know they're being heard just like I was being heard."

"It was bad," said Bodolay. "But I am thankful that it wasn't as extreme as his." It was his grandmother who came to his rescue. He lives with her in

downtown Sacramento, and she volunteered at the Catholic school he attended. He hadn't even come out to her, but she heard the rumors at school. She also recognized signs of depression and suicidal behavior in Bodolay.

She started by talking to the school administration herself, but was told that if she didn't like the way they were handling the problem she was welcome to remove her grandson from the school. So she connected him with support at the Center's Wednesday Night Youth Group.

Though hesitant to open up, he found solace just listening to others talk about problems similar to his own. He said, "I was just figuring out my sexuality. I

was quiet and I sat back. When they would do introductions, most of the time I would say 'pass.' After time, though, I became comfortable and started interacting."

He also started branching out to other events he heard about through the Center, including Gay-Straight Alliance events like the Statewide Advocacy Council and the Northern California Youth Council. He especially enjoyed GALA, a GSA advocacy youth leadership academy weekend that culminates with students going to the California state Capitol to talk to legislators.

"It was really empowering coming together with youth from all over California," Bodolay recalled. "We all wanted the same thing – safer schools and to be able to go to school without being discriminated against."

With support from the Center, Bodolay stuck out the school year. But when he returned to junior year to find no reprieve from the bullying, he got an emergency transfer to The Met Sacramento High School. It meant he would repeat sophomore year due to credits not transferring, but he was reunited with elementary school friends and welcomed as openly gay.

The Met required internships, so after a stint with the secretary of the California state Senate, he began volunteering at the Center. Now he is a facilitator for the Wednesday youth group. He also took the lead coordinating the annual Queer Youth Prom.



PHOTO BY RYAN DONAHUE

"You have to give back to the community," said Bodolay. "I do it for the youth, that way they know they're being heard just like I was being heard."

Bodolay will graduate high school this year. He plans to continue facilitating the Wednesday youth group, and has started attending the Friday night group for ages 17 to 21. He no longer feels depressed, and is looking forward to attending Sacramento City College next year. **A.B.**

"A lot of these guys don't have family – they've been ostracized. We become that family."

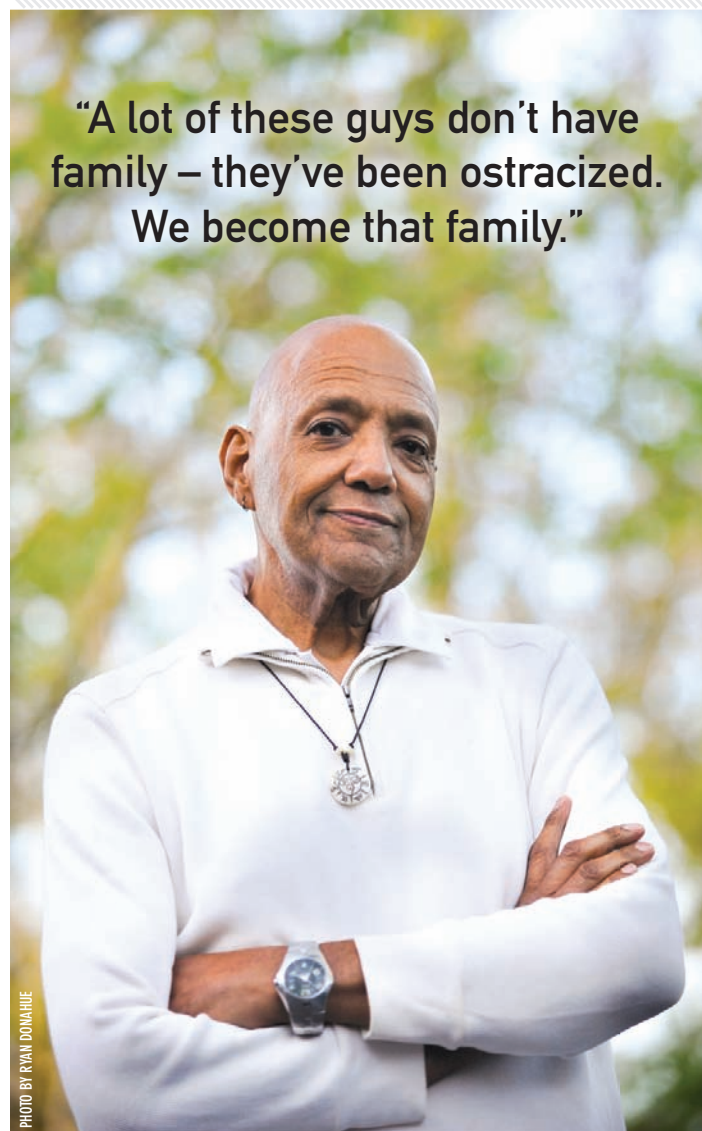


PHOTO BY RYAN DONAHUE

Jg Gonsalves: Living a Double Life

Jg Gonsalves has lived not just one, but two, very full lives. The first half he calls "the straight life" – he spent 22 years in the Air Force, married, had a child, adopted two more, retired from the Air Force, got a degree in drama, and taught dance and drama. But then his wife passed away from diabetes. Gonsalves was left with nothing – even the master's program he moved to Sacramento to pursue didn't happen. But life started anew for Gonsalves when he finally admitted he was gay.

"I think I always knew I was gay," Gonsalves recalled, "but I didn't want to be. Through circumstances, I fell into the life that I did. I met this girl, had sex with her one time and got pregnant, decided I had to do the right thing, married her and stayed with her for 30 years until she died. Then I came out of the closet."

Gonsalves turned to the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center for help when he first came out. At first, he was nervous to go inside. He worried about how he should behave as a gay person.

"I was having a real hard time dealing with my sexuality," said Gonsalves. "I remember very clearly the fear I had walking up those stairs for the first time, and then

feeling like I had come home. I walked in and everybody was so free. I felt like I was in a safe place and I could truly be me."

He immediately began volunteering at the Center. He started as the receptionist and then held posts of volunteer coordinator, board vice president, and interim director. He helped start a Men of Colors Group, facilitated the Men's Discussion Group and the Men's Coming Out Group, and helped bring back the parade as part of the Pride festival.

"I never left," said Gonsalves. "I've always been connected on some level. I knew the angst of trying to fit into the straight world – buying all the negativity that society puts on us and feeling very guilty on so many levels. I had a lot of healing to do."

Today Gonsalves is an active participant in the Men's Discussion Group. On some weeks, as many as 25 men join the group, but Gonsalves is part of that core group of five or six that come every week to support each other in a family dynamic. Often, they go out to eat afterward, get together on Friday at someone's house for movie night or plan holiday activities together.

Gonsalves said, "A lot of these guys don't have family – they've been ostracized. We become that family."

He lives in Fair Oaks with his partner. When he is not with the Men's Group, he spends time at the Spiritual Life Center exploring his spirituality. He is also taking time to explore his psychic abilities, which he had since childhood, and plans on traveling to Hawaii to host his first psychic workshop. After living one full life already – and even surviving a near-death bout of cancer – Gonsalves shines in his new life in Sacramento. He plans on writing a book about it.

"I never thought I would ever be partnered," he said. "I thought, 'I've already been married, I've got my children, I'm done.' But when I review my life, I realize that was one phase – living the straight life. Then I came out and I became who I really am. Everything had to be stripped away so I could emerge. That's what I'm going to write about." **A.B.**



Bill Snyder: Passion for Helping

Since moving to Sacramento 11 years ago, Bill Snyder has dedicated himself to helping his community at the Center. He has a passion for helping people, especially youth, and recalls a time when community centers like this were needed but did not exist.

"When I was a kid, there were no gay centers," he said, "there were only gay bars. I got over most of my difficulties before all the services came along."

He describes the difficulties he faced growing up as "the usual" – getting beaten up and harassed for being gay. He is thankful, though, that his family has been supportive. Although he didn't come out before his father died, when he told his mother she was not upset, or even surprised.

He came out to one branch of family at Thanksgiving dinner. He took his turn to share what he was thankful for and said, "I'm thankful that I have a loving family that is going to accept me even after I tell you that I'm gay."

"That was fun!" Snyder recalled. "The response was about two-thirds cheering and the other third were like, 'Duh!'"

He has volunteered at the Center ever since his arrival in the region. He sat on the board, was board president twice and recently took over the bimonthly newsletter.

The community's need for the center keeps him volunteering. He said, "Even though lots of improvements and advances have been made, there are still people who throw their kids out. There are still people who abuse their lesbian daughter. We need to be there for them."

Snyder describes helping youth as where his "heartstrings" are. He said, "My passion is to help everybody. But the passion of my passion is to help kids."

Although Snyder is currently unemployed from the real-estate profession, he looks at the bright side – he has more time to spend volunteering. He foresees the Center as a big part of his life indefinitely. **A.B.**

Programs and Services Offer Support

By Anna Barela

Catering to a variety of ages and sexual identities, groups provide a safe, welcoming forum to discuss problems, become part of a community and learn about each other and the world. Nearly every day of the week there is some kind of group meeting at the Center.

TRANSGENDER GROUPS

The Transgender Support Group meets on Sundays at 12:30pm. Gender questioning and gender transitioning men and women gather for support. In further support of the transgender community, SOFFAT meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm to support significant others, families, friends and allies of transgender individuals.

BISEXUAL GROUP

A safe haven for those who are bisexual, pansexual (open to attraction towards people of all gender identities), fluid or bi-friendly, the Fence-Sitters Club meets the third Sunday of each month at 6pm. Come for support or just to socialize.

MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Meeting on Mondays at 6:30pm, the Men's Discussion Group welcomes men 21 and over to discuss gay-related issues. Topics vary from local and political issues, to spirituality and general topics. Many of the guys are in the 40-50 age range. They come to socialize in a family dynamic, and often go out to eat afterward, get together on a Friday to watch a movie, or plan an activity on a holiday.

HIV/AIDS GROUP

Strength in Numbers (SIN) meets on the first Saturday of each month at 5pm. As the name implies, HIV+ individuals find strength and mutual support here. It's also an opportunity for education, to join activities, make new friends and enjoy potluck goodies.

SUPPORT FOR DEAF LGBTQ

Deaf LGBTQ individuals, their friends, families, interpreters and allies collaborate to bring Q-DEAF – free sign-language classes. Led by Tyx Puskamp, who has been part of the Center since he was 14 years old, classes are taught Fridays at 5pm.

During this time slot on the third Friday of each month, the group breaks for Deaf Social Support Group. It's an opportunity for emotional support, safe-sex education, information and referrals for access to local LGBT services.

LGBT LEGAL COMMUNITY CLINIC

In addition to various support groups, the Center also provides a legal clinic. The program's Referral Clinic on the first and third Mondays at 6pm provides accurate referrals to organizations and private attorneys, but cannot offer legal advice. They also help people with disabilities navigate their legal issues for free on second Mondays at 4pm. On fourth Mondays at 4pm, low-income individuals can get help with housing, education and public benefit issues.

20 SOMETHING GROUP

The 20 Something Group meets on Thursdays at 8pm. The co-ed group is open to ages 20-29. 20 Something Group topics include socializing and networking, career development, community service involvement and relationships.

LAVENDER ANGELS

See page 9 for more information.