



**TUCSON COMMISSION ON GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (GLBT)
ISSUES
STATE OF THE CITY**

MAY 11, 2015

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Preamble

The history of Tucson is one of struggle and progress, oppression and liberation, and minority communities of the Old Pueblo have faced hardships and discrimination of both social and legal natures. For this reason, commissions like the Tucson Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues have been formed to advocate for rights and recognition for underserved groups in our community.

The members of the GLBT Commission have decided that as representatives of the greater LGBTQIA population living in Tucson, it is appropriate to produce this public report, the Commission’s second, to inform the community as well as Mayor and Council of LGBTQIA specific issues and concerns facing Tucson.

Major changes in the Tucson’s LGBTQ community support services in 2014

The past year has been characterized by substantial shifts in the service organizations which support LGBTQ individuals. Below are reports on some of the organizations which have undergone major transitions.

Wingspan Community Center

The Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation board, in conjunction with Wingspan board members, worked at creating a merger starting with the closure of Wingspan's program and admin offices in June of 2014. Committees from each board were formed and it was decided given community feedback that the Wingspan Anti Violence Program and the Eon Youth Lounge would move to the SAAF offices.

The Anti-Violence Program serves LGBTQ people and allies who have experienced violence like harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence. With the support of volunteers, AVP sees clients, creates safety plans, and works to support our community in living violence free. AVP operates a crisis line in addition to providing support groups and one-on-one support.

The Eon Youth Lounge is a safe space for LGBTQ and allied youth between the ages of 13-23. Eon hosts support groups, holds workshops, provides on-on-one support, and serves as a safe space/drop in lounge for youth in need. Eon also serves a number of homeless youth in accessing resources and providing food, hygiene products, and showers.

In addition to acquiring AVP and Eon, SAAF also operates as fiscal agents and/or provides meeting space for Southern Arizona Senior Pride, Puertas Abiertas, The Multifaith Working Group, and the Camp Born This Way.

Wingspan's Anti Violence Project

Despite being uprooted from its office at the former Wingspan community center to the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation, the Wingspan Anti-Violence Project has been able to counsel more clients than it did this time in 2013.

While the number of people seeking out AVP's help declined between 2012 and 2013, it has grown again in 2014.

2012 client total: 491

2013 client total: 301

2014 client total to date: 376

The 2014 monthly numbers are significantly higher than in 2013.

Patrick Farr, AVP's only full-time staff member, speculates that the drop in clientele last year was due to mistakes and turmoil going on at Wingspan, including layoffs and a high turnover rate for AVP staff. In Farr's opinion, these led to a community-wide lack of trust in Wingspan and a decline in the number of people calling the hotline or seeking out AVP's help.

As for the rise in clients this year, Farr believes that AVP is regaining the community's trust. Since Wingspan closed its doors and the project was adopted by SAAF, AVP has been fortunate to have a core

trio of steady volunteers - Yolinda Gomez, Alex Nicely, and Dani Dutton - in addition to many new volunteers, stepping up to help.

AVP defines its mission and scope as follows:

“The Wingspan Anti-Violence Project is an anti-oppression LGBTQIH activist organization that works to transform the legal, social and cultural landscape in the Southwest regarding violence against LGBTQIH people. Through a 24-Hour Bilingual Crisis-Line and an AVP Office, the Wingspan AVP performs crisis intervention, advocacy, grass roots organizing and community education in order to support primary and secondary victims/survivors of recent and past experiences of domestic violence (Intimate Partner Violence), sexual violence, hate violence, discrimination and related forms of violence.”

Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA)

Effective Nov. 17, 2014, the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance became incorporated as an independent nonprofit organization. It had most recently operated as a program of Wingspan prior to Wingspan's closing.

According to Vice President Abigail Jensen, SAGA decided to incorporate in order to create a formal structure that would be legally recognized and enable SAGA to seek funding via grants and donations, which, in turn, would enable the organization to expand its programming.

The good news is that even in the face of instability and change, there has been a resurgence in volunteer support, attendance at support groups and renewed energy in making SAGA a successful organization and improving the lives of transgender and gender nonconforming people in Southern Arizona.

SAGA is vital to the community because of the unique and effective services it offers transgender individuals. Through SAGA, people undergoing gender confirmation are assisted with court-ordered name changes as well as changing gender markers on driver's licenses, passports, Social Security cards, and other records.

SAGA also offers education programs to develop cultural competency for employers, churches, civic organizations, health care providers and others.

Currently, SAGA offers four monthly support groups: SAGA General, DezerGirlz, DezerBoyz, and DezerPartnerz which welcome transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming community members. Mentoring and support is also available in person or by telephone.

SAGA's online presence includes a website (<http://sagatucson.org/wp/>), which hosts a variety of resources as well as an active Facebook page, closed Facebook group, and four Yahoo groups for support and information sharing.

SAGA hosts events for the trans and genderqueer communities and their allies, including Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Potlucks, and collaborates with the University of Arizona's LGBTQ Affairs Office to hold the annual Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance in November.

Currently, SAGA is exploring the creation of support groups for parents of transgender youth 13 years old and older, and those youth; expanding its educational programming and advocacy for trans people on legal, political, health care and other issues; and hiring a part-time coordinator.

What can the community do to help SAGA?

Donate to support our programming using the “Donate Now” button on the SAGA website or by mailing a check to SAGA, PO Box 41863, Tucson 85717.

Everyone is also welcome to attend the SAGA Advisory Council (SAC) meetings on the second Tuesday of the month at Ward 3, 1510 E. Grant Road, at 7 p.m. SAC meetings are where programming and other decisions are made and volunteers can find out where their help is needed.

Contact SAGA with requests for information and support, and share information about SAGA and its resources.

What can Tucson's Mayor and Council do to help SAGA?

Increase support for transgender employees by removing the exclusion for transition related health care from its health insurance programs; and arrange educational programming on Tucson's transgender community for employees and managers.

Fluxx Studio and Gallery

Fluxx Studio & Gallery is a non-profit queer community performance art space working to provide thoughtful, engaging and socially uplifting events. Fluxx is a multi-function space designed to host exhibitions, performance art, movie screenings, workshops and special events.

Fluxx encourages open dialogue and communication about queer culture in order to bridge gaps of understanding, acceptance and change. The organization's goal is to increase the visibility and promote the creation of queer arts and culture in Tucson by providing a platform for expression and exchange.

Throughout 2014, Fluxx has struggled financially and has been fundraising to keep the doors open, but the future of the space is threatened by legal red tape.

In the past, Fluxx has been funded through small grants, donations, and events.

According to executive director Dante Celeiro, the biggest obstacle is not being able to provide beer/wine for donations at events. With a recent change in the enforcement of Arizona liquor laws, Fluxx is no longer able to supplement its income with beer/wine donations, resulting in the loss of almost half of its monthly revenue and many of the artists utilizing its space.

CODAC Behavioral Health Services' Living Out Loud Health and Wellness Center

On Dec. 8, 2014, CODAC Behavioral Health Services opened a health and wellness center specifically for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex community. Straight and cis gender allies are also welcome.

The center is called Living Out Loud Health & Wellness Center and is the first of its kind in Arizona.

Living Out Loud is a welcoming environment where individuals and families can participate in mental health care, primary care, gender confirmation services, support and community groups, sexuality education, and much more.

"We have heard from our LGBTQ clients and from the greater LGBTQ community that they would like a one-stop health and wellness center that's safe and affirming of their identities and provides top of the line, expert care for their specific needs," said Dennis Regnier, CODAC President and CEO.

Living Out Loud serves individuals, couples, families and other professionals through its wide variety of health and wellness services, including:

- Individual, family, couples and group therapy.
- Specialized services and support for transgender individuals who wish to undergo gender confirmation procedures.

- Social activities and community gatherings.
- Health and wellness classes such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, exercise, nutrition, healthy relationships and parenting.
- Comprehensive general mental health assessment, psychiatric services and medication monitoring.
- Primary care medicine for annual exams and to address any medical issues that may arise.
- Professional consultation for other service providers in the community.
- An on-site pharmacy assistant who can help coordinate medication needs.
- SMART Recovery, 12-step and other support groups.
- Case management and peer support.
- Drop-in crisis intervention.
- LGBTQ-friendly resources and referrals.
- Counseling and support to straight and cis-gender allies.

The cost of care may be covered by a variety of funding sources including private insurance (including many commercial insurance carriers and the new marketplace insurance companies), a reasonable sliding scale fee for service menu or AHCCCS.

Founded in 1970, CODAC Behavioral Health Services is one of Arizona's oldest and most respected specialty providers of family development and integrated health care services. Through 11 service locations and more than 425 staff, CODAC provides services to more than 12,000 individuals and families annually.

For more information, visit www.CODAC.org.

Notable Upcoming Events in the LGBTQ Community

- i. The LGBTQ Behavioral Health Coalition of Southern Arizona and the LGBTQ Consortium's 4th Annual Statewide LGBTQ Behavioral Health Conference, Let's Get Better Together: a Quality Look at Healthcare, will be held May 8, 2015, at the Hilton El Conquistador in Tucson. The theme of the 2015 Let's Get Better Together Conference is A Dialogue on the Intersections of LGBTQ identity.
- ii. SAGA presents "SAGA at the Tipping Point" on Saturday, May 9, at Fluxx Studios from 7-11 p.m. This will be a community building and social event to reintroduce SAGA to the Arizona LGBT family, help build collaborations and partnerships with other community organization, and learn your thoughts about SAGA's priorities for the future.

Mission of the Tucson Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues

The Tucson GLBT Commission's role is to effectively present and address the issues and concerns of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender citizens of Tucson to the Mayor, City Council, and city departments through advice and recommendations on legislation, policy, and city programs. It is the Commission's goal to provide advice and recommendations that will inure to the benefit of all within the Tucson GLBT Community.

Brief Highlights from the History of the LGBTQIA Civil Rights Movement in Tucson City Council

Tucson has long been perched on the leading edge of progress for LGBTQIA issues. Its progress in civil rights history should be recognized as a journey which continues to advance and should not be hindered by intolerance, political discord, or apathy. A brief history of the accomplishments made by and for Tucson's LGBTQIA community illustrates the spirit of this city's officials and citizens.

In 1977, the Tucson Gay Coalition spearheaded a drive to ban discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Later that year, the Tucson City Council unanimously passed an amendment to the Human Rights Ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In 1984, the Tucson Lesbian Gay Pride Committee and Tucson Police partnered with the goal of fighting discrimination in law enforcement. TLGPC formed a law enforcement subcommittee to act as liaison with TPD in response to an upsurge in alleged harassment and negative encounters between officers and LGBTQI citizens.

Later in 1994, Mayor and Council opposed an amendment promoted by Traditional Values Coalition of Arizona chairperson Frank Meliti which would have banned laws prohibiting bias against the LGBT community. The amendment would have effectively overturned Tucson's 1977 Anti-Discrimination Ordinance.

In 1998, the Tucson Mayor and Council voted to create the GLBT Commission on Issues, as part of the City of Tucson government, which uses Citizen's Advisory Committees and Commissions on Issues of Concern.

In 1999, Tucson again amended its Human Rights Ordinance, this time to ban discrimination based on gender identity.

In 2003, the City of Tucson was the first governmental entity in the State of Arizona to recognize committed, same and opposite sex couples with a registry granting them hospital visitation rights and family privileges, discounts and other benefits at City operated facilities.

In 2013, the city council approved same-sex civil unions on the heels of a similar decision in Bisbee.

Just last year, Tucsonans stood together in opposition of controversial SB1062 which would have allowed businesses to discriminate based on their religious beliefs. Wingspan, the LGBTQ community center, coordinated a swift response to the legislation which included daily marches to Gov. Brewer's Tucson office throughout the week leading up to her eventual veto of the bill. These marches made national news and inspired countless local businesses to show their support for equality for all. During the movement, Mayor Johnathan Rothschild issued a letter affirming his support of the community as well and numerous politicians spoke out in support of the veto marches.

Throughout Tucson's history, the city and its elected officials have made groundbreaking progress by recognizing the importance of equal rights for its LGBTQ citizens, often before many other cities in the state and country. Tucson must continue to work for the fair and equal treatment and protection of all.

Current Issues Facing the LGBTQI Community

Transgender Inclusion and Access

The GLBT Commission aims to acknowledge and address specific social conditions and restrictions which transgender, genderqueer, and gender-nonconforming individuals face. In particular, the Commission would like to advance the establishment of transgender support initiatives and access to restrooms and other gender-restricted spaces. In particular, single-occupancy restrooms in public buildings and businesses should be gender neutral to improve access by everyone, as well as protecting the comfort and safety of transgender and other gender nonconforming individuals.

Additionally, transgender individuals face a myriad of difficulties in the area of health care due to lack of empathy and education on the part of health care professionals and anti-trans stigma. Where possible, the City of Tucson and its citizens should work to be inclusive and respectful of the transgender community and eliminate the unique challenges transgender individuals face.

LGBTQI Elders and Aging

As LGBTQI elders find themselves in need of housing, health care, support, and services, many face unique issues navigating the aging process. Many individuals who move into care facilities resort to going back into the closet to avoid anti-LGBTQI discrimination.

The Commission sees value in promoting education and awareness of the issues facing the aging members of the LGBTQI community. Therefore, we aim to explore these challenges to better educate ourselves and others on these issues.

Progress may include collaboration with existing organizations such as the Pima County Council on Aging and Wingspan Senior Pride (now an independent organization) to further the training and education of elder care providers and create resources for elders and their family members dealing with the aging process.

LGBTQI Law Enforcement Relations

Throughout the history of the LGBTQI rights movement in Tucson, effective communication and outreach have benefitted both the Tucson Police Department and the citizens they serve and protect. By maintaining open communication between law enforcement and citizens, and by better educating law enforcement with the issues faced by members of the LGBTQI community, Tucson Police can become an example for other cities.

The Human Rights Campaign's 2013 Municipal Equality Index awarded Tucson 0 out of 8 possible points for having no LGBT Police Liaison or Task Force.

Tucson's Municipal Equality Index Rating

Since the Commission's last State of the City report, Tucson's rating on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index grew from 90 to 100. The Commission wishes to point out, however, that while technically a perfect score, the City received makeup points in bonus categories which made up for deficits in the areas of trans health inclusion and an equal benefits ordinance.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Tucson Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues

Lauryn Bianco, Member Ward 4
Mark Cage, Member Mayor
Casey Condit, Member Mayor and Council At-Large
Davin Franklin-Hicks, Co-Chairperson Ward 2
Wendell Hicks – Member Ward 3
Abigail Jensen, Member Ward 1
Ronni Kotwica, Member Ward 6
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