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From the Desk of the Executive Director: Jackson's Corner

A Time to Reflect

Normally I would want to use this space and time of year to share with you the successes in the past or focus on the future. I write this note to you as I process through my feelings of the news of Leelah Alcorn's death and can't help but reflect on our work in progress.

Leelah was a 17 year old transgender teen who died on December 28th after completing suicide. Each November, we have a day to reflect on the triple digit count of the deaths (we know of) each year of transgender people killed for being trans. We have no way to know how many bright and beautiful people we lose each year to suicide, but I suspect that triple digit number would explode, indicating we are in a time of crisis. My Facebook newsfeed seems to introduce me almost weekly to a new person who struggled with seemingly insurmountable obstacles and circumstances leading to their taking their own life.

It's tragic. But it reinforces for me why our work is still critical. Why we have to educate our community, create a supportive space for those struggling in hopes of lessening suffering in our local LGBTQ family. We do this with help from our dedicated supporters, volunteers and board members work to help us keep the doors open and build our capacity to reach further to our community. End goal, to help everyone live authentically and comfortably in their daily lives. 2015 we will continue this work. Thank you for making this work a reality.



Leelah Alcorn from her Tumbler Account

PANDA (Parents AND Allies)

Introduction to Niki Pohnl

My Name is Niki Pohnl. I'm a member of the LGBTQ board and I have a transgender child.

When my daughter told me she identifies more as male than female and that she would be transitioning, I immediately went into research mode. I needed to know what this meant for her, what this would mean for my family and most importantly – how I could support all of my children through this process.

My first step was to contact the LGBTQ Center, seeking someone to talk this through with and be guided towards helpful resources. I found both. I found a library FULL of resources and was directed to a few members of the community that had also contacted The Center going through a similar situation. But, found that The Center didn't have a support group for parents or allies so I decided to start one.

PANDA supports the family and friends of the LGBTQ community. We all have loved ones facing unique challenges and we need a place to share the joys and concerns with others on the same journey. The Center provides a safe, confidential space to talk openly about our experiences as a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, or a friend. It is a place to learn and grow and form friendships along the way. No matter what stage you are in the process, this is a great place to be!

We meet the 1st Monday of each month at The Center at 6:00pm. We touch base with each other – to celebrate joys, talk about concerns of whatever our situations are, and share resources. We are in the process of putting together a schedule of monthly topics that will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

If this type of group is not something you would be comfortable with or you would like more information, I would be happy to meet with you individually or feel free to email me at panda@7riverslgbtq.org.

Please join us! ALL are welcome!

InQueery: Protecting Yourself and Making your Dreams a Reality

Chris Olson, CFP and
Greg Bonney, Esq

Join us *January 17th at 9:30 – 11:30am* for our first financial and legal based conversation about planning for your future.

It's a great opportunity to get free advice from local legal and financial professionals Greg Bonney and Chris Olson.

The Center will offer coffee, tea and refreshments to those who join us.

Seating is limited. RSVP Today by emailing ExecutiveDirector@7RiversLGBTQ.org to secure your spot.

Make sure you email Jackson specific questions you'd like to have addressed during the conversation and Chris and Greg will work them in!



Topics will include:

- Building blocks of a sound financial plan
- Insurance
- Legal issues for legal strangers
- How marriage impacts legal benefits

And much, much more!

NEW LGBTQ Safe and Welcoming AA Group

Now at the Center

The closed group is hosted at The Center every **Tuesday** Evening at **6pm**.

Regularly Scheduled Groups

Support

AA (Closed Group Style)
Every Tuesday at 6:00pm

Andromeda (Ages 18-25)
Every Thursday at 4:30pm

Galaxy (Ages 13-20)
Every Thursday from 6-8pm

Transgender Support
2nd and 4th Saturdays at 12:00pm

PANDA – (Parents and Allies)
1st Monday of the month 6–8pm

EmbrACE – (Asexual)
2nd Monday of the month 6–8pm

Social / Drop-in

Meditation Group
Saturdays at 11am

Gay Friendly Professional Network (GFPN) - 3rd Wednesday in January from 5-7pm at the Pump House Regional Arts Center.

GFPN space before a gathering-



Special Opportunities

Around town

Feminism on Tap – La Crosse

Topic: Stalking Awareness

Location: Pearl Street Brewery

1401 Saint Andrew St, La Crosse

1/7/2015 at 5:00pm

InQueery: Protecting Yourself and making your Dreams a Reality

Location: The Center, 230 6th St S

1/17/15 9:30-11:30

FREE - RSVP to reserve a spot and give questions you'd like them to address:

ExecutiveDirector@7riverslgbtq.org

The Center Annual Breakfast Meeting

Location: WTC Lunda Center

319 7th St N, La Crosse, WI 54601

\$15 – purchased or RSVP in advance

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/annual-meeting/>

Join us for The Center's Annual Breakfast and Members Meeting. It's the one opportunity of the year to review the work of the previous year and highlight goals and objectives for 2015. This year we'll be honoring some of our dedicated volunteers, presenting Volunteer of the Year and awarding the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Short Road Trip:

Torture – How it Affects the LGBT Community at Home and Abroad

Location: (Minneapolis)

1360 W Minnehaha Pkwy, Msp, MN

Thursday 1/22/15 7:30 – 9:00p

Laverne Cox

Location: (MSU-Mankato)

Wednesday February 18 7:00pm

WILL YOU OR WON'T YOU GET MARRIED?

What can you do to protect yourselves?

By Christina Mae Olson, CFP®

Now that gay and lesbians in Wisconsin and Minnesota (and a majority of other jurisdictions) can get married – it doesn't mean that all gay and lesbian couples will get married. There are those of us who just don't want to tie the knot. That's okay. Some couples are just dating. Some haven't found a soul mate or life partner. Some don't believe in the institution of marriage. Some want to maintain their autonomy. Some don't want to get legally or financially entangled with another person. Several years ago I spoke at a conference on domestic partnership issues. I was surprised that straight couples attended the conference. Quite naïvely, I had assumed that couples who could get married would get married. Was I ever wrong!

If you are in love with someone and are in a relationship or "coupled" you are still considered legal strangers to each other. Legal strangers should consider taking some simple steps to protect yourself and your relationship. These are very important if you are not going to get married. Below is a list of just some of the documents that can protect you and your partner and your families for as long as you are together. These can help you individually and collectively if you ever get in a dispute with some authority or even with each other.

- Will
- Medical Power of Attorney
- Durable Power of Attorney
- Living Will or Advance Directive
- Trusts
- POD – TOD on bank accounts
- Beneficiary Designations
- JTWRROS or Tenants in Common?
- The List: who gets the dog and the couch when we split?
- Partnership or Cohabitation Agreements
- Insurance policies
- Authorization for Final Disposition

It is smart to consult with a lawyer about what you need to protect yourself. It's true that even legally married couples should have some of these documents prepared. Everyone should learn about what legal steps are necessary to protect yourselves. The laws governing these things differ from state to state and you want to be certain that your documents comply with your state's requirements.

The Center is hosting an InQueery information and discussion session on these very issues – for singles AND couples, even straight people. This InQueery will take place on Saturday, January 17th at 9:30 am, at The Center in La Crosse. Attorney Greg Bonney (partner at the law firm Johns Flaherty and Collins and former board member for The Center) will join me in leading the InQueery. I'll be discussing a variety of financial issues and Greg will cover various legal areas of importance to all of us. Greg and I both plan to also answer attendee questions. The InQueery is free of charge. Look for more details about it from The Center. Would you like us to focus on a particular area of financial planning or the law during this InQueery? Please direct your questions to Jackson Jantzen, The Center's Executive Director: executivedirector@7riverslgbtq.org and we will try to answer them at the InQueery.

Chris Olson is a Certified Financial Planner™ Practitioner with a fee-only practice. She has been helping people get their financial lives in order since 1993. You can reach her at CMoney@centurytel.net or 608-525-9818. Please contact her with topic ideas for future newsletter columns.

Meet Wesley



It has been a distinct pleasure to be present as the Board of the LGBT Resource Center for the Seven Rivers Region has shifted location and name (The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection). Every transition has its rocky moments. This is true in birthing as well as in organization redevelopment. But as Dag Hammarskjöld wrote as a part of the larger context of life, “For all that has been, Thank you. For all that is to come, Yes!” And so a Thank you to Roseanne for her years of care, Cindy for needed changes and vision, Jackson for new eyes and engaged hopes, and all the Board members I served with who each added their part.

My time here as a privileged straight, white, male was a continuation of nearly 50 years of participation in ally advocacy for my LGBTQ(...) sisters and brothers. My journey began with a family open to new members through foster care and in college years (1961–66) with the intersection of religion and society (campus ministry and sociology) that crystalized a whole range of connections between race and gender and economic inequality and the list goes on. The LGBTQ connection became experientially clearest for me in seminary as I lived for 3 years with the presence and stories of outspoken gay and lesbian students.

As a United Methodist pastor ordained in 1971 only to find my denomination formally instituting categorical discrimination against “homosexuals” in its book of rules in 1972, it was clear I needed to decide which side I was on. We had finally ended our official discrimination regarding race in 1968 only to find it break out again in regard to sexuality. Since then I’ve preached about gender identity (its positives and the harm of discrimination) from the pulpit and willingly officiated even while my denomination has a rule against marrying people of the same gender (rules are not the last word in the mystery of relationships). My work has also been to change my denomination’s discriminatory rules by being elected as a delegate to vote against them, working as an editor of a social justice advocacy group within the church to advocate against these rules, and in recent years, as part of Love Prevails, a group committed to disrupting the decision-making processes of the The United Methodist

Church until we join Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ denominations in again ridding ourselves of a false and harmful biblical literalism.

Working at the national and international levels of church discrimination has needed grounding in local lives. I was pleased when invited to join the Board. I found the care for members of the LGBTQ community and the advocacy for their basic human rights of the Resource Center to be right on target. The advocacy work of The Center has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years, even as we continue to nurture and care for LGBTQ youth and elders, and we are now the go-to resource for media outlets regarding the LGBTQ community.

My time with The Center has helped me grow in appreciation and affection for all those represented by additional letters that have been added (LGBTTIQQ2SAA) and will be added (...) in days to come. Each one represents a way of encountering the world based on the reality of people's lives, not some ideal model in somebody's head. I am glad for the way The Center continues to "be real" and live with people in their particular way of living in a world filled with valuable intersections that can help us build a more compassionate community.

Although the time has come for my time on the Board to end, I will continue to support the excellent work The Center is doing and look forward to where the coming and future Boards will guide our common work of rejoicing in the lives we have as well as in the lives of others that enhance and stretch our own. I've already invested in my 2015 membership and contributed to a matching fund grant and hope you have, too.

Again, for everyone and everything that has brought The Center to this moment, Thank you. And, for all the shifts and changes The Center will go through to stay relevant to real lives, Yes!

Board Member Departures

We are sad to lose **Wesley White** as a board member this year. He is an amazing advocate and ally who has provided a fantastic voice, knowledge and perspective at critical points. He's prioritized the work he's done with us amidst some very important national work he's passionate about.

The support he's provided me personally as an Executive Director from my first day on the job has been critical to my success. He has served as an anchor and rock for our leadership team, he's been there as a sounding board, mentor and friend. I'm grateful to have had his wisdom and guidance the last 21 months and look forward to supporting his future endeavors.

Blythe Newberg, our current board President also reaches the end of her term this month. She joined The Center's board and committed to facilitate Galaxy. She has made a tremendous weekly commitment to the Galaxy kids for two years, recently stepping down December of 2014. She helped bring a stability to the group and allow the opportunity for its continued growth.

Blythe came to our organization and went all in. In addition to her weekly commitment to Galaxy, she began helping our Outreach committee to make things like the Pride and our Halloween Gala a reality. All this work was done while serving as an Executive Committee member overseeing huge projects we undertook this year of rebranding The Center, moving to a new location, hosting Pride among other things.

My very special thanks to both Wesley and Blythe. You both made incredible contributions. You made us a better organization. Thank you!

-Jackson Jantzen

Will You Support our Work?

Ways You Can Help

Individual Donations-

If you haven't already, please consider becoming a **SPONSOR** or **Donor**! Your yearly financial support is critical to our success.

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/get-involved/individual-memberships/>

Or, make a **one-time** or **monthly donation** in any amount here:

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/get-involved/give-gift/donate-amount/>

Business Sponsorship or Donations-

Do you own or know a business who wants to support our work?

Businesses can support our work, become larger event sponsor and enjoy additional visibility in the process. More information can be found on our Supporting Business Member page

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/get-involved/supporting-business-member/>

Shop with our Business Partners-

Please vote with your dollars and support our business partners when possible. You can let them know their support is valued by letting them know you found them in our directory. Visit our Business Directory online to the most current and complete list of supporters. We add new ones all the time! <http://7riverslgbtq.org/directory/business-directory/>

Volunteer!

Many of the services The Center provides is made possible through the generosity of individuals. There are a variety of ways to get involved either through donating time, skills or financial resources.

If you would like to learn more about opportunities visit our **Get Involved** page at

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/get-involved/>. If you have specific ideas on how you'd like to get involved, email Jackson directly at ExecutiveDirector@7RiversLGBTQ.org.

Spread the Word by Wearing Center Logo Gear!

We have all kinds of shirts, hoodies, bags and other cool stuff at our online store. You can check out the new store on Café Press by going to this web address: <http://7riversLGBTQ.org/store/>.

Thank You

We, like many regional and metropolitan LGBTQ Centers across the country have a huge mountain to climb. National trends are such that when individuals make charitable gifts, 95% of the time they only give to large national organizations with great marketing department budgets. Rarely (or never in our case) do any of those dollars make it back to local communities or centers for support and grass root efforts.

It takes a great many small donations and a yearly commitment to help us meet our budget goals, increase our advocacy and outreach ability and ultimately.

We sincerely mean it when we say, "Thank you, we could not do this without you!"



We are here if you need us.



"Encourage, lift and strengthen one another. For the positive energy spread to one will be felt by us all." - Deborah Day



7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection

together.

