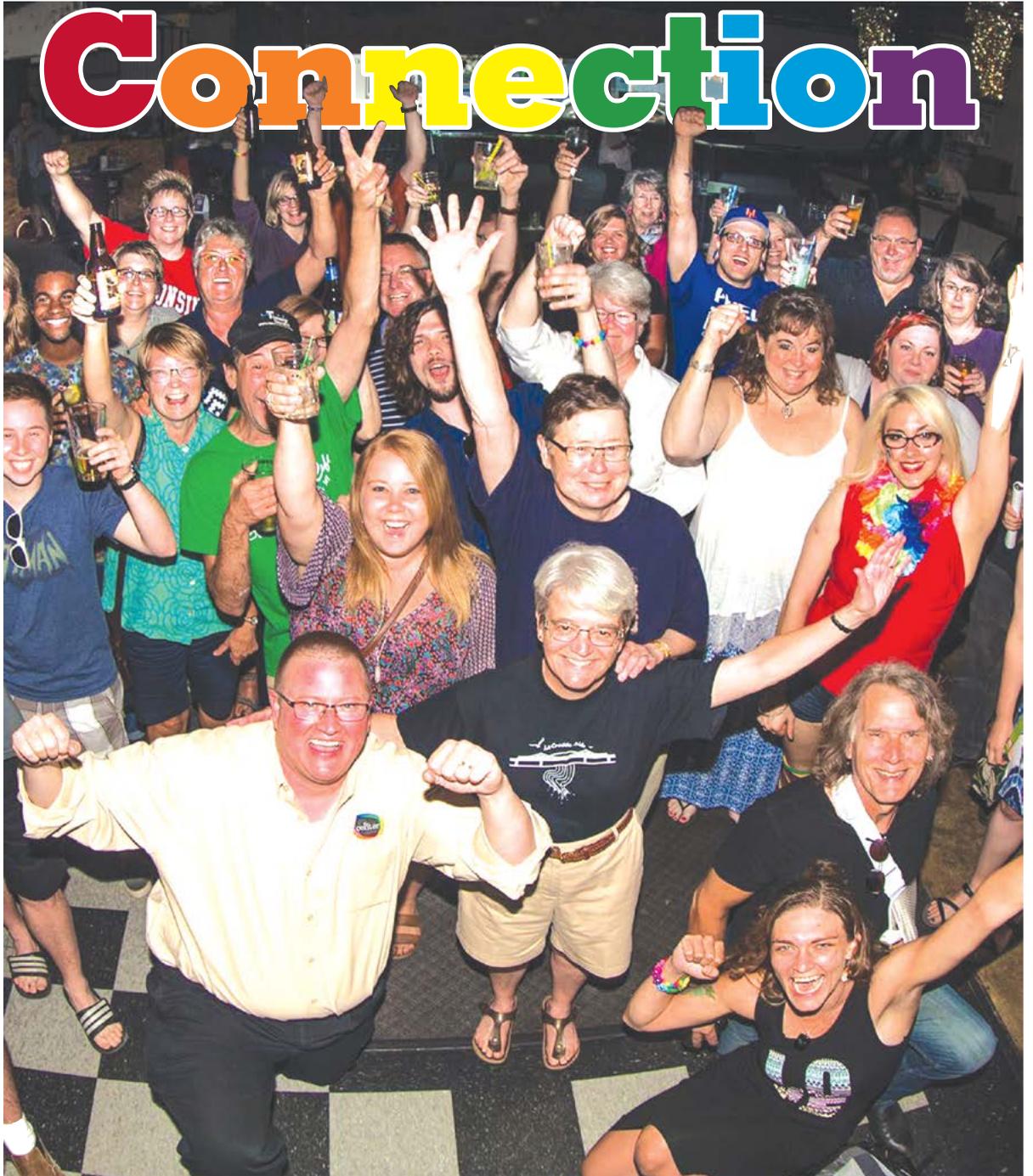


# Connection



# A Look Back

**T**he LGBTQ community has been on the national stage throughout 2015 – in both positive and negative ways. Equal access to marriage became the law in the United States this summer, which is a huge step forward for our community. There has also been a great deal of negative messaging targeting transgender individuals and public bathroom usage. California, Texas, Florida, and now Wisconsin have proposed legislation that criminalizes individuals using the restrooms, which is extremely disheartening to see. Some bills have targeted school-age children who already have to navigate hostile environments; other bills have been focused

on public facilities. In all cases, the transgender community has become the target of hate rhetoric and campaigns to drive fear and misinformation. In so many ways, this year has been bittersweet. We celebrate the victories, but are continuing to be reminded that our work is far from over.

## Growth & Change

The Center has undergone a lot of positive change in the last year. I am about to complete my first full year as a full-time employee with The Center. This is the first time in the organization's history we have ever had someone able to dedicate 100% of their focus to moving our mission forward. We also gained a part-time

**Jackson's Corner**



*by Jackson Jantzen  
executive director*

employee, Diana Hundt, from Experience Works in August; and I am grateful for how much more organized our office has become since she came on board.

We have made some great strides in our programming and I am very proud of all the work we have accomplished. We have continued to develop and improve our support programming we offer with Galaxy (LGBTQ youth support group for ages 13-20), Andromeda (LGBTQ and ally adult group for ages 18-25), PANDA (parents and allies support group), and the Transgender/Gender Queer Gathering group.

## Outreach & Dialogue

The Center has also focused on addressing the needs of our rural communities in the 7 Rivers region. Because we serve eleven rural counties in three states, people cannot always get to The Center for the support services they need. We have begun conversations about hosting satellite meetings in some of the more distant counties from The Center. We

## Introducing Diana Hundt

**D**iana Hundt is The Center's new part-time Office Assistant and we are lucky to have her! She started with us in August 2015 through the Experience Works jobs program. Diana is excited to be working for The Center, as the mission of our organization is very important to her. She is the proud mother of a son who is gay and daughter who is bisexual.

Diana hopes that she can help The Center move forward, grow, and better provide

## Profile: Diana Hundt



Diana Hundt

services to the eleven counties we serve. Her event coordination and administrative skills have already been instrumental to our organization and we look forward to seeing all we can accomplish with her help in the upcoming year. Welcome aboard, Diana! ☺

## The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection

are looking to kick off at least one pilot program meeting in the first half of 2016.

We have enhanced our community outreach and better stretch our resources at The Center. Among these efforts have been more proactive outreach and education initiatives. We tripled our speaking and education engagements in higher education environments from 2014! We also had the opportunity of counseling major La Crosse employers on fostering inclusive work environments; of educating law enforcement, and we continue to find new opportunities to meet with high schools in the area to support LGBTQ students. I am excited to announce that we have been invited to speak to a large collective of Human Resource professionals from the area this month. It will be a great opportunity to speak to LGBTQ challenges in the workplace, while opening avenues for partnering with individual organizations on future issues.

### Community Fun

All work and no play is never a good thing, so we have focused on community-building events as well. We created new events and groups for members of our community who might not need support services, but still want to participate in the LGBTQ + Ally community. We have hosted events like InQueery, GFPN (Gay Friendly Professional Network), Pride weekend, and recently created

the Center Social, a monthly gathering to bring people together while supporting a supportive local businesses. We also co-sponsored events like Namoli Brennet's concert at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and the One Voice Mixed Chorus concert at Winona State University.

We could not have done any of this without your support, so thank you. Please consider renewing your membership for 2016, becoming a first time member, or donating now. We have great momentum, vision, and support, but we cannot do it without your help.

*Best Wishes,*  
Jackson Jantzen

## Upcoming Events

### Annual Breakfast:

Save the date for The Center's Annual Breakfast on January 30, 2016 at 10:00 am at English Lutheran Church. We will be reviewing the work of the previous year and highlighting our 2016 goals and objectives. We will also be honoring some of our dedicated volunteers by presenting the Volunteer of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards. Tickets will be \$15 per person. 

## Ongoing Programs

### Andromeda:

A social and support group for LGBTQ and Ally young adults ages 18-25.

**Meets every other Thursday, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. at The Center.**

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/programs/andromeda-group/>

### Galaxy:

A group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning youth ages 13 to 20 who want to hang out with other LGBTQ teens and discuss issues relevant to LGBTQ teens.

**Meets Thursdays from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at The Center.**

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/programs/galaxy/>

### Panda

Provides a safe, confidential space to talk openly about our experiences as a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, or a friend of someone in the LGBTQ community. Meets as needed and often in groups with similar circumstances.

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/programs/panda-parents-allies/>

### Transgender/Gender Queer Gathering:

A group for gender nonconforming persons, transgender, transexual, gender queer, and gender bending individuals. Meets the second and fourth Saturday of the month at The Center.

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/programs/transgendergender-queer-gathering/>

## Pride in the Park and So You Think You Can Drag

September's Pride in the Park was a huge success this year! Moving the event to Riverside Park helped increase our visibility in town and double our attendance to over 1,000. The day started with a complimentary breakfast sponsored by Wettstein's. At the park, the festivities included with 40 vendors and musical guests, SHESHE, Sexy Ester, Oh My Love, and Annabel Lee.

That evening, our So You Think You Can Drag show was held at the Cavilier Theater and Lounge.



Sexy Ester performed at Riverside Park during 2015 La Crosse Pride in the Park.

The Center! The two-hour open house brought in a lot of new and familiar faces. Executive Board Member Will Van Roosenbeek led an hour-long ally training session. Thank you to everyone who attended and brought new people to The Center!



So You Think You Can Drag?!

## InQuery: Mastering Financial Mayhem

Majel Olson of the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of La Crosse hosted an InQuery session in October on debt management and budgeting. For free debt or student loan debt advice, reach out to The Center.

## Equal Employment Opportunities Commission

Justin Mulare from the Chicago EEOC office recently returned to La Crosse for the second time to speak on workplace discrimination. Attendance tripled this time around, particularly at the session for human resources professionals and managers.

## Center Awareness Day + Ally Training

Our Second Center Awareness Day was a great success at

## Halloween Gala

The Halloween Gala was a great success at the Concordia Ballroom. We had our largest crowd ever (over 100 attendees) and raised \$5,800 toward the matching grant.

# Events & Updates

## Thank You Dinner for Volunteers

We hosted a dinner to honor our volunteers' hard work in 2015 on November 7 at English Lutheran Church. Special thanks to Chris Olson, CFP® for sponsoring event and to Diana Hundt and Niki Pohnl for your help preparing the meal and coordinating the event!

## One Voice Presents: A Mighty Voice Tour

We kicked off the holiday season with a special concert put on by One Voice, Minnesota's only --- and the nation's largest --- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight allies (LGBTQA) chorus. The program, titled A Midnight Queer, featured songs from a large variety of holiday traditions.

## Grants Committee Update

The Center's committee charged with procuring grant monies to fund Center activities has been both busy and successful. Recently they wrote a grant that resulted in receiving \$8500.00 through the Gamma Mu Foundation. The money will fund a Rural Access and Community Health program.



Prize-winning Bob Ross costume combo at the Halloween Gala.

## Marriage Equality in the United States

June 26 marked a historic day in the United States for the LGBTQ community when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality with a vote of 5-4. Five Justices rejected claims in the case of Obergefell v. Hodges that marriage is defined by law only to encourage procreation within family units, meaning it could only apply to a man and woman.

"The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm,

# What's In the News

to define and express their identity," wrote Justice Kennedy.

President Obama declared this ruling a victory for the country stating, "this decision affirms what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts: when all Americans are treated as equal we are all more free."

The Center hosted a toast to marriage equality at Players, La Crosse's best-known LGBTQ friendly bar just hours after the ruling. Marriage equality is a huge step forward for the LGBTQ community and we were

very excited about the progress made on this front.

## Anti-Transgender Bathroom Bill in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Republicans are attempting to push a bill through the Wisconsin legislature that would prohibit transgender students in public schools from using a bathroom or locker room assigned to the gender with which they identify. The bill defines gender as being "the physical condition of being male or female, as determined by an individual's chromosomes and identified at birth by that individual's anatomy."

A packed hearing was held in Madison on November 19 with opponents arguing this bill is in violation of both the Civil Rights Act and Title IX, and will further endanger transgender students.

The "bathroom bill" is one of nine other anti-transgender bills that have emerged in 2015 in state legislatures around the country.

The soonest Wisconsin could act on this bill would be in January, and it is uncertain whether it has enough support to pass.

We recommend you contact your representatives to voice your opinion on this issue. You can find your representatives' contact information by logging onto: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/about/contact>

A year and a half ago, Niki Pohnl decided to start a group for Parents and Allies (PANDA), a place for family members and friends of LGBTQ individuals to seek support and knowledge of what their friend or family member is going through. As a parent of a transgender child, Niki brings not only knowledge and her leadership as a board member of The Center, but also experience as to what others may feel when their friend or family member begins to express themselves differently.

PANDA was started with the goal of meetings to support parents, other family members, and friends of LGBTQ individuals, to educate them, and show them that they're not alone in this experience.

## Close Up: Parents and Allies

It helps people become better allies to the LGBTQ community, by creating a non-judgmental atmosphere, along with learning experiences and complete confidentiality. The group has taken off and Niki is talking to new parents all the time.

If you'd like to get ahold of Niki, you can contact her by e-mail at [panda@7riverslgbtq.org](mailto:panda@7riverslgbtq.org) with any questions or concerns you may have. Also, visit our PANDA group page at <http://7riverslgbtq.org/programs/panda-parents-allies/> for more information. ©

## A cancer diagnosis changed her views of life, the future and planning for both.

By Christina Mae Olson

**M**y world changed last April when the love of my life was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma – Stage 3A anal cancer. You can imagine the myriad of thoughts that filled my brain. I am a planner so my thinking quickly went from, “Oh my god, what if she dies?” to “Am I ready for her to die?” Later, I might write about the feelings I have about possibly losing my spouse to cancer. This piece is about the practical side of dealing with a cancer diagnosis. Cancer motivated me to take action with our financial and end of life planning.

Fifteen years ago, I had a colon cancer scare. Michelle (my spouse) and I had just moved to Wisconsin from Alaska. We sold our house and cabin and were sitting on a wad of cash we planned to use for retirement. My carcinoid jolted us into the realization that life really could be short. I was 43 years old. I’m generally a tightwad with money. Having cancer myself made it easy to let go of that

## Personal Profile: Preparing for today & tomorrow

Alaskan wad we came here with. We built our dream home in the country with that money thinking that it would really be a shame if I died without getting to live out our dream.

I have spent 20 years helping people plan so they can make their dreams come true. I generally follow my own advice. We were, for the most part, prepared. There is, however, nothing like a cancer diagnosis that puts even the best planning in perspective. I don’t know if it was being 58 years old (as opposed to 43) or the fact that Michelle was the one with cancer – but this time I had a completely different view about our financial planning. We had done some smart planning that I never thought I’d see play out.

I was very happy and extremely relieved knowing that Michelle had life insurance. She was 58 and still had a few more working years ahead of her. We depend on each other’s income so if she died I knew the life insurance would replace at least a few years of her lost income. She also had short and long-term disability insurance. She collected several weeks of disability pay during her cancer treatment. Thanks to the disability insurance, she didn’t have to use up all of her vacation hours at work and she didn’t have to take any

leave without pay. If anyone depends on your income – please consider getting life and disability insurance to protect your income.

I am also glad that we got legally married. We can pass unlimited amounts of assets to the other in death without having to pay taxes on that transfer. We get to take advantage of Social Security with either survivor or spousal benefits. For us, our income tax liability is lower as a legally married couple.

Cancer is serious. We had wills, but they were over ten years old. Our lives had changed in those ten years and our legal documents needed to reflect that. We updated the beneficiary designations on our insurance and retirement accounts. We re-did our advance directives. We met with a lawyer and took care of our wills, durable powers of attorney and powers of attorney for health care.

For the first time in our lives, I considered the possibility that I might die before Michelle. It is funny how her cancer made me think of my own mortality. What if I died and she was going through cancer treatments? Quickly, I updated our list of log in and password information to our electronic accounts (the bank, mutual funds, IRA’s, utilities, etc.). We had a “family

meeting” and went over all of this information. One of us would need to know how to access these accounts if the other couldn’t.

Updating our important documents also meant having to share most of that information with others. One should always have a successor agent, trustee or personal representative to step in and act for you if your primary agent isn’t able. What if we died together? Who would manage our affairs? We identified these people and had heart-to-heart

talks with them. We gave them copies of our wills and powers of attorney. We had to include instructions for our four dogs.

Michelle began her radiation and chemotherapy in May. She moved to La Crosse for the last half of her treatment so she could be closer to the facility. Her parents and a sister stayed with her. She was hospitalized for eight tough days after her second chemo infusion.

The month I was alone at our house had a profound effect on me. I realized that I couldn’t (and ultimately didn’t want to)

manage this life by myself. We do not live a one-person lifestyle here on these 38 acres.

I started to take care of those repairs we’d been putting off. Cleaning and mending. Purging. De-cluttering. I was in a sort of reverse nesting mode. I cut back on the routine chores and only did what was absolutely necessary. We had friends come from Alaska and California to help with some things, friends from La Crosse came to help with others. Most of all, I quit planning for new things to do and add to our home. In my mind, I was planning our (or my?) move out of here. I didn’t want another new project.

Now that it’s December and Michelle is back at work, my fretting has died down a little. Michelle has had two successful check-ups in which no cancer was found. Apparently, the chemo and radiation worked. We will, however, live with this cancer for the rest of our lives. She’ll have periodic check-ups and even if she is ultimately cured – the cancer could recur at any time. The “no new things” philosophy remains. We are living more in the moment but also mindful that we might have to make changes in case the cancer comes back.

*Chris Olson is a Certified Financial Planner™ practitioner. She has been in private practice since 1996. You can reach her at 608-525-9818 or CMoney@centurytel.net.*

**W**hat planning lessons can I share to help you prepare for a partner’s death? Here is our plan:

- We will have life insurance as long as we are working.
- We will have disability insurance as long as we are working.
- We have primary and secondary beneficiaries on all of our retirement accounts.
- We are legally married. If you decide not to marry – own joint property as JTWR0S (joint tenants with rights of survivorship). Complete an Authorization for Final Disposition (Wisconsin residents) so you can direct what happens to the body of your partner after death. Without it, only blood relatives have the legal right to direct final disposition: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f0/f00086.pdf>.

## A Checklist

- Our electronic accounts are current and we both have easy access.
- We have a current wills naming trusted personal representatives and successor representatives.
- We have a current durable power of attorney.
- We have a current health care power of attorney.
- Our current living wills/advance directives are on file with our doctor.
- Our loved ones know our final wishes.
- We try to keep our property up to date with repairs and upkeep.
- We are still working on getting the clutter out of our lives.

## Individual Donations

Consider becoming a 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

Businesses allies can support us by becoming a donor or large event sponsor and enjoy additional visibility in the process. Look into it:



**T**he Center will be having a voter registration drive next spring along with an information session about the new Wisconsin Voter ID Law that is going to affect everyone who does not possess a government-issued photo ID as well as trans people who do not have the appropriate photo ID.

If you are not registered to vote, you should consider doing so as next year's elections in August and November are extremely important. Also, there may be a statewide primary election for Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court on Tuesday, Feb. 16, but there is no additional information at this time.

The next primary election on the calendar is Tuesday, April 5, at which time you vote for the presidential candidate for your

# Ways You Can Help: Donate & Get Involved

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

## Shop With Our Business Partners

Support our business partners whenever possible. Let them know their support is valued and mention you found them in our directory. Visit our Business Directory online:

<http://7riverslgbtq.org/directory/business-directory/>

## Register to Vote

party. Additionally, one Justice of the Supreme Court and one Court of Appeals Justice will be on the ballot.

The Partisan Primary is Tuesday, August 9, when you vote for the candidate from your party to move into the General Election to face a candidate from the opposing party. There will be other primaries for U.S. Senate, U.S. Representative, State Senator and all assembly seats are up for election.

The General Election is Tuesday, Nov. 8.

*For more information, contact Special Registration Deputy Cindy Killion at [ckillion@winona.edu](mailto:ckillion@winona.edu) or 507.313.0777.*

## Volunteer!

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](mailto:ExecutiveDirector@7RiversLGBTQ.org).

## Spread the Word: Wear 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/>

## Seasons Greetings from The Center

On behalf of everyone at The Center, we wish you a happy holiday season. We look forward to serving you in 2016!

## Newsletter Staff

**Editor:** Alli Berry

**Designer:** Mark McDougal

**Contributors:**

Jackson Jantzen

Cindy Killion

Jessica Taylor

Mary O'Sullivan

Chris Olson