

Southern Arizona's Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual & Transgender
Community Center

300 East 6th Street
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wingspan.org

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Arizona Fights Anti-Gay Initiative in State Legislation



A crowd protests anti-LGBT legislation

Ask Jess Knutson why she's excited about the prospect of leading the effort to fight anti-LGBT legislation in Arizona and she has a quick answer. "This will be a uniting force for our community," she says, "and there will be a spill-over effect nationally."

As the new political organizer at Wingspan, Jess is ready for all eyes to be on Arizona in November 2006, when a proposed state constitutional amendment that will narrowly define marriage and, in effect, take away existing domestic partner benefits, will be on the ballot statewide. In her newly created position, funded by the LGBT&S Alliance Fund of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, the Arizona Human Rights Foundation, and Wingspan, Jess's first order of business is to lead the Arizona

Coalition for Fairness (ACF), an alliance of community members and organizations whose mission is to keep the proposed constitutional amendment from passing.

Her background in political theory, public policy, and American politics made Jess an easy choice to lead the ACF's charge against this harmful legislation. After feeling compelled to speak up for her lesbian sister when she came out as a teen, Jess says that applying her education and skills for the LGBT and allied communities is "a dream job, what I've always wanted to do."

The ACF held a strategic planning session in March, welcoming over 40 people with diverse backgrounds and experience to formulate a plan for the next 18 months. The group's committees focus on outreach, coalition building, social change, media, legislation, fundraising, voter registration, and volunteers.

The official wording of the amendment, which is being proposed by the ultra-extremist conservative Center for Arizona Policy, has not yet been released but is expected to closely mirror the language used in similar legislation in other states. The wording will likely include the statement, "To secure and (continued on page 6)

Eon Youth for Social Change

Wingspan's new Youth Organizer Jaecin Harris is excited to begin a new social change program at Eon. Using her strong activist background with queer and people of color communities, Jaecin will facilitate and organize the youth-led program. "Effective social change should be exciting and igniting," says Jaecin. "I want activism and fun to go hand in hand." With the help of a grant from the Wallace Foundation, Eon youth will organize and implement a broad range of social change campaigns. The program will empower them to examine the societal conditions affecting their lives. "Today's youth face a ton of issues," says Jaecin, "such as hostile school environments and unwelcoming families." With ideas like a PFLAG panel, Safe Zone training, and a Queer Youth March, the young people who attend Eon have a wealth of opportunities awaiting them.

One such young activist is Thomas Jay Halltin. "I have always been interested in activism," says 20-year-old



Thomas Jay Halltin is one of many Eon activists

Thomas, "because both of my parents are activists." Thomas, who is working towards becoming a volunteer facilitator for Eon, envisions the program uniting different oppressed communities. He adds, "I want to be able to walk down the street and show people who I really am."

by Victor Ventura

02

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 300 East 6th Street
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 or wingspan@wingspan.org
 Please email text as a Microsoft Word attachment.

AIDS Candlelight Memorial 05/15/05

On Sunday, May 15, from 6-8 pm, SAAF, TIHAN and Wingspan will sponsor Tucson's International AIDS Candlelight Memorial at El Presidio Park downtown. An interfaith service and songs by Desert Voices will honor loved ones lost to HIV/AIDS, and AIDS memorial quilts will be on display. Please see the Wingspan website, www.wingspan.org, for further details.

Drag Shows at Casino Del Sol 06/04/05-06/25/05

Every Saturday in June, drag diva Lucinda Holliday will be producing Celebrity Impersonation shows at Casino Del Sol. The events are free and will feature celebrities for all ages—Judy Garland, Cher, and more. Lucinda Holliday will host the shows and embellish them with stand-up comedy and live vocals.



Pride in the Pines 06/11/05



Celebrate Pride Month with our neighbors in the north. Flagstaff Pride in the Pines will be Saturday, June 11 this year. The daytime celebration takes place in the heart of the city, right in front of City Hall. At night, visitors and locals alike will dance and party the night away at diverse venues throughout downtown Flag and off Route 66, the main thoroughfare. Rounding out the offerings, the gay-themed play, *A Night in Vegas*, will be performed over Pride weekend by Phoenix's Alternative Theater Company. For more information, visit www.flagstaffpride.org.

Dan Savage Speaks at the Public Library 06/15/05

In celebration of Gay Pride Month, the GLBT Services Committee of the Tucson-Pima Public Library will host an evening with author and columnist Dan Savage on Wednesday, June 15 at 6:30 pm. Savage is the author of *The Kid: What Happened After my Boyfriend and I Decided to Go Get Pregnant: An Adoption Story*, and *Skipping Towards Gomorrah*, and he writes the syndicated sex column "Savage Love." The event is free and will be held at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library, 101 N. Stone, in the lower level meeting room.



Photo by Mark Van-S

Arizona Human Rights Foundation Dinner 06/18/05



On Saturday, June 18, the Arizona Human Rights Foundation (AHRF) will hold its annual fundraising dinner and awards ceremony. The Arizona Biltmore will host this year's dinner, and the theme will be "Strength From Adversity." Keith Boykin, president of the board of the National Black Justice Coalition,

will be keynote speaker. Mr. Boykin is a lawyer, educator, activist, reality television star, and former White House aide to President Clinton. His books, *One More River to Cross: Black & Gay in America*, and *Beyond the Down Low: Sex, Lies, and Denial in Black America*, have appeared on the New York Times best-seller list. For information and tickets contact the Arizona Human Rights Foundation at www.ahrf.org or call 602-650-0900.

Gay Wet 06/25/05

On Saturday, June 25 from 7 pm-midnight, Tucson Pride, Inc. will present Gay Wet, an evening at Breakers Water Park. Come on out and enjoy Breakers' wave pool and water slides, a cash bar, contests, and live entertainment. Admission is \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door.

Other Pride events were to be finalized after this newsletter went to press. Please check the Wingspan website's event calendar at www.wingspan.org for an up-to-date list of events or call Wingspan at 520-624-1779.

Gay men are more adversely affected by health problems than their straight counterparts >>

Spotlight on GBT Men's Health and Wellness

Wingspan has had a broad-based Health and Wellness Program since July 2004. The program holds info tables at community health fairs and educates health care providers on LGBT issues. Recently, LGBT staff and volunteers participated in a focus group run by the Arizona Department of Health Services, to educate their staff on LGBT cultural competency.

Gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men's health is a particular concern of the Health and Wellness Program. Luis Ortega, a new Tucson resident and Wingspan volunteer, has worked in the field of health education with GBT men for the past ten years. He notes that GBT men are at significant risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, lung (pulmonary) disease and stroke. According to Luis, some of GBT men's biggest risk factors—smoking and drinking alcohol to excess—are “related to there not being more social spaces to meet men outside of bars.” Other risk factors can include eating high-fat foods or an otherwise unbalanced diet, being overweight, and exercising too little. Abusing drugs, both prescribed and illegal, and sexually risky behavior which expose one to STDs, are also risk factors for GBT men.

Overall, Luis emphasizes, gay men are more adversely affected by health problems than their straight counterparts. “One of the biggest factors that creates this disparity is homophobia,” he explains, as well as heterosexism—the assumption by most health care providers that all patients are straight. Luis has encountered this himself. “A doctor I was seeing for a while,” he relates, “who was a very nice person, just never thought of asking me about my sexual history—HIV, hepatitis, etc. When I came out to him, all of a sudden, HIV was an issue. I realized he should have been asking all those questions before!”

Wingspan sponsors several programs to improve community members' health, including a Tobacco and Smoking Cessation Group and a Walking Group. Check the weekly E-News or the Wingspan website for more on when these programs meet. HIV/AIDS prevention and care can be obtained through the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF), 520-628-7223 and the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN), 520-299-6647. It is noteworthy that SAAF and the Pima County Health Department are now using a new oral

HIV-antibody test with a 20-minute turnaround time, eliminating the two-week waiting period.

Luis comments that GBT men's internalized homophobia can often interfere with their health. A strong feeling of self-worth is crucial. He says, “I urge gay men to look out for themselves, love themselves, and *want* to live long lives—and one of the ways to do that is to stay healthy.” **by Joe Heller**

Philip Walsted Murderer Brought to Justice

On June 12, 2002, Philip Walsted, 24, was robbed and murdered near 4th Avenue. Walsted, an openly gay man, had been beaten to death with a baseball bat in what was labeled by police a hate crime.

Wingspan supported Philip's partner after the murder. In the past year, the Anti-Violence Project staff also supported Philip's mother and sister during the trial and sentencing.

David Higdon, arrested for the crimes, rejected a plea offer to second degree murder and opted to take his chances with a jury trial. Philip's family was relieved that the case went to trial. “We do not want to see David Higdon on the streets,” stated Philip's mother, Judy Boyer. The defense argued that Higdon's girlfriend at the time committed the murder. However, the jury agreed with the prosecutor that Higdon murdered Philip out of his hatred for gays and his white supremacist beliefs.



Philip Walsted

Higdon was convicted of first-degree murder and armed robbery, and was sentenced to 15 ¾ years for the armed robbery and to natural life for the murder. He will not be eligible for parole. “This sentence sends a strong message that hate violence will not be tolerated,” said Lori Girshick, Coordinator of the Anti-Violence Project.

Family, friends, and supporters will continue to remember Philip, and Wingspan mourns the loss of this precious person.

1987-95 were groundbreaking years for LGBT rights, and Peri Jude Radecic was in the middle of the fray >>

Community Member Profile: Peri Jude Radecic



Peri Jude Radecic prepares for a public hearing at the AZ State Senate

Tucson resident Peri Jude Radecic speaks with warmth and excitement about her eight years working at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). 1987-95 were groundbreaking years for LGBT rights, and Peri Jude was in the middle of the fray, serving as a lobbyist and Policy Director and ultimately as the Director of the Task Force. Her lobbying efforts yielded several important successes, including the passage of the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990, which requires law enforcement agencies to record the numbers of hate crimes that occur in their jurisdictions—a crucial step that assists the Wingspan Anti-Violence Project with its work here in Tucson. Peri Jude comments, “This was the first proactive piece of legislation on sexual orientation that was ever passed, mentioning sexual orientation right next to race and religion as a protected category.” Often, though, her work consisted of simply fighting to defeat proposed homophobic legislation. “Any time we could beat Senator Helms, it was a victory,” she asserts.

Peri Jude moved to Tucson to go to law school. During law school, she established the Pride Law Clinic, which continues to provide weekly legal information meetings at Wingspan for the LGBT community. Peri Jude now works as the Director of Public Advocacy for the Arizona Center for Disability Law, educating members of the State Legislature and shaping public policy on disability issues at the state level. “Boy, I’ve got another great job!” she exclaims. “I can combine all my grassroots policy experience from the Task Force with my law degree.” Peri Jude emphasizes that any LGBT people who have issues related to disability should give her organization a call.

Peri Jude lives in central Tucson with her partner, Helen Fleischman, who is a family nurse practitioner. They have been together for almost eleven years, after meeting in Kansas when Peri Jude was visiting to speak at a gay

pride festival. The couple has two cats, one of which is named after k.d. lang.

Like many of us, Peri Jude loves Tucson because of its great weather and even greater LGBT community. “The Wingspan staff is wonderful,” she says, “and their commitment to the community is extraordinary. They are truly an anchor for GLBT people in the community.” She has equally positive things to say about NGLTF, ten years after her time there. “The Task Force always had great staff people who cared about strengthening the movement at a state and local level. It’s still a wonderful organization today. I was happy to see so many NGLTF leaders participate in the Wingspan Dinner—it’s just a great fit, the Task Force and Wingspan.” **by Meredith Trauner**

Wingspan is Aging with Pride!

Any LGBT person could encounter negative reactions from health care and social service providers, but the experience can be especially difficult for people age 55 and older. “LGBT seniors who grew up prior to the era of Stonewall face considerable obstacles to accessing care,” states Cathy Busha, Director of Programs at Wingspan.

Though many older LGBT people are open about their sexual orientation and gender identity, a large number have been in the closet for many years, due to fears of discrimination and social condemnation. Even when they are ‘out’ to friends and family, overt discrimination has caused many LGBT seniors to adopt a strategy of keeping their sexual orientation and gender identity hidden from health care and social service providers.

To help break down the barriers of senior access to care, eighteen Wingspan volunteers were trained in a three-day intensive workshop on LGBT aging issues. These dynamic, dedicated volunteers have made over 15 presentations on LGBT senior issues to groups such as Pima Council on Aging, Adult Protective Services, Catholic Social Services, and several hospice agencies.

“We believe that LGBT seniors will receive better services from the agencies the Wingspan volunteers have trained. These agencies will have a better understanding of and sensitivity to the issues that LGBT seniors face,” shares Bernice Greenberg, who coordinated the project.

Catherine Shisslak, Ph.D., one of the senior volunteers, has incorporated modules on LGBT seniors into teaching materials for residents at the University Of Arizona

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Senior Pride is a new committee that organizes social events for LGBT seniors >>

College Of Medicine, and will continue to train residents on this important information next semester.

In addition to accessing culturally competent services, another concern for LGBT seniors is isolation. A recent survey revealed that two-thirds of LGBT seniors live alone, as opposed to one-third of heterosexuals. Also, LGBT seniors are less likely to have ties to a biological family or a religious institution, making community support even more vital.

To reduce isolation among LGBT seniors, Wingspan is pleased to announce a new volunteer committee called "Senior Pride." Senior Pride organizes social events by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people ages 55 and over. Friends and family under 55 are welcome, too. The group will plan events such as picnics, potlucks, movies, and discussion groups.

Stay tuned to the Wingspan Weekly E-News and website to find out what Senior Pride has planned. To help plan a social event, or to schedule a training on LGBT senior issues for your organization, please contact volunteer@wingspan.org or call Kendall at 520-624-1779.

The First Rainbow Build



Volunteers raise the first wall at the Habitat for Humanity Rainbow Build

Tucson's Rainbow Build project is a first in the nation for Habitat for Humanity and the LGBT community. Diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations and individuals are working together, along with their allies, constructing and financing the soon-to-be-completed residence for a family of three. The home is being built for the Rubio-Fischer family, an elderly married couple and their adult daughter.

The driving forces behind this build were Kathy Altman from the Wingspan Board and Michael McDonald from Habitat for Humanity. Kathy enthuses, "It is wonderful



Crew Leader Ann Jones is amazed by the volunteers' level of dedication

to think of LGBT people doing this concrete thing together. And it feels really important in the sense of being able to say we are an altruistic people—that we are willing to do this for the broader community." Kathy adds, "On a lighter note, I've noticed a lot of people going out there [to volunteer for the build] looking for someone to date. Because it's a group of clean, sober people—they think, 'Of course, what a healthy place to meet someone!'"

Many people have come together to help with the build. Over 37 LGBT and LGBT-friendly organizations are participating in the project, including eight churches. In March, eleven New Hampshire Community Technical College spring breakers joined the volunteer effort through Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge. Crew Leader Ann Jones, a longtime Wingspan volunteer and former professional house-builder, marvels at the number of volunteers and each one's dedication. "We are going to set a record, with the Rainbow Build, for how quickly we put [a Habitat house] up—everyone is so committed to getting this done. In spite of it being hard work, they keep coming back for more." Ann herself is at the build for two full days every week and supervises 12-25 volunteers each day, patiently teaching her crew how to build and setting high standards for quality and workmanship.

Donations and volunteers are always welcomed. To donate, call 520-326-1217, or go to hfhtucson.com, click on Donate, and follow the instructions—just be sure to type "Rainbow Build" in the "Designation" box. To sign up for the Rainbow Build, contact Volunteer Coordinator Rebecca Corran at volunteer@rainbowbuild.org or 520-237-1399. **by Richard DiRusso**

Southern Arizona's LGBT community and allies are the first in the nation to erect an LGBT-sponsored home with Habitat for Humanity >>

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This list is based on Wingspan's donor records. If you see any errors, please contact Miriam Barnard, Director of Development.

Wingspan's Founding Donors Celebrate 16 Years of Support



Leslie Carlson

The year is 1989. The Berlin Wall comes down. The Dalai Lama wins the Nobel Peace Prize. Madonna releases "Like A Prayer." And Leslie Carlson writes a check to Wingspan, marking the beginning of a 16-year relationship with Wingspan that's still running strong.

Leslie Carlson and Beth Carey are just a few of the many donors who have been supporting Wingspan for over 15 years. "The world has changed a lot since then," remarks Robin Fuller, who has been supporting Wingspan with her partner Carolyn Rice since 1989. "But Wingspan is still the first place we think of when we're talking about organizations that we really care about."

In 16 years, the world *has* changed a lot, but some things have remained unshaken, and even grown stronger. Wingspan's community base has grown enormously over the years, and many of Wingspan's earliest supporters have continued to help Wingspan change and grow to better serve Southern Arizona's LGBT community.

There is a certain intangible commitment exemplified by these community members, who have continued to give of themselves as the world has shifted and changed around them, feeding faith to Wingspan's mission to promote the freedom, equality, safety and well-being of LGBT people. These are the gifts that hold a greater value than the sum of all their parts. To those who have stuck with Wingspan since the beginning, thank you—we're looking forward to another 16 years.

by Miriam Barnard

Anti-Gay Initiative

(continued from page 1) preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for the future generations of children, the union of one man and one woman shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose."

Jess Knutson points out that rather than providing security to children, the amendment would actually harm kids and their families. For example, she says, "This is going to negatively affect children who depend on their parents' domestic partner benefits, regardless of whether the parents are straight or gay." By voiding existing benefits granted by Tucson, Pima County, Phoenix, Tempe, and Scottsdale, the legislation would take away local control and have painful consequences for couples and families who depend on them.

Tucsonan George Adam was able to retire several years ago because his partner of 17 years can include George on his insurance coverage. The couple is concerned about what will happen if the proposed legislation passes. Says George, "If this amendment were to pass, my domestic partner and I would lose what little we gained by registering with the Tucson Domestic Partner Registry, hospital visitation rights being most important. For the past five years I have been covered under Bob's health benefits through his employer of 27 years, i.e. medical, dental, and optical. If this measure passes, his company could decide—or, depending on the wording of the bill, be forced—to discontinue domestic partner benefits, leaving me with no health coverage at all."

Beyond the personal consequences, George and his partner are against the amendment because "hate legislation such as this upcoming amendment would write discrimination into the constitution and be a major setback."

Jess Knutson points out that Arizona is uniquely positioned to defeat the amendment. "It seems that the votes are in our favor. 56% of Arizona voters support domestic partnership benefits. That's huge," she says. "Also, Arizona is a different kind of state. [Arizonans] don't want government regulating everything. Plus, we have more time than any other state fighting similar legislation. We will be able to beat this and win."

For information about the Arizona Coalition for Fairness, contact Jess Knutson at 520-624-1779 x 22 or email jknutson@wingspan.org. **by Kirsten Larsen**

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Wingspan's New Home

Another chapter in Wingspan's history begins soon when Wingspan moves from its current Sixth Street location to a newly leased two-story building nearby. Wingspan has utilized a variety of creative solutions for meeting and administrative spaces in its twenty-plus-year history. These have ranged from volunteers' homes, a church, shared office space with other community groups, and the current Sixth Street location. The new location, 425 East Seventh Street, is just east of Fourth Avenue. It is larger, with its own parking and capacity to take in the annex groups currently meeting at The Muse. The building will have enough space for administrative offices upstairs and community meeting spaces downstairs. Executive Director Kent Burbank says, "We are thrilled to have the extra space and an entire building that will better serve the LGBT community."

*Wingspan's future home*

Modifications to the new location are currently underway, and the move will take place in late May or mid-June.

by Richard Whitmer

Wingspan Garners Kudos

On March 30, the Wingspan Anti-Violence Project was honored with a "CDBG: Communities on the Rise" award, celebrating the project's positive impact on the Tucson community. The project was recognized for educating hundreds of LGBT community members about hate crimes, harassment, and discrimination, developing positive and meaningful relationships with the Tucson Police Department Hate Crimes Division and with the Pima County Attorney's Office, and raising the level of awareness about hate-motivated violence in the entire Tucson community.

Additionally, Wingspan is a finalist for the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona's Achievement Awards. Wingspan was chosen because of its work in building true and effective community coalitions, especially through the Arizona Coalition for Fairness (see cover story), the Rainbow Build (see page 5), and the events last year that centered around the traveling museum exhibit, *Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals*.

Each of these projects brought together over 20 diverse community groups.

Volunteer Profile

*Catherine Jean Lumenello*

Catherine Jean Lumenello was raised in eastern Massachusetts, and initially moved to Tucson in 1995 for a graduate program at the University of Arizona. Although she left shortly thereafter to pursue her education in Philadelphia, she moved back to Tucson in 2001 to be with her partner, Janet Bardwell, whom she met here in 1995.

Catherine will graduate this June with a Master's Degree in Chinese Medicine and plans to become a licensed acupuncturist. Having reached a dead end with Western medicine in treating some of her own health concerns, Catherine found that acupuncture and Chinese medicine became integral to her healing process. Her curiosity about her successful treatment led her to her new career.

And while Catherine would love to spend more time at home with Janet and their two cats Leo and Lenora, enjoying the garden and sipping tea, she spends much of her limited spare time as the Chair of Wingspan's Annual Dinner Committee. Catherine joined the committee in 2002, working on the silent auction. After that year, she had intended to scale down her work on the committee. But Catherine says that after the unexpected death of Alexander John Goodrum, a much-loved local transgender activist, she changed her mind about her commitment to the LGBT community. When Kent Burbank, Wingspan's Director, asked her to chair the committee, she gladly accepted. She has been the chair for the last two years.

In Catherine's opinion, the biggest challenge for the committee is planning an event that has broad appeal in a community as diverse as ours. The rewards of working on the committee are the close camaraderie between committee members, and watching people really enjoy themselves at the dinner. Catherine suggests that for people interested in working on the dinner, the best way to get involved is by volunteering on the night of the event, to see what it's really like from "behind the scenes." **by Kendall Tankersley**



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Wingspan's 8th Annual Benefit and Awards Dinner!

Wingspan's **Annual Benefit Dinner** will be taking place **September 24** at the Tucson Convention Center. There will be a silent auction, dinner, keynote speaker and dance with a live band. Don't miss it!

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