



Straight from The Center

We, the Board of Directors of The Center, are pleased to present the following information about The Center's history, its mission, its financing, and its activities. We know this information may be different than what has been presented in some local media. Maintaining openness and transparency about The Center's activities are of the highest priority; so we've done our best to compile accurate and detailed results. We've developed a progress report that provides a comprehensive historical overview and corresponding milestones of The Center's programs and services and income and expenses. Entitled, *History in the Making*, this report is available on The Center's website at www.TheDCCenter.org and we welcome comments and feedback from the community. A condensed summary of that report follows here.

Understanding The Center's History

To understand the birth of The Center, we start with the history of the relationship between The Cherry Fund and The Center. The Center is forever grateful and appreciative to The Cherry Fund for providing a study and the funds upon which a strong foundation for The Center has been developed over the years.

In 1999, The Cherry Fund established an Ad Hoc Committee for a DC Community Center.

In 2001, The Cherry Fund and the Ad Hoc Committee commissioned a study that consisted of surveys and focus groups of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender residents of the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area and a published report. This report concluded that there was "clear support for the DC Community Center idea."

In 2002, The Cherry Fund next established an organizing committee to further these efforts. The organizing committee morphed into a Steering Committee and then a Board of Directors which incorporated The Center independently on December 10, 2002. With the founding of The Center, The Cherry Fund's Executive Vice President Patrick Menasco became The Center's founding President.

In 2003 and 2004, the Board of Directors continues efforts to plan and open The Center while offering programs and services to the community. In addition to programming, a "site committee" was formed to explore possible options for a permanent location for The Center.

In 2005, The Center opens its first office space at 1111 14th Street NW in downtown Washington, D.C.

October 6, 2005

Understanding The Center's Income

In total to date, The Cherry Fund has donated \$186,500 to The Center and served as The Center's sole source of income from the point The Center was founded through 2004.

In 1999, 2000, and 2001, The Center was not yet incorporated.

In 2002, no income was received.

In 2003, The Cherry Fund provided in October its first generous donation to The Center in the amount of \$10,500.

In 2004, The Cherry Fund made two generous donations to The Center: one in February for \$10,000 and one in April for \$162,000.

In 2005, The Center expanded its efforts and has raised close to \$50,000 in grants and donations so far: a \$15,000 grant from the Scarlet Fund; a \$4,000 donation from The Cherry Fund; a \$6,000 grant from The David Bohnett Foundation for computer workstations, internet connectivity, and maintenance, plus an in-kind grant of hardware and software for The Center's David Bohnett CyberCenter; over \$9,000 in corporate sponsorships; and, almost \$12,000 in community donations.

Understanding The Center's Tax Status

As The Center's income for both 2002 and 2003 was below the \$25,000 threshold requirement for 501(c)(3) non-profit reporting of financial information to the IRS, The Center was exempt, as all non-profit organizations are, from filing its 990 forms for those years. As the 2004 income met the threshold requirement, The Center will be filing a Form 990 by the IRS deadline of November 15, 2005. Since the income was below \$250,000, IRS requirements allow The Center to file a simplified Form 990-EZ. For 1999, 2000, and 2001, as The Center did not legally exist, no tax filing requirements apply.

Understanding The Center's Expenses

An itemization that accounts for the income and how it was spent over the years is included in our progress report which is available on The Center's website. Highlights and major milestones include:

In 1999, 2000, 2001, and most of 2002, The Cherry Fund paid directly for office start-up equipment, postal services, stationary, other supplies and most notably, the research report that cost a total of \$75,500.

In 2003, funds received were used for supplies, equipment, and for various administrative tasks including the launching of our first program entitled, *Empowering Ourselves and Our Relationships: A Four-Part Educational Series on Domestic Partnership* in the fall of 2003. In addition, in December 2003 The Center proudly hired its first paid administrative resource person.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, with more funding The Center launched or funded 10 programs; upgraded its website; joined the National Association of LGBT Community Centers, which connects The Center to the other 147 community centers in the country; established its first office space which opened in February of 2005 and is shared with the Metro DC Chapter of Parents, Friends, and Family of Lesbians and Gays (Metro DC PFLAG) and Brother Help Thyself (BHT); and hired administrative staff to implement and support all these various tasks and efforts. The Executive Advisory Council was formally established to help guide The Center in the community; and the Board invested in several all-day strategic planning sessions to ensure the many various and diverse facets of our community are identified, considered, and documented as The Center moves forward.

"Building" a Community Center

Since The Center's founding in 2002, we believe that in 3 years The Center has brought the Metro DC GLBT community together in new and exciting ways that no other organization has. We know The Center's "identity" is still forming and will continue to evolve. We are grateful that the community continues to nurture that identity. Below are highlights of programs and services that we have provided and are planning to offer to the GLBT community.

Screen on Stead

We are proud of The Center's outdoor movie series *Screen on Stead*. The 2,500+ people that attend this year's series overwhelmingly enjoyed themselves as did the 1,000+ that attended last year. Its one very visible way The Center brings our community together. From picnic baskets filled with sandwiches and snacks, to blankets sprawled out under the stars all shared with loving partners and friends, the outdoor movie series was a highlight for the summer of 2005. We look forward to the summer of 2006 and are making plans now for another wonderful series.

David Bohnett CyberCenter

We are proud to have received a grant from the highly competitive David Bohnett Foundation which is helping The Center implement a state-of-the-art *CyberCenter*. The *CyberCenter* will be comprised of six workstations fully-loaded with hardware and software and will be open to the public for internet access and eventually trainings and tutorials. Significant portions of the community, most notably youth and people of color, are clearly and consistently underserved and lack access to computers and the internet. Even for



Straight from The Center

October 6, 2005

those who do have access at home or school, many will never feel safe using those particular access points to become connected to the larger GLBT community. Or worse yet, filtering software used by libraries and other access points routinely blocks out all things “gay” making it impossible to access perhaps life-saving information they need and demand.

CyberCenters in other major cities like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco are often the most popular ‘destination’ at those very successful community centers. Over the past 6 years, The David Bohnett Foundation has invested nearly \$2 million in technology and infrastructure in funding over 30 *CyberCenters* at GLBT community centers across the country. We are excited about our upcoming Grand Opening of our David Bohnett *CyberCenter* and are confident it will serve as a key element in The Center’s success.

The Truth About Crystal Meth

The Center also recognizes its unique role of bringing community organizations together around issues affecting us all. From our first educational forum on this issue entitled, *The Truth About Crystal Meth* launched in May 2005, The Center continues to champion efforts that address the use and abuse of crystal methamphetamine within the GLBT community. From hosting and coordinating monthly meetings that have now evolved into the DC Crystal Meth Working Group, The Center is helping plan events and provide resources that target the prevention of crystal meth use and abuse and the treatment for those that are addicted. We’ve worked with the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL) and with local Drag Queens and Drag Kings to produce, along with DC’s Miss Cookie Buffet, *Wig Aid – Special Edition* on Saturday September 24, 2005 at Velvet Nation before the ever-popular *Red Party*. This benefit raised \$1,500 to help continue the efforts of the DC Crystal Meth Working Group.

We are proud to be part of this ever growing coalition to address the use and abuse of crystal methamphetamine that now includes The Center; SMYAL; Youth Pride Alliance; Whitman Walker Clinic; the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) of the Metropolitan Police Department; the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN); Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry (NOVAM); the DC Government’s Addiction, Prevention, and Recovery Administration (APRA); DC Council Member David Catania; Prevention Works; BHT, and; a number of highly motivated independent community and business activists.

Promoting and Supporting the Community

The Arts

The Center holds quarterly art exhibits called *Art in Community* which showcases local GLBT talent. The community is invited to drop by to view or even purchase some of this fine artwork. Twenty-five percent of proceeds from sales are donated to The Center.

Our Elders

The Center proudly coordinates a group that specifically addresses the needs of our seniors. This group has worked together to produce *Elder OUTreach*, a public meeting held on Sunday September 25, 2005



Straight from The Center

October 6, 2005

from 2 pm – 4pm at DC's Martin Luther King Jr. Library. Representatives from various organizations spoke on social and volunteer opportunities available for GLBT elders. Participating organizations included: the GLLU, The Center's Elder OUTreach committee members, Whitman Walker Lesbian Services Program, Burgundy Crescent Volunteers, Mautner Project Lesbian Caregivers, Metro Retirees, Older Wiser Lesbians (OWLS), Prime Timers, Rainbow History Project, and the Senior Health Resources.

Capital Pride Town Hall Meetings

For two years, The Center has partnered with Whitman Walker Clinic to bring the *Town Hall* to the community. Held during Capital Pride, *Town Hall* has brought leaders and experts together to discuss issues affecting our lives, our relationships, and our health.

Support for Our Community Partners

For several years now, The Center has provided financial support through advertisements and sponsorships to *One in Ten*, *Youth Pride*, *Black Pride*, *Capital Pride*, *the Mautner Project*, *the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*, among others. We are proud to continue support for these efforts and plan to expand support for other GLBT organizations going forward.

So Where Do We Go From Here?

Our current office space is modest, but it meets the needs that we have right now. Previous plans to construct a large building are in the scope of our longer-term vision, while programs and services and the immediate needs of the community remain our priorities for the present and near future. These priorities will be guided by the position and values we envision for The Center which were set through in-depth strategic planning processes. These processes directed our focus toward Community Building; Education, Health & Human Services; and Advocacy, Public Policy, and Government Relations.

We believe The Center is the local place to discuss local issues in a safe and welcoming environment. The Center is a broad-based agency that helps people find their way and their place in community. We are committed to working with other local and national organizations to enhance their missions and better meet the needs of local GLBT residents and visitors. We achieve this vision by functioning as a collaborator and convener, by bringing people and organizations together for the good of the whole while benefiting the individual.

We will continue to maintain a focus across the entire landscape that enables The Center to engage the community in "bigger picture" issues. The Center will serve as a "gateway" or "clearinghouse" for information and resources. The Center will play a critical role in connecting individuals to other organizations and programs relevant to their individual needs. The Center will assist other, smaller, GLBT organizations to increase their capacity within community and will foster grassroots interest groups that are in keeping with the mission, vision and values of The Center. Lastly, The Center will maintain a comprehensive voice on GLBT issues for public debate while also including those in community that may have no voice.



Straight from The Center

October 6, 2005

We are committed to the Metro DC GLBT community, to our mission, and to helping meet the needs of the community. We will continue to maintain openness and ask the community to get involved. So please visit us online, drop by our offices, participate in our programs and services, and use our community conference room. We are here for you and look to serve you in the best way we can.

Respectfully,

Michael Sessa, President
Neil Alexander, Vice President
Robert Baldre, Treasurer
Christine Grisham, Secretary
Peter Hahn, Chief Communications Officer
Edwin Craft, Dr.P.H., LCPC
Farrah Darbouze
Colleen Dermody
Jeff Englar
Donald Hitchcock