Having a Ball

The Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut visited the Mark Twain House for a fundraiser

ALSO INSIDE:
• Meet the new team at the New Haven Pride Center
• DMV adds option for non-binary marker on licenses
• Events and fundraisers around Connecticut
• A look at some LGBTQ+ history
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Meet the NHPC Team
Since hiring its first paid staff member in 2017, the New Haven Pride Center has been growing rapidly. Meet the seven new staff hired over the past 12 months! 10

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Going Bi+ the Book
A new Bi+ Book Program has launched, with the opportunity for community members to receive copies of a variety of new books throughout the year. 23
Welcome to 2020, and with it the start of our third year of publication of Centerline! We’re happy to have you with us on this journey.

This year will bring further changes to the magazine. The magazine will be getting a little larger, thanks in part to the growth of the New Haven Pride Center, under whose umbrella this magazine is published.

The Pride Center’s staff has grown over the past 12 months from just our Executive Director to now eight positions, with a ninth on the way! Get to know the staff, and the roles they’ll be tackling, in the piece that begins on page 10. We thank Lucy Gellman, Editor of Arts Paper, for bringing these bios to our readers.

The addition of all of the staff means we’ll be reaching out to an even broader mix of authors covering various parts of our community, and bringing their viewpoints into the magazine.

We’re also going to be starting a set of blogs on the New Haven Pride Center website, as a part of the Centerline mission, that will cover many of the same categories that our program officers are tackling. Some of the best of them will find their way into the magazine.

To accommodate this growth in content for our community, we’ll be adding pages to Centerline, as well adding new locations for pick-up, going into the spring.

Elsewhere in the issue, Gellman is also responsible for the piece on the DMV’s changes that now allow for a non-binary marker on driver’s licenses in Connecticut. She reported on the changes as they took effect, and that article can be found on page 26.

One of the newer programs at the Pride Center is a Bi+ book raffle, part of an extension of a concerted effort to expand the Pride Center’s collection of Bi+ literature for visitors to read and checkout. Learn about the program, and the raffle, on page 23.

The Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut had their Imperial Crown Prince and Princess Ball at the Mark Twain House in January, a fabulous venue for such a fun event. Megan McGory Gleason captured the action, and her photos are on page 8.

Alberto Cifuentes Jr. is the author of this issue’s viewpoint, building upon Mel Cordner’s piece a year ago about the problems the SESTA/FOSTA laws bring to the queer community. Cifuentes looks at it from a different perspective, that of sex workers. It seems these laws continue to have more and more negative impacts as the months go by. See Cifuentes’ concerns starting on the facing page.

In the back of the issue we have our standard calendar, featuring both local events (including in this issue a list of LGBTQ+ happy hours!) as well as fundraisers that are all focused on our community. If you’re looking for a place to support a worthy nonprofit, or just to meet with others in a safe space for us, these lists will give you a number of places to check out.

Finally, I’m excited to announce that we’re launching a Best of Queer program as part of Centerline, and you get to vote! We have established a number of categories for you to vote on, and we’ll give out awards for the best businesses in these categories later this year, once we’ve had a chance to tally up all the votes. Check out the announcement on Page 22, and be sure to look for our posts on Facebook and the website on how you can submit your votes!

Thanks so much for picking up this copy and reading this issue. Please share your thoughts to me at centerline@newhavenpridecenter.org, and we’ll see you with another issue in March.
Sex Work is Real Work: The Case Against SESTA/FOSTA

by Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., LMSW

In the February/March 2019 issue of Centerline, Mel Cordner wrote a compelling and timely article on the dangerous effects of SESTA/FOSTA on the queer community, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and black and brown people. Also known as the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act and the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, SESTA/FOSTA is a bipartisan piece of anti-sex trafficking legislation that became law in April 2018. The law was intended to hold online sex traffickers accountable for their crimes and rightfully prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. Many, including myself, would agree that working to reduce and eventually eliminate online sex trafficking, especially of women and children, is a worthy cause.

However, SESTA/FOSTA also amended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 to indicate that websites and other online platforms would be indicted if they participated in both the promotion of prostitution and facilitation of sex trafficking. This amendment has led to widespread censorship online, the immediate shutdown of websites used by sex workers to protect themselves from harmful clients, and the conflation of consensual (non-coercive) sex work with sex trafficking. I appreciate Cordner’s perspective on the negative impact of SESTA/FOSTA on LGBTQ+ people’s level of access to online venues that gave them a voice and empowered them to form their own safe, affirming communities.

I’m a queer Latinx scholar and sex-positive activist that has devoted his research and career to not only promoting social justice but also eliminating health inequities. I’ve come to realize that SESTA/FOSTA has widened social and economic inequalities facing sex workers and reduced their chances at obtaining housing, healthcare, and employment. In the aftermath of SESTA/FOSTA, sex work has been pushed further underground, making sex workers more susceptible to trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation.

SEX WORK IS WORK

When I have discussed sex work with my colleagues and friends, the topic tends to raise strong emotions. Some believe that most sex workers are forced into the sex trade and exploited by third parties, such as pimps and brothel owners. Others tend to adopt a very moralistic stance and favor abolishing sex work.

While I’m not an abolitionist and actually believe sex work can be a form of liberation from oppressive forces like heterosexism and transphobia, I understand why many would rather do away with sex work than confront the social institutions and structures that make sex workers unsafe and stigmatized in the first place. I’m a firm believer that sexual safety, consent, and pleasure are human rights; people have the right to express their sexuality any way they want as long as they’re not harming themselves and others. Nevertheless, the belief that sex work is not “real work” is based on a rescue rather than a rights-based narrative that does little to actually help sex workers live healthy and sexually fulfilling lives.

The “sex work is work” mantra of many sex workers includes their right to safe and equitable workplaces,
appropriate hiring practices, fair wages, unionization or collective bargaining, and professional autonomy. While most of us would expect these standards of any workplace, sex workers have been branded in our society as second-rate citizens unworthy of public assistance, economic advancement, and any sense of belonging.

RESISTING THE IMPACT OF SESTA/FOSTA ON SEX WORKERS

SESTA/FOSTA has had a detrimental impact on sex workers that depend on online platforms for screening clients and negotiating safer sex practices. In addition, many have felt fear and intimidation when encountered by the police and have not been able to trust law enforcement. The implementation of SESTA/FOSTA has even led more police officers to report losing important online vehicles for pursuing sex trafficking rings and locating missing perpetrators. Law enforcement has lost a valuable method for helping them find and prosecute cases of actual sex trafficking and exploitation.

I believe in the popular saying that a crime against one of us is a crime against all of us. We need to do more to help sex workers; we owe it not only to them but also ourselves. Many of us knowingly or unknowingly have a friend, family member, or co-worker that has participated in one or more forms of sex work at some point in their lives. Several of my queer heroes, writers and activists Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and John Rechy, have a history of participating in sex work; however, this fact has often been erased from their narratives due to societal and cultural stigmas and discrimination.

Here are some ways you can help not only mitigate but resist the stigmas associated with sex work and sex workers exacerbated by SESTA/FOSTA:

• Get educated and informed: Visit the websites of the Sex Workers and Allies Network (SWAN) in New Haven, Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center in NYC, and the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-USA). Check out the most recent community report available online from Hacking//Hustling and Whose Corner Is It Anyway, Erased: The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA.

• Respect and trust the narratives of sex workers: Amplify their voices rather than silence them.

• Include and embrace sex workers within your groups, families, and communities.

• Engage with sex workers in local community organizing and policy advocacy efforts.

• Increase sex workers’ access to social and healthcare services.

• Advance efforts to decriminalize sex work in localities and states: Decriminalization involves fully repealing criminal penalties for both buyers and sellers of sex. This harm reduction, rights-based approach is associated with more positive sex worker health outcomes than most criminalization models.

• Call or write to your federal legislators (Senators Murphy and Blumenthal along with your Congressional representative) and urge them to co-sponsor the “SAFE SEX Workers Study Act,” the first-ever bill to not only examine the effects of SESTA/FOSTA on sex workers but hear from sex workers themselves on the unintended consequences of the law.

I also encourage readers to reach out to me directly if you want to further discuss these issues. I can be reached by email at jr_alberto.cifuentes@uconn.edu.

To read Mel Cordner’s piece about SESTA/FOSTA that was published last year, you can find Centerline’s archives at the New Haven Pride Center’s website, at http://www.newhavenpridecenter.org - full electronic PDF versions of each issue published are archived on the website.
CHARITY

Having a Ball

In January, the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut had its annual Imperial Crown Prince and Princess Ball, which this year took place at the Mark Twain House. Despite the challenging weather, a lively crowd enjoyed great food and an entertaining show.

Photos by Megan McGory-Gleason
Yale New Haven Health believes the sum is greater than all of its parts. When individual organizations work well together with a common mission, great things happen. This collaboration is what makes our community strong.
In August of 2017, the New Haven Pride Center hired its first ever paid staff member, Executive Director Patrick J Dunn. Going into 2020, there are now eight paid roles, with a ninth soon to come! Here are profiles of the new team.
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR: LAURA BOCCADORO (SHE/HER OR THEY/THEIR)

Laura Boccadoro started her college career certain she was going to become a doctor. She’s ending it as an outspoken advocate and behind-the-scenes magic-maker for LGBTQ+ rights.

Born and raised in Darien, Laura joined the Center last year as its first ever administrative coordinator. A queer superhero by day, she first came to the Center last summer through the Arts Workforce Initiative (AWI), a program for Connecticut college and university students through the state’s Office of the Arts.

During her AWI internship, Laura helped plan PRIDE New Haven, a celebration of the city’s LGBTQ+ community that included a flag raising and march, PRIDE parade, rooftop party, and week of performances, lectures, and an outdoor block party. To this day, she calls it “the coolest thing I’ve ever worked on.”

In her new role, Laura has found that no one day looks the same. In a week, she fields queries for the center, offers help to support and affinity groups, plans and coordinates events, folds, organizes, and expands the Center’s clothing closet, and connects program officers to each other and to members of the community. In a recent interview, she joked that she even enjoys taking out the garbage.

“Honestly, the collaboration is my favorite part,” she said. “I have literally a hand in everything that goes on for the Center.”

When she isn’t working at the Center, Laura is also a part-time student at Quinnipiac University studying political science with a minor in philosophy.

Contact Laura at info@newhavenpridecenter.org

MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR: MAIA LEONARDO (SHE/HER)

As the new Marketing and Development Coordinator, Maia Leonardo comes to the Center as an artist, activist, tech whiz, non-binary and trans woman, and fierce political advocate. In 2014, soon after moving to New Haven, Maia became involved in #Justice4Jane, a movement to free a 16-year-old transgender teen referred to as “Jane Doe” from an adult York Correctional Facility.

At the time, the movement became her gateway into organizing with the Party for Socialism and Liberation, with which she is still active. She has also organized and spoken for the nonprofit Trans Lifeline, and has served on its board of directors for almost two years.

In her professional life, Maia has held positions in development and customer service at the Neighborhood Music School, Central Connecticut State University, and several restaurants and bars in Cooperstown, New York. When she is not at a desk, she can often be found marching through the streets of New Haven and speaking at events like the city’s now-annual Transgender Day of Remembrance rally and vigil.

As she grows marketing and development at the Center, Maia has been flexing her graphic design skills on postcards and images for the Center’s website. She has also been working on organizing the Center’s salesforce database, managing social media, and cultivating funders. In her personal life, Maia is also a musician.

Contact Maia at mleonardo@newhavenpridecenter.org
DIRECTOR OF CASE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES: JUANCARLOS SOTO (HE/HIM OR EL)

Long known as New Haven’s “artivist,” Juancarlos Soto joins the Center this February as its first Director of Case Management and Support Services. A proud Boricua, Juancarlos moved to New Haven from Puerto Rico when he was 15 years old, turning to his artwork as a vehicle for release, exploration, and communication. In the years since, the Paier College of Art grad has become known for his banners, graphic designs, photographs and illustrations defending immigrant rights, survivors of sexual assault, reproductive freedom and more.

In addition to advocacy work at Junta for Progressive Action and Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Juancarlos has served on the leadership team of Puerto Ricans United, planning the annual Festival PuertoRriqueño on the New Haven Green. For the past two years, he has facilitated Black and Brown Queer Camp, a collaboration with Citywide Youth Coalition and the New Haven Pride Center. In 2019, he won a prestigious Dorothy Award for his advocacy across communities.

As he starts work at the Center, Juancarlos plans to blend support services and advocacy, with an eye toward making sure clients are “not just surviving, but thriving.” He will be working across social services and organizations to connect clients with affordable housing, job opportunities, resources around reentry, and proper legal counsel. In a recent interview, he said he feels blessed for the opportunity.

“When it comes to the LGBTQ community, there are so many identities that intersect,” he said. “My approach is to make sure that we are providing the services that people need, but that we are also not just putting a band aid on issues. We know that way too often, systems don’t work for LGBTQ folks. And especially, systems don’t work for LGBTQ folks of color. For too long, we’ve survived. We’ve struggled with reaching survival. It’s our time to thrive.”

Contact Juancarlos at jcsoto@newhavenpridecenter.org

LGBTQ+ WOMEN’S OFFICER: MIRANDA RECTOR (THEY/THEIR)

Born in that “wonderful, wild place” that is Los Angeles, Miranda Rector was raised on political activism. Their new position as LGBTQ+ Women’s Officer marks the next step in that work.

A proud product of L.A. public schools, Miranda first came to New Haven in 2016, as a freshman at Yale University. Prior to their time in the city, they were involved in political and social movements in California, first with their mom (they once attended an environmental protest dressed as the sun), and then in middle and high school.

As a student at Venice High School, Miranda launched a chapter of Junior State of America (JSA), frequently out-debating other schools at debate competitions. They became, quite unexpectedly and in their own words, “the mom to all the gays in the school,” a constant support to LGBTQ+ students who were navigating what it meant to be queer in a million different ways.

While Miranda expected to be premed, they pivoted to community activism after the election of Donald Trump in 2016. With other students, they became an active member of RALY (Reproductive Justice Action League at Yale), rallying for reproductive justice, immigrant rights, and sanctuary city status. They first connected with the Pride Center through their work with the Office of LGBTQ+ Services at
Yale. Currently, they are in a dual-degree program, with undergraduate work in anthropology and graduate work on public health with an interest in policy.

In their new role at the center, Miranda is working on building out events like a recent LGBTQ+ Women’s Social, held at Three Sheets New Haven last year. In addition to collective action, they are focused on the need to create collective, communal joy as a foundation for long-term, sustainable relationships. With social programming, they also plan to establish events around policy and advocacy, “I think that’s how you build resistance,” they said in a recent interview. “The revolution relies on care.”

Contact Miranda at women@newhavenpridecenter.org

LGBTQ+ LATINX OFFICER: MAX CISNEROS
(HE/HIM OR THEY/THEIR)

As the Center’s first LGBTQ+ Latinx Program Officer, Max Cisneros is working to open up a world of new, wide-reaching, intersectional and inclusive programming in New Haven’s Latinx community. Born in Mexico and raised in Stamford, Cisneros grew up wanting to “validate my story and validate my background” in a world that rarely made space for him.

As a high school student, Max launched H.U.G.S. (Helping Unite Gays and Straights), a student group at Stamford High School. As he navigated his own coming out process, Max also started “empowering the different parts of me,” exploring the queer, Latinx, and immigrant intersections at which he stood. He has since chosen to dedicate his life to that work.

In 2015, Max joined the Mid Fairfield AIDS Project in Norwalk, where he has worked in social media management and sent out a newsletter in both English and Spanish. He has been an outspoken advocate for those living with HIV and AIDS, with work that includes personal testimony on the 30th annual World AIDS Day in 2018. In addition to his work at the Pride Center, Max also works at Norwalk’s Open Doors Shelter.

As he joins the Center this year, Max will be working to get to know New Haven’s Latinx community—not just those who identify as LGBTQ+—and create specific, sensitive and intersectional programming. In part, he said he’s excited to interrogate the terminology itself, including conceptions that Latinx is an exclusively LGBTQ+ term, coined and used by white people.

“I think that’s a narrative that I’m going to have to address, being able to define what Latinx is and being able to broaden it,” he said. “I think that’s key. Being able to kind of define it and listen to people.”

Contact Max at latinx@newhavenpridecenter.org

LGBTQ+ YOUTH OFFICER: ALA OCHUMARE
(SHE/HER)

Born and raised in New Haven, Ala Ochumare has lived “in my intersections”—Black, woman, queer, and now a mother—for her entire life. But it was a transformative trip to South Africa in high school that moved her to become a community organizer.

For over a decade, Ala has worked across those intersections to make the city a more fair, equitable, and anti-racist place to live and work. In 2014, she started Black Lives Matter New Haven with organizers Lauren Pittman (the poet Sun Queen), Dawnise Boulware, and Sy Fraiser. She has led protests around the police murders of unarmed Black men, advocated for safer community policing practices in the city, and spearheaded clean water campaigns.
and clothing and backpack drives. In addition, she has served as a facilitator for Black and Brown Queer Camp two years in a row, helping build the program with City Wide Youth Coalition and the New Haven Pride Center.

As the Center’s LGBTQ+ Youth Officer, Ala plans to work both “for youth and with youth, centered around emotional wellness.” Specifically, she is focusing on programming that explores and celebrates the vibrancy of the city’s young LGBTQ+ community, and lifts up queer voices that have too often been silenced. In addition to drawing on her own lived experience in New Haven, Ala brings years of travel and cultural exploration, from South Africa to Atlanta.

When she is not doing youth programming or organizing, Ala serves as a crisis recovery assistant for Continuum of Care. She is a proud resident of the city’s Newhallville neighborhood, which she has called home for over three decades.

“I feel like the ancestors aligned things for this to happen,” she said. “I need to do this work, and it’s not laborious, it’s very organic. It doesn’t feel like it’s work for me.”

Contact Ala at youth@newhavenpridecenter.org.

ACCOUNTANT: VU TRAN (HE/HIM/HIS)

Originally from New Orleans, Vu Tran has a history of advocacy and service in the LGBTQ+ community. As a student at the University of Connecticut, he joined the student group Queers United Against Discrimination (QUAD), using it as a springboard for work in the school’s Rainbow Center. For three years, he coordinated the Rainbow Center’s speaker series, talking to both students and professionals in the LGBTQ+ community as he learned the ropes. He was still a student when True Colors moved its annual conference to UConn, opening his eyes to another chapter of youth involvement and advocacy.

“I think that’s sometimes an overlooked form of activism,” he said in a recent interview. “Just telling your story and making folks aware.”

Since graduating, Vu has remained extremely active in Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ community. An auditor by day, he is a rockstar LGBTQ+ accountant, advocate, and member of royalty by night. For years he has been a member of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut, for which he is also Imperial Crown Prince and treasurer. After learning about the Pride Center at its annual Dorothy Awards four years ago, he has assisted with PRIDE New Haven, the annual Halloqueen fundraiser, Dragapalooza, and the center’s new entry into Quickbooks for accounting.

“It’s a place that I would have loved to have when I was growing up and discovering my identity,” he said of the Center. “Anytime we can get more spaces for queer folks to feel supported in, the better we are.”

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A Look at Some LGBTQ+ History

By Patrick J Dunn

“Let it be known that homosexuals are not cowards.”

The final words of World War II LGBTQ+ Dutch Resistance Fighter William Arondeus, moments before his execution

William Arondeus was a Dutch Resistance fighter during World War II. Before the War he was an artist and a poet, and as a resistance fighter he created forged documents used to get Jewish, Romani and other persecuted individuals out of Nazi territories. William Arondeus was also a gay man. After several years of conducting forgery work, alongside a group of 13 other men, he infiltrated a Nazi municipal office and destroyed documents that would help Nazis identify Jews and other folks who were being targeted by the Nazi “final solution.” He was arrested on April 1, 1943, within a week of the act of resilience, and executed on July 1st of the same year. He was adamant to his lawyer that he and two other resistance fighters were to be identified as homosexuals in records and drove his desire to be remembered as being LGBTQ+ clear in his final words.

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William was only one of 100,000-150,000 gay men persecuted before, during, and after World War II in Germany using the 1871 German Law Paragraph 175. In addition to gay men, who were the primary target of Paragraph 175, lesbian and bisexual women and gender diverse people, particularly folks born intersex, were also major targets of the Nazi German government for experimentation, “re-education,” and extermination. Paragraph 175 was a broad stroke law that attacked many types of sexual relationships, particularly sexual relationships between men.

It is important to note that during this period it was not just in Nazi Germany that the LGBTQ+ community faced persecution. On both sides of the war lines, most of Europe’s nations as well as the United States had strict anti-LGBTQ+ laws. These laws often called for LGBTQ+ people to be imprisoned and / or castrated and supported “cure therapy” which equated to sexual torture through electric shock therapy and “restorative sexual encounters” which really was just psycho-bable for rape.

Unlike most of the groups persecuted by the Nazis during World War II, the LGBTQ+ community’s persecution extended well beyond the end of the war in 1945. LGBTQ+ folks, gay and bisexual men in particular, who survived extermination camps and Nazi prisons, were sent to prison (or not released) because of their “deviant behavior” and having “criminal records.” This anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment resulted in large groups of people remaining imprisoned until the law was changed in 1969 (although parts of Paragraph 175 remained in German law books and was used to persecute men until 1994). While this primarily targeted gay and bisexual men, many of the lesbian and bisexual women faced similar imprisonment following the war, particularly if they had been classified as “crazy” by Nazi doctors.

Unfortunately, there is no way to know how many transgender identifying individuals were persecuted and killed during this time period. Documents, if they exist at all, often mis-gender them using their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity - a practice that is still
common today by media outlets and police records in the United States and beyond. There were also gay men, particularly during the lead up and during the war, that lived their lives as women to protect their identities and stay hidden from Nazi persecution further blurring the ability to know the extent of persecution of gender diverse individuals.

Reflecting on this history, it is important to remember that similar persecution of LGBTQ+ peoples was taking place worldwide, particularly in western white cultures. Many of the folks whom were imprisoned in Germany, and elsewhere, following the war, were done so on the backs of the laws of the ally nations of World War II not the axis forces. In places like the United States, it was common practice to publicly “out” someone in media outlets who might have been seen at LGBTQ+

Prisoners wearing pink triangles on their uniforms are marched outdoors by Nazi guards at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany on Dec. 19, 1938.

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venues or engaging in same-sex relationships. This “outing” often resulted in losing one's job and creating forced poverty. This behavior is no different then when a civilian in Germany would report a neighbor or co-worker as being LGBTQ+ to Nazis, as the intent is the same. To cause harm.

We should not kid ourselves and think that this story is in our distant past. Throughout the world, in 2020, there are laws and “cultural norms” that bar queer folks from work, housing, resources, legal rights, medical treatments, and more. This story is our past, but this story is also our now.

Recommended Reading

NONFICTION:
"The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals" by Richard Plant
"Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity" by Robert Beachy
"Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880–1945" by Clayton Whisnant
"The Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-45" by Günter Grau, Claudia Shoppmann
"Berlin’s Third Sex" by Magnus Hirschfeld

"The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery" by Witold Pilecki, Jarek Garlinski
"The Men with the Pink Triangle: The True Life-and-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps" by Heinz Heger, David Fernbach

MEMOIRS:
"I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror" by Pierre Seel

Case Management

If you or someone you know needs help in any of the following areas, the New Haven Pride Center’s new case management program is here to assist!

- Social and support services
- Mental and physical health services
- Addiction
- Housing and food insecurity
- Unemployment
- Access to education
- Personal and legal documents
- And more!

Contact Juancarlos Soto at jcsoto@newhavenpridecenter.org or (203) 387-2252 for more info

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The New Haven Pride Center has introduced a new monthly program for the Bi+ community designed to both provide community resources and support Bi+ authors.

Each month the Pride Center will select a book that will be added to its library. A second copy will be acquired and raffled to someone subscribed to the Bi+ category of the Pride Center mailing list.

The program was proposed by Connecticut resident and Bi+ activist Shari Lucas, who has been investing a lot of time and energy in programming that supports the Bi+ community and raises the visibility of resources for the community. As part of the launch of the program Lucas has made a generous donation to help purchase the first wave of books.

The first book chosen was "Getting Bi," an anthology edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah E. Rowley. Additional books will span poetry, memoirs, fiction, anthologies (both fiction and non-fiction), all with the goal of expanding the breadth of Bi+ books in the library.

If you have a book recommendation, or want to sign up for the Bi+ mailing list and be entered for future drawings, email Laura at info@newhavenpridecenter.org.

In the March issue of Centerline, look for a set of Bi+ resources, from regular support groups, socials and more to help those looking for some resources, either online or in person, that are closer to home. If you are aware of any resources that should be included in our roundup next issue, please email centerline@newhavenpridecenter.org.
The Honorees

Suzanne Kachmar
Greater Bridgeport Pride founder and artist

Ricky Mestre
Multimedia artist, founder of Greater Bridgeport Pride

Nadine Ruff
MSW, transgender rights and HIV/AIDS advocate

Gretchen Raffa
Reproductive justice advocate and Planned Parenthood representative

Mel Cordner
Educator and advocate for queer youth

Joe Grabarz
Pioneering gay elected official, LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS advocate

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# 17th Annual Dorothy Awards

Honoring LGBTQ+ Nutmeggers Making a Difference

| Date: Saturday, March 7, 2020 | Time: Begins at 5:30 p.m., Dinner at 7 p.m. | Proceeds to benefit the New Haven Pride Center and our Scholarship Funds |
| Fantasia, 404 Washington Ave., North Haven | Black tie or festival attire encouraged! |
| Hosted by Kiki Lucia and Joshua O’Connell | See enclosed card for ticket and table details. |

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DMV Now Gives Non-Binary Recognition. What’s Next?

by Lucy Gellman

Lindsey Pembrooke was excited to start their week at a AAA office in Hartford. For the first time in Connecticut history, a major state department was recognizing them—as them.

Pembrooke was one of the first Connecticut residents to take advantage of a new non-binary gender designation on state driver’s licenses and identification cards. The change, which adds a “X” as a non-binary gender marker, is offered through the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as well as affiliate partners, such as AAA offices across the state.

The change was announced and implemented earlier this year. It is accessible via a single form that applicants must fill out and submit in person. They must pay a $30 fee to complete the process if their license or ID is not in its renewal period. In what advocates are calling a win for the decision, applicants do not need any medical documentation to make the change, as they once did at the DMV.

With it, Connecticut joins 11 states and the District of Columbia to offer a third gender designation on driver’s licenses and state ID cards. The option does not yet extend to other official state documents. State Reps. David Michel, Raghib Allie-Brennan, and Jeff Currey all praised the new policy.
“This is a major step forward to recognize that many people in our state don’t identify with a gender,” said Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz in a press release on Monday. “Adding a non-binary gender or ‘X’ option on our state ID form sends a clear message that Connecticut is a place where all people will find inclusivity and acceptance.”

The change follows two pieces of proposed legislation, neither of which passed during the last legislative session, that would have implemented more sweeping changes across the state.

One, proposed by State Sen. Matthew Lesser, would have provided new legal and medical protections to intersex individuals in Connecticut. The other, proposed by State Rep. David Michel, would have required all state agencies to update their applications and forms with a non-binary gender option. Michel praised the number of Connecticut residents who rallied behind the bill, many of whom withstood a six-hour public hearing to give testimony in support.

“I believe my journey could have involved less anguish had a simple theme been introduced … recognition,” read one such testimony from Raven Matherne, an openly trans member of Stamford’s Board of Representatives. “Recognition that not everyone fits cleanly into male or female definitions of sex and gender. Recognition that forcing people to decide between two incorrect options on a form is an impossible situation. Recognition simply that trans people exist.”

When neither proposal made it to a vote last year, Michel said that he and Currey began to sit down with individual departments to talk about what changes might look like when implemented. As recently as last week, they hadn’t received any definite commitments (the state Department of Children and Families has included expanded language for protections of LGBTQ+ individuals). So he recalled his surprise last Friday, after hearing that the DMV had made the change.

“We have to continue now,” he said. “We have to put more pressure on the agencies that are willing to do it.”

Layne Gianakos, a trans advocate and senior manager of community services for Anchor Health Initiative, called the new designation “a huge step” in a continuing battle for legal recognition in the state and the country. While he praised the DMV for adding
a third gender designation, he noted that “there might be some incongruences” for individuals using forms across multiple state agencies, some of which still offer only binary gender options.

He added that he is thrilled that the process does not require documentation from a medical professional. Until this year, he recalled, applicants had to bring in a form signed and filled out by a medical professional to change their gender designation.

“The DMV no longer requires medical ‘proof’ to update someone’s gender marker,” he noted. “This is a huge step away from gatekeeping trans bodies and identities.”

“To be honest, I think it is unfortunate that it took this long,” chimed in Patrick Dunn, executive director of the New Haven Pride Center. “CT is usually a leader in queer rights. I am so grateful to all of the advocates across the state who worked tirelessly to press the importance of this recognition. Having gender markers congruent with folks’ gender identities has major implications on housing, availability to get a job, and overall mental health—thus this is vital for human rights.”

Matherne, who uses they/them pronouns, said they hope the DMV’s new option will push other agencies across the state—and around the country—to do the same. They spoke fondly of a new interest they’ve developed in sites operated by the National Park Service, noting that they worry about having the same recognition in other states, as well as at home in Connecticut.

“It’s incredible,” they said. “It’s a huge step. There are people in our state who haven’t had representation, and now they get IDs that actually work.”

“But am I going to have an issue if I travel?” they continued. “Am I going to be told that my ID is invalid in other states? Until more states give us more bills that establish legal footholds giving us another option, we need to keep pushing this.”

Reached by phone Monday, Pembrooke said they were elated.

“I have the state giving me recognition,” they said.

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2020 - 2021 Exhibition Series

February - June 2020

Self Love: Personal Expression & Care
Feb 3 - 27
This exhibition, featuring a number of CT artists, explores our relationship with ourselves and how we care for our health.

Jaii Marc Renee: A queer Black voice on canvas
Mar 2 - Apr 30
Jaii Marc Renee is a CT artist who explores Black identity, queer identity, and the intersections thereof in large-format acrylics.

Advice from the Lights: an artistic response to Stephanie Burt’s poetry
May 4 - Jun 30
Artistic responses to the New Haven Big Read book by transgender author Stephanie Burt.
Check-out these upcoming FUNdrasiers where you can support the community while attending a fun event! Every issue of Centerline we will continue to let you know about fun events around the state that you can attend and give back to Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ community.

**Feb. 14 – 16: Connecticut Coronation at the Hartford/Windor Marriott, Windsor**
Raising money for the beneficiaries of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut
Connecticut’s most fabulous black tie affair – with bigger hair, tons of sequins, and some of the most beautiful jewelry you will ever see. Coronation weekend celebrates the year of fundraising done by members of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut and acts as their annual gala event where folks from across the United States, Mexico and Canada come together to celebrate Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ nonprofit sector. Tickets begin at $125 and include dinner.

More info at facebook.com/ctimperialcourt

**Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m.: Beat The Bushfire : Australian Wildlife Benefit**
Raising money to support the wildlife of Australia following the recent bushfires
A fabulous evening of drag and live music all going to a good cause! There will be performances, a community raffle, face painting, and a bake sale! Hosted by Kiki Lucia with performances by Veronica Bow, Tytannia Lockhart, Xiomarie Labeija, Ray Decorazon, Danger Pickle, Julia Wolfe, and Ivy Spillman.
$20 donation at the door.
More info at facebook.com/NEUrsamen

**Feb. 28, 9:00 p.m.: Conga for a Cause with the Northeast Ursamen at the Chez Est, Hartford**
Raising money for Northeast Ursamen
Join in the fun of a Luau and help raise money for the Northeast Ursamen to continue their great work within the community. Enjoy and evening that includes performances by members of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut, socializing with folks in the community, and making some new friends. $8 donation at the door.
More info at facebook.com/NEUrsamen

**Mar. 7 @ 5:30 p.m.: 17th Annual Dorothy Awards at Fantasia, North Haven**
Raising money for the New Haven Pride Center
The annual Dorothy Awards event is a fabulous evening where we come together as a community to celebrate and honor folks in our community making an impact on the LGBTQ+ community of Greater Connecticut. At the 17th Annual event the New Haven Pride Center will be honoring OutCT, Nadine Ruff, MSW, Ricky Mestre, Gretchen Raffa, and Suzanne Kachmar with Dorothy Awards and Joe Grabarz and Mel Cordner with special awards. Tickets are $125 and include dinner and open bar.
More info at newhavenpridecenter.org.
Events from Around Conn.

By Patrick J Dunn

There is always something interesting and fun going on somewhere in Connecticut! Know of an event you think should be featured? Email us at centerline@newhavenpridecenter.org

Feb. 5 – Mar. 1: "I Am My Own Wife" at Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven

A tour de force performance, in the vein of Long Wharf favorites An Iliad and Satchmo at the Waldorf, I Am My Own Wife tells the inspiring true story of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. As an openly transgender woman, she bravely survives both the Nazi and Communist regimes of East Germany with her unique mix of strength, savvy and grace. This powerful and life-affirming masterpiece—in the first major revival in a decade—will leave you speechless. Tickets are $19 – 67.

More info at longwharf.org/i-am-my-own-wife.

Feb. 9: Open NOH8 Photo Shoot at True Colors, Hartford

The NOH8 Campaign returns to Hartford, CT on Sunday, February 9th for an open photo shoot at True Colors Inc. Stop by anytime between 6pm-8pm to pose for an official NOH8 photo by photographer Adam Bouska. No reservations needed!

Single / Solo Photos: $40; Couple / Group Photos: $25 per person.

More info at noh8campaign.com.

Feb. 11: Lecture/Performance Arien Wilkerson Queer Eroticism as Power at University of Hartford, Hartford

In this conversation with Billie Lee, artist Arien Wilkerson, LGBTQ+ dancer and choreographer, will talk about his latest work "lovepiece," including showing video content and material from the installation while explicitly sharing ideas on using queer eroticism as power. They will also discuss their latest work titled "Anastrophe" : a retrospective of works and specifically share insight into their personal connection with being openly HIV positive, black, non binary, and openly queer. FREE event.


February selection is “Let’s Talk About Love” by Claire Kann. Alice, the main character, is an asexual bi-romantic lead. Alice had her whole summer planned. Non-stop all-you-can-eat buffets while marathoning her favorite TV shows (best friends totally included) with the smallest dash of adulting--working at the library to pay her share of the rent. The only thing missing from her perfect plan? Her girlfriend (who
ended things when Alice confessed she’s asexual). Alice is done with dating—no thank you, do not pass go, stick a fork in her, done. Join in a conversation about the book. FREE event.

More info at facebook.com/events/174345873674662.

Mar. 7-21: Next to Normal at Castle Craig Players, Meriden

The Goodman’s seem like a perfect family. The only problem is that sometimes mother Diana is, well ... a little too happy. Her husband Dan worries all the time. Her daughter Natalie seems awfully intent on getting that scholarship to Yale so she can leave home. And her son Gabe, well ... that’s another story entirely. Tickets are $20-25.

More at castlecraig.org.

4 MONTHLY LGBTQ+ HAPPY HOURS AROUND CT :


Feb. 19, 5–7 p.m.: Te Amo Tequila in New Haven – hosted by APNH: A Place to Nourish Your Health. Takes place every third Wednesday of the month.

Feb. 21, 6–10 p.m.: Bradford’s Grill in Stamford – hosted by the Stamford LGBTQ+ Resource Group and So You Think You Can Bowl? Takes place every third Friday of the month.

Pink Drink Social at Chez Est in Hartford – hosted by Pink Drink Social and Chez Est. Usually the third Wednesday, sometimes it changes due to other schedules – check facebook.com/thechezest/ for full schedule.

You’re an inspiration to us all

New Haven Pride Center is making a difference in our neighborhood.

Helping the local economy thrive is just one of the many positive attributes you bring to our area. Extending your abilities and resources to the community through service and other initiatives makes you a true leader.

We’re proud to work with New Haven Pride Center.

Visit us at bankofamerica.com/connecticut.
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203-674-1102

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Anchor Health Initiative has set out to provide you best-in-class pharmacy service. The pharmacy will be able to service both the Hamden and Stamford Clinics. Our goal is to streamline prescriptions within one centralized pharmacy.

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www.AnchorHealthInitiative.org