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Milwaukee LGBT Community Center Builds Momentum Reducing Debt, Raising Funds & Engaging Our Community

More than 100 people attended the May 17, 2012, Milwaukee LGBT Community Center Town Hall meeting. The meeting was focused on updating the community about many significant changes and accomplishments that have been made since the last Town Hall, which took place at the end of January.

In an effort to make the meeting as accessible as possible, the meeting was live streamed over the internet for community members who couldn't attend in person. Nearly 20 people attended online.

Changes and accomplishments highlighted that evening included:

- The board membership has increased from 4 to 14. The new members bring a range of specialized skills in fundraising, communications, technology, strategic planning, human resources, youth programming, and more. We also increased the number of volunteers active on a weekly basis from five to over 30.
- Karen Gotzler has stepped up to serve as interim Executive Director on a volunteer basis, while the other staff of her firm, Urban Strategies/Sector Management, are offering additional support services.
- The Center's lease has been renegotiated to reduce the amount of space rented from four floors to two, cut the monthly rent from approximately \$20,000 to \$9,500, and shorten the term from 10 years to one.
- The board reviewed the current and previous bylaws and developed recommendations for revisions. Proposed changes include reverting to the previous policy regarding board elections, to restore the members' rights to elect at least 50% of the directors. The proposed changes also return more power to the membership to revise bylaws and call special meetings.
- The Finance Committee is meeting regularly to redesign financial procedures, renegotiate contractual relationships and debts to cut costs, and prepare the Center's books for the 2011 audit.
- The Center staff produced a 2011 Annual Report, with all printing and design services provided pro bono by community members. The report can be viewed and downloaded at [http://www.mkelgbt.org/_data/documents/2011_LGBT_Annual_ReportFinal\[1\].pdf](http://www.mkelgbt.org/_data/documents/2011_LGBT_Annual_ReportFinal[1].pdf).

The board was pleased to announce a new two-year, \$50,000 grant from the Helen Bader Foundation and a challenge grant from the Johnson & Pabst Humanity Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. The \$3,000 challenge grant was quickly matched by the Town Hall attendees with a total of \$3,250, including over \$300 raised from those following the meeting online. An additional commitment of several thousand dollars was announced by Nadia Rizk, on behalf of a group of young humanitarians who work in the information technology profession.

"The town hall was reminiscent of the original steering committee's organizing days," said community member Leonel Marchan. "You could feel the positive energy in the room as the board shared its news and guests shared their stories. I felt a renewed sense of faith in the Center's future."

"We were so pleased with the outpouring of support and the wonderful energy that community members brought to the meeting," said Center Co-President Paul Williams. "We want to build upon the many positive developments of the past several months and fully renew the Center based on the community's interests and needs. Please become a member of the Center or renew your membership."

More information is available at www.mkelgbt.org.

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Milwaukee LGBT Community Center programs include: Project Q Youth Services, HIV Risk Reduction & Prevention Services, LGBT Breast Health Programs, Counseling Services, and the Anti-Violence Project, as well as personal financial counseling and

coaching, an art gallery, an LGBT lending library with over 2,400 books, a cyber center and meeting spaces. In addition, the Center sponsors many networking events and activities.

Numerous community partners are located at the Center, including Milwaukee PrideFest, FORGE, PFLAG Milwaukee, Lesbian Alliance, Veterans for Diversity (formerly Vets Do Ask Do Tell), and Wisconsin Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf.

The Center needs you. We need the community to pull together and become members, give donations and committee members. Please call the Center today at 414-271-2656 today to offer your support. Use our online PayPal donation link to make contributions to the Center on our website: <http://www.mkelgbt.org>

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS

The Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

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Funds are sought for administrative costs for these vital programs and reorganize the Center for the LGBT community and its allies.