

# Building Community in Every Encounter

## Volunteer Spotlight: Peg Kern Payne

When Peg Kern Payne moved from Baltimore to the Bay Area suburbs a few years ago, she immediately set out to find volunteer opportunities within the LGBTQ+ community. "I wanted to invest my time," says Peg, "in the community and the tribe that my trans son, who now lives in Portland, belongs to. I thought I'd need to go to San Francisco or Oakland, but I found it practically in my own backyard."

She and her son founded a PFLAG chapter back in Maryland, so Peg soon joined the Claycord PFLAG, where she heard about Rainbow Community Center (RCC). "Everyone kept talking about Rainbow!" Peg says, "So I had to check it out."

Since then, Peg has dedicated many hours to Rainbow, serving Senior Luncheons and holiday meals, and participating in our PRIDE events and Inclusive Schools Coalition.

"At Rainbow we are building community in every encounter," Peg says. "And that has long been a cornerstone in the fight for civil rights, women's rights, disability rights, and now gender rights. We are not made to live in isolation. I think that's the key, and why I do volunteer work. It keeps me focused on social justice, being involved with such a diverse group of folk."

After a 30-year career as an educator, Peg recently completed a term as a Home and Hospital Special Educator. In that role, she participated in Rainbow's Inclusive Schools Training. "It was just incredible," she says. "People on the gender spectrum always need gender justice, and it's needed the most in schools. Adults there need to provide a safe school environment by holding a space where all students can express themselves. I believe gender identity is fluid—believe what students say at age 5, 15, or 25."

Peg says she's been astonished by the depth and breadth of diversity of the RCC staff. "They do this work with such authenticity," she says. "They speak truth. There is such warmth here. I see the dignity and worth of everyone expressed with such openness: Come on in! What can we do for you?"

"People at Rainbow move forward with their hearts open," says Peg. "Everyone I've met has demonstrated the intersection of what their past struggle has been and what their dreams are for the future. And we're all working for the present: to change things. We're all change agents, big and small. I've just been blessed to be part of that."

Peg recently helped to prepare for the Third Annual GSA Forum on March 6, 2020, at Ygnacio Valley High School. Rainbow supports and helps to run the event, which in Peg's words "helps young people come into their own and live out their authentic lives while advocating for each other. And Rainbow always has our back, standing in solidarity with the youth."

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## Standalone Quotes:

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