

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rainbow Community Center Restructuring

Contra Costa County's LGBTQ Resource Center is Restructuring the Organization to Better Serve the Community

Concord – The Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County, providing support services for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) community, will be implementing a new strategic plan and restructuring over the next several months. The plan involves restructuring the organization, training staff and provide upgraded and improved services to the community. Minimal disruption to clinical support is anticipated during this restructuring and RCC's current case load is a priority.

Rainbow provides programs for LGBTQ youth and their families, working to prevent bullying in schools, providing visiting and food services for people living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ seniors, as well as offering low cost mental health services and training programs.

"After two years of strategic planning, we are excited to be implementing our plan to provide improved, cost efficient services to meet the growing needs of the LGBTQ community in Contra Costa County," said Kevin McAllister, Executive Director of the Rainbow Community Center located in Downtown Concord.

The Rainbow Board of Directors and the organization recently concluded two years of strategic planning, which included input from the LGBTQ community, clients, staff, funders and others, with the goal of developing a plan that would entail more focused, effective and upgraded services to meet the growing needs of Contra Costa County's LGBTQ community.

Rainbow provides health services, counseling, and case management to individuals in the LGBTQ community, including partnering with the Solano/Contra Costa Food Bank for its on-site food pantry and providing lunches to LGBTQ seniors. The organization hosts the County's yearly Pride event, as well as providing anti-bullying training to school personnel and business leaders.

"The services we offer, like our program to help displaced and homeless youth experiencing backlash due to their identity, are playing an important role in our region," said Ken Carlson, Chair of the Board of Rainbow. "Taking this time to reorganize and improve services will be of tremendous benefit to the community," Carlson added.

The Rainbow Community Center, located at 2118 Willow Pass Road in Concord, will limit its services while preparing for new programming. While its food pantry will be limited during the reorganization, mental health counseling, training, HIV testing and limited youth services will still operate through Rainbow during the restructuring. Rainbow will also complete the remodeling of its Service Center/Community Space during this time.

McAllister added that individuals in need of greater food services during Rainbow's reorganization will be served by the Solano/Contra Costa Food Bank. For information on the availability of services, individuals in the community can contact the Rainbow Community Center at (925) 692-0090.

Below is the Rainbow Center's Mission Statement and list of services it provides.

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About the Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County

Mission Statement

The Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County (Rainbow) promotes community and well-being among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals and our allies.

Brief Overview

Since 1996, the Rainbow Community Center has been helping Contra Costa County and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) community come together and thrive. Our programs serve LGBTQ youth and their families; work to prevent bullying in schools; provide visiting and food services for people living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ seniors; deliver low cost mental health services; and operate two mental health training programs.

Social and Support Groups

Our social and support groups aim to increase a sense of community amongst the LGBTQ population and decrease isolation. Our social and support groups include both professionally facilitated and peer-led support groups, recovery groups, and social and activity groups for people with various identities. We host movie nights, game nights, summer picnics, theatre outings, an annual Crab Feed, and more.

Health and Wellness Services

Our health and wellness services support the creation of a healthy, flourishing and vibrant LGBTQ community in Contra Costa County. Services include Rapid Testing HIV clinics, safer sex information and supplies, and domestic violence information and support services.

Rainbow also provides in depth PrEP HIV medication reviews with clients and offers a wraparound support system for people living with HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, in partnership

with the Contra Costa HIV/ AIDS & STD Program, Rainbow is piloting a 3-Site testing project (collecting throat swabs, anal swabs, and urine from MSM clients) to test them for chlamydia and gonorrhea. Last year in 2018, Rainbow Community Center tested almost 200 people for HIV/AIDS.

Community Mental Health Services

Rainbow's mental health program aims to increase resiliency of our community, help stabilize high- risk people with acute mental illness, and help our community thrive. Rainbow provides culturally competent counseling and case management services in support of the LGBTQ community, including individual counseling, couples counseling, support groups, and "coming out" groups, counseling in support of LGBTQ youth ages 12 to 25, and support groups for parents of LGBTQ youth.

Youth Programs

Fostering a positive self-identity for all LGBTQ youth ages 12-20, Rainbow offers structured programs, youth mentoring, social activities and a drop-in youth center. Our youth programs help address internalized homophobia, promote resilience, and help youth decide when and how to disclose their gender identities and sexual orientation. Our youth are diverse in their interests, and we like our programs to reflect that! Our youth program is proud to offer a variety of activities, including game nights, movie nights, discussing hot topics, planning youth events, quarterly youth dances, tons of cool field trips, and more.

Senior Services

Rainbow's senior program provides safe spaces for LGBTQ seniors to gather, socialize, and create a supportive community. LGBTQ seniors are more likely than their straight peers to be isolated, so we aim to increase support, help address internalized homophobia and shame, and ensure seniors have access to a supportive network of peers. Activities include senior lunches, social groups, youth/senior events, and social outings.

Kind Hearts Food Pantry

The Kind Hearts Program provides services to people with HIV/AIDS and/ or to LGBTQ people over the age of 50. Our weekly Food Pantry sends food boxes to people living with HIV/AIDS and qualifying seniors, and twice a month we make home visits to those who are sick and cannot leave their homes. Rainbow is a distribution site for the Senior Food Program and the Extra Helpings Program through the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

Training

Rainbow offers LGBTQ cultural competency training programs in-person or online for mental health providers, schools, and other community groups. Our training includes LGBTQ 101, Out of the Closet and through your door, and Gender Identity 101.

Contra Costa LGBTQ Youth Collaborative & Inclusive Schools Coalition

Contra Costa LGBTQ Youth Collaborative & Inclusive School Coalition are a joint community effort to raise awareness among parents, families, peers, schools and faith groups about the

harmful effects of rejection on LGBTQ youth. Our primary goal is to improve the health of LGBTQ youth by reducing rejecting behaviors and increasing accepting behaviors in Contra Costa County social service networks. We aim to increase policy changes, increase safety and support for youth, and train teachers, administrators, and faith leaders to recognize and address LGBTQ youth harassment.