Feb/Mar 2020

Announcements

**New Support Group for Parents of Transgender Persons** is starting Monday, February 10 and March 9th at 7 pm at Grace Church in Harrisburg. Grace Church and Transcultural would like to invite parents and other family members to join us in the Guild Room at Grace Church for our first meeting. This group brings together adult loved ones seeking to better understand and support their children of all ages dealing with issues of gender identity. Additionally, the group will operate under a policy of confidentiality in order to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. For details, please call the church office at (717) 238-6739 or email us at family@transcentralpa.org.

**Harrisburg Dinner** will be at Rock Bass Grill Saturday, February 8th. We will meet at 5:30 pm and dinner will seat promptly at 6:00 pm. Please RSVP at our website.

**Harrisburg Meeting** is Saturday, February 8th at 8:00 pm at the MCC of the Spirit, Harrisburg. After hour activities usually ensue after the meeting at the Sheraton’s Dog & Pony Lounge.

**York Dinner** Dinner will again be at the Central Family Restaurant in downtown York at 6:30 pm. Please RSVP.

**York Meeting** is Saturday, February 22nd at 8:30 pm at the York LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, located at 15 N. Cherry Ln, York PA 17401

This is open to transgender individuals of all ages and their family (including spouses, partners, parents, siblings, and children). Wherever you are at on your transition journey, be it just coming out of the closet or having lived your authentic life for years, we welcome you to join us in this opportunity to be yourself and be around others who understand and support you.

**Keystone Conference** official dates are March 25th-29th, 2020. [Register here.]

**Have an idea for Keystone?** We are soliciting ideas for both day and evening activities during Keystone. Also, if you have a suggestion for one of our speakers, please send us an email at info@keystone-conference.org.

**TCPA Membership Dues** are a one-time annual fee of $20. Dues are used to pay for meeting space, program literature, our website and our affiliation with and support of community groups and activities such as Common Roads, the Community Center, Central Pennsylvania Pride, etc. Please continue to support our organization and efforts by joining or renewing your membership—we are making a difference!

**Department of Corrections.** For a couple of years now, TransCentralPA has been actively involved with providing support services to transgender inmates. Recently, two of our long-time advocates at the department published an article describing the program and shared it with us. They specifically wanted to thank Joanne C., Liz L. and Gretchen L. for their support from the beginning and continued involvement.

**Questions About Updating Gender Markers or gender designation on PA IDs or driver’s licenses and would like to talk to a supportive person inside of PennDOT before moving forward with the process?** Inquiries about changing the gender designation on PA IDs or driver’s licenses, contact alecampbel@pa.gov or call 717-787-0485.

**Red Roof Inn Discount.** We have negotiated a rate of $42.99/night for TranscentralPA members and guests. To take advantage of this special offer, call the hotel directly at (717) 939-1331 and use the CP code ‘609306.’

**Attendee Registration Is Now Open!!** Visit the Keystone Website for More Information.
As we look back on 2019, we reflect on both the happy times and the sad times. We smile when we think of the new friends we made or that outfit we always wanted and could now finally purchase. For some we see the steps we’ve taken in our transition to be ourselves, and how we have grown as the person we want the world to know. We also shed tears and feel lonely at times, thinking of those who were once close to us and now no longer wish to be with us, or when we hear of a friend struggling with family members as they embark on their transition or when we read an article about how a member of our community is mistreated or even worse.

As we look forward to 2020, we welcome a new year of hope and promise, to the accomplishments yet to come. Whether you are only now beginning your journey and finding us here at TCPA and looking for support, looking for help, or whether you have been here with us for years, offering support to the newer individuals, those who are beginning their journey, one that many of us know so well. We all have plenty to look forward to in 2020, but we still have plenty to do. For those of us who have learned from our experiences, share the lessons learned and be that big sister or big brother to someone in need of support. Offer a hand, be there to listen and provide some kind words of support.

Society in general is becoming more open and accepting. More communities are passing non-discrimination legislation. Larger corporations are openly vocalizing their support in advertisements and hiring ads. More and more schools are learning how to address their growing transgender student population, and we are seeing more transgender individuals getting roles on TV shows or getting elected to public office. Though these TV roles are generally small and still few and far between, and the political offices less prominent. But these accomplishments are the beginning of something bigger and better. As many of us have learned, this is a marathon, not a sprint. We must be persistent and keep moving onward and upward.

We need to celebrate these accomplishments yet dream even bigger as these accomplishments are only the tip of the iceberg. There are still plenty more advancements to make and more individuals in need of our help.

We must also remember that for every individual embarking on this journey there is a family and a community experiencing this journey alongside them as well. We need to be there for them as well.

Find ways to get involved. To be there for those afraid to take that first step for fear of rejection and loss. Pass on what you have learned to others and help pave the way for those still to come.

The Keystone Conference is held in March every year. This is only a few short months away. A great event to look forward to. This is a chance to catch up with old friends and make many new friends. Its also a time to offer guidance and support to first time conference attendees. The conference is intended to be both educational and entertaining. It offers participants opportunities to attend workshops on a vast array of subjects important to the transgender community. It also offers great entertainment and opportunities to get out and about. Bus trips to great restaurants, or shopping trips to nearby clothing stores. It’s also an opportunity to get dressed up and feel your best while attending a fantastic gala event.

As we look back and smile at the accomplishments of our past, we must not forget that there is still much work to do in the coming year.

Holly Evans

You're invited to Danni's Keystone Beach Party at the Sheraton Pool starting at 2:30 pm, Wednesday. Grab your swim trunks or prettiest bathing suit and come on down to the pool for swimming, hot tubing and social time. Cash bar and snacks will be available.
Mara Keisling is the founder and executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, the nation’s leading social justice advocacy organization winning life-saving change for transgender people.

Mara’s strategy and vision have guided NCTE’s work since 2003. She has led organizational and coalition efforts that have won significant advances in transgender equality, including the inclusion of gender identity in the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act from 2007 onward and countless other federal- and state-level wins. Mara also co-authored Injustice at Every Turn, the groundbreaking 2009 report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, and the report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey.

As one of the nation’s leading voices for transgender equality, Mara is regularly quoted in national and local print media and has appeared on major television networks, including being part of the first all-transgender panel on a national news show in 2012. Mara, a proud Pennsylvanian, received her bachelor’s degree from Pennsylvania State University and did graduate work in American Studies at New York University.

Blake Dremann is a 2003 graduate of Ozark Christian College, earning his Bachelor of Biblical Literature and graduated with a Masters of Business Administration from Norwich University in June 2019.

Lt. Commander Dremann has completed 11 deployments. Those include 4 onboard USS DENVER (LPD 9); and 5 patrols as Supply Officer, USS MAINE (SSBN 741), and he completed one deployment with the Army to Afghanistan. He is currently assigned as a supply chain manager at a joint logistics command on Fort Belvoir, VA.

Lt. Commander Dremman’s decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Joint Service Achievement Medal, one Navy Commendation Medal, and four Navy Achievement Medals. He is a 2015 recipient of the Vice Admiral Robert F. Betchelder Award, the Navy’s highest logistics award. In 2018, Lt. Commander Dremann received the Department of Defense Pride Military Leadership Award and in 2019, he was named one of the top 25 LGBTQ Next Generation Leaders to watch by Out in National Security.

Amanda Jetté Knox is an award-winning writer and human rights advocate from Ottawa, Canada. She, along with her family, share their story about the power of acceptance, understanding, vulnerability and unconditional love, in the hopes of normalizing the existence of LGBTQ+ families.

Amanda’s work has been featured by several national and international media outlets, including BBC, CBC, The Today Show, O Magazine, The Social, The Marilyn Denis Show and Upworthy. She is the recipient of the 2014 Joan Gullen Journalism award for Media Excellence in Small Print, and a Chatealaine Canada 2019 Woman of the Year.

Amanda is the author of Love Lives Here: A Story of Thriving in a Transgender Family which is a #1 bestseller, an Indigo Best Books of the Year, and sits on the 2020 Canada Reads Longlist.

Pooya Mohseni is an Iranian-American actor, writer, filmmaker and Trans activist. Born and raised in Tehran, Iran she moved to New York at the age of 19. She studied design at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where she discovered her love of acting and story telling after joining the FIT theatre.

She is the co-producer, star & co-writer of "Transit: A NYC FAIRYTALE", a short film about love between a trans woman and a cis man, coming out in 2020. Pooya is the first middle eastern trans actor on network television to portray a judge on season 21 of NBC's "Law & Order: SVU", and is a recurring guest star on the new crime drama "Big Dogs", the first season of USA Network's "Falling Water" and CBS's "Madam Secretary."

Pooya's fluent in Persian (Farsi), a transgender advocate, and a voice for immigrants’ and women’s issues. She is a member of the advisory council for the Gender and Family Project at the Ackerman Institute. She has also written articles shedding light on the different aspects of being trans, in the past, the present and future. She’s very involved in writing and co-writing original LGBT stories to shed light on under represented communities.
Last December, the Philadelphia Police Department held the latest of its Coffee with a Cop community outreach events — this time in the heart of the gayborhood at Starbucks at 12th and Walnut Streets. The events intend to solicit feedback from specific communities and to enable area residents to get to know, in an informal setting, some of the officers serving their neighborhood.

Police, in conjunction with Starbucks, have been conducting these events since last summer in various Philadelphia neighborhoods. This week’s event was the first to focus on the city’s LGBTQ community, specifically.

According to Sgt. Nick Tees, the Department’s LGBT liaison officer, the hope is that the event’s informality will encourage people to be more open about their concerns in a non-confrontative setting. “We also want to let people know how we can help them when they have a problem, who they can talk to.”

Inspector Altovise Love-Craighead feels that communication between police and the community serves to forestall the animosity and distrust of the police, which is prevalent across the nation.

“One of the important purposes of the Coffee with a Cop program is to let people get to know us as human beings — to let people know that the folks underneath the uniform are also members of their community who understand their concerns,” she said.

Sgt. Tees was heartened by the response officers received from people who wandered in for their morning coffee. “We haven’t really been getting much in the way of concerns or problematic issues. Mostly it’s been expressions of appreciation for the work we do. It’s good to get feedback like that in that it lets us know that what we’re doing is making an impact.”

Deputy Commissioner Joseph Sullivan, also in attendance, said, “It’s important to get feedback from the community. Communities like the LGBT community have a history of distrust of the police, which is understandable given their past experiences. But clearly matters have greatly improved over the past several years. But we can do more, which is our goal.”

A 2013 Williams Institute survey found that 48 percent of LGBTQ victims of violence experienced police misconduct, and the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 58 percent of trans folks who interacted with law enforcement knew they were transgender reported harassment, abuse or other mistreatment by police.

In June, the Philadelphia Police Department announced a policy overhauling guidelines on law enforcement interactions with transgender and non-binary people. Under the new policy, Directive 4.15, officers are required to include both a person’s chosen and legal name on paperwork, use preferred names and pronouns when interacting with and speaking to the media about trans people, and transport trans people in custody to the nearest medical facility for immediate needs, including hormone therapy.

Before, police worked under Directive 152, a 2014 policy that included terms like “cross-dressers” and “transsexual” and indicated an arrested individual’s gender was that which appeared on the person’s government-issued ID, except when an arrestee had undergone gender-affirming surgery. When an ID wasn’t available, police had the authority to assign gender based on genitalia.

Along with building trust, the Coffee with a Cop program is a recruitment effort, to make sure that police officers accurately reflect the diverse communities they serve — which includes the LGBT community. For several years now, the Philadelphia Police Department has had a program of actively recruiting LGBT officers.

Sgt. Rob Ryan, who spearheads the Department’s LGBT recruitment, admitted that LGBT recruitment has been a challenge, but that progress is being made. “For instance, the membership of GOAL [the Gay Officer’s Action League], which has a contingent every year in the gay pride parade, numbers well over a hundred. And there are a large number of out officers beyond that membership.”

The Coffee with a Cop program is an ongoing affair. Tees asserted that future LGBT-specific events would be held at other Starbucks locations throughout the gayborhood, adding that the coffee chain approached the police about initiating a program like CwC.

That outreach was spearheaded by Sean Korman, who manages one of Starbucks’ South Philly locations. When asked what inspired him to reach out to police, he admitted, “The unfortunate event last year was a serious wake-up call to take our community responsibilities seriously.”

The “unfortunate event” Korman referenced was an incident where Black men were unceremoniously ejected from a Starbucks for apparently insufficient reasons.

“We realized that if we wanted to be a part of the communities we were in, we actually had to step up and play the part we claimed we wanted to play in the communities we serve.”

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**Keystone Business Alliance Excellence Award Winners**

Keystone Business Alliance has announced the winners of its second annual Business Excellence Awards. The honors were presented at KBA’s annual awards dinner and gala on January 24 at the Hilton Harrisburg.

This year’s awardees are Advocate of the Year, The Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition; Certified Business of the Year, Voycetress Media; Corporate Partner of the Year, UPMC Pinnacle; and Member of the Year, York Revolution.

Keystone Business Alliance is committed to expanding the economic interests of LGBT and allied business through advocacy, education, and partnerships with the local business community. Headquartered in Harrisburg, and serving eight counties in South Central PA, KBA is a five-time award winning affiliate of NGLCC – the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce.
On Dec. 17, the Huntingdon Borough Council voted to adopt an LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance, making the borough the first rural community and 58th municipality in Pennsylvania to enact local protections for LGBT people in employment, housing and public accommodations.

Home to Juniata College, Huntingdon is about 30 miles south of the geographic center of Pennsylvania and has almost 7,000 residents.

The vote was 4-3 at the evening meeting. Council President Nicole Houck, Council Vice-President Sean Steeg, and Council members Robert Jackson and Johnathan Hyde voted in favor, while Council members David Quarry, James Bair and Terry Green voted in opposition.

Houck told PGN, “I think this is a huge victory for the borough of Huntingdon. We’ve made a statement that we care about the people in our community, and we want this to be a safe place. It’s especially amazing to be the first rural township pass such an ordinance. It feels good to be making history in such a positive way in our little town.”

Huntingdon resident Anthony Bullett began advocating for the ordinance nine years ago. In 2015, he contacted the Pennsylvania Youth Congress for support, and PYC has been involved ever since. Bullett, along with Pat Hunter and other community members, formed Diversity Huntingdon to coordinate education and advocacy over several years with Borough Councilmembers.

“It’s not just what we have done over the past few years, but even looking back 50 years ago, what my father and others tried to do in this town. That we have finally been able to get inclusive nondiscrimination protections into law is tremendous. There will not be another generation that has to live under legal discrimination, at least not in our community of Huntingdon,” Bullett said, celebrating the victory.

Hunter, whose son is a part of the LGBT community added, “I am very excited, beyond words. I would not have thought that 22 months ago this ordinance would have passed. We came a long way, and we turned a lot of people’s opinions in the right direction.”

She said when her son was the one who informed her that there were no nondiscrimination protections for him in Huntingdon when he was in only the ninth grade. He told his mother he would not stay in the borough after graduation, and he didn’t.

“Now, maybe it opens the door for individuals who are interested in staying to know they are welcome and protected here,” Hunter said.

Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Youth Congress Jason Landau Goodman said in a release, “We could not be prouder of the local leaders who advocated consistently over the years to this moment. We have been honored to support them from day one in this effort, and join them in directly advocating with Huntingdon Borough Council to approve this urgently-needed ordinance.”

He added, “Huntingdon joins other communities in sending the lightning rod to Harrisburg to pass LGBT nondiscrimination protections and paves the way for additional ordinances in rural Pennsylvania communities to be adopted.”

The Pennsylvania Youth Congress has worked with local leaders in several rural mid-state communities to adopt nondiscrimination ordinances. Borough Councils in Gettysburg and Shippensburg are committed to advanced conversations about nondiscrimination ordinances in 2020.

Pennsylvania is the only state in the Northeast that does not have statewide LGBT nondiscrimination protections, but the Keystone State does have the most local LGBT nondiscrimination ordinanc-
Are U OK? A Guide to Caring for Your Mental Health by Kati Morton seeks to break down the stigma and secrecy around mental health and illness, and conduct a fresh, healthy reexamination of how we approach them. This year’s deaths of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain shocked the world. Despite seeming to “have it all” — fame, financial success, supportive friends and families — these great talents were suffering. Such tragedies further cement the notion that mental illness needs to be treated like the serious medical condition that it is, and not as an emotional or social problem. Morton expertly explains the distinctions between mental illness and mental health and answers the most frequently asked questions: Should I seek help? Do I need medication? What can I expect on my first therapy session? Are U OK is the perfect guide to breaking the ice on this very important urgently needed conversation. (Seal Press) — Desiree Guerre-ro

(Don’t) Call Me Crazy: 33 Voices Start the Conversation About Mental Health edited by Kelly Jensen is an educational, fun icebreaker to a still-too-taboo subject in our world. Geared toward kids and teens but entertaining and readable for people of all ages, this collection of essays, lists, comics, and guided meditations is the perfect way to get the family talking about mental health. The 33 featured actors, athletes, writers, and artists offer their personal insights on everything from understanding how every person’s brain is wired differently, to discussion on what the word “crazy” actually means. Hint: it’s not necessarily a bad thing.

Beautiful Justice: Reclaiming My Worth After Trafficking and Sexual Assault by Brooke Axtell. The activist and sexual abuse survivor told her story onstage at the 2015 Grammys, and now offers empowering insight for those struggling to move on from the trauma of abuse. At 7 years old, Axtell was raped repeatedly by her male nanny who also sold her body at “parties.” This resulted in lasting feelings of worthlessness and shame, which led to a series of unhealthy and abusive relationships. Axtell was eventually able to change this toxic pattern and begin healing, and is a strong advocate for abusers to be held accountable and prosecuted in court. She also notes that, in a world where 90 percent of perpetrators don’t spend a day in jail, legal justice is sadly an unlikely outcome for most victims. She adds, “Even when I’ve been a part of successful prosecutions, it doesn’t set survivors free from the impact of the trauma.” Despite these harsh realities, Axtell does provide readers with a fresh perspective and theory on the healing process that focuses on empowering survivors despite an often flawed and sexist legal system. She writes, “I am redefining justice to include and honor our well-being as survivors…. we are no longer waiting for someone else to set us free.”

The Twelfth Annual Keystone Conference
A Celebration of Gender Diversity
March 25th-29th, 2020
Veteran Gay Diplomat Confirmed as Ambassador to Lithuania

Trudy Ring, Advocate Reporter

Veteran diplomat Robert Gilchrist, who is gay, has been confirmed as ambassador to the conservative nation of Lithuania.

The Senate confirmed him by voice vote, and Gilchrist posted on Twitter Thursday about his confirmation:

Although nominated by Donald Trump, Gilchrist has a long record of service to both Democratic and Republican officials. Currently director of the operations center at the State Department, he has been deputy chief of mission — a rank second only to ambassador — at the U.S. embassies in Sweden and Estonia, and the director of Nordic and Baltic affairs in the department’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in addition to assignments in many other parts of the world.

He was a foreign policy aide to a Democratic congressman, William Delahunt of Massachusetts, in 2002 and 2003. For several years he was president of Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, an organization of LGBTQ people and allies working in foreign affairs for the U.S. government.

He opened Baltic Pride in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2011, with a speech saying, “My name is Robert Gilchrist and I am the number two — the deputy chief of mission — at the U.S. Embassy. I am also gay. So being here this evening is not just important to me as a U.S. diplomat in reaffirming my government’s respect for the integrity of every human being. It is also important to me as someone who has been active in the gay movement back in my own country and as a fellow gay person who is out and proud.” In the speech he also praised then-President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Baltic Pride rotates between the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, all former Soviet republics.

Lithuanian attitudes toward LGBTQ people are slowly becoming more positive, but the laws and public opinion remain largely hostile. The nation has no legal recognition for same-sex couples, and has a law similar to Russia’s “gay propaganda” ban. It does have a law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, but it is reportedly poorly enforced.

On the positive side, Lithuania has given shelter to people fleeing anti-gay persecution in Chechnya, a semiautonomous republic within Russia. And while Pride celebrations in the nation were disrupted by protesters a few years ago, this year’s saw support from politicians and corporations.

Despite Trump’s overwhelmingly anti-LGBTQ record, he has a few other out appointees, including Richard Grenell, who is ambassador to Germany, and federal judges Patrick Bumatay and Mary Rowland.

Merriam-Webster: Gender-Neutral ‘They’ Is the Word of 2019

Tracy E. Gilchrist, Advocate Reporter

Merriam-Webster named the gender-neutral pronoun “they” its word of the year for 2019, adding that searches for the pronoun increased by 313 percent over the previous year.

Merriam-Webster, a dictionary publisher founded in 1812, added the singular “they” to its vernacular earlier this year but also chose it over terms like “quid pro quo” (up 644 percent from last year) as its word of 2019.

“Our Word of the Year for 2019 is they. It reflects a surprising fact: even a basic term—a personal pronoun—can rise to the top of our data,” the word source writes in an announcement.

“Although our lookups are often driven by events in the news, the dictionary is also a primary resource for information about language itself, and the shifting use of they has been the subject of increasing study and commentary in recent years.”

“English famously lacks a gender-neutral singular pronoun to correspond neatly with singular pronouns like everyone or someone, and as a consequence they has been used for this purpose for over 600 years,” the dictionary writes.

“More recently, though, they has also been used to refer to one person whose gender identity is nonbinary, a sense that is increasingly common in published, edited text, as well as social media and in daily personal interactions between English speakers.”

Finally, Merriam-Webster details how the use of “they” as a singular pronoun has risen in discourse over the year, with Sam Smith coming out as nonbinary and declaring their use of the word, as well as Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal opening up about her gender-nonconforming child who uses the pronoun.