

November 2016

Dear Friends of Affirmations,

One of the things I love about living in Michigan is the changing seasons. I am particularly enthralled with the autumn landscape and the vibrancy of hues that is Mother Nature's miracle. This seasonal transition brings me back to this time last year as I was about to begin my career at Affirmations. While I was sure about my decision to lead Affirmations, I must admit I was apprehensive about the "unknown" of the new job. As I approach my one year anniversary as Executive Director, I am reminded that the what-ifs, fear of the unknown, and self-doubts, accompany many who walk through our doors daily.

Affirmations recognizes that often the people we serve are in the middle of their own transition and looking for validation to chase away their self-doubts and fears. Whether it's an older adult seeking acceptance, a teen contemplating suicide, young adults struggling to find employment or local business looking for sensitivity training, **Affirmations is the constant in the community. It is the safe space with open arms, 12 hours a day...6 days a week...52 weeks a year.**

According to Buzz Feed, more trans women were killed in the U.S. in the past 12 months than any year on record and nowhere do the violence and homicides appear as concentrated as the Palmer Park area in Detroit.

Julisa Abad, Director of Transgender Outreach & Advocacy, Fair Michigan and community advocate says she excited that *"Affirmations is bringing opportunities (specifically) for trans women of color, who have the highest rates of being murdered."*

A national survey of 1.3 Million LGBT identified students revealed:

- Many skipped school far more often because they did not feel safe
- At least a third had been bullied on school property
- More than 40 percent of these students reported that they had seriously considered suicide, and 29 percent had made attempts to do so in the year before they took the survey

The good news, according to trans youth in our community, is that "Affirmations unconditionally welcomes me and makes me feel safe and secure."

Further, it is estimated that there are over **2.4 million LGBT adults over age 50 in the U.S.;** many of whom are at risk for mental health problems, disability, and disease and physical limitations vs. their heterosexual peers. And, Transgender older adults are at risk for poor physical health, disability and depressive symptoms compared to cisgender adults.

"Our LGBT community has an older and somewhat invisible population of gray pioneers. Senior programming at Affirmations is vital to community health and means no one ever feels alone," Rosemary Ruppert, Facilitator, Affirmations Senior Koffee Klatch.

I feel grateful to be a part of such a dynamic organization that continues to rise-up to meet the needs of the LGBTQ population in Metro Detroit, both at the Center and in the Community. We live our mission daily, creating community **safe places and saving lives** through the programs and services provided by Affirmations. We need your time, talent, treasures and resources more than ever. Help us to help our community, whatever their transition may be.

Please support Affirmations and be a Center Partner so that we may continue to offer the critical programs and services needed in our community.

To donate, go to www.goaffirmations.org or use the enclosed reply envelope. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Happy Holidays,



Susan Erspamer, Executive Director