



November 2017

Dear Friends of Affirmations,

While the political climate in 2017 brought a lot of uncertainty to our country and community, Affirmations stepped up to provide much needed support and outreach to the individuals we serve. This year we also engaged in strategic planning which resulted in a 3-year plan; a road map to Affirmations future that will focus on three key areas: PROGRAMS, SUSTAINABILITY and ENGAGEMENT; this includes program expansion beyond our four walls, an increase in effective community partnerships and initiatives that address economic inequality through expanded Workforce Development Programs.

In 2017 Affirmations programs and services experienced significant growth. Our Youth Programs, Workforce and Leadership coupled with the youth drop-in, homecoming and Prom, served over 1000 program participants. Affirmations 26 Support and Discussion Groups were attended over 7000 times throughout 2017. Affirmations also focused on education as a priority and conducted Training and Education to approximately 200 people. Below are comments and anecdotes from two youth; this represents a small fraction of success the youth have achieved.

Aiden shared with us that he "finally felt he could be himself and that Affirmations programs here gave him the confidence to go back to school." His anxiety faded as he spent more time actively involved with Center Youth programs, even planning open mic nights for the Recess Café.*

Another youth, Laney, struggled with any sort of social interaction when they first came to Affirmations. Over the last few months, they have gone from not wanting to be a part of anything to taking on a Leadership role starting a youth-run social media community for activism.*

Affirmations has **strengthened ties with several community partners** by hosting events such as Transcend the Binary's "Sharing our Strength" exhibit. Some of the other partner initiatives include celebrating World AIDS Day through an open mic night with SWERVE/Sex Lab of University of Michigan, Thinking About Tobacco Cessation Programming with those living with HIV with Wayne State HIV Program and Henry Ford Hospital and National Black HIV Testing Day events with Adult Well-Being Services. We've also participated in all metro Detroit Pride events over a three-month span.

The expansion of our Support and Discussion Groups now includes a group for alter-abled (or disabled) individuals within the LGBTQ+ community and a welcoming group for friends and families of LGBTQ+ persons to meet, talk and seek support and advice. We now have dedicated prayer space for LGBTQ+ Muslims and a group, aptly named, Transpir'd, which provides spiritual and philosophical discussion with music and dance as a vehicle for self-experience; this empowers individuals to move beyond their LGBTQ+ identities into whole-personhood – a first for Affirmations.

Community Training and Education Programs have evolved as well. We are going to corporations, healthcare facilities, education institutions and local businesses to provide customized LGBTQ+ information that serves as a foundation, so people can better understand, accept and embrace a diverse workplace and community, especially in an ever-changing discriminatory political landscape. Just this year, Affirmations has trained over 150 emerging medical doctors on LGBTQ+ medical sensitivity.

Affirmations has experienced a **significant increase in Center user participation from 20,000 visits to 30,000.** This monumental expansion and growth throughout 2017 has inspired us to establish a **vision that will drive us for the next 10 years: unlock our community's limitless potential.** Our **mission** is to **support evolving and vibrant communities by empowering and uplifting LGBTQ+ individuals to become the best version of themselves.**

Everything we do will reflect our vision and mission. It is our hope that you will continue to travel this road with us. Your support means we can continue to offer the critical, life-altering programs within the Center and out in the community. Please consider a year-end gift to Affirmations and help us empower and uplift our community. Use the enclosed envelope or go to www.goaffirmations.org/donate.

In gratitude,

Susan Erspamer, Executive Director



*the youths' names were changed to protect their privacy