

Semi-Annual Report on DeFrank Activities – Spring, 2004

By Patrick Soricone, Executive Director

Overview

As part of the By-law changes approved at the September 2003 membership meeting, a written report to the membership will take the place of the March meeting. Below are some of the notable accomplishments, challenges, activities and changes in the past six months here at the Center.

Inadequate space and tight finances have remained the biggest challenges in recent months. Most nights of the week, the Center is beyond maxed-out on its capacity to provide meeting space for our of our community members. This has led to juggling of meeting rooms, and attempting to serve people in less than ideal conditions. This, as much as anything, points to the importance of getting moved into the new building in order to provide proper space for the various groups who currently use the Center, as well as serving those folks who would like to use the Center but can not at this time.

Like most other non-profit agencies and many local businesses, the Center is managing tight finances. Keeping the building renovations moving forward is consuming dollars and stretching cash flow. Thanks to the commitment and generosity of our many of community members, we have been able to maintain renovation progress and deliver quality programs – but we still need more financial help, especially from those folks who have let their membership expire and those use the Center yet do not invest in it.

Events

Recent successful community outings include: beginner kayak trips, rock climbing class, and a ski-bus trip to Lake Tahoe. Based on input from our members, upcoming events will include: camping, whale watching, white water rafting and more.

We launched a volunteer-driven Social Committee, which consists of community members. Their goal is to develop and host more fun community events. Over seventy people turned out for the Pasta Peep luncheon, which was their first big social event. We are looking for diverse volunteers to join in planning the fun. Their next event is a brunch on April 10.

The volunteer-managed and run “Gay” Bingo has continued to provide a very success social outing on Wednesday nights at the Odd Fellows Hall. Bingo went on hiatus for February and will resume in early March at the Center. “Bingo Bob” Jefsen and the team have done an extraordinary job!

National Coming Out Day – October 11th saw the Center host a pancake brunch attended by over eighty people. Highlights included: great food (thanks to Red Rock Grill Catering), fun prizes, meeting new friends and the powerful ‘coming out’ stories that were read during the festivities.

In late October we co-hosted, along with SisterSpirit Bookstore, a great performance by the poetry slamming group, OR-A-TRIX.

On Transgender Remembrance Day November 20th, we helped five high schools participate in remembrance activities. We reached over 12,000 students and teachers. On the next evening as part of remembrance activities, the Center hosted a showing of two films (by Shelly Prevost and Dion Manley) and a discussion on Transgender rights. This event raised several hundred dollars for the Horizon Foundation’s Transgender Education and Awareness Fund.

Workshops

Thanks to financial support from the Community Health Partnership and Susan B Komen Foundation, we hosted a series of Breast Cancer Awareness and Prevention workshops in January. Other recent workshops include: Dating, Makeovers, Spirituality, Coming Out, etc. ‘Good Vibrations’ has launched its first South Bay area series of separate Men and Women’s sex communication workshops. In order to be able to facilitate expansion of our workshop offerings, we developed an infrastructure for teachers in setting up workshops. It can be found on the web site.

Youth Programs

The Youth Program has hosted three dances with a total of over 350 attendees. A new youth-focused newsletter was developed by program participants and launched in November. It is called “Outspoken”. (If you are interested in targeting your financial support for specific youth programming, funding is needed for some of the ideas that the youth have.)

We continue to conduct outreach and advocacy in schools and colleges. Sites of recent trainings include: Milpitas Unified School District, Casa SAY, Andrew Hill HS, Foothill HS, and the City Year Young Leaders Program.

Queer Arts Festival Coming!

In collaboration with Works: San Jose, a downtown art gallery, we developed a joint proposal and were awarded a grant to host a Queer Arts Festival in June. This will consist

of a series of workshops and hands-on art classes for DeFrank members. Art pieces created through this process will be hung in the new Center during the summer months.

Heads Up!

The HIV prevention outreach program is regularly delivered into Wednesday and Thursday night San Jose area nightclub events. This has resulted in providing HIV prevention support to people who otherwise do not attend DeFrank Center events.

The continued collaboration with AACI (Asian Americans for Community Involvement) has resulted in both agencies being to better serve their clientele. The current session of psychosocial educational groups is almost complete, and as with the other seven recent sessions, we can see demonstrable attitudinal and behavior change by participants.

AIDSNet Sentry

Over 350 men have been served since AIDSnet Sentry Project started in July 2003, surpassing our first contract goals to reach 240 men within one full year. Santa Clara County HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office approved a revision of the contract with new targets of serving 500 men. We are on track to meet these goals.

In December, the AIDSnet Sentry Project launched its new website, [HYPERLINK "http://www.aidsnetsentry.org/" www.aidsnetsentry.org](http://www.aidsnetsentry.org/) This was developed in order to accommodate participants for other important questions and information. The website can be found on Internet searches, chat rooms, the Billy DeFrank LGBT Center's email blast and other LGBT websites. Beginning in March, the AIDSnet Sentry website now provides HIV/AIDS/STD resources for all California counties, and not only resources found in Santa Clara County.

Tobacco Awareness

The American Legacy Foundation funded anti-tobacco project has come to a close. In February, two hundred surveys were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the ad campaign. Preliminary findings show high degree of awareness of the campaign, and a significant impact on attitudes held by smokers. The Center is trying to secure funding to continue services with a smoking cessation program.

Vintage Program

The Vintage Program (serving folks 50+ in age) continues to blossom. The program is guided by the Advisory Council, and had a staffing transition recently. Ron Schoof has stepped in to provide staff support to the program. Volunteers from the vintage program hosted two holiday socials, one at Halloween and another during December's Holiday

season. Winter's inclement weather has brought the exercise activities indoors, with emphasis on an aerobic-style exercise program. The Vintage Program has been gaining new participants nearly every week.

Technology

In September, the Center added a part-time tech support contract worker. This was done in order to improve internal and external electronic communications, and reduce the extensive burden that had been placed on our volunteer team. Being able to accomplish more, with fewer staff than in past years, has required us to be more efficient in our use of technology and to upgrade our equipment. Further, community members have come to rely on our excellent web site as usage has skyrocketed. (Kudos to the volunteer team who keeps it up-to-date.)

Support and Activity Groups

In response to the growing numbers of our constituents with children, we started a family e-community to bring LGBT families together to share resources. A survey has been conducted to target the needs of this segment of our community. We anticipate providing a family-friendly space in the new building to help meet these needs.

In an attempt to better serve newcomers, several of the other ongoing support groups were restructured, including Coming Out and the Women's Support Groups. Also, in response to inquiries from young people, we are launching a new Trans and Gender Questioning Youth Support Group for teenagers.

We launched a '30something' Women's Group that has been drawing more than thirty women at each event, and ten at each potluck event.

The Counseling program is struggling to keep up with demand for services. There is so few sliding scale counseling services available in this area that are competent to serve the LGBT community. We are back up to offering three counselors and working hard to reduce the waiting list for service.

Securing Resources

In November, we converted from solely using fundraising consultants to having an onsite Resource Development Director. This was done to focus on not only on finding new dollars for programs and services, but also to better mobilize and serve our volunteer workforce. Additionally, as government funding cutbacks loom, our management team is working aggressively to secure continued and new program funding dollars.

Summary

The volunteers, Board and staff at the Center are working harder than ever to deliver quality programs and activities. Our community is quite fortunate to have such a great team serving on their behalf. While we have accomplished much this past six months, we have so much more to do to truly be that place we can all home. Moving into the new building will bring new opportunities to better serve our community – as well as new challenges. We will strive to deliver on this promise: Friendship. Community. Support. Fun. “Home is Where DeFrank is”.