

EQUALITY TOLEDO

# Newsletter

## About ET

EqualityToledo works for equality for all Ohioans regardless of their marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression through education, anti-defamation efforts, and activism.

## Our Work

### SAFE SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Safe Schools Project strives, through education and advocacy, to create a culture of safety that will make Ohio schools free from harassment, bullying, and other forms of violence against any student or group of students.

### FAITH & FAIRNESS INITIATIVE

EqualityToledo created the Faith and Fairness initiative to promote understanding and empower fair-minded people of faith to speak from their rich faith traditions about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender equality.

**EDUCATING** our community about issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and unmarried persons.

**BUILDING COALITIONS** of individuals and groups in Northwest Ohio who share our mission.

**NETWORKING** and cooperating with other local, state, and national non-profit groups that are dedicated to working for equality.

## Board of Directors

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## Contact Us

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## Happy Spring!

Happy Spring. It's a beautiful time of year in Toledo with all the blooming trees and spring flowers. It's also a very busy time of year for EqualityToledo. I will be brief this newsletter to allow space for other contributors who will share of our activities. But before I close we are excited to announce Toledo Pride 2010.



EqualityToledo is working with Outskirts and other community volunteers to plan Toledo Pride 2010. Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 28th and plan on joining us for a day of festivities at the Erie Street Market. More information will follow.

Hope to see you at the Old West End festival and also at Toledo Pride 2010!

~ Sherry Tripepi  
Executive Director, EqualityToledo

## Upcoming Events

### LOBBY DAY 2010

Wednesday, May 19  
9:00am - 4:00pm

We will be car pooling from Toledo leaving at 6:00 am. If you are interested in joining us, please email [info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org)

### THE OLD WEST END FESTIVAL

Saturday June 5th & Sunday June 6th

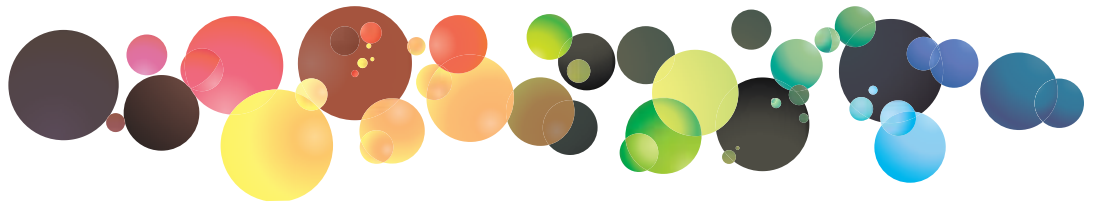
Volunteers needed to staff our information table, please email [info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org)

### TOLEDO PRIDE

Saturday August, 28th  
Erie Street Market

Volunteers needed to assist with planning, please email [info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org)





## Opportunities to Assist Youth in our Community Help Keep RAY Going

Rainbow Area Youth (RAY) is a non-profit organization that seeks to provide socialization, adult and peer support, an advocacy for the region's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. Founded in January of 1998, we have served hundreds of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 from more than 25 different schools in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. GLBTQ youth are at a much greater risk than their peers, with increased incidents of suicide, violence, discrimination, truancy, and even homelessness. Among our own youth members we have heard desperate stories of serious physical abuse, violence in school, job discrimination, and deep depression. Yet despite these and a host of other adversities, our youth have shown a resiliency and passion for life that are generated from existing in an unwelcoming world. RAY has been able to play a part in many teens' transformation from troubled and

depressed to becoming vibrant contributors to their schools, communities, and families.

Despite the successes RAY has had over the past 12 years, we know that there are hundreds of more kids we aren't reaching. We are also keenly aware that a weekly support group meeting is just one of the things these kids need. Therefore, we are reaching out to our friends in the community to help support us by making donations of any kind to RAY. Every week we offer activities, a GLBTQ media library, games, snacks, member-led topics, and discussion for the 20-30 current members, as well as try to dispense Safer Sex information/items, and are in need of anything that would allow us to continue to provide for them. If you are able to give a monetary donation, no sum is too small. For those of you that wish to donate their time, we need adult volunteers (AVs) who are willing to donate at least 2 hours a month

and are at least 24 years old; initially we do ask that you attend 3 meetings before committing to be an AV. For additional information, visit [www.toledoray.org](http://www.toledoray.org), or contact Executive Director Brenda Spurlin at [laluna@buckeye-express.com](mailto:laluna@buckeye-express.com) or me at [shannonfrye84@yahoo.com](mailto:shannonfrye84@yahoo.com). Please help us keep RAY going until there is no longer a need for us to exist.

Thank you,

~ **Shannon R. Frye**  
*Rainbow Area Youth  
and EqualityToledo  
Board Member*

## Become a foster or adoptive parent

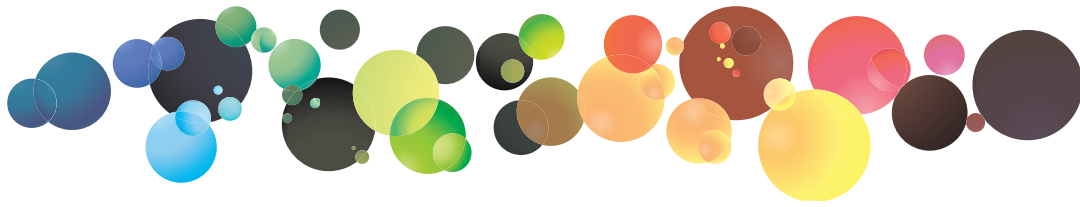
Lucas County Children Services is seeking loving individuals and couples interested in becoming foster and adoptive parents. The greatest needs are for families willing to foster straight and LGBTQ youth, as well as for individuals or couples willing to adopt groups of two or more brothers and sisters, older children and children with special needs. We currently have several sibling groups of two to six young children with special needs who are awaiting adoption.

While the agency's goal is to help parents provide a safe home for their children, sometimes, family crises get in the way. Only after we exhaust efforts to solve those problems do we break the link between parents and their children and seek adoptive families to become new "forever families."

Becoming a foster or adoptive parent is easier than you think. LCCS provides the required 36 hours of training free of charge. You can be married, single or in a relationship; can own or rent your home; and can work outside the home. You don't have to earn a lot of money; just enough to support yourself. We'll conduct a safety inspection of your home and background checks on everyone living there. Finally, you'll receive financial support for the child you foster or adopt, and should you adopt, post-adoption assistance to help your family welcome its new members.

If you have room in your heart and home for children who have been victims of abuse or neglect, please call the LCCS Adoption Recruiter at 419-213-3336. You can view profiles of our waiting children online at [www.lucaskids.net](http://www.lucaskids.net).

~ **Julie Malkin**, *Lucas County Children Services*



## Toledo's Transgender Community Begins to Come Out

**Seriously, you're not the only transgender person in Toledo. I promise.**

For many years, transgender individuals who live in the Toledo area thought that they were the lone transgender-identified person in the area. On Sunday, February 28, 2010, these individuals realized that they were in fact, not alone.



The first meeting of the newly formed Toledo Transgender Support Group was held at The Village Church and was facilitated by Shane Morgan, Founder and Chair of TransOhio. There were thirty-eight attendees spanning gender identities and sexual orientations, in addition to a diversity of ages and socio-economic spectrums. "When new groups form, you never know what the turnout is going to be like. Sometimes there are just a few people, sometimes there's just enough space for everybody to sit comfortably. Almost 40 people came to the first meeting, and that tells us that there's a large need for support and services in Toledo and its surrounding neighborhoods."

The initial meeting was scheduled to run for 2 hours, but ran over by nearly an hour. Topics of discussion ranged from coming out to family and at the workplace, job discrimination, relationship issues and disclosure, religion, experiences growing up and being labeled by mainstream society as "abnormal." I was thrilled to

see the large number in attendance at our first Transgender support group, which I believe speaks to the need in our community which we are attempting to begin to meet," says Sherry Tripepi, Executive Director of Equality Toledo, "It's been an honor and privilege to collaborate with TransOhio and support our transgender community. My hope is this is the first of many groups and other collaborative efforts."

The Toledo Transgender Support Group will be held on the following Sundays at 2pm:

- May 23, 2010
- June 27, 2010
- July 25, 2010
- August 22, 2010

All meetings run from 2pm-4pm and are held at The Village Church, 3992 Monroe Street, Toledo, OH 43606. The Village Church is at the corner of West Central Avenue & Monroe Street in Toledo, Ohio.

Drop-ins welcome! Email [TransOhio@gmail.com](mailto:TransOhio@gmail.com) if you have questions or need additional information.

*This group is a collaboration between TransOhio, EqualityToledo and The Village Church. For information, visit [transohio.org](http://transohio.org), [www.equalitytoledo.org](http://www.equalitytoledo.org) or [www.villageohio.org](http://www.villageohio.org).*

~ Shane Morgan

# EQUALITY @ WORK

The Equality at Work Committee has been reconstituted and has begun to again meet regularly. The Committee's mission statement is as follows: "The Equality@Work Project educates area businesses and individuals and advocates for all employers in Toledo and the surrounding geographical area to implement full and inclusive LGBT non-discrimination and non-harassment policies and practices in their workplaces".

Our primary focus has been on identifying employers which need assistance in implementing all-inclusive anti-discrimination policies for the workplace and toward promoting the offering of domestic partnership benefits to all employees. In that regard, we are also in the process of writing a draft anti-discrimination policy to serve as a model for employers who are in need of assistance. We are also conducting a survey of area insurance companies to formulate a list of those carriers who are willing to provide domestic partnership benefits. While there are many more issues that we have discussed, our energies have been largely devoted to the above.

The committee is still looking for others who may have an interest in serving with us. If you'd like to volunteer your services please contact EqualityToledo and we'll be happy to put you to work.

~ Bill Takacs

## Lucas County Moves Equality Forward



In a first for a local government in Northwest Ohio, the Lucas County Commissioners have unanimously approved domestic partnership benefits for all county employees.

In March of 2010, local government began offering health care benefits to the partners and children of all of its employees, without concern for their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is an amazing success for LGBT equal rights!

Thanks to ongoing conversations with EqualityToledo, the Commissioners were convinced that now is the right time to ensure that all of its employees are treated equally. According to county officials, at least 12 different families took steps toward equal coverage for their families.

The Commissioners have previously outlawed discrimination in county employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Lucas County

is the second county in Ohio to offer domestic partnership benefits, joining Franklin County (Columbus) whose benefits also began at the start of the year.

Please take a moment to thank the Commissioners for standing up for equality by emailing the Board at <http://co.lucas.oh.us/forms.aspx?fid=41> Choose "Board of County Commissioners" in the Department list.

Also, if you are a county employee or know a county employee who wants more information about this new benefit, please have them call the Commissioners office at 419-213-4817 for more information.

EqualityToledo will next be reaching out to the leadership at the City of Toledo and working to move equality forward in this important local government as well.

~ David Mann

**kroger**  
**community**  
**rewards**

## It's Time to Re-enroll in the Kroger Community Rewards Program

April 1, 2010 starts the new year for the Kroger Community Rewards Program and all current members of the program must re-enroll in order to continue to earn funds for EqualityToledo.

The Kroger Rewards Program allows Kroger shoppers to donate money to EqualityToledo just by swiping their Kroger card each time they shop. That means that you don't actually donate the money, but Kroger does it for you when you shop at their store and swipe your Kroger card.

It's easy for members to enroll or re-enroll in Kroger Community Rewards. Visit [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com), click on "Ohio" to sign up for a Kroger.com account or click on "Already enrolled? Sign-in" if you already have an account and follow their directions. All participants must have a valid online account at Kroger.com to participate. You can sign up at anytime, but the earlier you do the more money EqualityToledo earns. Thanks again for your continued support!