



P.O. Box 1850, Modesto, CA 95353 ▲ (209)567-3121

An estimated 25,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people live in Stanislaus County and surrounding areas. All too often, they cannot find the resources, support or community they need or desire—or find it is all too limited. They must travel out of the area for activities and events that speak to their lives. Some may even move out of the Valley to places where they feel more welcome and their unique needs may be met more readily. Those who can't leave yet can't find the support they need to lead healthy and productive lives may find themselves in marginalized places, at risk for substance abuse and more likely to contract HIV/AIDS and STDs. Others may simply live in relative isolation, unable to find a safe and comfortable place in which they feel a sense of belonging.

The Stanislaus PRIDE Center (People Respecting Individuality, Diversity and Equality) was founded in 2005 to address these and other issues facing the local GLBT community.

The Stanislaus PRIDE Center

The mission of the Stanislaus PRIDE Center (SPC) is to provide informational, educational and cultural resources in a safe and positive environment to support, strengthen and celebrate the lives of GLBT persons in the greater Modesto area. In addition to adding new resources, we aim to centralize those currently available. We are committed to bringing together and working with allied groups to reveal the true and diverse face of our community. Above all, we seek to foster an environment in which people can be who they are, freely strive to enrich their lives and contribute productively to the place they call Home.

There is no doubt that our region needs such a resource. In a 2004 survey of GLBT people and allies, a community center was named a needed GLBT resource by nearly 67% of respondents. At a meeting held in January 2005, local GLBT leaders confirmed these results. The SPC is now in the process of conducting a more specific survey of needs to help us prioritize, understand and meet the specific needs of our GLBT community.

Based on initial feedback, we anticipate providing programs and services such as:

- Support groups and peer counseling
- Informational media about issues of concern to GLBT individuals
- Referral services to local professionals, businesses and organizations

- Health information, including information on HIV/AIDS, STDs and safer sex
- Educational outreach to businesses, organizations and schools
- Information on events and news of interest to the local GLBT community
- Cultural events, including readings, lectures, film, theater and music
- Social and other community-building events

In developing and providing these programs and services, we are especially sensitive to meeting the needs of ethnic/racial minorities and the disabled—groups long neglected and grossly underserved within the GLBT community as a whole. Understanding that no one is equal until all are equal, the Stanislaus PRIDE Center is devoted to ensuring fair treatment and access for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity/race, age, religion or disability.

Current Projects and Development Plans

We continue to develop our referral list and compile informational resources. Already, we have sent over 1100 letters to regional businesses and organizations, inviting them to list in the *SPC Equality Pages*, our directory of GLBT-friendly businesses, professionals and organizations. Encouraged by the 8% positive response rate (more than double the standard for direct mail), we have future mailings planned for the first months of 2006. The directory is currently available as a PDF on our website, stanislauspridecenter.com, and a print version is being planned. We are also working on transforming the online version from a static file to a dynamic, searchable database.

Much of the information and referrals we have collected are also available on our website, which has been online since August 2005. Along with the *Equality Pages*, we offer a community calendar, local GLBT news and links to regional and national resources. The site also lets people get involved with the Center by joining our mailing list, volunteering and making financial contributions. Such involvement will help ensure that the SPC is a *community* center in the truest sense.

Beginning in February, the SPC will host a transgender discussion and support group. Run by transgender people for transgender people, the group will meet twice monthly and be an important first step in filling the needs of this vastly underserved population.

Several other programs are in the early planning stages. These include:

- Facilitating low-cost/free counseling for GLBTs in need
- Promoting educational outreach to businesses and organizations to help them understand how they can better serve their employees, clients, students and members
- Hosting a series of monthly social events to help bring members of the community together

One of our most important goals is to establish a physical facility that will serve as a central hub for the GLBT community. Here, we will provide meeting space for new and

current GLBT groups, and space for cultural and community events hosted by the Stanislaus PRIDE Center. Until then, programs requiring meeting space will be conducted in local facilities willing to donate space or provide it at low cost. We aim to secure a physical facility by the end of 2006.

Meantime, members of the Board of Directors have been meeting with local organizations and building coalitions in our attempt to centralize all GLBT-relevant resources. We also hosted an informational program and reception in October 2005. Many of the 130 guests subsequently signed up as volunteers or made generous financial contributions to the SPC. Additionally, we have an ongoing publicity campaign to further get the word out about our mission and vision. Our results so far include feature stories in *The Modesto Bee*, *Bay Area Reporter*, and *Stanislaus Connections*.

In April 2006, we will begin publishing *PRIDE in Print*. This quarterly newsletter will serve to keep our donors and supporters up-to-date with SPC developments. It will also be distributed at GLBT-friendly businesses and organizations in the region to increase awareness of the SPC and its programs.

Our programs and projects will continue to be run by the Board members, committee members and volunteer staff. We anticipate naming an Executive Director early in the 2006 fiscal year and converting it from a volunteer to paid position in the 2007 fiscal year.

Our Governance

The Stanislaus PRIDE Center was founded by its first Board of Directors:

- Lisa Verigin, President
- Jeff Gianelli, Vice-President
- Keith Highiet, Chief Financial Officer
- Leslie Highiet, Secretary
- Bobbie Felser, Events Coordinator
- Linda Gianelli, Board Member
- Marilyn Mettler, Board Member
- Lewis Woodward, Board Member
- Shirley Woodward, Board Member

Collectively, our board has experience in business, finance, law, personnel management, education and communications. All members have previous nonprofit experience, including the establishment of other nonprofit organizations. Officers are elected by the board to an unlimited number of one year terms. Board members are not financially compensated for their service. R.J. Moriconi serves as Advisor to the Board.

Currently, three committees handle the essential functions and duties of the Stanislaus PRIDE Center:

- Programs and Services
- Financial Development
- Communications

At least one board member serves on each committee, joined by community members with the skills, enthusiasm and dedication to help the center grow. Committee chairs are board-approved and appointed by the Board President. All committee members serve an unlimited number of one year terms. Chairs report to the full Board of Directors.

Additionally, an Executive Committee has been established to advise the President, who is currently charged with conducting the SPC's daily affairs.

Our Financial Structure

The Stanislaus PRIDE Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation and registered California public benefit corporation.

As an emerging public trust, fiscal responsibility, accountability and stability are all crucial to every member of our board. The first step towards upholding these values was to commit to being a 100%-giving board—a principle codified in the SPC's bylaws. As a start-up, our initial operating funds have come from board members and a number of community members who believe strongly in our mission. The legal help we have received in the matter of incorporating and securing our tax-exempt status has also been generously donated.

We have since built upon our start-up funds by launching our first direct mail campaign, Jump Start 2006. All monies received in this campaign will go to our general fund and be used to conduct the SPC's programs and operations. In December 2005, we further built upon this fund by providing volunteer gift-wrappers at Barnes & Noble in Modesto.

Meanwhile, a capital campaign is being planned to secure funding for the establishment of our physical facility. The campaign has already been seeded with a \$943 contribution from the Owl Empire of Stanislaus County, Inc.

To avoid over-reliance on any one source of funding, our CFO and Financial Development Committee have created a comprehensive fundraising structure. Our projected income lines include but are not limited to private donations, corporate sponsorships, public and private grants and fundraising events. Our 2005 budget showed a surplus for our first fiscal year. For subsequent fiscal years, we will establish a Contingency and Reserve Fund. At the end of each year, surplus from this fund will be transferred to a Trust Fund, towards the goal of providing a long-term, stable source of income for the SPC.

In 2006, our first full-calendar fiscal year, Stanislaus PRIDE Center has budgeted more than half of expenses to be used to pay for programs & services that we offer. We are

committed to raising this to at least 65% in the 2007 fiscal year (our third year of operation).

The annual budget for the Stanislaus PRIDE Center is always available for public review and will be available on our website.

A Dream Becomes Reality

For years, individuals have dreamt of establishing a local GLBT community center. Now, a group has come together to make this dream a reality through the Stanislaus PRIDE Center. For too long, the local GLBT community has lacked a focal point. It has been diffuse. The Stanislaus PRIDE Center aims to provide the central community hub it has lacked. And by bringing together and enhancing the well-being of the local GLBT community, we can also bolster that of the general community as a whole.

We hope you will join us in our mission to provide the resources and services that will make this vision a reality.

Revised 2/16/06