

ORLANDO YOUTH ALLIANCE

OYA!

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2016



#LOVEISLOVE #ORLANDOSTRONG #ONEPULSE

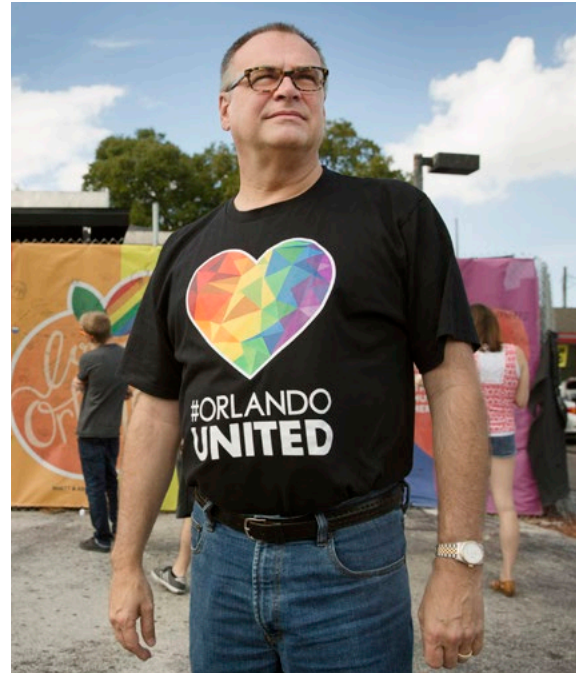
WE ARE ORLANDO

President's Message

2016. What can I say?

2016 in Orlando will be forever remembered as the year of the Pulse massacre. Normal will never be the same. The year was going along fine for OYA. Weekly support groups were well attended. Babes in Bonnets at the Parliament House raised a record \$22,000. Over 50 gathered together at the OYA Family Reunion at the Magic Kingdom in June. And then the shooting. OYA volunteers went into hyper mode – texting and calling to check on every youth member. We offered a support group the afternoon of June 12. I cannot speak more highly of our board members. They responded to every media request (over 30), sent email thank yous to hundreds of donors from around the world. They coordinated mental health & grief counselors & police security to be at all of our support groups for a month. LYA's Polk County Pride was just six days after the shooting. It had record attendance, but having police at each corner of the park was a stark reminder of the times we live in. The youth and the adults are still haunted by the tragedy but healing and support is what OYA has been all about for 26 years. A special thank you from me to all those who showed compassion to OYA and our community during 2016.

Michael Slaymaker
President



Photographer: Ola Torkelsson
www.olatorkelsson.com

Contact Us

We look forward to hearing from you!

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40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT. OYA is here to help.

He is 19. Income came from male dancing. He was living in a car with his mother. The HIV test came back positive. OYA encouraged him to attend their support group. While at OYA he learned of various resources. He now resides in a shelter for homeless people with HIV that he wouldn't have found without OYA.

A member of SYA for years, finds his family evicted from their home with nowhere to live. Leadership of OYA meet with the parents and introduce them to resources they didn't know existed. OYA offers financial assistance to tie them over this bump. They signed a lease on a new place right before Christmas. Everyone is safe and healthy.



New OYA t-shirt designed by the youth

Babes in Bonnets

Carmella Marcella Garcia's Babes in Bonnets 2016 was the most successful yet, raising more than \$22,000 to support the Orlando Youth Alliance. Parliament House and returning emcees Miss Darcel Stevens and Blue Star returned to host an auction for extravagant bonnets and exciting prizes donated by our friends in the community. OYA youth once again created and modeled their own bonnets, joined by some of Florida's most fabulous drag performers. Thank you to Parliament House and all who attended and supported the event!



Miss Darcel, Blue Star and Miss Sammy

Brandon and Nicole at O-YES

Brandon Kiley and Nicole Pinto, LGBTQ+ youth leaders+ OYA members, shared their experiences, hopes, and strategies for empowerment during a panel at the third annual Orlando Youth Empowerment Summit. They addressed youth, educators, parents, City of Orlando officials, and community and faith leaders during a day of education, dialogue, and relationship-building among all those invested in Central Florida LGBTQ+ youth.



Brandon & friends

Petrified Forest

More than 20 youth enjoyed a spooktacular adventure at the Petrified Forest haunted house tours in Altamonte Springs, with several touring behind the scenes and hanging out with the zombies, clowns, monsters, and madmen. They capped off the night with some tasty Italian Ice.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

OYA attended and participated in Valencia College's annual Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 17, 2017.

Organizations providing services and resources to the LGBT+ community were invited to table their programs to the students and faculty at Valencia. Tables were set up outside the main buildings to capture the attentions of those passing by to learn more about the remembrance and the agencies. As the afternoon faded into dusk, those attending were invited inside for pizza while the program got started.

The program was a series of individuals telling their story of growing up as a person who is transgender. At times, the stories were not easy. Coming out can be hard for some to share. The stories were intermixed with entertainment provided by others who are also transgender.

At 9 PM, the stories ended though the conversation never died. Everyone moved outside for the candle light vigil to remember all of those who have been killed over their gender identity in the past year.

OYA Interns

OYA had two interns over the past year to help with social media platforms for our youth. Our first intern, Hector Constanzo, was student at University of West Florida. Hector was pursuing a BA in Communication and reached out to OYA for an internship over the summer semester. Hector was a perfect addition to our marketing efforts to get the word out about OYA on the social media platforms youth are using most. During his summer in Central Florida, Hector connected with our youth, set up social media platforms being used on Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. He regularly promoted OYA activities and meetings to keep everyone in the know about OYA.

Our second intern, Emily Hope, joined us for a semester during the fall. She was attending college and one of her final courses was an internship with OYA. She, too, had a passion for social media and picked up where Hector left off.

Emily not only attended all of OYA's events and social activities but took many pictures and videos which she later posted on OYA's social media platforms. Emily even continued coming to OYA events and activities once her semester ended. She was dedicated to our mission and wanted to share the happenings of OYA with others.

OYA was fortunate to have the help of two young students who wanted an internship that would make a difference. By working on OYA's social media platforms and getting them up and running, both did just that. They certainly made a difference by promoting OYA to Central Florida, so we could be shared.



Venezuelan Delegation

The Orlando Youth Alliance was honored to welcome a delegation from Venezuela in August. We enjoyed sharing with Edgar, Ana Margarita, Lowing and Mauricio. The visit was organized through the World Affairs Council and the US Dept of State International Visitor Leadership Program.

Art Therapy

The Florida Art Therapy Association event was a terrific gathering where youth were able to come together and express themselves through different art forms and techniques. They learned new methods of art and learned how just doing something as simple as a scribbled line could release a large amount of unwanted stress. We had a great turn out for this event. There was laughing, messy hands, and joy across the room. Two volunteers came in who specialize in art therapy to assist with the event. One of the favorite activities was the mandala creations. Many used crayons, some used glitter and stencils, but each and every one came out spectacular. There were also activities such as the blind fold creation, where youth were told to close their eyes and randomly draw a line on a piece of paper until told to stop. From there everyone helped each other in discovering what was in the mess of tangled lines. The event was terrific thanks to our volunteers and youth that came out to join.

To the right is a photo of the artwork created by our youth. It is made up of broken colored glass. Their message is "even when things are broken we can find beauty".



Art therapy after Pulse



FBI

In December, two Victim Specialist FBI Special Agents attended a Seminole Youth Alliance meeting to discuss cyber crimes and protecting yourself online. Twenty youth attended the presentation.

Transgender Education

In September, OYA Board Members and volunteers held a half-day seminar led by Gina Duncan, Transgender Inclusion Director for Equality Florida. Topics included gender identify and expression, societal inclusion, rethinking sex-gender-sexuality, and risks of transitioning.

OYA Receives Bequest

Long time friend of OYA, Professor Michael Moriarty, passed away in December 2015. He included OYA in his will. His generosity will help our organization grow and help hundreds more youth. You too can include OYA in your will or trust. To learn how log onto www.orlandoyouthalliance.org/donate

Recreation & Social Activities are Important

In August, OYA sponsored a day of fun at Paradise Cove. Thirteen youth spent the day kayaking, jet skiing, riding a tube behind a ski boat, and paddleboarding. It was a beautiful day to spend on the water and the youth were extremely appreciative of the end-of-summer event!



Scholarships

The Orlando Youth Alliance (OYA) awarded five college scholarships to area youth. Recipients of the scholarships were:

Emily Mound (Seminole State College)

Samantha Fuentes (University of Central Florida)

Allen Barrett (University of Central Florida)

London Nunn (Lake Sumter State College) and

Hector Constanzo (University of West Florida).

Nearly \$7,000 was awarded. The OYA Scholarship Program is grateful to the generosity of **Bill Neighbors** and **Tim Warzecha** and the **Walt Disney Company Foundation** for their gifts to help fund a major portion of the program. OYA has been providing financial assistance for education to its members for over eight years.



Grants to Gay-Straight Alliances

In 2016, OYA joined forces with GLSEN Orlando to provide grants of up to \$500 to each of the following schools: Lake Nona, Colonial, Cypress Creek, Titusville, and Leesburg. The grant money was used by the GSA clubs at these schools to fund various club sponsored events and for some to print t-shirts and purchase other marketing tools to help spread the word about these valuable clubs.



Library Donation

After the Pulse tragedy, **Paula Yoo**, a writer from Hollywood contacted writers and book dealers from the US, Canada and United Kingdom to send books to the Orlando Youth Alliance. Our youth now have an extensive library of LGBTQ positive books. Thank you, Paula and all who donated.



Lakeland Youth Alliance

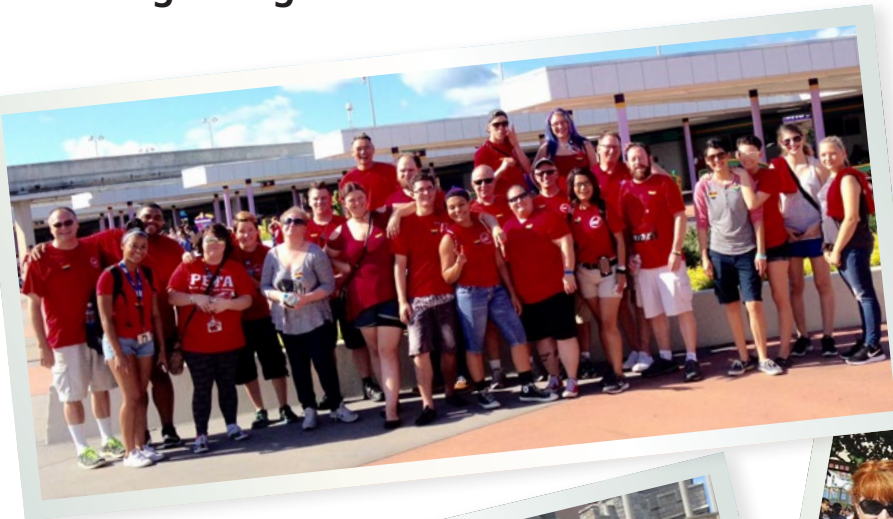
The Lakeland Youth Alliance has had a busy year of growing. Regular attendance has increased from 4 to 20. Many of its members have taken on leadership roles in their schools GSA's and other clubs.

The youth have participated in lots of events in the area, such as **Gay Days at Disney**, **Polk Pride in the Park**, the annual **Lakeland Christmas Parade** and team building/community outings.

Website: www.lakelandyouthalliance.org



Family Reunion 2016 at the Magic Kingdom



THANK YOU!

OYA Speaks at Social Workers Seminar

This fall, the Human Rights Campaign sponsored a seminar for social workers and others that deal with the foster care system in the State of Florida. The meeting was designed to help provide better care for LGBTQ+ youth in the foster care system. Orlando Youth Alliance was invited to speak during a lunch session about the types of services we provide for LGBTQ+ youth in our area. Jeff Speicher attended the event on behalf of OYA. He spoke about the services that we provide, the activities planned for the youth, and our mission in service to the LGBTQ+ youth in our community. We distributed newsletters and information cards to the participants. Many of the participants were interested in finding similar groups in their areas, and the local participants were encouraged to send any youth to meetings. We also discussed the needs of LGBTQ+ youth in foster care, and how we as a community can help meet these needs.

Come Out With Pride

Exactly five (5) months after the largest mass shooting in American history, 150,000 people from across the world gathered in Orlando to celebrate Orlando Pride and honor the lives of the 49 victims. OYA participated in the event by both marching in the parade and by hosting a booth at Lake Eola. Approximately 700 interested youth stopped by our booth and received information on OYA and our mission. Following the Pulse massacre, interest in the organization has increased as youth look for ways to cope with increased anxiety and fear. But Orlando Pride was an opportunity for the youth of OYA to come together and celebrate who they are and everything we have in common.

OYA youth marching in Come Out With Pride parade



OYA 2016 Donor Listing

Over \$10,000

Michael Moriarty

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Disney Worldwide Services
Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation
Gopal Grandhige
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September 20th Fund
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\$2,500 - \$4,999

Don Granatstein & Susan Unger
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The Harry Potter Alliance
The Parliament House
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\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Paula Yoo

\$500 - \$999

Abdu Ali
Big Boy Pride
Jim Bowden
Andrew Bracker
Broadway United Methodist Church
Amy Cantley
Joe Colon
Dubsdread County Club
Funky Monkey Wine Company
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Joel Gran
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The LGBT Center
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Dixie Todd
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George Wallace
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\$100 - \$249

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Madeline Boyce
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Support after Pulse

OYA was extremely grateful for the love and support we received after the Pulse Massacre in June of 2016. It was deeply needed after the tragic hit our community took with the 49 lives lost and thousands effected. The community that arises after this was what all got us through it and we couldn't have done it without you.

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