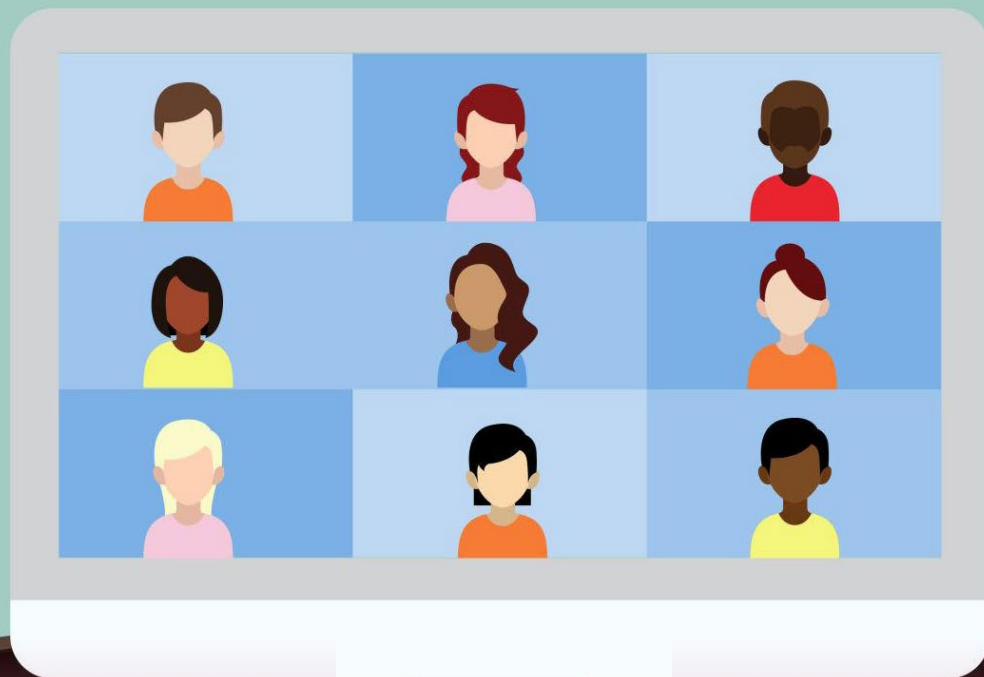




**ORLANDO  
YOUTH  
ALLIANCE**

***ANNUAL  
NEWSLETTER  
2020***



## PRESIDENT & CEO'S MESSAGE

The bottom of our stationery reads "the children are our future." As we work with, dialogue with and mentor the youth in our support groups, we can see the hope, the spark, the creativity and the energy. The Orlando Youth Alliance knows that we are helping to develop the leaders of tomorrow. In 2020, the Orlando Youth Alliance made the adjustment to virtual. This brought with it challenges and opportunities. Some of our youth who regularly attended started voicing "Zoom-fatigue" after being on virtual platforms all day for school and at nights for OYA. But being virtual did allow us to connect and help youth from outside our normal geography. We interacted with youth from South Carolina, Texas and Canada. They all had friends in Central Florida or plan to move here after the pandemic.

In our 30th year we continued to rise up. Our dedicated volunteers gave hundreds of hours to create those safe spaces for our youth. We thank them for their time and dedication. Our financial health is strong. We appreciate our donors who believe in our mission.

We facilitated over 108 support group meetings throughout the year; hosted Friday night drop-ins to provide a safe and social setting for youth to gather until that pandemic came along; coordinated engaging virtual activities for our youth to celebrate themselves and build that very important network of support; provided grants to fund the creation and ongoing missions of Gay-Straight Alliances/Gender Sexuality Alliances throughout Central Florida; and provided three scholarships to LGBTQ+ youth to support their post-secondary academic pursuits. On behalf of our Board, volunteers, and over 100 Central Florida youth with whom we have the privilege of working, thank you for your continued support as we pursue our mission to facilitate the development of LGBTQ+ youth and provide a safe space for them to find the support they need to thrive.

With thanks,



**Patrick Howell**  
President



**Michael Slaymaker**  
Chief Executive Officer

## MISSION

The mission of the Orlando Youth Alliance and its chapters is to provide a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth in Central Florida.

## BASIC OVERVIEW OF OYA

The Orlando Youth Alliance has offered a weekly peer-to-peer support group for LGBTQ youth in Central Florida since 1990. Today, three weekly groups are offered: Orlando, Lakeland and Longwood. Monthly social, educational and recreational activities occur to further help our youth to develop a core group of friends and peer supporters. In addition to the support group and activities, OYA provides LGBT History & Culture classes, scholarships, mental health referrals and career exploration. Numerous professionals have spoken to our youth about their careers and the options that await them. Developing this nucleus of friends is the key to never feeling alone. Since LGBTQ youth are five times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual classmates, it is vital that we provide the services of OYA to our area youth.

**The impact of OYA:** Over the past 30 years we have helped 2,000 youth and only lost one to suicide.

## CONTACT US

We look forward to hearing from you!

PO Box 536944  
Orlando, FL 32853-6944  
Voicemail: 407-244-1222  
[info@orlandoyouthalliance.org](mailto:info@orlandoyouthalliance.org)

[www.orlandoyouthalliance.org](http://www.orlandoyouthalliance.org)  
[www.seminoleyouthalliance.org](http://www.seminoleyouthalliance.org)  
[www.lakelandyouthalliance.org](http://www.lakelandyouthalliance.org)



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President**  
Patrick Howell, Esquire

**Vice President**  
Nicole Coco

**Secretary**  
Jeff Speicher, DVM

**Treasurer**  
Wesley Howell, CPA

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Michael Slaymaker, MHR

**Board Members**  
Rick Claggett

Harriette Georgiou

Brandon Kiley

Chris Nault, M.A., LMHC

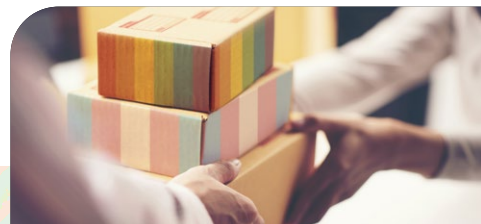
Laura Stiles

**LGBTQ YOUTH ARE FIVE TIMES MORE  
LIKELY TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE COMPARED  
THEIR HETEROSEXUAL CLASSMATES.**



## COME OUT WITH PRIDE

Orlando Youth Alliance youth always look forward to marching in the Come Out with Pride parade and visiting all the booths around Lake Eola. OYA did have a billboard truck in the 2020 COWP caravan. We encouraged our youth to watch the parade safely and view the virtual events. To make sure this pride opportunity was as memorable as possible, OYA allowed each youth member to order a flag that showed the colors of how they identify. **The Pride Packets** were mailed to the youth. During our online Zoom meetings we can see the flags adorning the walls of our youth.



## SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The Orlando Youth Alliance awarded three scholarships to area youth. Here are the mid-year reports from our scholarship recipients.



**Terrell Jackson**  
New York University

.....

This semester has been pretty successful thus far. I have one more week till I can break in the hot cocoa and Christmas lights! I do school remotely so it has helped my anxiety surrounding COVID-19, especially since losing close family to it. My course work this semester involved Managerial Accounting for Healthcare Organizations, Healthcare Information Technology: Public Policy and Management and Principles of Human Resources Management for Healthcare Organizations. They have all been such interesting classes and have expressed to me the vitals of proper management within the foundations of planning, healthcare development and financial planning. Next semester I am excited to learn about Healthcare Economics, Healthcare Marketing and Strategic Communications as well as Healthcare Law, Governance and Ethics! I am so pleased with NYU and the support that I have received from staff and even my cohort. It's been a blessing and I'm so thankful for you and the rest of the funders for taking such an interest in my professional wellness. If there is any other information I can provide please let me know! Best.



**Andrew Wiater**  
Valencia College

Education has been a journey for me to say the least. I've had many challenges and obstacles that I've dealt with. From the very beginning of my academic journey, I've had to push. Push to show people that I have the drive and the intelligence despite my disability. Constantly pushing barriers and stereotypes of what a disabled individual looks like taking on their education. Now being in my sophomore year of college I've pushed all of those boundaries. Exceeding my own expectations for myself. So thank you to all of the donors who were selfless enough to donate. In order for me to continue my education path, and hopefully make myself a successful individual who achieves my goals.



**Kevin Wonder**  
University of South Florida

My first semester of college was exciting and I had a good time. Even in the midst of current events I had a nice experience living on campus. I had fun being able to connect with the various LGBT groups on campus and meet other trans people going to USF. My classes all went well and I was able to finish the semester with A's and B's and I'm excited for next semester to start.

The OYA Scholarship Program is grateful to **Bill Neighbors** and **Tim Warzecha**, the **Walt Disney Company Foundation**, and **Bill Woods** for their gifts to help fund a major portion of the program. We thank **Maggie Martin Lloyd** for funding *The Rodney Hughley Memorial Scholarship*. OYA has been providing financial assistance for education to its members since 2009.

# CENTRAL FLORIDA COUNTIES

## LAKE/SEMINOLE/ORANGE/OSCEOLA/POLK

**IN 2020 WE WERE IN-PERSON UNTIL MID-MARCH.**

**FOR THE LAST NINE MONTHS  
WE WERE ALL VIRTUAL.**

**WATCH FOR US IN 2021 AS WE CONTINUE  
TO RE-OPEN AT ALL OF THESE LOCATIONS:**



[www.seminoleyouthalliance.org](http://www.seminoleyouthalliance.org)



[www.lakelandyouthalliance.org](http://www.lakelandyouthalliance.org)



[www.polkpridefl.org](http://www.polkpridefl.org)

### **LAKE COUNTY YOUTH ALLIANCE OSCEOLA COUNTY YOUTH ALLIANCE**

As a committee we began planning like usual in July 2019, but halted in March like the rest of the world. We made an initial attempt to postpone from June 2020 to October 2020, but ultimately cancelled our events for the safety of all. We are currently in the planning stages for Polk Pride in the Park to be held October 2, 2021...so mark your calendar!

**Scott Guira, President Polk Pride**

## **VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN GENDER DIVERSITY AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**

OYA volunteers learned to better serve our youth in a relaxed small-group setting. Since many OYA youth identify as transgender or gender diverse, volunteers reviewed current language around gender identity and sexual orientation. They deepened their understanding of gender role expectations in society, and became more attuned to the unique experiences of trans and gender diverse youth.

OYA volunteers also earned certification in the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) method of suicide prevention. They practiced listening for the warning signs of suicide and connecting youth in crisis to community resources. Volunteers reported greater comfort and confidence with these lifesaving skills.





## OYA VETTED MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL PROGRAM

Orlando Youth Alliance welcomes local mental health professionals who have an interest in supporting the needs of LGBTQI+ youth to join our referral program. Such professionals are listed on our web site ([www.orlandoyouthalliance.org](http://www.orlandoyouthalliance.org)) and on informational materials (e.g. brochures) so that our youth and their families may access them as needed.

Participating in the OYA referral program is free to you and requires that the following 5 criteria be met in order to be listed as a referral:

1. A criminal background check (standard for all OYA volunteers and affiliates)
2. A copy of your current license to practice counseling/psychotherapy
3. Proof of malpractice insurance (e.g. a copy of your certificate)
4. A current fee schedule
5. A statement that you repudiate aversion and reparative therapy

If you are interested in being listed as a referral source for OYA youth or have any questions, please feel free to email [info@orlandoyouthalliance.org](mailto:info@orlandoyouthalliance.org) or call 407-244-1222.

OYA appreciates the support and dedication of our professional referrals. The mental health needs of LGBTQI+ youth can be unique, and access to informed and inclusive care is vital. Thank you for being part of our efforts!

## OLDER YOUTH GROUP

The age range of our youth is 13-23. But the information and discussion needed for a 13 year old and the 23 year old are totally different. That is why in 2020 OYA formulated an Older Youth Alliance group for members 18-23.



Dr. Greg Meek

## SOCIAL & RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### VIRTUAL ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

One of the best attended activities of 2020 was a virtual class to learn American Sign Language.



Photo: Chris Kelley

In December, Alex Blue Davis jumped on our Zoom meeting to speak with the youth. The youth knew his work as a voice actor on She-Ra and the Princess of Power as a transgender male character, Jewelstar. He is also a regular on Grey's Anatomy (2017-2020), Grey's Anatomy: B-Team (2018). The youth were excited to say the least to get to ask questions with this celebrity.



## GSA GRANTS

The Orlando Youth Alliance provided grants to fund the creation and ongoing missions of Gender Sexuality Alliances / Gay-Straight Alliances throughout Central Florida. The grants are named after former OYA Board member Ginger Malcom who recognized that GSAs are an essential resource for LGBTQI+ youth attending school. She conceived the GSA grant program before her passing in 2017. Want to apply for your school's GSA?

**Want to apply for your school's GSA?**  
Visit [www.orlandoyouthalliance.org](http://www.orlandoyouthalliance.org) today!

# RECOGNIZING 30(+) YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO YOUTH

## JEFF HORN

It took more than a year of research and weekly planning sessions before Terry Deischer and I were confident we had laid a solid foundation and were ready to open the doors of Delta Youth Alliance. While that was more than 30 years ago – the need for a safe space and common meeting ground remains. Initially it was my hope that, with an evolving culture, the mission would become obsolete. While the gains of the last 30 years have been impressive, in many ways surpassing what I would have predicted, the urgency persists. I am thrilled that Orlando Youth Alliance has not only continued the mission – but also significantly expanded the organization’s outreach and impact. Happy Anniversary, Orlando Youth Alliance!



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### THE 1990’S

### RICK CLAGGETT

I joined the Delta Youth Alliance (now the Orlando Youth Alliance) in 1991 at the age of 16. I spent the years leading up to this moment trying not to be who I was. There was no support system for me at that time. Every indication from my surroundings told me there was something wrong with me. Every night before bed, I would look in the mirror and beg myself to wake up normal. Each morning was met with the disappointment that nothing had changed. This went on for a long while before I hit a breaking point. I decided to seek help. I opened up the phone book and looked up the word “gay.” It was there I found the Gay and Lesbian Community Services that led me to Delta Youth Alliance.

In the 90s, youth meetings were kept secret until a group facilitator could verify your reason for joining. I sat down with Delta Youth Alliance cofounder, Terry Deischer for the initial meetup. He was the first gay man I had ever met. From the moment he said hello to me, my life changed. He was so kind and caring and calming. I was petrified to admit I was gay and he put me at ease. From there we made our way to my first meeting. So much self hatred, so much self doubt, was lifted just sitting in a room with other gay kids going through exactly what I was going through.

The other cofounder, Jeff Horn, became my father away from home. I can’t imagine my life without him. He pulled me aside and told me I could be anything I wanted to be AND I could be gay. Sounds so simple now, but hearing it in 1991 was everything to me. This youth group validated me, gave me worth and inspired me to be who I am today.

Currently, I am the owner and publisher of Watermark, Central Florida and Tampa Bay’s LGBTQ news source; a newspaper that was founded by another youth alliance mentor, Tom Dyer. I serve on the board of the Orlando Youth Alliance and the One Orlando Alliance. I have previously been on the board of the Pride Chamber and was a founding board member of Come Out With Pride. I have been named Business Man of the Year by the Pride Chamber, 40 under 40 by the Orlando Business Journal and named Orlando Trailblazer by the LGBT+ Center; and it all started with a meeting at a Subway Sandwich shop with the cofounder of the Orlando Youth Alliance.





# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? (CONTINUED)

## THE 2000'S

## KEN G. BARTON

Orlando Youth Alliance (OYA) was a formative part of my youth and young adulthood. I have life-long friends and connections that grew from the community it built. Probably most significant were the volunteers that were willing to sit with us, listen to our teenage melodrama and help guide us through thoughtful discussion on the experience / situation of the queer community. OYA was also a very unique and safe early exposure to sexualities that were not something I had ever heard of before; such as transgender people. This is a bit embarrassing to admit, but it was extremely valuable for me to meet queer adults that had careers outside of what we saw on television. As an Orlando Youth Alliance alumni, I recently donated for the first time to the organization and I am to be a lifelong contributor to the cause. Thank you again for providing me a safe space to meet real queer people, ask sometimes naive questions and grow as a young adult. I am forever grateful.





## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? (CONTINUED)



### THE 2000'S

### DR. HEATHER MARINELLO

My name is Heather Marinello and I was a member (and later a facilitator) in OYA from 2006-2012. It meant the world to have friends and support. To be with people that were open minded and kind, and to find a safe space to talk freely about who you were as a person and what the hurdles are that you might face. With car washes, pride parades, dances, movie nights, gay days, and meetings, it felt like a family. I can say with most certainty they pushed me to be a strong person, an advocate. I went on to be president of a GSA at Valencia's west campus, to attending conferences with the Florida Collegiate Pride Coalition at UCF, to representing an LGBTQ professional in my doctorate and being awarded the come out with pride scholarship. I don't think I could've done it without OYA setting the framework.





## THE 2010'S

### BRANDON KILEY

BY: JEREMY WILLIAMS, COURTESY OF WATERMARK

Brandon found the Orlando Youth Alliance (OYA) at a point in his life when he needed it the most.

He was homeschooled by his parents and raised in the church. When he finally decided to ask about "the gay thing," Brandon and his family's path changed forever.

"[The church] tried to pull me into reparative therapy," Brandon says. "Since I was a minor at the time they pulled my parents into it and tried to get them to be on their side. When they brought my parents in and said your daughter feels like she should have been born a boy, my dad was like 'This makes perfect sense.'"

Brandon's family came together and stepped away from the church, the only community they had known. That is when Brandon's family found PFLAG.

"When we came to PFLAG we were kind of broken," Brandon says of his family. "All we had known were the people in church. We went to PFLAG and met some great people and they said to me 'You should really go to this place called Orlando Youth Alliance,' they told me it was a youth group and my first thought was 'Great, I just got kicked out of a youth group.'"

From the first visit to OYA Brandon knew he was home.

"I absolutely fell in love with it," he says. "OYA was the most instrumental thing to happen to me in my transition. That was the first place I went where I was able to be respected for who I am and have my proper pronouns used."

Brandon has been involved with OYA for eight years and now serves as a support group facilitator for the organization. OYA CEO Michael Slaymaker even called Brandon the "poster child" for OYA. He was also a speaker at the Orlando Youth



Empowerment Summit, an event presented by the City of Orlando in collaboration with local governments and LGBTQ community organizations to empower Central Florida's LGBTQ youth.

"Because I am an outspoken individual when it comes to my story, I've done a lot of speaking engagements for OYA and been a mentor to so many of these kids who have come through," Brandon says. "To see kids starting T [testosterone shots] for the first time or going through their name change, it is almost like transitioning over again and that excitement of getting to be who you are. It's so inspiring for me."

## OYA 2020 DONOR LISTING

### Legacy Society

Sandy Neubarth  
Michael Slaymaker

### Over \$10,000

Anonymous  
Orange County Government  
Bill Woods

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

Greenberg Traurig, P.A.  
Lisa & Charles Soderstrom  
Wingstop Charities

### \$2,500 - \$4,999

CenterLink  
Niki & Scott Friedman  
Network for Good  
Daniel Niccum  
The Walt Disney Company Foundation  
Tim Warzecha & Bill Neighbors

### \$1,000 - \$2,499

Kylie J. Brown  
COME OUT WITH PRIDE  
Matt McKnight III  
Todd Miller  
Lindsay Pettite & Megan Widhalm  
Stephen Roberts  
Smiley Face Braces  
Neil Starkey  
The Walt Disney Company  
Watermark Media

### \$500 - \$999

Rick Claggett  
Michael Dively  
Tim Gough  
Heart of Florida United Way  
Daniel Humphress & Enrique de la Torre  
Maggie Martin Lloyd  
RANGER'S PET OUTPOST  
AND RETREAT®  
Michael Slaymaker & George Bridges  
Jeff Speicher  
Paula Yoo  
Rick Zajac

### \$250 - \$499

Sammy Goldstein & Bill Yahner  
Glenn Grether  
Brad Hodum  
Bob & Judy Kiley  
Aimee Kincaid  
Longwood Hills Congregational Church  
Ron Scorsch & Bernd Hilbert  
Jeffrey Scott  
Wilfred Souchereau & Patrick Caraher  
Mark Spiecher  
Marv Villiard & Craig Thompson  
Scott Will

### \$100 - \$249

Ken G. Barton  
Ben & Jason Berry  
Elaine Bradbury  
James Brower  
Karen Brown

Geraldine Gallagher  
Lawrence Glinzman & Carlos Murphy  
Calarmargaret Groover  
Steve Heller & Doyle Hill  
Michael Hollmen  
Jeff Horn  
Amy Iennaco  
Patrick James & Ralph Daffin  
George Kalogridis  
Alan Kruser  
Al Leach & Rev. Jim Merritt  
Valerie Mardle  
Joe Mathews  
Chris Nault  
Robert Reese  
Sharlett Reinke  
Steve Roberts  
Steve Roberts  
Karen Schultz & Christine Dance  
Software Answers, Inc.  
Katharine Torgersen  
Jamie von Schaumburg  
Eric Walker  
Max Watzman  
Philip & Judy Woods

### Up to \$99

Bob Adam & Ken Ouzts  
Amazon Smile  
Zachary Austin  
Tiffany Ayres  
Vanessa Barboza  
Becker & Poliakoff, P.A.  
Carol Bizub  
Norton & Santa Bonaparte



Carol Bresnahan & Michelle Stecker  
 Janie Burnham  
 Kathy Connelly  
 Robert Croll  
 Jason Dominick Cobb  
 John Dontrich  
 Gina Duncan  
 Louise Fike  
 Gary Fracassi  
 Dyan Goodman  
 Ann Grimes  
 Seth Hannan  
 Jeff Henderson  
 Eleanor Hill  
 Patrick Howell  
 Cullen Hudhall  
 Mariah Ide  
 Chris Kelley  
 Joe Kern  
 Deborah Mead  
 MightyCause Charitable Foundation  
 Florenda Newton  
 Justin Okimi  
 Orlando Roller Derby Team

Alan Pagán  
 Brad & Jenny Patty  
 Caroline Pittman  
 Carole Pittman  
 Herbert Pleiman, Jr.  
 Sarah Pruitt  
 Tison Pugh & David Dean  
 Karen Revels  
 Ritzy Rags Wigs & More  
 Karen Roark & Denise Encinosa  
 James G. Shepp  
 Jane Slaymaker  
 Tamara Smith  
 Samantha Sterthaus  
 Laura Stiles  
 Steve Summers  
 Target  
 Steven Thorp  
 Greg & Amanda Thys  
 James VanMiddlesworth  
 Marilyn Williams & Shane Williams  
 Julie Wright  
 Katharine Zimmerman



**PLEASE REMEMBER  
 ORLANDO YOUTH  
 ALLIANCE IN YOUR  
 WILL OR TRUST.**

#### **Ways to donate:**

##### **1. Make an online gift.**

Log onto

<http://www.orlandoyouthalliance.org/Donate.aspx>

Just click on the "donate" button  
 to make a credit card gift via PayPal.

##### **2. Mail your gift.**

Send a gift through the mail to:  
**Orlando Youth Alliance**  
**PO Box 536944**  
**Orlando, FL 32853-6944**

##### **3. Put OYA in your Will or Trust.**

Individuals wishing to include Orlando  
 Youth Alliance in their will or estate plan,  
 can find information on our website.  
 For more information please call  
 407-244-1222 or email us at  
[info@orlandoyouthalliance.org](mailto:info@orlandoyouthalliance.org).

## **OYA'S LARGEST GIFT**

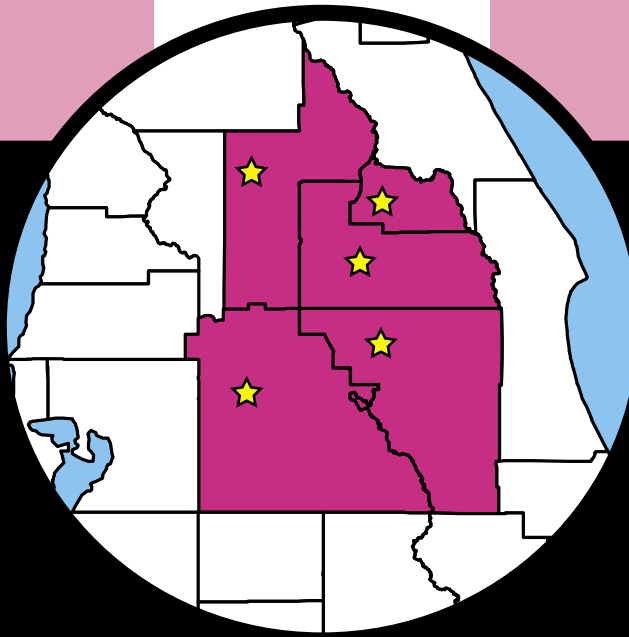
The largest gift OYA received in 2020 was the gift of volunteer time. OYA has over 30 volunteers who serve our youth on the board of directors, group facilitators, chaperones for activities, drop-ins, fundraising, marketing and program design and implementation. As of July 2020 the estimated national value of each volunteer hour is \$27.20. Our dedicated volunteers donated 2,269 hours to support the youth. That calculates to **over \$61,716 in volunteer time** to OYA and its chapters.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION OF ORLANDO YOUTH ALLIANCE, INC. (#CH25270) AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES AT WWW.800HELPFLA.COM OR BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 1-800-435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



**LAKELAND  
YOUTH  
ALLIANCE**

[lakelandyouthalliance.org](http://lakelandyouthalliance.org)



**ORLANDO  
YOUTH  
ALLIANCE**

[orlandoyouthalliance.org](http://orlandoyouthalliance.org)



**SEMINOLE  
YOUTH  
ALLIANCE**

[seminoleyouthalliance.org](http://seminoleyouthalliance.org)

# **THE COMMUNITY GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE**

## **ORLANDOYOUTHALLIANCE.ORG**

COPYRIGHT © 2021. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ORLANDOYOUTHALLIANCE](https://www.facebook.com/orlandoyouthalliance)



[HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/OYA\\_CFL](https://twitter.com/OYA_CFL)



[HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/OYA\\_CFL](https://www.instagram.com/OYA_CFL)



FUNDED IN FULL OR IN PART BY  
ORANGE COUNTY GOVERNMENT, FL