

West of 50—August Newsletter

“Kindness is king and love leads the way.” -Nina West

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Pride Beyond June—Pride month and everything that comes with it has come and gone for this year. Between the festival, parade, performances, joy, and protest this time of year can be especially taxing. However, what wears our community down more is the constant struggle against anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, hate speech, and violence. As of early July the ACLU tracked an astounding 491 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the US, with the targets of these bills primarily focusing on trans healthcare & privacy rights, school and education censorship, and public accommodations. While we are fortunate to be here in Colorado where measures at the state level have all been defeated, there are still communities across this state that are advocating for banning books in public libraries and in schools and counties, like Douglas County, where groups are trying to restrict and ban Pride events from occurring. The Trevor Project released a survey that found one in three LGBTQ+ youth experience extremely poor mental health as a result of these hateful actions. So the question remains, what steps can you take to stand up for your community while also taking care of yourself and your needs. Firstly, change starts at the personal level; talk to your neighbors, your social groups, and family, if possible, to work to dispel the misinformation and disinformation that spread the hate towards our community. Become engaged with the Pride Organization that operates where you live, whether that be here at The Center, in Aurora, Douglas County, or otherwise. Attend public meetings on the topics mentioned above and spread your beliefs in love, community, and equity. Finally, VOTE, vote locally, vote nationally, make our voices heard so that we can drown out the vitriol targeted at our community. Never forget the Pride is year-round! -Bryant Mehay

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Pride 2023

This year Denver Pridefest hosted its largest pride ever with an estimated 550,000 people attending from across the state and country. Because of this, West of 50's Pride Tent engaged over a thousand people between our Bingo, Dildo Yard Games, special presentations, and resource sharing. We are so grateful to all who came out and volunteered for our booth! A special shoutout goes to Steve-Anne and Cowpoke Avi for braving the heat in FULL DRAG to entertain, titillate, and engage our audiences across both days.

Throughout the month we collaborated with several organizations. In early June we started our Pride month off right with a Karaoke/Bingo event sponsored by the Denver Public Library and hosted at the Town Hall Collaborative. During the festival we had pop up presentations hosted by The Denver Art Museum, who led us on a journey through queer art history, Denver Health, who discussed safe sex and HIV/STI prevention, and Cristina Michaels, who discussed her new book on the healing process from vaginoplasty.

Thank you to everyone that came out to volunteer, say hello, and celebrate pride! Let's start work on next year!!



The Tea Dance 2023

I want to thank each and every one of you that came out and celebrated your pride with me, August Celestial, at West of 50's Tea Dance this year. With your engagement this year's Tea Dance was the largest one I have done thus far at The Center, with over 100 people attending and over 40 active community members making an appearance! For me this event is all about providing you all with the space to mingle and celebrate the unique people that make up our community. And I think we did a pretty damn good job of doing just that. This year's Tea Dance saw the return of the galactic StarChild, the rich vocals of Ty Woo, and music dropped by DJ Blaque Gurl. We also had the immense pleasure of hosting Porsha DeMarco Douglas. With our community and way of life under attack across the country, it is more important than ever to be loud, proud, and visibly joyful. It is my immense honor to get to organize, perform for, and host this incredible event with such amazing talent. I hope that you carry your PRIDE with you throughout the year and share it with as many people as you can.

Much Love, August Celestial

For more photos visit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lgbtqcolorado/albums/72177720309588280/page1>



Movie Night: Victor/Victoria

Movie Night at The Center on Colfax returns with the 1982 musical comedy classic, Victor/Victoria. Starring Julie Andrews as a struggling nightclub singer, who finds a place onstage as a male/female impersonator. Hilarity, glamour, and personal life struggles ensue as Victor/Victoria and their indeterminate gender dazzles and confuses audiences. So join us on August 7th in the basement of The Center, seating will be provided on a first come first serve basis, with space reserved for our elder community. There will also be floor space available with yoga mats, bolsters, and blankets provided by The Center or you may bring floor seating of your own. Snacks, popcorn, sodas, and more will be available to complete this movie experience.

Date/Time: August 21st doors open at 5pm, movie starts at 5:30pm.



Community Song Circle

Join west of 50's Music Meetup – A group designed to meet musicians where they're at. Participants don't have to be perfect, we love different textures, and invite all to come and play, sing, or listen. We will have a collection of music that will spark joy in your day. The goal of the group is to create an organic space of sanctuary and delight.

When: Group Starting Thursday, August 3rd, then will run every Thursday from 1-2:30pm.

Mingle Masters

The Mingle Masters is a casual social/community development event that will be hosted on the rooftop of The Center in early September. Join for an evening of conversation, treats, and community development. Food, snacks, and alcoholic & nonalcoholic beverages will be served for a relaxing social evening. Please RSVP with Jason or Bryant to attend.

When: Friday September 8th, 3-7pm

Where: Rooftop of The Center



Colorado New Musical Festival—A message from Bryant

The 4th annual Colorado New Musical Festival is a space where new works from around the country are partially performed. Usually consisting of around 1-3 scenes per show, the Festival will return in August. This year the festival will include a selection from my jukebox musical Staring at the Sun. I wrote this show during my last semester of my Master's program at Kansas State University and I am so excited to have a piece of it brought to the stage. Information about the event and the shows selected can be found at this link <https://www.wellspringtheatre.org/upcoming-performances-1>. Please reach out to me if you have any questions!

Time to say goodbye to Emma

As my internship wraps up, I reflect on my time here. How grateful I am to have been granted this opportunity at such a beautifully vibrant time of the year, pride. I have witnessed unmatched community engagement, and experienced countless interactions with community members that will impact me for the rest of my life.

Truthfully, prior to this practicum, I had little exposure to queer older adults in my life. Getting to know this population and the individuals it is comprised of has been eye-opening. I have observed how passionate, unique and dynamic this group really is. The things I have learned from you all are simply invaluable to both my career and personal life. I have also had the opportunity to practice my presentation skills and gain both micro and macro experiences during my time here. I am beginning my Master's of Social Work program this fall. I will specialize in mental health and substance misuse, with my last day at The Center being Thursday, August 10th. Please feel free to stop by the office and say good-bye - I would love to see you all!

Join us for an Ice Cream Social to say goodbye to Emma as she continues on her journey!

Time/Date: Wednesday August 9th from 11:45a-1:00p.



Douglas County PrideFest

Presented by Castle Rock Pride a non-profit 501(c)(3)

Douglas County Pride is coming up at the end of August. This event has seen massive blow-back after last year's festival where a queen's breastplate (with a pastie covering the nipple) popped out during her performance. That means it is more important than ever to support our queer family that live in areas that still are trying the ban their existence. This year Jason and Bryant have stepped in to assist this pride come to fruition. Jason and Kevin have been a part of the Pride's planning committee. Bryant will be hosting and performing as their alter ego August Celestial for their after hours adult dance party.

- The Douglas County Pride Festival will be Saturday August 26th from 11am to 11pm
- From 11am-5pm there will be a variety of performances, vendors, and crafts available on their mainstage and throughout the festival.
- There will be an all-ages drag show from 5pm-7pm
- Their Pridefest Afterparty: Rainbow Revolution will be from 7pm to 11pm. August Celestial will be hosting the event from 7pm to 9:45

The Event will take place at the Douglas County Fairgrounds at **500 Fairgrounds Road, Castle Rock, CO 80104.**

Cowpoke Avi's Game Extravaganza presents: SCATAQUEERIES

Join Cowpoke Avi as he mystifies and MANeuvers players through the hilarious category game of Scataqueeries. Its like regular Scatagories except much, MUCH gayer. Fabulous prizes can be yours, snacks will be overflowing, and his imprint somehow keeps getting bigger!



Don your mustache and cowboy hat and join us Wednesday, August 23rd 1:30pm-3:00pm downstairs for a great time!

Lunch & Learn Building Healthy & Delicious Meals

Let's get back to the basics! Join our Lunch and Learn presenter from Natural Grocers Grey Trizna as she discusses the importance of getting off the blood sugar roller coaster using high-quality proteins, fats, and carbohydrates to build healthy & delicious meals. Lunch provided by Natural Grocers. Together we'll make meal planning easy! Contact Jason and Bryant for registration, *please inform us of any food allergies.*

When: Wednesday August 16th from 12-1:00pm

Where: At Natural Grocers on Colfax, 1433 N Washington St.



The Disability Program is 1 year old!

The Disability program has been active since August of 2022. The first group was the Disability Peer Support Group, which meets every Friday 1:30-3pm. This group has been visited by members of the community over 100 times and has served as a place where people have shared resources, found community, and learned more about each others' experiences. We have collaborated with a number of organizations like the Denver Art Museum, Phamaly Theatre Company, Brewability, and more for day trips, theatre performances, and social outings! In the coming months we are expanding our programming. Two programs have been in development, the first being a Sexuality and Disability program where each session we will discuss a topics related to sex and sexuality and its unique intersection with disability. The second will be a quarterly expressive arts program, where we will explore the diversity of the arts and provide our community with a space to engage in artistic expression. As this program develops I want to hear from you about what you want to see from this program. Please contact me at bmehay@lgbtqcolorado.org or call at 3039515228 with questions, ideas, or if you just want to learn more about what The Center has to offer you!

-Bryant Mehay, MA, CTRS

Sexuality and Disability

Topics of sex and sexuality for the disability community have long been taboo and ignored by the culture at large. Each week we will dive into a specific topic; ranging from representation of disabled sex and sexuality in the media, consent, to healthy sex practices. This program will be based in the most current research & guided by the community and its interests. This program is for adults 21+. A Survey was implemented at the Disability Pride Month Event—a time and schedule for this group will be available soon!

Expression and Art

My Master's education was in Drama Therapy. Through that experience I furthered my appreciation and knowledge of the arts as a necessary element of healing and thriving. Because of this the Disability Program will now feature an Expressive Arts quarterly program. From drama and theatre to creative writing to painting, this group will focus on the variety of arts and the ways they can inspire personal reflection and growth. A Survey was implemented at the Disability Pride Month Event—a time and schedule for this group will be available soon!



Weekly Groups

Mondays

Telling Your Story, 1:30—3:00PM hybrid
Participants are provided a weekly topic that sparks memories, connections, and friendships. We welcome all and are open to people who choose to compose their stories or tell others about their experiences.

Stitch & Bitch, 6:15—7:45PM in-person
A weekly group that welcomes all and provides space for sewing, crafting and conversation.

Tuesdays

Men's Coffee, 10:00AM—12:00PM hybrid
A weekly group for men focusing on conversation and friendship.

Older, Wiser, Sexual Smarter, 2:00—3:30PM in-person
A weekly discussion group facilitated by a West of 50 staff member focusing on dismantling sexual misconceptions and introducing evidence based topics to help older adults engage in their best sex-positive-selves.

Veterans Support Group, 6:00—7:00PM online
A weekly group for veterans to come together for conversation and connections.

Wednesday

Silver Sneakers Seated Yoga, 10:30—11:30AM hybrid
A certified Silver Sneakers® instructor leads participants through a complete series of chair-assisted yoga poses designed to increase flexibility, balance, and range of movement. Silver Sneakers® membership is not required.

AARP Community Group, 1:30 – 3:00PM in-person
A group that's focused on their own interest such as community engagement, volunteering, advocacy, event planning and so much more.

Thursday

Open Art Studio, 10:00AM—12:00PM in-person
Let your creativity fly while connecting with others who share a passion for the arts.

Community Song Circle, 1-2:30PM in-person
A group designed to meet musicians where they're at. Participants don't have to be perfect, we love different textures, and invite all to come and play, sing, or listen. We will have a collection of music that will spark joy in your day.

Friday

Movement Therapy, 10:30 – 11:30AM in-person
Instructed by Cristina Michaels, participants are introduced to techniques such as Qigong, Tai Chi, modern and contemporary dance movements, along with some classical ballet techniques.

Meditation & Visualization, 11:45AM—12:45PM hybrid
Instructed by Bryant Mehay, participants are introduced to techniques based on Progressive Muscular Relaxation, guided visualization, and basic meditation for individuals who are new to the practice.

-The first Friday of every month Meditation will be taken over by local artist and inner peace gardener Quana Madison!

Disability Peer Support Group, 1:30—3:00PM hybrid
A peer support group for individual who have a disability and identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This is a drop in space that provides conversation, social support and resource sharing.

- Groups could change due to participation level or implementation of new projects-Jason

August 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Key: Sex: Older Wiser, Sexually Smarter Vet: Veteran Support Group Move: Qigong/Movement Med: Meditation DPSG: Disability Peer Support Group Stitch: Stitch & Bitch Story: Telling Our Story		1 10 Men's Coffee 2 Sex 5 Vet	2 10:30 SS Yoga 1:30 AARP	3 10 Open Art 1-2:30 Community Song	4 10:30 Move. 11:45 Med. 1:30 DPSG	5
6	7 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	8 10 Men's Coffee 2 Sex 5 Vet	9 10:30 SS Yoga 11:45 Emma Goodbye 1:30 AARP	10 10 Open Art 1-2:30 Community Song	11 No Movement 11:45 Med. 1:30 DPSG	12
13	14 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	15 10 Men's Coffee 2 Sex 5 Vet	16 10:30 SS Yoga 12-1 L&L 1:30 AARP	17 10 Open Art 1-2:30 Community Song	18 10:30 Move. 11:45 Med. 1:30 DPSG	19
20	21 1:30 Story 5 Movie Night	22 10 Men's Coffee 2 Sex 5 Vet	23 10:30 SS Yoga 1:30 Scataqueeries	24 10 Open Art 1-2:30 Community Song	25 10:30 Move. 11:45 Med. 1:30 DPSG	26 11am-11pm Douglas County Pride
27	28 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	29 10 Men's Coffee 2 Sex 5 Vet	30 10:30 SS Yoga 1:30 AARP	31 10 Open Art 1-2:30 Community Song		