

I'm having a Valentines Day for me this year



Valentine's Day can be a polarizing holiday; there are people who find joy in this holiday and there are countless others that may find it painful and lonely. This year I decided to ditch the social constructs placed on us and exercise a little self-compassion.

Life is full of self-criticism that make us feel not-so-loved and lead us to experience depression, anxiety, stress, and even shame. Instead, why not embrace ourselves and practice self-compassion?

Close your eyes and say - What do I want for Valentine's Day? A walk in the park with your favorite coffee in-hand. Maybe you take yourself out for dinner and a movie. Attend a yoga class and enjoy your favorite place for lunch.

The important thing is that you cultivate a state of loving presence of oneself thus changing ourselves and the world around us. This Valentine's Day, exercise some self-love, connect with yourself, and be present with your thoughts and body.

I hope you have a wonderful Valentine's Day
Xoxoxo Jason

We had such a wonderful day at the Denver Aquarium!
Here are some photos!



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Rex answers the hard questions regarding The Center's new strategic plan. For the past year The Center has been hard at work crafting a new strategic plan for the years 2024 through 2027. For those of you unfamiliar with this process, this is where the organization defines its vision for the future and identifies our goals and objectives. During this process we reviewed the progress made on the 2020 – 2023 Strategic Plan, gathered data from community members. The Center held over 10 focus groups to understand more about what our consumers needed from us, issued surveys, and held countless conversations with key stakeholders.

What we crafted was an ambitious plan that will engage, empower, enrich, and advance Colorado's LGBTQ+ community for the next three years and beyond. The West of 50 Team is excited for this plan as we thrive off forward-thinking concepts that challenge the status quo and strengthen the community.

The 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan will be unveiled to the community at a Community Update Meeting hosted by Center Staff and its CEO Rex Fuller. But we wanted to give you a sneak peek into what is to come with an interview with none other than the marvelous Rex Fuller, CEO of Center on Colfax.

Q: Hi Rex! What are the main objectives for the new strategic plan?

A: "We have six main goals for the plan: to maintain The Center as a collaborative and community-minded organization, to serve the community as a one-stop resource hub, to create inclusive and innovative programs and events, and to focus on inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in all our programming. We also want to effectively communicate about this work to the community through impactful marketing and collaborative partnerships. And we want to ensure the financial viability of The Center on Colfax in the long term so that we can serve future generations of LGBTQ Coloradans."

Q: What do you think is at the heart of those objectives and how are they best serving the community?

A: "Our goal was to really understand what the needs and priorities of our community are and to find ways to make an impact. The Center will celebrate our fifti-

eth anniversary in a couple of years. We have a long legacy of serving our community in a wide variety of ways. I'm



very proud of our program staff who have found amazingly creative ways to engage and enrich our community. Creating the strategic plan was a way to recommit to our values and chart a course for expanding that legacy. I think all of us are proud that we survived the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and are grateful that we maintained community support during that difficult time. As we are emerging from the pandemic, it's been very exciting to see our programs grow and expand. I'm especially proud of the work done by our West of 50 staff who are always finding creative ways to empower, engage and enrich our community of older adults."

Q: How can community members expect to see and feel the impact of the new plan over the next several years?

A: I think we are already seeing some positive impacts. Last year we launched two new programs: the Saga program for young adults and the Glass-Lawler Mental Health Program. Both new programs are reaching new audiences and bringing folks into The Center's community in meaningful ways. We have also seen the revitalization of our library and we will see more work done by our LGBTQ History Project. As we move through the next few years, I think community members will see additional growth in both existing programs and the creation of new programs. The Transgender Program has seen amazing growth. RANGE Consulting is finding new ways to deliver trainings to create more inclusive workplaces. We hope to expand the number of days that we offer programming in the next year. We are also working to create more engagement opportunities for a broader spectrum of community members.

Continues on page 3.

Interview with Rex Fuller continued from page 2.

Q: Is a hotdog a sandwich?

A: "This feels like a trap. I respectfully plead the Fifth."

Q: What parts of the plan most excite you?

A: "The LGBTQ community has grown so much. It can be very difficult to keep track of all the incredible activity out there. I'm very excited about expanding and upgrading our efforts to be the best one-stop resource for information and resources in our community. There's so much creativity out there and so many organizations and individuals doing great things. I think that by sharing this information and promoting it, we make our community healthier and stronger. A rising tide lifts all boats."

Q: What parts of the plan do you think are going to be the most work?

A: "While I am excited about redeveloping our resource directory, keeping abreast of everything and effectively communicating it will be a major challenge. And as always, funding will be a challenge. We are fortunate to be in good financial health but as we expand our services, our costs will rise. Will we be able to support this expansion? I feel it compels us to make the case for our value to community so that they continue to generously support our work."

Q: if you were a professional athlete, what would your walk-out song be?

A: "Sissy That Walk" by RuPaul"

Q: If you had to create a warning label for this plan, what would it be? Why?

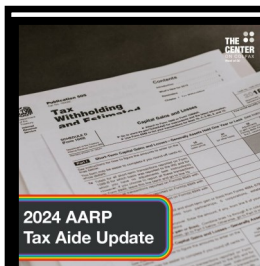
A: "Be careful what you wish for." I anticipate that while there are many exciting goals and aspirations outlined in our new strategic plan, they will come with unexpected challenges. It will be exciting to see how we adapt.

Q: What can the community expect to see The Center do to keep the community informed of its progress on this plan?

A: "Since I started in the CEO role, I have wanted to create an annual community update meeting. The Center did similar updates in the past and I think it

will be valuable for our staff to be accountable to the community we serve. Our first step in that direction is to hold a Community Update Meeting about the new strategic plan on February 22 at Town Hall Collaborative. I hope to continue this annual meeting in future years so we can try to help community members understand our direction and build support for this work."

To learn first hand about the new strategic plan please join us at the Town Hall Collaborative (525 Santa Fe Dr, Drive, CO 80204) on February 22nd at 6:30p. –Jason



AARP TAX AIDE Update—We are sad to say that we are unable to host the AARP Foundations Tax-Aide program this year. We recognize the importance of this service for the community and will do our best to connect you with other host locations once they become available.

AARP Tax Aide will now be held at Messiah Community Church - 1750 Colorado Blvd. The site is open for appointments, with limited ability for walk-ins. The site is open every **Friday, 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM.**

THE CENTER'S SCHULE OF DRAG

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4 | DOORS AT 3:30 PM
HAMBURGER MARY'S | 1336 E 17TH AVE**

Join us for a showcase of participants from The Center on Colfax's 4-day drag workshop!

Featuring performances by the Schule of Drag Participants, August Celestial, Betty Swallows Alnite, StarChild, and Ty Woo!

Reservations are required, and seats fill up quickly. Call Hamburger Mary's at **303-993-5812** or email **mary@milehighmarys.com** to secure your space!



**THE CENTER'S
GOT TALENT**

AUDITIONS

We are in search of singers, dancers, poets, burlesque performers, comedians, instrumental musicians, and variety acts. Come audition & show off your talent for a chance to perform at The Center's Got Talent! Performers must be 21+.

Wednesday, February 7
2:00 - 5:00 PM

Monday, February 12
5:00 - 7:30 PM

For more information, scan the QR code or visit lgbtqcolorado.org/series/auditions-the-centers-got-talent/

THE CENTER
ON COLFAX
West of 50

A LGBTQ+ variety show hosted by Steve Anne, CowPoke Avi, & August Celestial.

Auditions will be held on:
Wednesday, February 7th at 2:00 PM—5:00 PM &
Monday, February 12th at 5:00 PM—7:30 PM.

All talents welcome!
 Must be 21+ to perform & auditions are limited to 3 minutes.

Center's Got Talent Show will be hosted the evening of March 29th.

THIS OLD QUEER MEETS THE NEW YEAR.

The bells of midnight had long since ceased to ring,
 But in my heart was a song that I continued to sing.
 My love and I had slept, enveloped in each other's arms.
 Since long ago he had won me over with his loving charms.
 It was an unlikely marriage for us, as he was young, and I was old.
 "What difference does a few years make?" we were often told.
 My December cold was sharpened by a frosty winter breeze.
 While his hot youth made the fire that warmed us both with ease.

The Center celebrated Christmas with a party and a show,
 With food and fun, singing and dancing, and prizes that did flow.
 With our friends, we recalled events that occurred in these halls,
 And viewed our artwork so carefully hung on all the walls.

What does the New Year hold for these two loving queers?
 Our love has grown by leaps and bounds and, we hope, will last for years.
 We look forward to another year of togetherness and hot passion.
 We'll keep our love alive in our own wonderful fashion.

-Kenneth W. Felts

Lynn and Teresa go to the Denver Aquarium without Sally—Lynn and I attended the recent outing of The Center to the Denver Aquarium. The creatures that were lovely to me were the slow moving seahorse, who does resemble a horse; the toothless turtle, the playful otters and the jellyfish. Most would trend toward the sharks and tigers, but these are not my pick. The aquarium visit reminded me of Lynn and my last outing with Sally, Lynn's mom. We visited the St. Louis Aquarium together, and Sally really liked the jellyfish. Jellyfish are made of mostly water, not jelly, come in a multitude of colors, and look like a group of ballet dancers as they swim about. Sally's favorite color of jellyfish would be red, she liked that color as she was a snazzy dresser. Jellyfish are not deadly, but will give you a sting if bothered. In October, Sally passed away, there would be no more aquarium visits together, or outings to the museum, musicals, plays, having pizza, or her favorite spot La Bonne Bouche to have a croissant. It stung like a jellyfish, the fact she would no longer be swimming with us in this ocean ballet. We traveled back to St. Louis to attend her memorial. There was some time before the service started, so we sat about with Lynn's other family members. I was bewildered to listen to how the other family members viewed Sally, never saw it coming. They explained that she was not enough, not smart enough, not attentive enough, and not generous enough. I felt like I had slipped on the ice, but had not fallen.

Their comments stung like getting shampoo in my eyes when washing my hair. I defended Sally to deaf ears, explained our many outings, our fun, her years of teaching and volunteering to no avail. She was not enough to them, they would not take the time to lay her ashes. Lynn and I respectfully saw to this honorable task. Sally, Lynn's mom, a woman I had known for a number of years had gone, just like the jellyfish after a few years. She was smart, fun, capable, smiled with her eyes and mouth, and chuckled when she laughed. She would be the head goose in a flock of geese, and Lynn and I would be honking to encourage her leading. The feeling I had toward Sally can best be explained by the sunlight that reflects on the snow and looks like diamonds, the sound of our kittens purring, Lynn crunching leaves on a walk, water hitting the sides of a swimming pool, and the hearing of Clair de Lune. Clair de Lune's piece of music provides a mix of emotions of sad you left Sally, to glad to have known you well enough to know you were enough, yes more than enough.—By Teresa Marlow.



WOF's Valentine's Day Movie Night: Join West of 50 for our



Valentine's Day Movie Night on **Friday, February 16th**. Enjoy popcorn, snacks, sodas, and more while you watch the 1958 classic film Auntie Mame, starring Rosalind Russel. See the heartwarming joy, freedom, and love of this beloved character.

Doors will open at 5:30, with the movie beginning at 6pm.

Please RSVP in person or online to reserve your space! See you at Auntie Mame's!



LGBTQ+ALKS-is a support group focused on dealing with aging and grief, all while fostering a healthy outlook and building community. This group will be facilitated by one of our West of 50 staff members.

Dates: Every Thursday

Time: 1:00 - 2:30 PM

Location: The Center on Colfax - 1301 East Colfax Ave, Denver, CO 80218

Ages: 50+

LGBTQ+ individuals tend to rely on caregivers who are not legally recognized such as partners and chosen families to aid with caregiving or daily living. Due to this, our community must be educated on what documents they need to protect themselves from individuals who do not want to respect their wishes.

This could result in surviving LGBTQ+ partners or other loved ones being unable to carry out funeral and burial wishes, being shut out of an inheritance, forfeiture of a family home, or other dire consequences for the serving caregiver or loved one. West of 50 is excited to introduce its newest program LGBTLife Plan. LGBTLife Plan is a monthly program that will bring in speakers who will focus on helping one get ready for the end of the rainbow. The following is the list of new programming & speakers:

January 31st

End of Life Planning

Lunch Provided; RSVP strongly recommended

One way to exercise control now and in the future, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community, is to prepare for the end of life. This class will guide you through the landscape of estate planning, end of life financial matters, and the importance of advance directives. Learn how to prepare to write your will, ensure your wishes are fulfilled and identity is respected even when you aren't able to advocate for yourself. Secure peace of mind by joining us - because being prepared doesn't diminish our vibrancy; it enhances our resilience.

February 14th

Advanced Care Planning

Lunch Provided; RSVP strongly recommended

Participants will gain insights into conversations about healthcare preferences and the best ways to ensure their wishes for care through the end of life are honored. We will explore topics such as identifying a healthcare agent, basic advance care planning, how to have "the conversation", building a support network, and accessing community resources. Designed for individuals navigating the journey of aging alone or in partnership with others.



March 13th

Death & Dying In Colorado:

Lunch Provided; RSVP strongly recommended

The Buyers Guide to Pre-Planning Your Final Wishes. You'll learn about the many options available to you and your loved ones regarding end of life

care in Colorado and how you can safeguard your plans for YOUR future. Topics Will Include: Benefits of Pre Planning, LGBTQIA+ Community Care Colorado, Dispositions Next of Kin Rights/Responsibilities Burial & Cremation, Traditional flame vs Water Cremation: Which is right for you, Organic Natural Reduction & The Rise In Green Funerals Veterans Affairs, and Funding Your Funeral & The Options Available.

April- The End of the Rainbow Resources with Denver Public Libraries.

Free Financial Coaching for older adults 55+

Sunshine Home Share's Financial Wellness & Empowerment Program serves older adults aged 55 and above in the Denver area by offering free one-on-one financial coaching sessions. Our experienced financial social workers are dedicated to assisting you in navigating the complexities of budgeting, managing debt, and improving your credit. Beyond these essential aspects, our program is designed to empower you to articulate and achieve your unique financial goals. By partnering with us, you not only gain access to expert guidance but also a supportive environment that fosters financial resilience. To schedule an appointment contact Becky at becky@sunshinehomeshare.org

About Becky: Becky Brazell (she/her) is a licensed social worker and the Program Manager at Sunshine Home Share Colorado. She has worked in affordable housing settings for over a decade and presently provides free financial coaching for older adults in Metro Denver. She earned her Master's in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis with a focus in community practice, and dual Bachelor degrees in Ethnic Studies and Social Work from Colorado State University.



DISABILITY PROGRAM

A social and supportive space for 21+ LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities.

Coordinator of Disability Services—Bryant Mehay, MA, CTRS

Email: bmehay@lgbtqcolorado.org **Phone #:** 303.951.5228



This hybrid peer support group is for individuals 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. This group is free to attend. Registration is required if you intend to participate virtually. For questions, please contact Bryant at bmehay@lgbtqcolorado.org.

When: Every Friday from 1:30 - 3:00 PM

Where: Virtually or In-Person at the Center on Colfax. Visit <https://thecenteroncolfax.salsalabs.org/disability/index.html> to register for the zoom link.

Upcoming Group Cancellations:

Feb 9th

During each meeting of this hybrid group, we will dive into a specific topic relating to Sex, Sexuality, and Disability. This program will also feature special guest speakers that will come in and share on relevant topics. The content of this group will be based in the most current research & guided by the community and its interests.

Topic: Consent & Laws of Consent

Ages: Adults ages 21+

When: Monday , Feb 26th 5:30-7pm

Location: Virtually or In-Person at The Center on Colfax

Registration is required to receive the Zoom link for virtual participation. You will receive a confirmation email with the Zoom information once you register.

February 2024

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Key

Lesbian: Lesbian Lounge

Story: Telling Your Story

Stitch: Stitch & Bitch

Sex: Older Wiser Sexually Smarter

S&D: Sex and Disability

AARP: Community Group

Art: Open Art

+alks: LGBTQ+alks

Move: Qigong Movement

Med: Meditation

DPSG: Disability Peer Support Group

4

12 Schule of Drag

3:30p Schule of Drag performance

11

18

Aromantic Spectrum Awareness Week

25

5

10 Lesbian
1 Story

6:15 Stitch

12 10 Lesbian

1 Story

5 CGT Auditions

6:15 Stitch

19

Center Closed
President's Day

26 10 Lesbian

1 Story

5:30 S&D

6:15 Stitch

6

10 Men's
Coffee

2:30 Sex

13

10 Men's
Coffee

2:30 Sex

20

10 Men's
Coffee

2:30 Sex

27

10 Men's
Coffee

2:30 Sex

7 10:30 Yoga

2:00 CGT Auditions

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

14 10:30
Yoga

11:45 Lifep1an

1:30 AARP

Valentine's Day

21

10:30 Yoga

1:30 AARP

28

10:30 Yoga

1:30 AARP

HIV is not a Crime Awareness Day

8

10 Art

1 +alks

No Jason or Bryant

15

10 Art

1 +alks

22

10 Art

1 +alks

6:30 Strategic Plan

29

10 Art

1 +alks

9

NO WOF

10:30 Move

11:45 Med

1:30 DPSG

16

10:30 Move

11:45 Med

1:30 DPSG

5:30 V-Day Movie

23

10:30 Move

11:45 Med

1:30 DPSG

10

11 Schule of Drag

17

24