CENTER ON HALSTED:
SUPPORTING AND ENRICHING COMMUNITY

2007 ANNUAL REPORT
[FOR PERIOD JULY 1, 2006 TO JUNE 30, 2007]
It’s been an exciting year! We achieved an amazing milestone when we opened Center on Halsted in June—a comprehensive, state-of-the-art facility for the LGBT community to receive life-enhancing services and recreational and cultural enrichment. We could not have come this far without the generous support of our donors—individuals, foundations, corporations and government—who realized and believed in the importance of the Center’s work for LGBT Chicagoans.

Our Out & Open gala celebrated the move to Halsted and Waveland and kicked off a Pride month of cultural and recreational activities and events highlighting our programs and services. The public’s response to the LGBT community center and our expanded programs has been overwhelming. On any given day, 1,000 visitors pass through our lobby to pick up our monthly calendar, check out a new art exhibit on the second floor or keep an appointment with a counselor. Our Youth Program helps 200 youth a week develop vocational skills and healthier lifestyles, while more than 100 elders participate weekly in our SAGE Program. Users of our cyber center increased by 500 percent and counselors on our State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline have answered more than 11,000 calls this year—many from Spanish-speaking callers. Our Anti-Violence Project continues its important outreach assisting survivors of hate crimes and domestic violence and partners with the Chicago Police Department and other agencies to raise sensitivity and awareness within and beyond the LGBT community.

True to our commitment to foster linkages and provide community resources, partnerships such as with the Chicago History Museum and with After School Matters continue to flourish and to bring our programs out into the wider Chicago community beyond our doors. We continue to seek and develop strategic, quality partnerships with other organizations and to enhance our ability to reach diverse segments of the community.

In short, interest and participation in all of our programs have grown exponentially as members of the community learn and discover their center. We look with excitement to the future and gratefully honor our donors, volunteers and staff—all have enabled Center on Halsted to serve our community and fulfill our mission.

Warm regards,

Robert T. Kohl
Executive Director

Modesto Vallee
Board Chair
In June 2007, the collective dream of generations of LGBT Chicagoans became a physical reality on the corner of Halsted Street and Waveland Avenue. But Center on Halsted is built on something even stronger than the foundation of our new building. We are shored up by the strength of our programs and services, reinforced daily by supporters and volunteers who enable us to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people every day of every year.

Even as we completed construction of our $25.1 million LGBT community center, Center on Halsted continued serving the critical needs of an expanding client base and increasing capacity in anticipation of much greater needs in the future. When the doors of the new Center on Halsted opened, our programs and services instantly launched into higher gear, ready to serve unprecedented numbers of new clients, program participants and visitors.

While much progress has been made toward social equality and inclusion in recent years, LGBT youth still suffer from higher rates of depression, suicide attempts, physical attacks, school dropout, and drug and alcohol use than their heterosexual counterparts, according to a 2004 CDC report, Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Chicago Public Schools. Our Youth Program addresses these problems by providing the affirmation and support that our young people often fail to receive from their schools and their families. The Youth Program prepares our young people for a responsible adulthood by offering assistance in preparing for and finding work; mental health services; programs that address the body, mind and spirit; arts programming that provides opportunities for self-expression; and case management to address such basic needs as housing, healthcare and education.

In preparation for our move to the new building, the Youth Program focused heavily on program expansion during 2007, fully utilizing the greatly increased capacity and expanded space of our new facility. By the end of the fiscal year, the Youth Program had added a number of critical programs and services, including a vocational program, Access (Access to Economic Self-Sufficiency), a mentoring program, new recreational programming, and a leadership development curriculum known as Belong, which stands for: Become a leader. Experience new things. Learn about yourself and others. Open yourself to challenges. Navigate your future. Give back to your community. In addition, we expanded our collaboration with After School Matters through a summer apprenticeship film-making program built upon our outreach to Chicago Public Schools through the Teachers Union LGBT Committee.

As of the end of the fiscal year, 150 to 190 youth participated in the program weekly.
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS BROADEN IMPACT

Center on Halsted’s Mental Health Services program achieved unprecedented and strategic growth during fiscal year 2007. The number of clients served rose from 251 to 360 over the previous year—a growth rate of 43 percent. We also added an array of new programs and support groups, as well as linkage agreements with important new community partners, including Chicago Women’s Health Center, Thresholds, Heartland Health Outreach, Rainbow Hospice and Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House.

The dramatic increase in clients and programs was facilitated by the recruitment of a number of highly qualified volunteer and contractual therapists who brought new specialties and skills to our program. Among them are six providers of color, two Spanish-speaking counselors, and a therapist fluent in the use of American Sign Language. In addition, we energized our outreach to transgenders, partnering with the Chicago Department of Public Health and other agencies to offer forums for transgender individuals and their providers, including “Trans Pharmacopeia,” an introduction and overview to hormone use.

Two key staff changes during 2007 reflect our goals of continuing to expand our mental health offerings and to better serve the needs of Chicago’s Spanish-speaking LGBT community. Our new Latino Services Coordinator will develop and implement culturally competent programming for Latinos/Latinas, as well as support groups for immigrants, transgender individuals, and people impacted by domestic violence and intimate partner abuse. Our Client Services Coordinator, also fluent in Spanish, has significant experience working with immigrants and will develop programming for individuals with HIV/AIDS, as well as a range of services for LGBT substance abusers and their loved ones.

CLIENT GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE

For many of the clients served by Center on Halsted’s Mental Health Program, our services make the critical difference in moving from chronic hopelessness to fulfilling and productive lives.

“Ron”, a 45-year-old long-term AIDS survivor, was unable to maintain a job or a relationship due to bipolar disorder. Medication prescribed by a psychiatrist helped allay symptoms of that disorder, but Ron turned to Center on Halsted for counseling to learn how to manage his new life and change self-destructive behavior patterns.

Today, Ron holds a part-time job and is in a committed relationship with a life partner. He credits his psychotherapy at Center on Halsted for moving him further toward wholeness, learning to control his problematic impulses, and providing the support necessary for sustained personal growth. “Without Center on Halsted, I would never have been able to afford the quality therapy I’m getting,” Ron says. “The Center has helped me dramatically improve the quality of my life.”

SAGE BLOSSOMS

Like the rest of the nation, Chicago’s LGBT population is aging. In 2007, Center on Halsted made a big step forward toward meeting the unique and often overlooked needs of this population by hiring a full-time director for SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders). With new leadership as well as increased funding and a great new space—the John Baran Senior Center—SAGE ended 2007 poised to significantly expand programs and services for LGBT elders.

Already our seniors are benefiting from expanded social opportunities, including outings to theater, opera and other local cultural attractions. They’re also enjoying new opportunities at the Center that bring together different generations of LGBT people to interact and learn from one another. The everyday lives of our senior participants are improving through our outreach programs, support groups and educational workshops on such issues as preparing for retirement, caring for loved ones, and health and wellness. New programs, such as “Hot Topics for Lesbians,” are attracting greater numbers of participants than ever before in SAGE’s 10-year history.

HELPING NEWLY SINGLE CLIENTS PICK UP THE PIECES

Ending a long-term relationship is painful at any age. But dealing with such losses later in life, when venues for meeting new people are more limited, can be particularly challenging.

Center on Halsted’s SAGE program offers unique opportunities for mid-life and older LGBT people to meet and socialize with their peers in positive and supportive settings.

Andrea, a Latina lesbian in her 50s, is one of the growing number of people who took advantage of SAGE during 2007.

Andrea was just coming out of a relationship when she discovered SAGE, and she was feeling isolated and a little hopeless. She didn’t know where to begin picking up the pieces of her life. Today she’s a frequent face at numerous SAGE activities and events. You can find her attending a SAGE computer class, helping to break the ice for newcomers at SAGE social events, lending her wisdom and support on COH service projects for homeless youth, and dancing the night away at galas for one of our community partners.

When she found SAGE, Andrea was dealing with a broken heart. Today she’s juggling a busy social schedule, meeting wonderful friends, developing new skills, and enjoying the satisfaction that comes from giving back to her community.
UPROOTING VIOLENCE

Combating the violent toll of anti-LGBT discrimination is among Center on Halsted’s most critical and challenging tasks. Through public outreach and education, our Anti-Violence Project (AVP) raises awareness and sensitivity to this problem, equipping key constituencies with the ability to recognize and prevent it. AVP is proud to be acknowledged as one of the nation’s leading anti-violence resources.

During 2007, AVP gave 72 presentations—up from 51 in fiscal year 2006—to community organizations, anti-violence groups and educational institutions. Nearly 1,200 people attended. Also during the past year, AVP was featured in a PBS WISE television segment on survivors of male domestic violence and participated in a vital public-awareness campaign for the Chicago Foundation for Women that highlighted violence in the lesbian community.

Since the move into our new facility, the average number of new clients seeking assistance every month has risen from 13 to 19; nearly 40 clients return for other services. AVP has also received an unprecedented number of consultation requests from organizations nationwide, raising the bar of our ability to make a difference in the United States.

In addition to our educational work, AVP contributes to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs annual release of Domestic and Hate Violence Statistics. A copy of the report can be found on the Center’s Web site at www.centeronhalsted.org/prog_av.html. These critical statistics document crimes against our community that might otherwise fall through the cracks, and they are used by lawmakers and policymakers to establish a basis for hate crimes reform and law-enforcement training. AVP participated at the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs Roundtable Conference in Tucson, Arizona, in May 2007.

Our 24-hour crisis number (773.871.cAre (2273)) is a lifeline for LGBT people who are victims of violence, providing them with telephone counseling and referrals as well as onsite volunteer assistance. AVP also supports victims through the legal system, when required.

During 2007, AVP augmented its crisis line capabilities by recruiting and training 11 new volunteers.

WHEN VIOLENCE HITS HOME

“Shawn” (not his real name), a transgender male from central Illinois, contacted AVP’s crisis line after a verbal assault by his brother-in-law accelerated into physical violence. Shawn sustained serious back and neck injuries as well as brain trauma.

Before AVP became involved, transphobic local law enforcement officials failed to investigate and properly report this incident. In addition to ensuring proper legal handling of the case, AVP connected Shawn with counseling services in his area to begin the process of emotional healing.

“Elizabeth” (not her real name) had endured physical abuse from her live-in partner for more than three years before she contacted AVP. She had been beaten repeatedly, nearly choked to death while sleeping, and attacked with a box cutter. AVP helped Elizabeth obtain an order of protection against her partner and provided her with crisis counseling and safety-planning support to get her started in a new life.

“Many people assume our work focuses on attacks from outside our community,” says AVP manager Laura Velazquez. “But, sadly, some of our most critical, life-or-death cases involve attacks not only from members of our own community but from within family units. Without us, these victims would often have nowhere to turn for help.”

NEW PROGRAM PROMOTES GLOBAL AWARENESS

Created in winter 2006, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Institute (SOGI) is a unique program designed to expand national access to culturally competent mental health care for LGBT individuals. Using live and Web-based formats, the Institute provides educational programs for healthcare providers and advances clinical practice through the promotion of research on LGBT behavioral health issues. SOGI’s Web-based training program, led by notable academics and clinicians from throughout the United States, will have international reach.

Since its first year, SOGI also held a summit examining the state of LGBT behavioral healthcare. More than 50 mental health providers, service program administrators, health department representatives and consumers representing diverse economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds conferred to provide a comprehensive review of existing mental health services available in the Chicago metropolitan area.

SOGI has developed a model for public forums to bridge the gap between cutting-edge research and clinical practice. On June 26 The State of Lesbian Health in Chicago: Results and Responses was held in the Hoover-Leppen Theatre. A panel of community healthcare providers and administrators provided commentary on the latest research findings of the country’s largest lesbian health study.

Our anti-violence project raises awareness and sensitivity to the problem of violence against LGBT people.

SOGI is a unique and crucial program designed to expand national access to culturally competent mental health care for LGBTQ individuals.
Call me.

Outreach to Spanish Speaking Callers Has Impact

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to disproportionately impact communities of color, Center on Halsted has ramped up efforts to address the crisis. During 2007, we placed ads and commercials featuring our AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline number with local Spanish-language media. In addition, we provided a full staff of Spanish-speaking counselors to handle calls. Our purpose was two-fold: To raise awareness and to encourage people at risk in these communities to seek out information and referrals that could save lives.

As a result of this outreach, our Hotline handled 50 percent more Spanish-speaking callers than the previous year.

“Callers ranged from people looking for basic information about HIV transmission to people who were experiencing health problems that might be associated with infection,” says Hotline director Jill Dispenza. “By educating callers and encouraging them to get tested or follow up with a doctor or a clinic, we were able to not only to help them but also to potentially protect their sex partners.”

Entertaining a Diverse Community

During 2007, Center on Halsted packed the calendar with a wide array of events bringing together LGBT Chicagoans and their allies across age, gender, and racial lines, as well as people from diverse neighborhoods and of different income levels. Event venues included the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, the Chicago History Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago. The opening of our new facility brought enormous opportunities for unique onsite cultural offerings, partnerships and community programs that appeal to the diverse interests of our community.

The opening of our new facility brought enormous support and resources to people in need. We are able to not only to help them but also to potentially protect their sex partners.”

The increased Hotline activity sparked by the move into our new building demonstrates the exciting possibilities that lay ahead. Following the move, calls to the Hotline climbed instantly and dramatically, up from 1,427 calls in May to June 2006 to 2,568 in May to June 2007. In addition, the new Hotline space facilitates teamwork, training and the rapid flow of new information to counselors.
Center on Halsted’s Community Technology Center has long helped LGBT Chicagoans bridge the digital divide by providing free online access along with computer technology training and assistance. With the opening of the Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center, we expanded this important resource from six to 20 workstations and substantially augmented our hours of operation. These improvements, coupled with the high visibility of the new facility, have increased monthly usage by 500 percent. The additions of a Community Technology Center Coordinator and a Cyber Assistant have allowed us to better serve users than ever before, by providing more classes along with individual help in everything from software training to research.

Cyber Center users benefit from our resources in a number of ways. For some, the Center provides access to vital information concerning health and other important issues. For others, it’s a way to stay in touch with far-flung friends and family members. Many have used our resources to create résumés and obtain jobs through online employment listings. The ability to perform these functions in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment is making a real difference everyday in the lives of LGBT Chicagoans.

Connecting a Community

Volunteers help out with Pride month and grand opening events.

Nearly 300 new volunteers lent helping hands in 2007.

Volunteers fuel Center’s growth

The many programs, events and activities of Center on Halsted would not be possible without the time and effort donated by our generous volunteers. Volunteers now provide an average of more than 100 hours of service each week at the Center, and that number is expected to increase in 2008.

Last year, Volunteer Mental Health therapists provided counseling to hundreds of clients, and LGBT volunteers offered thousands of hours of referral information to callers. Our volunteers shared their talents, experiences and career advice with youth and young adults through workshops, discussion groups, and our AccEss and Mentoring Programs. Volunteers provided support and assistance to participants in our SAGE Program, to Anti-Violence Project Crisis Hotline callers and to computer users in the Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center.

As the new building began taking shape on Halsted Street, volunteer interest in our programs soared. In 2007, we welcomed nearly 300 new volunteers, many of whom joined just in time to help with our month-long grand opening—staffing the opening events, leading building tours and celebrating with us in the Pride Parade. At our Volunteer Recognition Brunch in June, we recognized longtime volunteer Fred MacDonald with our Volunteer of the Year award. The same day, our Volunteer Program hosted the first annual Volunteer Fair, inviting the community to learn about all the exciting and rewarding new volunteer opportunities at the Center and at 12 other nonprofit LGBT service providers.
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN SURPASSES GOAL

Center on Halsted surpassed its capital campaign goal of raising $20 million to meet a Kresge Foundation challenge grant of $950,000. This is the largest grant the Foundation has made to an LGBT organization.

Other notable gifts include those from the federal, state and city government, foundations, corporations and individuals including Mimi U. Hoover, who donated the Center’s largest gift of an individual.

We were able to open the Center with no long-term debt and, when all outstanding pledges are paid, we will fund an endowment of nearly $4 million. The capital campaign was also successful in attracting support from corporations with foundations or little or no history of supporting LGBT causes, thus bringing new relationships and opportunities for program support.

OUT & OPEN OPENING GALA RAISES $1.5 MILLION

As part of our fundraising efforts, more than 1,000 guests attended a June 8 gala to commemorate the opening of the Center. That was followed by a Pride Month full of networking events and activities that introduced the Center’s diverse and program platform.

The event featured a 200-person reception and dinner, which featured a presentation by Mimi U. Hoover, whose major support of Center on Halsted was recognized with the naming of the Hoover-Lapine Theatre.
SUPPORTING CENTER ON HALSTED IS A PERSONALLY ENRICHING WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY. TO LEARN ABOUT VOLUNTEER AND DONOR OPPORTUNITIES, CALL 773.472.6469.