

April 2008

A quarterly publication for members and friends of:

Out & Equal
DFW Regional Affiliate
c/o Resource Center
2701 Reagan Street
Dallas, TX 75219
www.outandequal.org



Keeping Current

Dates to Remember

April 19, May 17 and June 21, 2008 – Out & Equal DFW Officer monthly meeting at the Resource Center, 2701 Reagan Street, Dallas, TX 75219 at 11:00 am. All members are welcome.

April 25, 2008 – Annual Day of Silence/Breaking the Silence Event.

May 14, 2008 – Texas Diversity Conference and GLBT Pre-Summit.

May 15, 2008 – Clock In For Equality.

June 10, 2008 – Out & Equal DFW Mixer & Discussion – God, Gays & The Workplace.

June 12, 2008 – The First Annual Out & Equal Dinner and Gala in San Francisco, California. More info at www.outandequal.org

September 10-13, 2008 – Out & Equal Workplace Summit to be held in Austin, Texas

Join Out & Equal DFW and Make A Difference!

The DFW Regional Affiliate of Out and Equal welcomes new members. Our organization is unique in that we do not have any national or local membership fees. Joining Out & Equal DFW is a great way to keep up on what's happening nationally and locally regarding workplace equality.

It's also a great way to get involved in the local community. To learn more or join, simply go to:

www.outandequal.org/affiliates/dallas

Networking Event Focuses On Countering LGBT Tax Inequities



Guest speaker, Barney Grossman, addresses the attendees at the first quarter Mixer and Discussion-The Tax Inequalities of Being LGBT.

“MAKE THE TIME TO BE PREPARED!” That was the central message that guest speaker Barney Grossman reiterated during Out & Equal DFW's first quarter Mixer and Discussion event as he advocated that LGBT persons in the DFW area make the time to learn how various laws impact them and how to be prepared.

The title of the event was “The LGBT Tax Inequities, how to minimize their negative impact and how to use them your advantage” and was held at the Metro Grill in Dallas.

The inequities of being Gay has substantial and real impact. Tax day is an especially good reminder of this fact. For instance, all American workers file tax returns that include the total amount of social security payroll taxes that the individual paid during the prior year. LGBT Americans pay these same taxes as everyone else. However, we are excluded from spousal as well as survivors' benefits. In fact, children raised by same-sex couples could also be denied survivor benefits.

Health insurance is another area where LGBT Americans are treated unfairly. Most workers rely on health insurance secured through their places of employment and many companies today allow employees to add their same-sex partner. However,

even though these health benefits are excluded from the employee's gross income it is taxed as additional income and must be treated as such at tax time.

Taxes resulting from creating a home together can even add extra burden for LGBT couples. When an LGBT person adds his/her partner to the title for their home, it is can be considered a transfer of 50% of the value of the home. This is as if the two were legal strangers. Therefore, the transaction is taxed in the same manner. Straight married couples do not pay this tax.

LGBT Americans inheriting property from their partner will also learn that inheritance taxes apply differently to them. Straight spouses do not pay inheritance taxes. However, same-sex spouses must pay inheritance taxes unless they live in a state that allows for same-sex marriage, civil unions, domestic partnerships, or special tax exemptions for partners. Combine this with a possible legal challenge by a deceased partner's unaccepting relatives, a surviving LGBT person could find themselves in a real battle at a time when they are still just trying to deal with the loss of their spouse.

Barney wrapped up the evening by answering several questions from those attending and reminded everyone to be prepared. It may be time consuming and require some additional expense, but it's better to be prepared legally for whatever might happen.

Barney Grossman has been providing financial advice and wealth strategies since 1993. He lives in Dallas with his wife and two children. He is very active in the community holds advisory positions at his house of worship and the largest North Texas regional non-profit blood provider. He volunteers on behalf of local and national health advocacy and human rights organizations.

Out & Equal DFW Participates in Lawrence King Vigil and Day of Silence

Lawrence King was a 15-year-old student from Oxnard, California, who was shot and killed in class on February 12 by a 14-year-old classmate



because of King's sexual orientation and gender expression. Out & Equal DFW partnered with over twenty other Dallas area organizations to hold one of over 100 vigils across the country in remembrance of King. On Sunday, March 09, Out & Equal DFW members joined over 200 others for the vigil at the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas. The goal of the Day of Silence is to inspire change so that such a tragedy and others like it never happen again.

Out & Equal DFW has also signed on as a Partnering Organization in public support for this year's student Day of Silence on April 25th. On this same evening we will also participate in the **Breaking the Silence rally to be held at 7:00 p.m. on April 25** in Reverchon Park, located near the intersection of Maple and Oak Lawn in Dallas.

The Day of Silence, sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), is an opportunity for students to take the initiative to teach one another about diversity, respect and safety for all students. The Breaking the Silence rally is an opportunity to show our support for the very brave LGBT youth and allies who participate in the Day of Silence.

The effort to pressure schools into prohibiting students from participating in the Day of Silence and to marginalize the Youth has been very organized and strong this year. The participation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally non youth can give them the encouragement they need to continue making a difference.

Preparing LGBTQ Youth For The Work World

As part of our on-going work with LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning) youth, Out & Equal DFW is currently working with Youth First Texas to develop a career planning and preparation course for the local LGBTQ youth.

The course as drafted will consist of three to four ninety minute sessions covering resume writing, interviewing and networking. "The program is unique from other similar events because we have involved the Youth in the planning and development," said Out & Equal DFW Regional Chair, Ron Ausemus.

The program will take place over multiple weeks and provide classroom instruction which will be followed up by one-on-one coaching with each Youth participating. Mock interviews will also be conducted with each Youth by Out & Equal DFW volunteers who are also hiring managers in their day jobs. Each Youth will try to be matched with an Out & Equal coach in the same or related field of interest.

A mixer will be held for those Youth completing the program to allow them some real world experience in networking. Special guest speakers are also expected for this mixer.

Clock In For Equality

Out & Equal DFW and Lambda Legal will partner again for this year's Clock In For Equality to promote Workplace Equality on May 15. This is Lambda Legal's 2nd national day of action for workplace equality. Almost 90 percent of people in this country believe workplace discrimination is wrong. More information to come regarding details. Downloadable documents related to this event will be available in the Media Files on the Out & Equal DFW collectivex site. Go to: <http://www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/campaigns/clock-in-for-equality/> for more information and to learn how your organization or company can support workplace equality for LGBT and HIV+ workers.

About Out & Equal

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates (commonly known as "Out & Equal") is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in San Francisco, California. We provide a variety of services to companies, human resource professionals, employee resource groups (ERGs) and individuals.

Out & Equal™ Workplace Advocates champions safe and equitable workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. We advocate building and strengthening successful organizations that value all employees, customers and communities.

We sponsor the annual Out & Equal Workplace Summit for LGBT employees and human resources professionals from around the country. This event has featured such notable keynote speakers as Judy Shepard, BD Wong, Billie Jean King, Howard Dean, Patricia Ireland, Ann Richards and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin.

In addition to the annual summit, Out & Equal offers Building Bridges Diversity Training specific to LGBT workplace issues, a growing network of regional affiliates provides support to LGBT employee resource groups, a national newsletter and individual donor and membership programs.

Out & Equal's regional affiliates produce local educational and networking events in order to share best practices and discussions about important LGBT workplace issues. These events provide an effective way for Out & Equal to serve the needs of individual employees, leaders of employee resource groups and human resources professionals.

Out & Equal Affiliates are organized and led by local regional councils, ensuring that they have the flexibility to meet the needs of the local community while still being connected to the national organization.

2008 Out & Equal DFW Council:

Regional Chair-Ron Ausemus
Secretary-Jeff Snook
Treasurer-Evelyn Caldwell
Communications-Mark Quigley
Outreach-Sherry Hooten
Chair Emeritus-Paul von Wupperfeld
John Connell
Mike Degroot
Jeff Falin
Sam Santiago
Bruce Shelton
Bill Smith
Ted Van Trabert
Russell Wallace

Out & Equal DFW Participates in GLBT Job Expo

On Wednesday, March 26, numerous local businesses and job hunters participated in the GLBT Job Expo.

The expo, a joint effort by the Resource Center of Dallas and the North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce, was held at the Radisson Central Dallas. The event started with a luncheon and panel discussion. Among the panelist was Lori Fox, who has been involved in many diversity organizations, including Out & Equal where she chairs the Transgender Advisory Committee.

Among the many booths and tables set up at the event was Out & Equal DFW. Our attendance was primarily to raise awareness to the community about Out & Equal, the resources we offer and how they can become involved.

Local LGBTQA groups successfully pass two equality related resolutions.

On the last weekend in March, two ground breaking resolutions were passed at the local Texas Democratic Senatorial Conventions. Supporters of the resolutions seek to add them to the Texas Democratic Party Platform.

The resolutions were the Safe Schools Resolution and the Non Discrimination Resolution. They were championed by partnerships between the local groups of the Human Rights Campaign, Stonewall Democrats and Equality Texas passed in the 2nd, 8th, 16th and 23rd Senatorial Conventions! The two resolutions also passed in Collin County, along with a resolution supporting same-gender marriage.

The resolutions will now be considered at the Democratic State Convention in June. Similar resolutions were introduced at Republican Senatorial Conventions in the area but failed to pass out of committee in any.

2008 Texas Diversity Conference



Chastity Bono, featured speaker at the Texas Diversity Conference, GLBT Pre-Summit

This year, for the first time, the Dallas and Houston HRC Steering Committees and the Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Affiliate of Out & Equal, in partnership with the Texas Diversity Conference, have developed a special half-day pre-conference GLBT Summit scheduled for May 14, 2008 in Houston, TX.

This event will focus on GLBT workplace topics. The special half-day GLBT Summit will take place the day before the Texas Diversity Conference. It starts with a luncheon featuring Chastity Bono as the guest speaker.

Lunch will be followed by two concurrent training tracks (a total of six workshops) for participants to select from and an evening reception. You can find out about both at www.glbtsummit.com and www.texasdiversityconference.com.

Upcoming Mixer & Discussion – God, Gays & The Workplace

Out & Equal DFW's next Mixer and Discussion topic to take place on June 10. Dallas resident, Dr. Susan Gore, will share with us the insight she has gained on this topic while researching her upcoming book to be released in summer 2008.

Dr. Gore has been an activist for LGBT equality for more than 20 years and is a nationally recognized consultant on diversity and inclusion. The location and time will be announced in the coming weeks when confirmed.

ERG Spotlight

Comerica ERG Starts In Dallas

Comerica's recent move of its headquarters to Dallas means a larger employee base in the area. With this increased employee base in the local community it's good to see Comerica recognizing the importance of its LGBT employees.

Out & Equal DFW Chair, Ron Ausemus, spoke with Roger Jacob Jr. the Texas Service Company Diversity Coordinator at Comerica about the company's new Texas LGBT Employee Resource Group.

OE: So how long has Comerica had an LGBT ERG recognized within the company?

RJ: The first LGBT ERG was formed in 2006 in Michigan. However, for years there have been positive company policies that addressed LGBT employees. Domestic partnership benefits were a part of those policies.

OE: How was the LGBT ERG initially started?

RF: All of our ERG's are started on a grassroots basis, by employees who have a common interest and come together for professional and personal development, and to support Comerica. A few years ago, a group of employees came together in Michigan for this purpose to form the Michigan LGBT. They do have to formally apply through our Diversity area, and once approved, an Executive Sponsor is selected. Once approved, the group also receives a budget. In Texas there was a group of LGBT employees who saw what was happening there and started inquiring about how to get something started here locally. I became involved since I was the company's local Diversity Coordinator. I think a big driving force by the LGBT employees was the desire to be out and active within the community as employees of Comerica rather than just doing things as individuals.

OE: Is the LGBT ERG in existence at all Comerica sites?

RJ: The one from Michigan covers all of Michigan, including the over 200 locations we have there. The one in Texas covers all our 80 sites and is open to anyone to participate.

OE: How has the new ERG been received by the average employee at Comerica?

RJ: I have gotten no negative feedback at all. Only positive input.

OE: How many local members (including straight allies) are involved currently?

RJ: I'm going to say that here in Texas there are about 25.

OE: And when did you say it was started?

RJ: It was announced on March 10th of this year.

OE: Have you received any feedback from Sr. Managers?

RJ: We have an Executive sponsor who provides regular feedback but other than that I've not really received any feedback from other Sr. Managers.

OE: What kind of things have you done to encourage participation within the company?

RJ: We send out regular communications. We also have a resource database that anyone who has questions can access through a link. They can look up information about the ERG or pose questions through it.

OE: What about getting straight allies involved? How has that been?

RJ: We have several. I'm going to estimate that a third of our 25 local members are straight allies. Usually these straight allies have some kind of tie back to the LGBT community either by family, friends, etc.

OE: What has been the biggest challenge in getting the ERG started?

RJ: The paperwork.

OE: So there is a lot of paperwork to get an ERG started within Comerica?

RJ: Yes. You have to specify the primary objective, a list of people who are seeking formation of it. Things like that.

OE: What has been the most positive result of getting it started so far?

RJ: The most positive thing is the tie between the Dallas Resource Center and Comerica in getting a Financial Literacy Course planned for the LGBT community.

OE: That is a really good result of starting your ERG.

RJ: Yes.

OE: What has been the biggest surprise?

RJ: The biggest surprise for me was the lack of negativity. I really thought I'd hear quite a bit. The positive reinforcement to the announcement has been good. Another surprise is the lack of information that people have about being LGBT.

OE: The lack of information? Do you mean the kind of questions from non LGBT people?

RJ: People just don't have information about the LGBT community. A lot of people don't really even know that there is a large organized community and what it does. They didn't know that there are organizations that help out the community with food pantries and things like that.

OE: What do you see as the next steps in growth of the ERG?

RJ: The next steps are to focus this year on trying to do about 70% education within Comerica about the LGBT community and 30% giving back to the LGBT community.

OE: How many other ERG's are in Comerica and how long have most of them been around?

RJ: In addition to the two LGBT ERG's (one in Texas and one in Michigan) Comerica has six other ERGs. These are grassroots groups that have been started by employees with common interests who come together for professional development and to support Comerica. Groups like CAAN (the Comerica African American Network) and the Women's Forum have been in existence for over 10 years; others like CASIA (the Comerica Asian Indian Association) and the LGBT groups have been formed more recently.

OE: What do you hear from the ERG membership as their reasons for wanting to participate?

RJ: Probably the education part. To make more people within Comerica literate about what the LGBT community is about. People shy away from things they don't understand.

OE: Well, it certainly sounds like you're definitely on your way to achieving that goal this year. Thanks for discussing how things are going so far. You've been able to accomplish a great deal in a short time.

RJ: Yes. And we've got a lot more to do.