

LGBT Center Central PA History Project



*Discovering stories of
extraordinary lives*

NEWS

Spring 2016

40th anniversary of PA Council for Sexual Minorities to be commemorated April 12

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), in collaboration with the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project, is presenting a program from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Tuesday, April 12, 2016, in the auditorium of the State Museum of Pennsylvania to celebrate Pennsylvania's pioneering role in LGBT rights.

Dr. Anthony Silvestre, former chair of the Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities, will speak, along with a panel of several former members of the Council, including Samuel Deetz and Mark Segal, publisher of the *Philadelphia Gay News* (PGN), and whose new memoir outlines the creation of the Council. Panelists will discuss their experience on the Council, their accomplishments and the legacy of the Council. There will also be a discussion of future LGBT public policy efforts.



*Governor Shapp with Anthony Silvestre;
Credit: Pennsylvania State Archives
collection*

The event is free and open to the public. A reception will follow, sponsored by PGN, and will include the opening of a new exhibit about early LGBT activism in Pennsylvania and public policy initiatives similar to the Council.

The exhibit, titled "*We're Here: Pioneering LGBT Rights in Pennsylvania*" marks the emergence of the equality movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights in the late 1960s and its progress in the commonwealth during the 1970s. Featuring photographs, documents and objects related to this

pivotal moment in civil rights history, the exhibit focuses on the partnership between dedicated LGBT activist coalitions and Governor Milton Shapp, who came to office with a unique understanding of the issues of discrimination against minorities, leading to unprecedented executive action in Pennsylvania for LGBT equality. *"We're Here: Pioneering LGBT Rights in Pennsylvania"* runs through October 30.

Shapp was also the first governor in the nation to hold an official meeting with LGBT activists, issue an executive order banning discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation for state employees (in 1975) and enact a proclamation for a gay pride celebration, making him the nation's first "LGBT Equality Governor."



Former Council members Janet Cooper and Sam Deetz; credit: LGBT Center of Central PA History Project Collection at Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections

The exhibit will also commemorate the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities. Created by executive order by Governor Milton Shapp in February 1976, the Council is the first governmental body devoted to LGBT civil rights and public policy advocacy in the US.

The Council was created with representatives of major state government agencies as well as representatives of the LGBT community from throughout Pennsylvania to discuss and advise state government leaders on LGBT issues affecting public policy through the various agencies and "to recommend ways in which discrimination against sexual minorities can be ended," according to the executive order. The Council was active through the end of Governor Dick Thornburgh's administration, after which it became inactive.

The PHMC, the LGBT Center of Central PA, Equality Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Youth Congress will co-sponsor the event.

The State Museum of Pennsylvania, adjacent to the State Capitol in Harrisburg, is one of 25 historic sites and museums administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as part of the Pennsylvania Trails of History. With exhibits examining the dawn of geologic time, the Native American experience, the colonial and revolutionary era, a pivotal Civil War battleground, and the commonwealth's vast industrial age, The State Museum demonstrates that Pennsylvania's story is America's story.

For more information about the museum, visit www.statemuseumpa.org.

History Project attends TransCentral PA event

The History Project set up an information booth and pop-up exhibit at the 8th annual Keystone Conference sponsored by TransCentral PA at the Sheraton Hotel outside Harrisburg, March 10-12. The event attracted about 500 attendees from all over the U.S. including many from central PA. The exhibit featured photographs and other collection items related to transgender history. It was the first time we have set up a booth at this event and we had many attendees stop by and visit with us. About ten people signed up to be interviewed for the History Project. We are very excited about getting more transgender voices and stories for our oral history collection.

Fundraiser draws record crowd

Fifty people came out on a cold February night to support the History Project for our annual Hot History/Cold Night fundraising house party, raising \$2,110. It was the largest number of people who have ever attended one of these events. The party was hosted by Ray Davis, a Harrisburg realtor, who provided an incredible and delicious selection of food and beverages at his beautiful home just outside of Harrisburg.



From left, host Ray Davis welcomes volunteer Bill Burton, and Teddy Maurer, member of the History Project Steering Committee, to the Hot History/Cold Night fundraiser.

The History Project also received a \$500 grant from the William Penn Social Association, which runs a private social club on North 3rd Street in Harrisburg.

Funds received from both the house party and the grant will support the design, production and purchase of components for our traveling exhibits. Thanks to all who donated, thank you Ray for your generous hosting of this event, and thanks to the William Penn Social Association for your generous grant in support of the History Project!

New traveling exhibit components to debut

Thanks to our successful fundraising efforts, the design is complete for our new pop-up traveling exhibit components and they are now moving into production. We are expecting to debut the new components at the GSA Summit, a gathering of LGBT high school and college organizations in Carlisle March 31 through April 2. Our new exhibit components will also be on display at our open house at the LGBT Center in Harrisburg on Tuesday July 12 from 6 PM to 8 PM.

Looking for outreach coordinator

We continue to look for a new outreach coordinator to join the steering committee and take over the responsibilities of publicity for the History Project. You should be willing to attend a meeting every other month on a Monday evening and be willing to take the lead in doing a variety of outreach efforts through media, organizations, bars and businesses, events and social media. Please send an email with your interest and a little bit about your background and skills to Barry Loveland at history@centralpalgbtcenter.org.

Support our friends

The Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus and the Central PA Womyn's Chorus have been supportive friends to the History Project, welcoming us to be part of their information tables and providing free ad space in concert programs. Please check out their web sites for upcoming concert information and support them in their events.

<http://www.harrisburgmenschorus.org/>

<http://www.cpwchorus.org/>

And don't forget upcoming events at the LGBT Center including 3rd in the Burg at the LGBT Center Gallery every 3rd Friday evening: check out the full calendar of events at

www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/

LGBT Center of Central PA History Project

Winner of the 2014 J. Franklin Jameson Award from the Society of American Archivists

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<http://www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project>

facebook.com/LGBTcentralpa

Working in partnership with the Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>