

# TIME OUT YOUTH GET CONNECTED

Summer 2011



## A message from Executive Director Steve Bentley

As we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Time Out Youth, I had the opportunity to reflect on how much has changed for LGBTQ youth. Youth have access to more information, they're coming out earlier and they experience greater acceptance on a limited basis.

But much has not changed. Youth still have to come out – often with negative consequences including outright rejection by friends and family. They are still dependent upon parents or other adults for food and shelter. They still want and need a place where they can be themselves without pretense or hiding. And they still need adult role models with whom they can identify.

For all these reasons, Time Out Youth is just as relevant today as it was in 1991. We remain the only organization in this region dedicated to the support and well-being of LGBTQ youth. We also remain critically dependent upon the community for financial support. Without you, there would be no Time Out Youth. And without Time Out Youth, many of our young people would be completely without resources.

Please consider a one-time or recurring gift to help create hope for a new generation of LGBTQ youth who will make this a better community for all of us.

## Our Mission

Time Out Youth offers support, advocacy, and opportunities for personal development and social interaction for lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 13 – 23.

We will:

- Provide a safe environment for LGBTQ youth and their allies by fostering interaction, learning, and affirmation.
- Build a youth's self-concept to its fullest potential through uniquely targeted programming.
- Offer diverse opportunities for group activities that are open to all and closed to none.
- Promote awareness, understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for LGBTQ youth



## Time Out Youth Turns 20!

Following months of planning, TOY sponsored a series of events to mark our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary over the weekend of June 10 - 13. Under the capable leadership of Marketing and Fundraising Vice Chair, Chip Perry, board members planned and executed four spectacular events. “We wanted to design a weekend that would appeal to everyone in our community in some way – and to acknowledge the past, present and future of Time Out Youth”, said Perry.

### Platinum Gala

The weekend began with a fabulous Friday evening of fun, good food and entertainment for 250 friends at Extravaganza Depot. Guests included current and former supporters and board members, including Time Out Youth founder, **Tonda Taylor**. Author and blogger, **Brett Berk** provided the keynote address, and youth board members **Ean Woods** and **Loan Tran** challenged us to step up and help change the future. We were fortunate to have terrific corporate sponsors for our gala, including Platinum sponsors Wells Fargo and Drake Dentistry. This fundraising event raised \$50,000 for TOY operations!

### Greatness: Living Your Life Like It’s Platinum

Saturday’s activities began with a community conversation among youth and adults about what we can do to make life better today for LGBTQ youth.

### Glam – A Time Out Youth Prom

The highlight of the weekend was a youth-only prom held at Grand Central. Decorated in the platinum theme, this elegant venue was an appropriate setting for the nearly 100 youth who attended, dressed to the nines. One youth observed, “this is better than any prom ever!” Entertainment was provided by **DJ Rob** and **Roxy C. Moorecox**. After the prom, twelve of our youth participated in a lock-in at Myers Park Baptist Church.

### Grace...in every step

On Sunday, youth, and board members were invited by Myers Park Baptist Church to a delicious breakfast before the worship service. Afterward, Senior Minister **Steve Shoemaker** led the group on a meditative labyrinth walk.



## Step Up

*Loan Tran's address to PLATINUM GALA guests*

My name is Loan Tran. I am 16 years old and will soon be a junior in High School. I have experienced bullying and harassment in various periods of my life. The biggest thing that has helped me conquer the resulting heartache is the knowledge that no matter where I look, there will be someone there to sympathize. High school sucks and being young and not straight doesn't make it any better. Sure, we find like-minded friends who are LGBT but at some point, we need that one person who will step up and say, "I'm straight. I'm an ally. And I care."

We need allies to come out because we live in a scary world. Sadly, this is still a world in which our government, our bosses, our teachers, and unfortunately some of our families will shut out the LGBT young person who has a story to tell. What allies can do is speak out, reach out, and listen to these stories. Your presence matters. In this day and age, it's imperative that we challenge ourselves to go beyond just saying, "Hey. I'm an ally." You can still say you're an ally. But you can also become a volunteer at Time Out Youth and witness for yourself the transformations LGBT youth are experiencing in safe spaces. Become a mentor, and promise to always be there. Last but not least VOTE! Vote, vote, vote!

Being someone who is both a minor and an immigrant, I don't know when I will be able to vote to change these policies that demean me and my friends. But you have the power to change our futures, for better or for worse. Don't forget that.

And no, I haven't forgotten about the LGBTQ adults in the room. You won't be let off without a to-do list. I know that most of us in this room have been victimized and put down for any number of reasons which may include being shamed for having a crush on someone of our own gender, or being a little more or a less masculine or feminine than our peers. It's horrible but it happens. And as soon as we reach that point in our lives where we've crossed the proverbial finish line and said goodbye to those bullies and bigots, we do a well-deserved happy dance. And some of us never look back.

It's easy to take lots of strides forward but it's admirable look back around. We LGBTQ youth are still here! Having LGBTQ adults around who are not afraid of their past helps a ton. Our identities are intertwined even beyond generational gaps. Take the initiative and become a role model, a warrior, making it better for LGBTQ youth by sponsoring safe space trainings, telling your story, and standing up even when you are most vulnerable. Yes, you.

Speaking out is a risk, but it is a risk we must be all held accountable for. The time is now and as a matter of fact, it's always been the time to reject the notions of LGBTQ youth being somehow less than. Step up and offer your wisdom, learn a little, and carry this community forward—whether you've got a blossoming youth under your wing or you have taken your rightful place under the wings of a youth; providing love and support will go a long way.

## New School Outreach Effort to Launch

With funding from the Charlotte Lesbian and Gay Fund, Time Out Youth and the Gay Men's Chorus of Charlotte will launch a new effort to support school-based gay/straight alliances (GSAs) and other gay-friendly student programs. Research has shown that schools with strong GSAs have reduced incidences of harassment and bullying, and report more positive school climates overall than those without the student clubs.

Beginning this fall, TOY will hire and supervise a dedicated resource to provide direct support to students and faculty advisors who wish to have a GSA in their school. Laurie Pitts, TOY's Director of Programs and Services, notes that "this effort builds on the work we have done over the past two years to build a mutually supportive relationship with local schools. Response from school personnel has already been positive."

# A Busy Season

## Believe In Youth

Time Out Youth joined **Campus Pride** in sponsoring the second annual “Believe in Youth” event on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Over fifty people came out to hear **Judy Shepard** describe her advocacy efforts and the work of the Matthew Shepard Foundation. This year’s event was partially underwritten by a grant from the **Wesley Mancini Foundation**.

## RENT and Just Like You

The staff and board of directors at **Theatre Charlotte** invited Time Out Youth to join a fundraiser in conjunction with the premier of the musical RENT on May 12<sup>th</sup>. TOY received a portion of the ticket sales and the silent auction proceeds. During the run of RENT, Theatre Charlotte produced an original drama, “Just Like You”, based on real life stories from Time Out Youth. Our youth thoroughly enjoyed this moving production which included two of our youth among the cast.

## Urban Education Symposium

In June, staff members Laurie Pitts and Steve Bentley, along with youth Ivel Posada and Loan Tran participated in the Summer Urban Education Symposium sponsored by **Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools**. The undertaking was designed to expose 100 teachers to a social justice experience over four days. TOY’s contribution included information on the LGBTQ experience at CMS as well as what teachers can do to make their classrooms and schools safer and more welcoming for LGBTQ students. Steve Bentley commented, “This marked an important milestone for Time Out Youth. We have worked diligently to build a relationship with CMS and this invitation is confirmation that CMS recognizes the value we can bring to the table.”

## Time Out Youth Joins Crossroads Charlotte

Time Out Youth has become a member of the third cohort of Crossroads Charlotte; and the first and only LGBT organization to participate. With an emphasis on creating a community that is accessible to all, inclusive and equitable, the goal is to build a trusting, vibrant and sustainable city. For more information, visit [crossroadscharlotte.com](http://crossroadscharlotte.com).

## Board of Directors

Ivey Graham, Chair  
Jeremy Carter, Vice Chair  
Chip Perry, Vice Chair, Marketing & Fundraising  
Christa Carter, PhD, Treasurer  
Terri Matthews, MSW, ABD, Secretary  
Jonathan Anslow, PsyD  
Donell Beaty, Youth Board Member  
Tim Bice  
Michael Holmes  
Ted Lewis  
Jolie Long, LPC  
Daniel Mauney  
Dang Pham, Youth Board Member  
Loan Tran, Youth Board Member  
Steven Wilson  
Ean Woods, Youth Board Member

## Staff

Steve Bentley, Executive Director  
[sbentley@timeoutyouth.org](mailto:sbentley@timeoutyouth.org)  
Laurie Pitts, MSW, Youth Programs and Services Director  
[lauriepitts@timeoutyouth.org](mailto:lauriepitts@timeoutyouth.org)  
Melanie Pace, MSW, Summer Support Staff, [mpace@timeoutyouth.org](mailto:mpace@timeoutyouth.org)  
Leigh Dixon-Phillips, Office Manager  
[ldixon@timeoutyouth.org](mailto:ldixon@timeoutyouth.org)

## CONTACT US

TIME OUT YOUTH  
1900 THE PLAZA, CHARLOTTE, NC 28205  
T 704.344.8335 F 704.344.8186  
WWW.TIMEOUTYOUTH.ORG  
TWITTER.COM/TIMEOUTYOUTH  
FACEBOOK.COM/TIMEOUTYOUTH