



Introducing a New Choice
in Menlo Park for Middle
School and High School



- Geared for English Speakers
- Rigorous Math, Science and Design Tech Curriculum
- New Campus

Log in Register



Home News Town Square Blogs A&E Sports Real Estate Print Edition Classifieds Shop Visit Join Contact

1

Uploaded: Fri, Nov 6, 2015, 5:51 am

Outlet offers LGBTQQ youth a place to be

Longtime local program serves critical support, advocacy role

by Elena Kadvanly / Palo Alto Weekly

There's a rare place in Mountain View where transgender and gender non-conforming teens feel safe to explore, express and be who they are.

That place is Outlet, a longtime local program that provides comprehensive services to LGBTQQ youth and adolescents, both directly in the form of support groups and individual counseling and indirectly through providing training to local school districts, including Palo Alto Unified.

Local transgender youth and their families describe Outlet as a life-saving, one-of-a-kind resource. It was where Rayden Marcum, a male transgender college student from Palo Alto, first tried out male pronouns. And it was where J., a transgender man who transitioned from female to male while a Gunn High School student, felt he was given "permission to exist," he said. J. requested that the Weekly only use his first initial to protect his privacy. For some students, Outlet was where they met another transgender person for the first time.

In high school, Marcum and J., as well as other current Palo Alto transgender and gender non-conforming students, frequently attended one of several peer-led, drop-in support groups at Outlet. This particular group is for LGBTQQ+ youth ages 10 to 18 years old and meets every Monday night at the Community Health Awareness Council in Mountain View, where Outlet is based. It's entirely driven by the youth themselves, though staff members help to facilitate. The students typically check in with each other about what's going on that day or week and suggest topics or questions that they want to focus on that night. Topics can range from deeply serious -- how to handle discrimination or harassment at school -- to typical teenage angst: "How do I ask someone out?"

Ross said in the last three or four years, that particular group has seen an increase in the number of transgender and gender non-conforming youth, compared to its history of supporting mostly gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. The group provides critical support and information for students who are questioning or exploring their gender identity.

"The nuanced piece of being trans or gender-diverse is that it's this internal struggle that's not super visible, but it's always in there," Ross said. "It's been shown to have a huge impact on the ability of these kids to really figure out what feels right to them. If you don't have a place to do that, then you're keeping it internalized. You're walking around with anxiety and depression and isolation."

All of Outlet's support groups are free, confidential and meet year-round. Other groups include De Ambiente, the only Spanish-speaking support group for bilingual and/or newly immigrated LGBTQQ+ youth between 10



Anthony Ross, center, program director of Outlet, talks with LGBTQQ teens during a weekly support-group meeting on Nov. 2, as Erica Velasco, left, a community volunteer, listens. Photo by Veronica Weber.



REAL ESTATE ADVISORS & BROKERS
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
ZANEMAC.COM

TOP BLOGS

Opening alert: Bird Dog in Palo Alto

By | 2 comments | 2,137 views

Options for Addressing the Rapid Rise in Regional Rents: More Housing?, Rent Control? Other Solutions?

By | 50 comments | 2,072 views

A sad sea of trick-or-treaters

By | 17 comments | 1,462 views

SENIOR FOCUS: 5 Things to Understand When Considering a Retirement Community

By | 2 comments | 887 views

Development Cap: Size, what to count, and why

By | 11 comments | 800 views

[View all local blogs](#)

TOM LEMIEUX
REALTOR

650.465.7459
tom@tomlemieux.com
tomlemieux.com

PACIFIC UNION
Licenses: 01065910

JUST LISTED

OPEN SAT & SUN, 1:30 - 4:30 PM

180 Greenoaks Drive, Atherton
Spacious Lindenwood Home - Almost 1 Acre;
3 bedrooms, 2.5 bath, guest house
OFFERED AT \$5,300,000
[Click here for more information](#)

VIVI CHAN
Real Estate
650.917.4211

Success Starts with Vivi Chan
www.ViviChan.com
COLDWELL BANKER

and 25 years old in the Bay Area; another support group for youth ages 10 to 18 who identify anywhere on the gender spectrum or want to explore their gender identity; and a young-adults group geared toward LGBTQQ+ young adults who are out of high school, in college or are transitioning into work and gaining more independence.

The groups average about seven to 12 youth per week, according to Outlet Program Director Anthony Ross. Outlet, which employs three full-time staff members including Ross, serves students from up and down the Peninsula, from Palo Alto to San Jose. The organization is now housed under Palo Alto nonprofit Adolescent Counseling Services.

Outlet also runs peer-support groups on the Palo Alto and Gunn high school campuses, as well as at Woodside High School and a pilot group at Sequoia High School. These groups are for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or who might be questioning their gender identity and are highly confidential. If a student is interested in attending, they must speak with their school's Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) site director to find out when and where the group meets. Many of these student are "barely out," and come to that group first to get feedback and advice from their peers and Outlet staff on how to talk to their friends and families about their identity, Ross said.

Outlet also provides youth with individual counseling through ACS interns either after school in a Community Counseling Program, or at the students' own schools through the on-campus groups.

These kind of youth support groups are scarce in the area. The only other local option is a weekly drop-in meeting in Palo Alto for LGBTQQ+ people and allies between the ages of 13 and 25. The group is hosted by Youth Space, a Family & Children Services LGBTQQ+ program based in San Jose.

Outlet first formed in 1997 as an HIV-prevention and education program through the YWCA of Palo Alto. The organization would teach volunteer high school students how to lead HIV-prevention workshops, with the goal that they would then spread that education back at their schools. It turned out that many of those students identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual, Ross said. They asked staff leading the program at the time if they would start a support group for LGBT youth, and they did -- the same Monday night group that continues today.

Outlet also plays a major role in the education of Palo Alto teachers. They have been the school district's primary source of LGBTQQ+ training for eight years and provide an annual, two-hour long training to new hires. Outlet also regularly consults with teachers or administrators who have questions or request help in supporting a transgender student's transition, for example. Ross is also a member of the school district's LGBTQQ committee and was directly involved in the creation of a new [gender-identity policy](#) coming before the Palo Alto school board next week.

Outlet's educational services are broad-reaching. During the 2014-15 fiscal year, the nonprofit provided training and education to 3,395 youth and youth-serving professionals throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, according to Ross. The group also takes requests for workshops on LGBTQQ+ issues, from what California laws are in place to protect LGBTQQ+ youth to gender education. Ross said they receive requests not only from schools -- from elementary through higher-education institutions -- but also mental health professionals and youth-serving nonprofit organizations that are not LGBTQQ+ specific.

Outlet staff will also advocate on behalf of students and families when necessary. Ross said he recently attended a meeting with administrators and a family of a middle-school transgender student to talk about accommodations for the student. The school administrators were talking about getting training scheduled eventually; Ross stepped in to make the point that "something really needs to happen now."

"We often need to advocate and push for, "What are you going to do right now," and, "What's your long-term plan?" he said.

Outlet also leads parent-education programs in both English and Spanish, and regularly refers parents to local mental health professionals for further support. Ross urged any parents with gender-diverse children, whether or not they fall into the organization's target age group of 10 to 25, to contact Gender Spectrum, an Oakland organization that provides education and training around gender to schools and other institutions, with any questions.

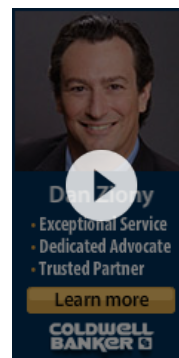
Ross -- whose email signature includes not only typical information like his professional title and phone number, but also his preferred pronouns ("he/him/his") -- signs off every email with a quote from American poet and feminist Adrienne Rich: "When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing."

Through support groups, education, advocacy and beyond, Outlet serves to counter that psychic disequilibrium that so deeply affects local LGBTQQ+ youth.

Youth or parents interested in finding out more about Outlet can email outlet@chacmv.org or visit acs-teens.org/what-we-do/outlet/.

Related content:

- [Transgender youth navigate difficult path in quest to be who they are](#)
- [Gender terms and definitions](#)
- [Palo Alto school district eyes new gender-identity policy](#)



ALAIN PINEL
FAMILY

**Open Sunday
1:30-4:30**

**7 Vasilakos Court,
Menlo Park**
Cul de sac location!
4 BR/2.5 BA \$3,495,000

Learn More

Carol & Nicole
Carol Camevale & Nicole Aron
CalBRE# 00946687/00952657

650.543.1195
Serving Palo Alto
and Menlo Park

A Refreshing Change Of Place.

Wood-fired cooking, craft beers and exciting wines.

FIRE OAK & BARLEY
WOOD-FIRED BISTRO

CLICK HERE FOR MENU

**811 Hamilton Ave.
PALO ALTO**

FOR SALE

Newly completed
5-bedroom home in
Crescent Park

ALAIN PINEL

CITRON

JUDY CITRON • 650.543.1206
jcitron@apr.com • judy citron.com
License# 01825568

- [On privacy, early intervention and medical advances](#)

Comments

Posted by **AllYouCanEat**
a resident of Mountain View
21 minutes ago

+ Like this comment

LGBTQQ... What the hell does QQ stand for. In my day all we had was BLT... Hold the mayo!

[Email Town Square Moderator](#)

[Report Objectionable Content](#)



PRIORY
Spiritually, Integrity

Admission Open Houses

Saturday, November 14, 2015
Middle School (Grades 6 to 8) - 10 a.m.
Upper School (Grades 9 to 11) - 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 5, 2015
Middle School (Grade 6 to 8) - 10 a.m.
Upper School (Grade 9 to 11) - 2 p.m.

[Learn More](#)

Don't miss out on the discussion!
Sign up to be notified of new comments on this topic.

Email:

SUBMIT

Post a comment

Posting an item on Town Square is simple and requires no registration. Just complete this form and hit "submit" and your topic will appear online. Please be respectful and truthful in your postings so Town Square will continue to be a thoughtful gathering place for sharing community information and opinion. All postings are subject to our [TERMS OF USE](#), and may be deleted if deemed inappropriate by our staff.

We prefer that you use your real name, but you may use any "member" name you wish.

Name: *

Select your neighborhood or school community: * Not sure?

Neighborhoods

Comment: *

Verification code:  *

Enter the verification code exactly as shown, using capital and lowercase letters, in the multi-colored box.

*Required Fields

SUBMIT

INDEX

Home
News
TownSquare
A&E
Sports
Home & Real Estate
Shop Palo Alto
Visitor Info

Send News Tips
Join
Print Edition/Archives
Fogster Classifieds
Express
Promotions
Special Pubs
Obituaries
Circulation & Delivery

About Us
Contact Us
Advertising Info
Terms of Use
Privacy Policy

Mountain View Voice
The Almanac

© 2015 Palo Alto Online
All rights reserved.

Embarcadero Media