

NW NEWS



Joshua Arceneaux as Cher

The National GLBTQ Youth Foundation, a Portland-based nonprofit dedicated to funding and coordinating programs and studies to support their mental health.

After a three-year review of existing research on queer youth, Allen, the organization's president, found that anti-GLBTQ oppression is as visible and hateful as ever.

"So many ten of millions of dollars have gone into the equal rights movements, which we fully support—but it's a long process and there's been a backlash," Allen said. "An unfortunate and unintended consequence of the hard fight for equal rights for sexual minorities is a disturbing increase in homophobic and heterosexist messages in the media, schools, churches and other community organizations."

The National GLBTQ Youth Foundation aims to counter these messages by funding and helping to facilitate programs that empower queer youth and also to improve support after the fact by managing multi-center psychological research studies addressing the harm caused by anti-GLBTQ oppression.

"We did a very thorough review of psychological and social research and found an alarming lack of psychological research about GLBTQ youth," Allen explained. Despite the fact there are estimated to be more than 6 million queer youth in the United States, according to Allen, less than .01 percent of adolescent psychological research includes information about sexual minorities.

This lack of research makes it difficult to appropriately treat mental illness in queer youth, who are more likely than their straight peers to experience depression, anxiety, homelessness and suicidal ideation. Allen attributed these higher rates of emotional distress to anti-GLBTQ oppression, which can be made worse by the 40 percent of psychologists he said admit to not using a gay-affirmative therapeutic approach.

The GLBTQ Youth Foundation is currently finalizing its strategic plan and embarking on fundraising efforts. Allen said the foundation hoped to be in a position to provide grants by the final fiscal quarter of the year.

"We really want to reach out and try to decrease that anti-gay rhetoric and improve evidence-based social support," Allen said.

For more information on The GLBTQ Youth Foundation, visit glbtqyouthfoundation.org, or call Allen at 503-477-5330.

— Erin Rook

PABA Elects New Board, Hosts Mayor of Powell's City of Books

The Portland Area Business Association, the chamber of commerce for the local LGBT community, elected new officers and board members May 12.

Jill Nelson, a business and relationship coach for Empower Fitness and former PABA treasurer, was elected president, replacing Michael Long. Corey Kaster, of the Corey Kaster

planning the big surprise. On April 16, just a week after Arceneaux's 28th birthday, as he was getting dressed after a shower, Cygan entered the apartment with a Harpo producer and camera in hand.

"I'm about to surprise [my partner] with something that is going to totally blow his mind," Cygan said to the camera before entering the apartment. "I'm about to go inside and tell him that *The Oprah Show* is sending us to see Cher in Las Vegas. He's going to freak out."

Excited to be seeing Cher in concert, Arceneaux was doubly shocked when the singer called to him from the stage, saying, "Get your surprised ass down here."

After the April 17 show, Arceneaux was invited backstage to meet his idol.

"You have been such an inspiration to me. You have made me feel so comfortable in my own skin, and you have allowed me to love myself," Arceneaux told Cher.

For Arceneaux, the whole experience was confirmation of the power of believing in dreams.

"I would tell my friends and family all the time, 'One day, I'm going to walk on that *Oprah* stage, sit down and then give Oprah a high five.' I would sometimes practice the whole interview," he admitted. "So to see my dreams manifest before my eyes and, of course, to see the beautiful Cher in person was more than I could have imagined."

— Erin Rook

Portland Researcher Launches National GLBTQ Youth Mental Health Foundation

In response to lack of resources for and research about queer youth, Ken Allen founded

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