

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

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Title: *Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg*

Date: 1979

Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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[1979]



THE
GAY SWITCHBOARD
OF HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

P.O. BOX 872
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17108

LGBT-001 1-45

717

234-0328

THE GAY SWITCHBOARD OF HARRISBURG

What is it?

The Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg is a telephone service that gives information, referrals and supportive counseling.

Who calls?

Gay people, transsexuals, parents of gays, spouses of gays, groups needing speakers, media people wanting interviews and any other interested people.

Why are you in existence?

In 1975, a group of concerned gay people started the switchboard in response to community needs. It was noted that nowhere in Harrisburg was there a social service exclusively for gay people.

What are your hours?

We are open from 6-10 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Who will answer the phone?

A group of concerned volunteers, trained in telephone counseling techniques will answer. We are prepared to counsel and give the best referrals and information on anything you might want or need.

What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is assured. We take no names on the phone and anonymity is the case.

Is there any cost for the service?

There is no cost for the switchboard's services. We are non-profit and staffed completely by volunteers.

What is your phone number?

The Gay Switchboard's number is
234-0328

How can I become a member?

Membership is open to any concerned person, 18 years of age or over. One need not be a telephone volunteer to be an active member. In order to join, one must write a letter to: P.O. Box 872, Federal Square Station, Harrisburg, PA 17108. We will then contact you.

Can I meet people through the switchboard? Will you arrange dates for me?

The switchboard is not a dating service. We do not make social contacts for our members or for our callers. We are strictly a referral, information and counseling service.

How is the Gay Switchboard funded?

The switchboard is not funded at all. All of the monies used to run the switchboard are from individual donations, which are always urgently needed.

Fact & Fiction

- FICTION You can tell a person is gay just by looking at him/her.
- FACT Gay people look no different from straight people. Gayness has nothing to do with femininity or masculinity.
- FICTION Gay people wish they were the opposite sex.
- FACT Gay people are not interested in changing their sex. People who wish to change their sex are called transsexuals.
- FICTION Gay people would rather be straight.
- FACT Studies have shown this to be untrue. The vast majority of gays would not change their sexuality even if they could.
- FICTION Gay people are unhappy.
- FACT Gay people are no happier or unhappier than the general population. People who feel comfortable with themselves are generally happy. This holds true for gay and straight individuals.
- FICTION Gay people are overly sexually oriented.
- FACT While society would like to depict gay people as obsessed with sex, the truth of the matter is that gays are no more or less sexual than their straight counterparts.

The Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg, Pa.
P.O. Box 872, Harrisburg, Pa. 17108
717-234-0328

1979

The Harrisburg Gay Switchboard was created in April 1975 by a small group of concerned people from the Gay Community. The Switchboard provides information/referral and peer counseling Monday through Friday from 6PM to 10PM when volunteers are available. The volunteer staff receives about 15 hours of training in listening techniques, crisis intervention, resources, etc. Not all members are phone volunteers, but support the Switchboard in other means. There are about 25 active members of the Switchboard.

Funds for the Switchboard come from membership dues of \$3 annually and other contributions. No public monies are involved. A detailed expense and income account is included herein for 1979.

The Switchboard has a set of bylaws, and written policies and procedures of operation. Two Co-Directors (one male & one female), a treasurer, secretary, data compiler and publicist are elected annually by the membership. The general membership meets monthly to discuss current activities and process monthly calls. On-going training is also provided for at the monthly meetings in relationship to particular problems associated with calls.

The Switchboard is advertised in the white pages of the Harrisburg phone directory, public service announcements and stickers. As a partial result we have been requested on several occasions to speak with numerous groups. Some of those groups in 1979 included the Human Sexuality classes at Shippensburg State College, Contact Harrisburg, Crisis Intervention, Elizabethtown College, Tri-County Family Planning, and MH/MR.

The Switchboard maintains a small library of books, the Advocate, Christopher Street, Philadelphia Gay News and the Harrisburg Area Women's News. We are members of the Penna. Lesbian/Gay Support Network which contains a Switchboard/Hotline Association of Penna, and we are members of the National Gay Task Force. As a focal point of information we work with the Parents of Gays of Tressler Associates, Dignity of Central Penna. the Central Penna. Gay Alliance and other such groups which may arise supporting the Gay Community.

Referrals have been developed over the years in the areas of medical, legal, counseling and local bar information and other gay organizations. We have a female and male gay counselor plus other counselors sensitive to gay issues in the area. The ACLU and other sensitive attorneys have cooperated with us as well as several sensitive physicians.

Income and Expense Report 1979

Balance as of 1 January 1979	\$195.69
Dues from membership	76.00
Collections at meetings	162.02
Flea Market	21.50
Donations (La Rose Rouge, Altlands Ranch, Contact, Elizabethtown College)	422.00
TOTAL INCOME FOR 1979.....	<u>\$681.52</u>

Expense

Telephone	\$170.73
Room Rent	364.45
Post Office Box	40.00
Referral Book	12.00
Record (gift)	6.36
Stamps	30.00
Womens' News Subscription.....	5.00
Pride '79 registration.....	15.00
Books	22.00
National Gay Task Force	11.00
Checking Account fee.....	6.00
TOTAL EXPENSE FOR 1979.....	<u>\$682.54</u>
Balance on 31 December 1979.....	<u>\$194.67</u>

Statistical Summary for 1978 & 79

Total Calls 78-1777, 79-1824 78-6.96 calls per night, 79-7.33 calls per night
Total pieces of information dispensed was 78-1843, 79-1968 (one call may involve more than one category)

The Switchboard operated 78-255, 79-249 days or 78-1020, 79-996 hours.

Identified males 78-920 75%, 79-1030 79%

Identified females 78-300 25%, 79-271 21% 78-31%, 79-29% of the calls are sex unidentified.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
78-487 calls-23%	78-370 calls-22%	78-350 calls-19%	78-313 calls-17%	78-359 calls-19%
79-435 calls-24%	79-348 calls-19%	79-305 calls-17%	79-351 calls-19%	79-385 calls-26%
6PM	7PM	8PM	9PM	
78-487 calls-27%	78-503 calls-29%	78-415 calls-24%	78-372 calls-20%	
79-425 calls-23%	79-489 calls-27%	79-475 calls-26%	79-435 calls-24%	

- Category 1: General Rap Calls: all calls pertaining to general discussion, such as weather, politics, sexual practices and other Switchboard members calling. 78-289 calls-16%
79-346 calls-18%
- Category 2: Bar, Bath and Restaurant Calls: all calls requesting information on addresses and telephone numbers of bars, baths, and restaurants and those calls requesting information on cruising areas. This could be information anywhere that we have a guide for. 78-307 calls-17%
79- 370 calls-19%
- Category 3: Housing Calls: all calls where the person is either offering his home for prospective roommates or the person is looking for a place to move. 78-11 calls-1%
79-10 calls-.5%
- Category 4: Hang-up Calls: all calls marked as hang-up calls and wrong numbers. This does not include crank calls. 78-531 calls-29%
79-507 calls-26%
- Category 5: Personal Rap Calls: all calls where the party is discussing personal problems not herein categorized, general counseling, or just someone to talk to because of a problem. 78-201 calls-10%
79-203 calls-10%
- Category 6: Social Rap Calls: any and all calls discussing Gay organizations, and how or who to call to become involved. 78-162 calls-8.5%
79-226 calls-11%
- Category 7: Fantasy Calls: calls where the party relates or acts out a fantasy which they have had and through which they may achieve a kind of sexual satisfaction or used as a way of communicating. 78-11 calls-1%
79-3 calls-.2%

- Category 8: Medical Calls: all calls where the party seeks a Gay Doctor or just needs medical advice on certain problems.
78-34 calls-2%
79-36 calls-2%
- Category 9: Drag Calls: all calls requesting information on the various Drag groups, transvestites or trans-sexuals.
78-35 calls-2%
79-81 calls-4%
- Category 10: Crash Calls: all calls where the party is in an emergency situation and needs temporary housing.
78-3 calls-.5%
79-2 calls-.1%
- Category 11: Publication Calls: all calls where the party wants to find copies of a certain Gay publication or Gay literature information.
78-9 calls-.5%
79-5 calls-.3%
- Category 12: Coming Out Calls: all calls where the party has realized or has suspicion about his own feelings toward the same sex.
78-23 calls-1%
79-29 calls-1.5%
- Category 13: Masturbation Calls: all calls where we can identify the person using us to obtain a sexual release.
78-13 calls-1%
79-14 calls-.7%
- Category 14: Suicide and Drug Calls: all calls where the party is either so depressed he is about to attempt to take his life or where the party has already begun (with drugs) and wants to back out, or where there has just been an overdose of drugs and immediate identification and discreet assistance is needed.
78-2 calls-.5%
79-3 calls-.2%
- Category 15: Legal Calls: calls requesting legal information or requesting legal assistance.
78-32 calls-2%
79-10 calls-.5%
- Category 16: Crank Calls: calls where the party is calling for the purpose of harassment.
78-156 calls-8%
79-123 calls-6%