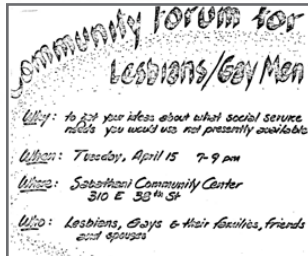


In 1985, after Lesbian and Gay Community Services closed its doors, a group of gay and lesbian leaders, executive directors from Minneapolis



Community leaders and activists worked for more than a year to come up with a plan to replace direct services to the GLBT community after a gay and lesbian health services agency closed down.

organizations (many of whom were straight) and representatives from the United Way and Hennepin County came together, dedicated to the idea that there ought to be a freestanding gay and lesbian organization to serve the community. With United Way and Hennepin County funding, the group created the Gay

and Lesbian Community Action Council with a Board of Directors and a staff of one, commencing operations in January 1987.



First Board and Staff – 1987

major events occurred, especially if someone had been hurt by gay-bashing, the phone would be much busier at that time. It would be lighting up people's fears. So there were a lot of requests for information and referral. People would also call in looking for realtors, lawyers, doctors, for any kind of professional service. They were looking for someone who would be gay-friendly. We had a list of organizations or individuals who were gay-friendly. That was necessary because we were still fairly closeted so there was a lot of discrimination and a lot of fear of discrimination."

Dear Friends:

Since November 1985 a number of Lesbians, Gay Men, and individuals from Twin Cities social service agencies have been meeting to begin to suggest ways to fill in gaps left by the closing of Lesbian and Gay Community Service (LGCS), the Lesbian Resource Center (LRC), and Christopher Street. The results from a discussion at the community forum held on April 15 and a survey completed during the winter both point to the need for continued grassroots coordination and additional leadership in the Gay and Lesbian communities. Therefore, we are proud to announce the creation of a Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council. A copy of the description for the first council is attached.

After extensive discussions, the group created the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council.

Over the next 20 years, the organization would grow in size and influence as well as change its name but would never forget its mission – to make our home a place where GLBT Minnesotans have the freedom, power, and confidence to make the best choices for their own lives.

In its infancy, OutFront Minnesota offered direct services such as a Helpline where community members could call to receive support for issues ranging from coming out to being victims of hate crimes. Founding board member Julia Classen remembers, "When



Crime victim services were a vital part of the organization, which also helped form a community response to the murders of two gay men in 1991, including providing the media with key information about the extent of hate crimes against GLBT people. It was a crime victim advocate at OutFront Minnesota who helped police arrest a suspect in that case.




"It was fairly obvious that she was the stronger candidate because of her work within the GLBT community, her experience as a seasoned and successful organizer, and who was never seen as a divisive person. She did a great job pulling people together to work together, which I think is still true." ~Julia Classen, former board member, on the hiring of Ann DeGroot as the first Executive Director.



20 Years of History

**GLCAC
Anti-Violence
&
Harassment
Program**



**Gay and Lesbian
Community Action Council**

OutFront Minnesota provided, from its inception, social services to crime and domestic violence victims.

From its early years, OutFront Minnesota was an active leader for public policy change. It embarked on the *It's Time Minnesota* campaign that would lead, in 1993, to the passage of an amendment to the Minnesota Human Rights Act, banning discrimination against GLBT people in areas such as education, employment, public services, and public accommodations. Looking back on his decision to sign the bill, former governor Arne Carlson says, "The issue of gay, that's not some kind of a joke to a person

who's gay. That's the essence of who they are. You want people in public office with a strong belief system who'll say 'come hell or high water, I'm with you.' I did it because it was the right thing to do."

The 1990's were a time for OutFront Minnesota to expand its services and respond to the critical issues of the time, including the military's new "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, the "Defense of Marriage Act", and organizing a local vigil to respond to the Mathew Shepard murder.



OutFront Minnesota was instrumental in helping Minneapolis police capture a man who murdered two gay men in 1991. (Police Chief John Laux and Ann M. DeGroot).

Even though OutFront Minnesota had been traveling the state doing outreach since 1991, in 1998 OutFront Minnesota hired its first statewide organizer to conduct trainings, education, and community organizing. Former senior staff member Doug Federhart remembers, "We were getting calls from around the state from individuals

saying, 'I really need to get something going.'" This reflected what he says was one of OutFront Minnesota's key values - to listen to constituents and respond accordingly. OutFront Minnesota worked with individuals and groups in Duluth, Rochester, Willmar, Bemidji, International Falls, Detroit Lakes, Stillwater, Alexandria, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, and many other communities,

DISCRIMINATION

Should gay people be included in Minnesota's Human Rights Act?

Rob
ago. was fired several months

OutFront Minnesota was an integral part of the campaign to change state law to prevent discrimination against GLBT people.

Subd. 2. **Employer.** Except when based on a bona fide occupational qualification, it is an unfair employment practice for an employer, because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age to:

- (1) refuse to hire or to maintain a system of employment which unreasonably excludes a person seeking employment; or
- (2) discharge an employee; or
- (3) discriminate against a person with respect to hiring, tenure, compensation, terms, working conditions, facilities, or privileges of employment.

"You're putting the approval of the sovereign state of Minnesota on that sense of equality. I think that's very important." ~Former Governor Arne Carlson, reflecting on his 1993 signing of the Minnesota Human Rights Act amendment to include GLBT people. The law bans discrimination in areas such as employment, public services, public accommodations, and education.

including holding statewide conferences, and providing consultation to local groups who requested it.

MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

UNIVERSITY MISSION AWARD

It's Time Minnesota

Special Recognition

For your successful efforts in passing legislation to include sexual orientation within the Minnesota Human Rights Act

Jan Platt
Jan Platt, Executive Director

Laura Waterman Wittrock
Laura Waterman Wittrock, Chair, Board of Directors

OutFront Minnesota was honored for its significant role in the "It's Time Minnesota" campaign, which led to the Human Rights Act amendment.

OutFRONT "At the Capitol"

News from the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council

Volume 7, Number 1 Spring 1997

GLCAC is your voice at the Minnesota Legislature

Building Your Future

- Help Schools, Workplace and Community
- Stable Families
- Strong Civil Rights

As gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or dual citizens we need and deserve to feel safe from state or local discrimination and our familial relationships ought to be recognized and valued, and our rights and responsibilities as equal citizens should be acknowledged and protected.

Into the 1990's, OutFront Minnesota continued to grow in staff, funding, and programs, and ensured it communicated with the community.

It was also during the '90's that OutFront Minnesota expanded its communication and outreach by creating a newsletter and its first website, complete with a district finder where people could locate their lawmakers. It also expanded its national ties. In 1994 Executive Director Ann M. DeGroot co-founded the National Association of LGBT Community Centers.

Into the new century, OutFront Minnesota's national relationship-building had grown so much that Ann co-chaired the Millennium March on Washington, D.C. in 2000 which brought tens of thousands of GLBT people to the nation's capitol. The Legal Program achieved significant victories, reflecting OutFront Minnesota's long standing commitment to addressing the legal needs of the



In 2001, OutFront Minnesota hired its first Public Policy Director. While the organization had been working at the capitol for years, this new move created a lobbying and political organizing arm for the GLBT community. According to former senior staff member Doug Federhart, there was

"...demand from the community that we need to do this visibly and powerfully." In 2003, OutFront Minnesota



OutFront Minnesota traveled around the state to train, educate, meet with, and work with the GLBT and allied community.

used this new strength to successfully beat back efforts to repeal the human rights protections so hard-won a decade before.

community. In 2001, OutFront Minnesota provided legal support to the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union as it successfully challenged the state's sodomy law. The legal program also helped correct discriminatory local

OutFront Minnesota's work at the capitol again paid off when, in 2004-2006, anti-GLBT forces tried to write discrimination against same-sex couples into the constitution by prohibiting them from marrying, or receiving any form of legal recognition. OutFront Minnesota played a key role in preventing the anti-marriage amendment from going to voters and throwing the rights of the minority up for a popular vote. In the fall of 2006, OutFront Minnesota's political action committee helped elect a fair-minded majority to the Minnesota legislature.



Training and education became an even bigger part of OutFront Minnesota's work in the 1990's.

ordinances, provided legal referrals, helped schools adhere to anti-discrimination laws, and educated the legal community about GLBT issues.

Minnesota State Representative Karen Clark, the longest serving out lesbian state lawmaker in the country, says OutFront Minnesota's representatives at the capitol help her do her job, providing her with accurate and current information and helping advise her on strategy as well. "They're great messengers about what just happened. They're great communicators. They're very astute lobbyists in the very positive sense of that word."



OutFront Minnesota's organizing acumen built a lobby day unlike any other in the country. One of the early lobby days, in 2002, had an attendance of 200. But by 2006, the justFair Lobby Day had grown to 5,000, showing lawmakers and Minnesota in general that GLBT and allied people exist, we're



OutFront Minnesota has been a critical advisor in this important effort. ~Minnesota Civil Liberties Union Attorney Teresa Nelson, on the successful striking down of the state's sodomy law, 2001

organized, and we're watching the votes of lawmakers.

Lorrie Janatopoulos, a GLBT community member from the Iron Range says that OutFront Minnesota's work in Greater Minnesota, particularly



After a rally in front of the State Capitol on Wednesday, the group OutFront Minnesota delivered petitions to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office opposing a proposed state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. Standing around the petition were Maria Dorsch, a Maple Grove High School student who spoke at the rally. At right was Scott Dobbie, DFL-Minneapolis, the state's only openly gay senator. Pawlenty hears from foes of gay-marriage ban

in recent years, has been very much appreciated. "Ann has always understood that greater Minnesota is different than the metro area. The community action



OutFront Minnesota helped persuade others to oppose the marriage amendment. Marcia Avner of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits testifies before a senate committee, as Ann M. DeGroot looks on. (Photo by Sophia Hantzes)

meetings I think are very helpful in bringing together community members in greater Minnesota who were in isolation in some ways."

OutFront Minnesota Executive Director Ann M. DeGroot. who has been at the helm of the organization since the beginning, is a well-known and well-



"The level of opposition is so organized and sophisticated, if we didn't have lobbyists dedicated to this work, we'd go backwards at a pretty fast pace." ~Representative Karen Clark on OutFront Minnesota's lobbying power. (with OutFront Minnesota Public Policy Director Monica Meyer).

respected leader statewide and nationally. Ann has worked closely and collaboratively with other GLBT leaders, strengthening the community's visibility, cohesiveness and power. She has an open door for anyone and everyone wanting to work on behalf of the GLBT community. Ann has led the growth of OutFront Minnesota in staff, funding, and programs, always



"This is, far and away, the largest lobby day our community has across the country. And that says so much about your dedication, your commitment, and your incredible statewide organization, OutFront Minnesota." ~Matt Foreman, Ex. Dir., National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (In 2006, OutFront Minnesota's justFair Lobby Day brought 5,000 people to the state capitol).

seeking ways to enhance relationships as well as OutFront Minnesota's direct services, policy initiatives, and systems change work. In the words of Doug Federhart, "Ann is a visionary."

In the past two decades much has been accomplished, and much remains to be done. And that is why, in its 20th year, OutFront Minnesota not only celebrates with our community this significant historical achievement but affirms our commitment to work toward a future where, reflecting our mission, GLBT Minnesotans have the freedom, power, and confidence to make the best choices for their own lives.