Welcome to Your ’ville

FROM WRIGLEYVILLE AND ANDERSONVILLE, TO EVERY ’VILLE IN CHICAGOLAND, OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITY IS KNOWN FOR ITS DIVERSE AND GROWING POPULATION. STRIVING TO GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE, WE HAVE FASHIONED A NEW VOICE AND LOOK TO GO HAND IN HAND WITH OUR EVOLVING COMMUNITY TOGETHER, TO GET READY AND WELCOME TO ’VILLE — CENTER ON HALSTED’S NEW NEWSZINE.

Here at Center on Halsted, we are certainly proud of all the progress we have made since opening our doors just five years ago, and yet we recognize the need to revamp and expand our mission to match the growth of our community. This premiere edition of ’ville reveals our new strategic priorities for the next three years:

1. Advance the impact of Center on Halsted through advocacy and public policy.
2. Ensure the health and well-being of LGBTQ people through wellness and life-span offerings.
3. Extend the geographic reach of, and access to, Center on Halsted.
4. Promote the visibility and relevance of Center on Halsted’s offerings in Chicagoland’s community.

We envision a future where a thriving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community is living powerfully in support and inclusive environments. Center on Halsted is committed to making this vision possible by advancing our community and securing the health and well-being of the LGBTQ people of Chicagoland.

What you will find between the covers of ’ville are stories of real people whose lives have been significantly affected by being a part of our community at Center on Halsted, and in this exactly what sets us apart from any other place. The people who come to the Center are seeking more than just social services; rather they strive to belong to a community of like-minded individuals who support each other during the good and the not-so-good times. That is why ’ville features many of the programs we offer to support the myriad interests found in our LGBTQ community.

But we are not just about fun and games. We are very serious about advocating on behalf of those in need of support and expanding our impact in order to advance public policies that guarantee further protection for all LGBTQ people of Chicagoland. That is why our doors are open every day from 8am to 9pm, and that is why more than 1,500 people come to the Center each day.

With everything we have to offer, people of all ages and backgrounds come together to participate, to volunteer, to grow and to move our community forward. Step by step Center anytime or visit www.centeronhalsted.org to find out how you can join us.

Again, welcome to ’ville. Get ready to be excited, informed, educated and empowered as you turn each page.

OUR MISSION AND VISION

Center on Halsted maintains a deep commitment to our LGBTQ community which is reflected in both the mission and vision of the organization. CENTER ON HALSTED advances our community and secures the health and well-being of the LGBTQ people of Chicagoland. VISION: A thriving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community, living powerfully in supportive inclusive environments.

WINDY CITY RAINBOW ALLIANCE FOR THE DEAF IS HOUSED AT CENTER ON HALSTED AS ONE OF 7 RESIDENT PARTNERS.

Co-presidents Juan Bernal and Lisa Roth have worked hard to position Windy City Rainbow Alliance for the Deaf as a leading group in Chicago and around the nation—showing how a small organization can make a big impact. Last year WEANS hosted an event bringing hundreds of deaf LGBTQ men and women from around the country to the Center “to meet, network, collaborate and support one another in our struggle for equality in a deaf world.” Participants learned about the work WEANS is doing here in Chicago so they can take new ideas to advance their communities back home.

According to Bernal, the deaf LGBTQ community has been a unique challenge in finding and paying for licensed ASL interpreters. Interpreters need to be licensed for sensitivity and confidentiality reasons, but they can be very expensive. Having an ASL interpreter is crucial for deaf people living with HIV to understand treatment and best healthcare practices, in addition to finding emotional support.

WEANS offers the deaf LGBTQ community support in many other ways, and often with little to no funding. Both co-presidents volunteer their time, as do the secretary, treasurer and a member-at-large. The group provides a voice to its members by raising LGBTQ awareness in housing and deaf high schools, organizing workshops and seminars, and advocating for equal rights in housing, employment and healthcare.

It is often difficult for deaf people to find fair housing to accommodate their safety needs. WEANS steps in to help ensure that members of our community are not excluded for being gay or deaf, and they work with landlords to provide things like special fire alarms and doorbells for the hearing impaired. The organization also helps to find legal counsel to represent members of our community who may face discrimination.

“Center on Halsted provides WEANS with a safe place to be ourselves—and where we can invite others to do the same.”

For more information about WEANS and/or our other Partners, visit the Center on Halsted Website at CENTERONHALSTED.ORG/PARTNERS.
When hockey is in your blood, it’s contagious. Andrew Sobotka grew up playing hockey in Detroit, so after graduating from Michigan State and coming to Chicago for an IT job, he brought his love of the game with him, and that’s good news for the LGBTQ hockey fans across the city.

Long-time hockey players like Andrew, or those new to the sport, have great options to get involved. Whether it’s on the ice with the Chicago Gay Hockey Association or on the gym floor with the hockey program of the Athletic Alliance of Chicago, there’s a game — and a great workout — waiting.

“We have about 85 people playing floor hockey at the Center on Halsted gym every week,” says Sobotka who is president of the Chicago Gay Hockey Association and co-head of the floor hockey program with the Athletic Alliance. And it’s a diverse group; women make up about a third of the players who range from early 20s to those well into their 50s.

There are just a few differences between the floor and ice versions of hockey. Players on the ice use the classic long, composite stick while floor hockey is played with a shorter plastic stick. But the moves are very similar. “Lots of people go back and forth between the sports — some play both in the same day,” says Andrew.

So what spurred the explosion of hockey in our LGBTQ community? Beyond the hard work of Andrew and his friend Tony Tiet, who runs the floor hockey league with him, it was likely the appearance of the Chicago Blackhawks marching in the Gay Pride Parade in 2010. The Chicago stars of the game put it on the map.

Keep an eye on the Center on Halsted event calendar for late March when the floor hockey program revs up. And see the league games at Johnny’s Ice House. Check the Chicago Gay Hockey Association schedule for game schedule and to see at which of Johnny’s two locations you’ll find them.

MORE ON RECREATION: Visit Center on Halsted and get moving. In addition to Floor Hockey there’s Co-Ed Volleyball, Open Gym Volleyball, Queer Tango or Meditation Yoga.

centeronhalsted.org/c&c.html

WE HAVE ABOUT 85 PEOPLE PLAYING FLOOR HOCKEY AT THE CENTER ON HALSTED GYM EVERY WEEK.

GET YOUR GEAR AND GAME FACE ON! COME ON! JOIN IN THE ACTION!
A childhood spent in schools on two continents. A degree in forensic psychology from one of the nation’s distinguished research universities. A corporate career managing the properties of one of Chicago’s largest banks. Any of these sound like stops on the road to homelessness? Hardly. That’s what Tannarrian Curtis thought too, until he found himself jobless and sleeping on the lakefront after losing his condo.

But it gets worse. He went to the Department of Human Services for help. They got him off the beach, but he found himself at a shelter and sleeping in a gymnasium. “I hit rock bottom and was ashamed to tell my family,” Tannarrian confesses. But he refused to give up.

“The people at Human Services knew me by name. I was there every day for two months looking for a job.” While no jobs seemed to be turning up, it was there his luck began to turn. As he sat trolling the job market on a Human Services computer, a delivery of brochures from the Center on Halsted’s Silver Fork program arrived.

“I thought, ‘Wow, food has always been my passion.’ And while a job seemed like a better solution than a training program, Tannarrian joined more than 100 applicants for the program’s 25 positions. After testing and interviews, Tannarrian was accepted in the Silver Fork program. He quickly rose to the head of the class. “They took me under their wing – but they never let me get a big head. And when I got over the shame of saying I was homeless, The Center on Halsted and the people in the program did everything in their power to support me – from help writing a culinary resume to bus passes so I could get to class and job interviews.”

Finally, everything started coming together. At the end of the course Tannarrian had Beverage and Alcohol Servers Education and Training certification – and a job and an apartment. When the economy took its toll on that job, he was on to a temporary position. That temp job turned into his current full-time job at a Loop restaurant.

Tannarrian’s next goal: “I think I want to be on Top Chef.” Stay tuned.

More about the Silver Fork Program: The Silver Fork is an intensive 12-week course open to all. The program prepares the unemployed and underemployed to pursue or restart a career in the restaurant and hospitality industry. The creator of Silver Fork is Chef Dan Smith, former co-host of the Food Network’s Party Line with the Hearty Boys. He took over the Center on Halsted culinary arts program and overhauled the curriculum. Smith and his partner Steve McDonagh are cookbook authors and owners of the Lakeview restaurant Hearty. The program is funded by Kraft Foods and the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services.

For Applicants: If you’re passionate for the culinary arts and are looking to secure a career in the restaurant or hospitality industry, Silver Fork is for you! Silver Fork seeks highly motivated, passionate underemployed and unemployed applicants to take part in their 12-week program. Interested applicants should contact us at 773.472.6469, Ext. 441 or email us at silverfork@centeronhalsted.org for information on our next orientation.

For Employers: By partnering with Silver Fork, employers align themselves with the Midwest’s most comprehensive LGBTQ community center and have access to the trained, reliable and certified graduates of the Silver Fork program. To discuss partnering with Silver Fork and learn more about our graduates, contact us at 773.472.6469, Ext. 462 or email us at silverfork@centeronhalsted.org for information on our next Orientation session.

I come to the Center to volunteer with the wonderful programming and to help with the community.

Rickie

I come to the Center to take advantage of the SAGE [Seniors] Program resources.

Neal

I am able to bring my child here and feel welcome. The Family Space is one of my child’s favorite places to play.

Akari

I am usually very busy with work, so I often come to the Center to get my work done quickly in a quiet place. It is very peaceful and puts me at ease.

Hugh

I am a senior citizen and the Center is a great place for everyone to come and enjoy themselves! Everyone I meet is caring and friendly. The Center staff has become like a second family to me.

Peter

Whenever in Chicago, I always stop and visit the Center to see what’s going on here. My partner and I are suing the state for Marriage Equality.

David

I come to the Center to make friends and I have met some of my best friends from going to programs here. I can dress up and be myself here with no judgment! The support for the community here is overwhelming.

Zenobia

I visit the Cyber Center weekly and write my mother an email on how I am doing. I have learned a lot and the staff is very caring.

Bert, Springfield, IL

I come to the Center to be more involved in my community.

Leo

I am usually very busy with work, so I often come to the Center to get my work done quickly in a quiet place. It is very peaceful and puts me at ease.

Petra

To hang out with friends and to get a breather; Also, to engage in programs—I love the programs.

Jordan

I came to the Center to make friends and I have met some of my best friends from going to programs here. I can dress up and be myself here with no judgment! The support for the community here is overwhelming.

Zenobia

I come to the Center to take advantage of the SAGE [Seniors] Program resources.

Peter

I am a senior citizen and the Center is a great place for everyone to come and enjoy themselves! Everyone I meet is caring and friendly. The Center staff has become like a second family to me.

Akari

Whenever in Chicago, I always stop and visit the Center to see what’s going on here. My partner and I are suing the state for Marriage Equality.

David

I visit the Cyber Center weekly and write my mother an email on how I am doing. I have learned a lot and the staff is very caring.

Bert, Springfield, IL

I come to the Center to be more involved in my community.

Leo

I am usually very busy with work, so I often come to the Center to get my work done quickly in a quiet place. It is very peaceful and puts me at ease.

Petra

To hang out with friends and to get a breather; Also, to engage in programs—I love the programs.

Jordan

I came to the Center to make friends and I have met some of my best friends from going to programs here. I can dress up and be myself here with no judgment! The support for the community here is overwhelming.

Zenobia

I come to the Center to take advantage of the SAGE [Seniors] Program resources.

Peter

I am a senior citizen and the Center is a great place for everyone to come and enjoy themselves! Everyone I meet is caring and friendly. The Center staff has become like a second family to me.

Akari

Whenever in Chicago, I always stop and visit the Center to see what’s going on here. My partner and I are suing the state for Marriage Equality.

David

I visit the Cyber Center weekly and write my mother an email on how I am doing. I have learned a lot and the staff is very caring.

Bert, Springfield, IL

I come to the Center to be more involved in my community.

Leo

I am usually very busy with work, so I often come to the Center to get my work done quickly in a quiet place. It is very peaceful and puts me at ease.

Petra

To hang out with friends and to get a breather; Also, to engage in programs—I love the programs.

Jordan

I came to the Center to make friends and I have met some of my best friends from going to programs here. I can dress up and be myself here with no judgment! The support for the community here is overwhelming.

Zenobia

I come to the Center to take advantage of the SAGE [Seniors] Program resources.
Having a Senior Monument

They didn’t want to be bothered with them. They weren’t ready for me or my kind in an institution, and a lot of senior citizen buildings, they’re like that. Gay-friendly, they’re not.

But innovations like the new building aren’t new to Center on Halsted. Britts Laundry, Director of Senior Services for Center on Halsted, implemented a shared housing program for older LGBTQ adults. In the only one of its kind in the country, the number of rooms in the program limits the number of participants for the program’s future sustainability. For Center on Halsted, the guide is that there is no housing shortage that is so critical that can’t be filled.

“We offer our LGBTQ seniors have been in a committed relationship for up to 20 years. When a partner passes away, they find there income severely slashed. Some can turn to their families for help and support. But without a family, many feel lost. Some choose to remain alone in their home to avoid discrimination. Others turn to us to help find resources,” said Britts. That’s what the new housing will provide. “It can open into this building, I think I would feel that finally I’m home. I’m safe, I’m loved,” said Britts.

Four of our LGBTQ seniors have been in a committed relationship for more than 20 years. When a partner passes away, they find their income severely slashed. Some can turn to their families for help and support. But without a family, many feel lost. Some choose to remain alone in their home to avoid discrimination. Others turn to us to help find resources,” said Britts. That’s what the new housing will provide. “It can open into this building, I think I would feel that finally I’m home. I’m safe, I’m loved,” said Britts.

Funding for the project comes from both public and private sources. Also helping make the new development a reality is a $5 million grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services, a $2 million grant from the State of Illinois, and $1 million from the City of Chicago. A new way of life.”

More On Seniors

Neighborhoods would benefit from a Senior Monument to give back. “This is a great way to bring art to the community. The spaces are limited. With the addition of the new apartments, LGBTQ seniors will have options for community, volunteering, cooking skills and etiquette through a fun, interactive dinner. As Shiane notes, “Chef Shiane: Making Connections, Making Change

Chef Shiane: Making Connections, Making Change

Chris Pierce, Director of the Center on Halsted, has always been passionate about creating opportunities for others to give back. “I love that Center on Halsted is the best place to do that. I love Chicago!”

On Events

Human First 2013 MAY 18

On Community

Chris Pierce: BLTQC Putting the “F” First

As the volunteer liaison to our Bisexual Community, Chris Pierce designs and hosts a series of Bi-specific informal discussion groups to major events, like Celebrate Bisexual Day, which brings together mostly queer community members for an afternoon of presentations, performance and networking. Chris’ work does not end at the Center doors. This year he attended a special LGBTQ summit at the White House, where he met Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden. “Bisexuals are often marginalized within the larger LGBTQ community. Center on Halsted is working hard to fix that by providing our community with real opportunities to both grow here in Chicago and have an impact around the nation,” said Chris. On Community

On Youth

Jimmy Wilson: Growing!

Jimmy was born and raised in Chicago. Before he knew it, he found himself in an abusive relationship in Iowa. He left his boyfriend and walked 200 miles back to his hometown—where his first stop was Center on Halsted. Jimmy was immediately connected to a housing program and then joined the vocational training program—where he learned job skills and was able to secure a summer internship that led to a full-time job in Lakeview. Jimmy’s already looking to do more and has signed up for the Center’s new G.S. program and is looking for ways to give back to others who find themselves in tough situations. Jimmy also wants to give back to other LGBTQ people and is looking at starting his own organization to provide housing for young people wishing to overcome similar challenges as he says, “When I walk into the Center I feel safe. I feel welcome. I want other young people to have that same feeling so we can all have new way of life.”

On Women

Chef Shiane: Making Connections, Making Change

Chef Shiane first came to the Center to help host our By Women, For Women event in August, bringing together many women for a night of celebration. She was one of four local lesbian chefs who designed their menus and did the cooking as a part of the Center’s Evening Delights: Women’s Aging Wellness, The Cyber Center, Ballroom Dancing, Spanish or French Classes, Creative Writing or Senior Discussion Group. Watch the calendar for special events made for seniors.

On Events

Human First 2013 MAY 18

Join us May 18 at 6:00 pm at Whole Foods Market (Center on Halsted Main Building) for the May 2013 Human First event. As the city’s only multi-staged LGBT event of the year, where we honor community leaders and organizations dedicated to advancing our LGBTQ community. By June King, the Founder & Chair of the event, with BMI. Human Bank as presenting host, will recognize this year’s honorees: Sarah Schrader and Julie Mathers, as well as Minority Business. The gala event will feature dinner and celebrative entertainment reaching the star power of past performers like k.d. lang, Lily Tomlin, Akoo Gentry and Kimmel Sylvan. Email us for more information

Events@centeronhalsted.org

Events@centeronhalsted.org

On Youth

Jimmy Wilson: Growing!

Jimmy was born and raised in Chicago. Before he knew it, he found himself in an abusive relationship in Iowa. He left his boyfriend and walked 200 miles back to his hometown—where his first stop was Center on Halsted. Jimmy was immediately connected to a housing program and then joined the vocational training program—where he learned job skills and was able to secure a summer internship that led to a full-time job in Lakeview. Jimmy’s already looking to do more and has signed up for the Center’s new G.S. program and is looking for ways to give back to others who find themselves in tough situations. Jimmy also wants to give back to other LGBTQ people and is looking at starting his own organization to provide housing for young people wishing to overcome similar challenges as he says, “When I walk into the Center I feel safe. I feel welcome. I want other young people to have that same feeling so we can all have new way of life.”

On Women

Chef Shiane: Making Connections, Making Change

Chef Shiane first came to the Center to help host our By Women, For Women event in August, bringing together many women for a night of celebration. She was one of four local lesbian chefs who designed their menus and did the cooking as a part of the Center’s Evening Delights: Women’s Aging Wellness, The Cyber Center, Ballroom Dancing, Spanish or French Classes, Creative Writing or Senior Discussion Group. Watch the calendar for special events made for seniors.

On Events

Human First 2013 MAY 18

Join us May 18 at 6:00 pm at Whole Foods Market (Center on Halsted Main Building) for the May 2013 Human First event. As the city’s only multi-staged LGBT event of the year, where we honor community leaders and organizations dedicated to advancing our LGBTQ community. By June King, the Founder & Chair of the event, with BMI. Human Bank as presenting host, will recognize this year’s honorees: Sarah Schrader and Julie Mathers, as well as Minority Business. The gala event will feature dinner and celebrative entertainment reaching the star power of past performers like k.d. lang, Lily Tomlin, Akoo Gentry and Kimmel Sylvan. Email us for more information

Events@centeronhalsted.org

Events@centeronhalsted.org

On Youth

Jimmy Wilson: Growing!

Jimmy was born and raised in Chicago. Before he knew it, he found himself in an abusive relationship in Iowa. He left his boyfriend and walked 200 miles back to his hometown—where his first stop was Center on Halsted. Jimmy was immediately connected to a housing program and then joined the vocational training program—where he learned job skills and was able to secure a summer internship that led to a full-time job in Lakeview. Jimmy’s already looking to do more and has signed up for the Center’s new G.S. program and is looking for ways to give back to others who find themselves in tough situations. Jimmy also wants to give back to other LGBTQ people and is looking at starting his own organization to provide housing for young people wishing to overcome similar challenges as he says, “When I walk into the Center I feel safe. I feel welcome. I want other young people to have that same feeling so we can all have new way of life.”

On Women

Chef Shiane: Making Connections, Making Change

Chef Shiane first came to the Center to help host our By Women, For Women event in August, bringing together many women for a night of celebration. She was one of four local lesbian chefs who designed their menus and did the cooking as a part of the Center’s Evening Delights: Women’s Aging Wellness, The Cyber Center, Ballroom Dancing, Spanish or French Classes, Creative Writing or Senior Discussion Group. Watch the calendar for special events made for seniors.

On Events

Human First 2013 MAY 18

Join us May 18 at 6:00 pm at Whole Foods Market (Center on Halsted Main Building) for the May 2013 Human First event. As the city’s only multi-staged LGBT event of the year, where we honor community leaders and organizations dedicated to advancing our LGBTQ community. By June King, the Founder & Chair of the event, with BMI. Human Bank as presenting host, will recognize this year’s honorees: Sarah Schrader and Julie Mathers, as well as Minority Business. The gala event will feature dinner and celebrative entertainment reaching the star power of past performers like k.d. lang, Lily Tomlin, Akoo Gentry and Kimmel Sylvan. Email us for more information

Events@centeronhalsted.org

Events@centeronhalsted.org
The Chicago Blackhawks proudly support the Center on Halsted. Visit centeronhalsted.org and register to win a pair of VIP tickets.