



## from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year is likely to go down as one of the most memorable Pride months in recent history. The intersection of a pandemic and an unprecedented surge in Black Lives Matter protests have highlighted critical aspects of our common life together as LGBTQIA+ individuals. First, the isolation that many LGBTQIA+ people feel in rural communities has been amplified by stay-at-home orders. Our elders and youth are particularly at risk for loneliness and mental health issues as they are either alone at home or quarantined with unsupportive families. Second, the movement for black lives highlights the many ways that oppressive systems have directly contributed to inequality, discrimination, and violence that disproportionately affect BIPOC communities, and especially our BIPOC LGBTQIA+ family. Black trans lives continue to be at highest risk for death by suicide and homicide, and justice for the victims is rarely pursued. We have much work to do, and Pride month has brought us together in solidarity to face these challenges.

But we have reasons for hope! The Supreme Court ruled that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is illegal in a landmark case that sets a precedent for protecting LGBTQIA+ Americans. July also marks the implementation of the Virginia Values Act which echoes the protections passed by the Supreme Court. Other state legislation taking effect includes a ban on conversion therapy for minors as well as mandated protections for transgender students in Virginia's public schools. Progress and backlash often go hand in hand, so we know that we still have mountains to climb. But having a legal foothold gives our community strength and visibility.

The team at Staunton Pride is committed to extending our celebration throughout the summer, culminating in a live-streamed variety show on Saturday, July 25. If we can't be together, at least we can continue to connect virtually to support and uplift our community. We hope you'll tune in to social media and our website, shop for some Staunton Pride merchandise, decorate your lawn with a Staunton Pride sign, and participate in some awesome raffles to raise much needed funds for the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center.

*In Solidarity and Resilience,  
Emily Sproul*



## STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

The board of the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center held a strategic planning meeting on June 28. In our day-long session, we reaffirmed the importance of the direct services we provide, particularly around mental health and referral to services. We also thought creatively about continuing to serve our clients in need while simultaneously engaging our broader LGBTQIA+ community in social events and community building.

The pandemic continues to challenge us to deliver content and create new connections while maintaining safe social-distancing. We are pleased with how the Queer Voices in the Valley podcast has been received as part of our virtual Staunton Pride. There is great momentum to keep that series going, and to build on its success by offering sexual education podcasts that will be available on demand to promote healthy, satisfying sexual relationships from a queer-inclusive perspective. We are imagining how we might utilize other forms of technology to bring more life skills such as cooking and personal finance into the homes of our diverse and widespread audience.

We remain dedicated to our values of amplifying and centering queer voices, encouraging and supporting agency and transformation for LGBTQIA+ people in the Shenandoah Valley. And we are grateful for the growing network of queer resources that support our community.

## COVID, FUNDRAISING, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING CLUBS

The COVID pandemic has wreaked havoc on the non-profit community, and LGBTQIA+ organizations are no exception. With Pride celebrations canceled around the world and fall fundraising events still uncertain, many centers are facing major budget shortfalls.

Through careful planning and limited spending, the Center is proud to have nearly ten months of expenses saved to weather this crisis. But without Pride and Gayla income at expected levels, we are looking elsewhere in search of funds to sustain our programming and operations. In addition to pursuing various grants and seeking advertising dollars to underwrite our podcast series, we are also turning to you, our community, for support.

One of the best ways you can support the Center is to enroll in one of our giving clubs. Our Founders Circle, made up of donors who pledge \$100 per month for 24 months, has become the financial bedrock of our organization. We are actively working to expand membership at that level, but if that's not within your reach, we have opportunities for you to pledge at any level. While we are acutely aware that many people are facing reduced hours and unemployment due to the pandemic, we urge those who are able to make a monthly pledge in any amount - \$5, \$25, or \$50 per month multiplied by hundreds of dedicated community members will help us recover the funds we are losing from our events this year. Please [visit our website](#) for more information and consider joining one of our giving clubs to help us continue providing critical services and support to our rural LGBTQIA+ community.



**TRAILHEAD**  
\$5-24/mo



**BASE CAMP**  
\$25-49/mo



**SUMMIT**  
\$50-\$99/mo



**GATHERING TOGETHER  
FOR SAFE SUMMER FUN**

Join us this summer for safe, socially-distanced gatherings in our local parks! Each month we'll have a walk and a picnic in Waynesboro and in Staunton to give you a chance to enjoy the outdoors and the company of other LGBTQIA+ community members. The events begin with a walk at 10 a.m. followed by a picnic at 11 a.m. You can join us for one or both! Please bring a blanket to sit on (there are usually a few picnic tables) and bring your own picnic food. Sadly we can't yet gather for potlucks and food sharing, so we're attempting the next best thing! Please bring face masks in case we need to be close. We will have hand sanitizer on site. Check out our website for dates and details!

**VDOE WORKGROUP**

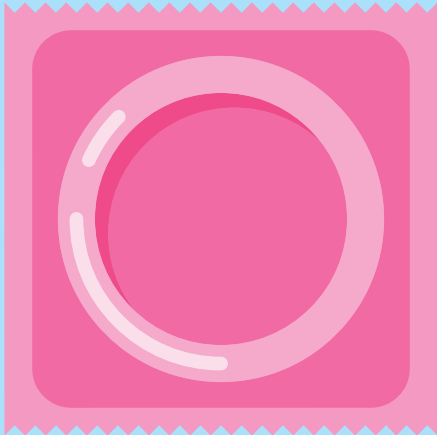
Center Executive Director, Emily Sproul, has been selected to serve on a statewide Department of Education workgroup addressing the passage of HB 145 / SB 161, legislation that protects and supports transgender students in Virginia's public schools. The workgroup is developing model policies to provide to school boards for use as they develop their own district policies. The legislation requires that school boards have a plan for supporting transgender students in their districts by December 31, 2020.

In this role and as a parent of transgender students in the public school system, Emily brings to bear her work with youth at the Center and her connections with other youth-serving centers across the country. Her work with the VDOE group will strengthen the advocacy and training work that the Center will be offering to area school districts in collaboration with Dr. Rocky Parker, board member and Safe Zone training facilitator.



**STAUNTON PRIDE GOES ALL SUMMER!**

Follow us on social media @StauntonPride and on our webpage for online content, podcasts, contests, and more! Catch the first episode of **Cooking with Cole** on July 13 as we give you a peek into our upcoming life skills cooking classes. And be sure to tune in to our grand finale, live-streamed broadcast on July 25!



**FREE CONDOM  
DELIVERY**

With the ongoing pandemic keeping the Center closed except for appointments, we are still committed to providing our community with free condoms, dental dams, and lube. To prove our commitment, we've created a condom delivery service to make sure you can access safer sex products. Anyone can [visit our website](#) and click the link to complete a quick request form. Deliveries are made on weekdays between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and are packaged in a discreet paper bag for your privacy. Safer sex is always in fashion and we are here to support you!

**CLOTHES CLOSET  
AND RESOURCE  
LIBRARY**

Need a wardrobe refresh for summer? Need a good book to pass the time? Our clothes closet and resource library are back open by appointment for all your needs! Please email [assistant@shenlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:assistant@shenlgbtqcenter.org) to schedule an appointment.



**SHENANDOAH  
LGBTQ CENTER**

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