



Contact: Sherrill Wayland
Phone: (314) 821-4845
Email: swayland@sagemetrostl.org

For Immediate Release

SAGE METRO ST. LOUIS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
SAGE Visionary Award Ceremony

As President Obama recently stated in his June 1, 2009 Proclamation declaring June 2009 LGBT Pride Month, (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-LGBT-Pride-Month/) "The LGBT rights movement has achieved great progress, but there is more work to be done. LGBT youth should feel safe to learn without the fear of harassment, and LGBT families and seniors should be allowed to live their lives with dignity and respect."

As SAGE Metro St. Louis celebrates its first anniversary of providing service and advocacy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults, it is our honor to celebrate the great progress already achieved, and the work that is still being done, by some of our finest community leaders and activists.

To commemorate its anniversary, SAGE has planned an Anniversary Celebration which will include the presentation of the first SAGE Visionary Awards.

The 2009 SAGE Visionary Award recipients were nominated and selected by the community based on their demonstrated service, activism and community awareness in the name of LGBT equality.

SAGE Metro St. Louis is pleased to announce the 2009 SAGE Visionaries.

Recipients aged 50 and over are:

Political and Community Activism – Representative Jeanette Mott Oxford. Representative Jeanette Mott Oxford was the first out lesbian elected to the Missouri General Assembly representing the 59th House district. Representative Oxford's work is vast and inclusive with over 20 years of activism including the issues of poverty, health, housing, racism, sexual orientation, and campaign finance reform in Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri. Most recently Representative Mott Oxford found herself surrounded by controversy when Speaker of the House Ron Richard declined to return her to the Children and Families Committee. A staff member reported that some members of the majority caucus found her "highly offensive." She was later named by Representative Paul LeVota, Minority Floor Leader, as the "Ranking Minority Member." Through Representative Mott Oxford's service to the community as a member of the House and past executive director of Reform Organization of Welfare (ROWEL), she consistently advocates with a sense of compassion and purpose for those who are marginalized and often forgotten within the greater society.

Mott Oxford and her partner of twenty-five years have lived in the 59th District since 1991. The 59th District includes neighborhoods between the Mississippi River and Grand Avenue, with I-44 as a northern marker and extending south to Delor Avenue.

Entertainment and Sports - Joan Lipkin. Joan Lipkin is the Founder and Producing Artistic Director of That Uppity Theater Company, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Joan Lipkin is a playwright, lyricist, educator, activist, and social critic. Her award-winning work has been featured on network television, National Public Radio, the BBC, and the Associated Press. Her work has been published and presented throughout the United States and abroad. Through her innovative work, Lipkin empowers minority communities to discuss vitally important issues with the world-at-large. She specializes in creating original work with underrepresented populations including LGBT youth and adults and their families, seniors, persons with disabilities, women with cancer, adolescent girls, and youth at risk. She co-wrote, directed, and produced *Some of My Best Friends Are . . .*, which was St. Louis' first piece of LGBT theater.

Lipkin has worked within the LGBT community over the past 20 years. She founded the *Alternate Currents/Direct Currents*, one of the longest running LGBT performance series in the country; founded *The Louies*, a gay male performance group; founded the *Apple Pie* project to create theater and provide support for LGBT youth; created *Coming Out Stories* to present the stories of audience members and showcase the work of 20 plus organizations; and developed and produced *Ten Percent*, a traveling show for corporations and organizations about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation in the workplace. Lipkin has also created theater with PFLAG, co-founded Words of Love, an annual fundraiser for PROMO, and has emceed and/or performed in Words of Love and with groups like CHARIS, St Louis' Women's Chorus, and the Gateway Men's Chorus.

Business and Professional Service - Joyce Trebilcot. Joyce Trebilcot, active member of the Society for Women in Philosophy, helped found and later coordinated Washington University's Women's Studies Program. She is author of *Dyke Ideas: Politics, Process, Daily Life, Taking Responsibility for Sexuality*, and many articles in feminist, lesbian, and philosophy publications. Her article, *Sex Roles: The Argument from Nature* has been reprinted 19 times. She was the editor of *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, and a special issue of the *Journal of Social Philosophy* on feminist social philosophy. She is a founding member of *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, and served on the editorial boards of *Hypatia*, *Social Theory and Practice*, and the *Journal of Social Philosophy*. She retired as Professor Emerita in 1995 after a 25-year career at the university. Sadly, SAGE recently learned of Trebilcot's passing. The following is an excerpt from her obituary, "Trebilcot, Joyce, Ph.D. 2/15/1933-5/27/2009, Joyce leaves this earth to enjoy greater freedom, joy and peace and to have her work continue to enlighten wimmin who are discovering their own values and identity without oppression and restraints of this world?"

Nonprofit Leadership/Volunteer Service - Dean L. Rosen. For over a decade, Rosen has served as President of the St. Louis Chapter of Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Under his leadership, the chapter has reached out to family members and friends to help them accept, understand, and embrace LGBT people - regardless of their age.

Rosen has been a tireless active spokesperson for PFLAG and social justice for LGBT people. Numerous letters to the editor and op-ed pieces written by Rosen on LGBT issues have been published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. In December 2008, he spoke out publicly against Washington University's granting anti-gay spokesperson Phyllis Schlafly an honorary doctorate degree.

Posthumous Recipients include:

Lisa Wagaman – Political/Community Activism. Lisa Wagaman was born on May 2, 1943 in New Jersey. As an adult, she lived in several large cities such as Toledo and Indianapolis. In 1972, she moved to St. Louis and began her activism within the LGBT community with the Metropolitan Community

Church of Greater St. Louis. She was involved in the furtherance of Gay and Lesbian Pride for many years. In addition to her work with MCC, she was involved with the former Metropolitan Life Service Center. She served on the gay and lesbian hotline for several years, assisted with training of new hotline volunteers, and served on the MLSC Board of Directors. Also, on behalf of MLSC, she spoke to several college classes, was interviewed on television, and participated in several radio talk shows on the subject of gay and lesbian rights.

In 1979, Wagaman became involved with the Magnolia Committee, which planned the first public celebration of Gay/Lesbian Pride in St. Louis, an organization that later became the St. Louis Lesbian and Gay Pride Celebration Committee. She served four terms on the Celebration Committee's Board of Directors. Wagaman also served as a delegate to the Regional Planning Committee for the 1987 March on Washington. She served as an area representative to several conferences of the International Association of Lesbian/Gay Pride Coordinators and was serving her second term on the Board of Directors at the time of her death in April of 2009. (Information for this biography was obtained from the Western Historical Manuscript Collection—University of Missouri. <http://www.umsl.edu/~whmc/guides/whm0542.htm>)

Entertainment/Sports: Totty Dunham. At a time when being out was not socially acceptable, Totty Dunham was out anyway. She said she knew she was gay by the age of five. She was an incredible athlete, playing semi-pro women's baseball and tennis. By the late 1970s, she was no longer able to play due to health issues so she became a softball coach. She fielded a women's softball team for two gay Olympics and many summer seasons in St. Louis. Her team won a gold medal at the New York Olympics. Her coaching philosophy was that everyone played and that her players had to be good sports at all times.

Dunham worked hard off the field to bring lesbians from different backgrounds together. She was a generous supporter of many LGBT causes and individuals.

Business/Professional Service - Bill Cordes. Born in St. Louis on July 17, 1945, Bill Cordes was helped out of the closet by a friend following a battle with depression over his sexuality in 1977. He wasted no time diving into the fledgling Gateway City GLBT community.

He began volunteering with the St. Louis Gay Hotline and with the publication, *Gay St. Louis*. Cordes served as the first chairperson of the Hotline Committee and later became known as the Father of the hotline. In 1979, Cordes founded *Gay Life* magazine to fill the void when of *Gay St. Louis* halted publication.

In June 1987, Cordes realized his longtime dream and opened the bookstore, Our World Too. It became a haven for St. Louis' GLBT residents, their friends, family, and allies for the next 12 years. His bookstore was considered one of the best GLBT bookstores in the nation. Cordes closed the store in 1999.

Cordes wanted to be remembered for his work with GLBT youth. He supervised Growing American Youth (GAY) shortly after the group's founding in 1979 and did so for nearly two decades.

Recipients aged 49 and younger:

Political/Community Activism - Pamela Merritt. Pamela Merritt has been an active voice and volunteer within the LGBT and broader community for many years. Merritt served as the PAC Chair for PROMO (Missouri's Statewide LGBT Equality Rights Group), has been active with Black PRIDE, is a mentor through Big Sisters and teaches various classes at several shelters in St. Louis. She previously

worked for the *Vital Voice*, *PRIDE Pages* and is currently the Statewide E-Organizer with Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri. Merritt is a staff writer for RH Reality Check, a contributor to the Shakespeare's Sister blog, a contributor to Feministing.com, and a featured contributor on National Public Radio's "Tell Me More" with Michel Martin. Her work has been published in the Chicago Sun-Times, Salon.com, and featured in Salon.com's Broadsheet. Merritt also writes and maintains her own blog, Angry Black Bitch, which was selected by the Guardian UK as one of the world's 50 most powerful blogs in 2008.

Political/Community Activism - Scott Emanuel. Scott Emanuel has been an active community organizer in the St. Louis LGBT community for the last twenty years and has been a strong coalition builder across issue areas. For the last eight years he has been volunteering with Growing American Youth, providing support and social opportunities for LGBTQ youth in the St. Louis Metro area. Emanuel has been on staff at the ACLU of Eastern Missouri for the last five years where he has worked on a variety of LGBT rights issues including support for high school Gay Straight Alliances. He currently works as the ACLU's Development Associate.

Emanuel has served on the board of PROMO, when it was PREP. He is the former host of *OUTspoken LGBT Talk Radio* on KDHX and served as Co-Chair of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2004 Creating Change Conference. He currently sits on the board of the LGBT Community Center and has been active since its inception.

Over the last six months, Emanuel and his now husband Ed Reggi have been organizing around marriage equality, something both personal and political for them. The two formed *Show Me No Hate* and organized, along with community support, the Prop 8 Protest Rally after the November election in downtown St. Louis, attracting over 1,400 people on a very cold winter day. They have stayed active on this issue and organized the Marriage Equality Bus that took 17 same-sex couples from Missouri to Iowa to get married on May 1, 2009. They are planning additional buses to head to Iowa soon!

Business/Professional Service - Jon Shigemura. Jon Shigemura is a gay activist business leader in the St. Louis community. He joined MetLife in 2007, and made the decision to specialize in GLBT financial services to better serve his community. He spearheaded the local implementation of the company's GLBT Financial Services program and currently serves as MetLife's liaison to the GLBT community. He makes numerous public appearances at community events, hosts educational seminars, and coaches and trains other MetLife representatives to better serve the GLBT community.

He has previously worked as a freelance writer for *The Vital Voice*, where he reported on issues pertinent to the GLBT community. He won the Helen Lee Creative Journalism Award twice.

Shigemura lobbied in Jefferson City for GLBT Equality with PROMO. He also wrote letters to newspaper editors and politicians on GLBT issues. His most recent letter was published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on May 4, 2009 and called for more members of the gay community to be activists.

Nonprofit Leadership/Volunteer Service - A.J. Bockelman. A.J. Bockelman was hired as the executive director of PROMO in July 2008. He has worked tirelessly to strengthen and expand its statewide outreach and inclusiveness on issues critical to the LGBT community. While Bockelman has been at PROMO, we have seen major movement on pro-LGBT policy, a new domestic partner registry in Columbia and the reinstatement of domestic partner benefits for the Kansas City Police Department.

Prior to joining PROMO, Bockelman gained experience through serving for five years on the Board of Governors for the Human Rights Campaign as well as on the PROMO Board of Directors. He was the Development Director of an after-school and mentoring program and was a director for the nonprofit organization Discovering Options, which sponsors mentoring programs for at-risk youth.

Honorable Mentions are: Martha S. Ficklen, Maureen“Mō”Costello, Bob Ballard, Reverend Marigene DeRusha and CJ Saenz.

LGBT and allied community members are invited to join SAGE Metro St. Louis for our Anniversary Celebration as we honor the 2009 SAGE Visionaries. The celebration will take place on June 13th, 2 pm at The Kerr Building, located at: 21 O’Fallon Street, St. Louis, MO. Please RSVP by calling (314) 821-4845 or send and email to swayland@sagemetrostl.org.

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For more information on this topic or to schedule an interview with SAGE’s Board of Directors or Sherrill Wayland please call (314) 821-4845 or email swayland@sagemetrostl.org .