

RAINBOW
HEIGHTS CLUB
25 FLATBUSH
AVE. 4TH FLOOR
BROOKLYN, NY
11217

Rainbow Heights Club is a project of Heights-Hill Mental Health Service-South Beach Psychiatric Center Community Advisory Board, Inc. that provides psychosocial support and advocacy services, free of charge, to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in recovery from mental illness.

This newsletter is made possible by the continued support of City Council Member Bill de Blasio

Inside this issue:

New Staff & Interns/LGBT Mental Health Conference 1

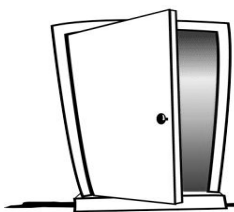
Director's Corner/RHC Welcomes New Staff & Interns 2

RHC's Event Calendar 3

Updates, Advocacy & Much More! 4

Shopping Group Update/New Hospitality Group! 5

RHC's Roving Reporter 6



Rainbow Heights Club

April 2009

Xpress



Introducing New RHC Staff & Interns

Over the past year, Rainbow Heights Club has focused on increasing the role of peer advocates in our staff team. Peer workers are an essential part of our program. By peer workers sharing the counsel and wisdom of one "who has been there" we know that all of our members are helped to feel less alone. In addition, a wealth of research has shown the positive impact of peer staff in mental health programs. With this in mind, we have added a new Peer Specialist staff position, as well as two Peer Intern positions which are time-limited entry-level opportunities for people to get a better idea of what a peer position is like.

This month we are excited to announce the addition of three new peer workers to our team: Natalie Lessinger, Peer Specialist; Rico Rivera, Food Service Peer Intern; and Jillian Henry, Outreach Peer Intern. Come on by and introduce yourself if you don't know them already and let's all give a warm welcome to them in their new roles! **See page 2 for more!!!**

LGBT Citywide Committee Plans May 2009 Conference



Featured Above: Bert Coffman, Consumer Co-Chair of the LGBT DOHMH Federation celebrates his 60th birthday at Rainbow Heights.

On the second Wednesday of every month, numerous Rainbow Heights Club members journey to the LGBT Center in Manhattan to attend the LGBT Citywide Committee of the DOHMH Federation. The committee is co-chaired by Bert Coffman of Zappalorti Society, and Rainbow Heights Club's own Christian Huygen, Ph.D.

The February 11, 2009 meeting was attended by 14 people, nine of whom are staff or members of Rainbow

Heights Club. We continued the exciting work of planning a citywide LGBT conference to occur this coming May. We were very happy to hear from DOHMH Community Liaison Robert Schulman that DOHMH has no current plans to cut the budgets of any agencies it serves, as long as they are continuing to meet the objectives described in their contracts.

The next meeting of the Federation will happen on April 8, 2009, at 3 pm. Come join us at the Center!

Director's Corner: Nicole Avallone, LMSW

With the help of so many members who decorated the club, planned the menu, served the meal, and danced and karaokeed into our evening hours, Rainbow Heights Club really welcomed in the spring at our spectacular Spring Fling Open House on Friday, March 20th. Thank you to all who volunteered their time and energy to make this the best Spring Fling event yet! We have many more great times in the month ahead. Here's just a quick peek of what is in store for April. We hope you'll come join us!

This spring we'll begin a major renovation of our club website to make it more striking but also much more user-friendly. We need your input on this to really get the job done right, so please join us on **Wednesday, April 8th** for a **Web Redesign Focus**

Group with our web designer. Got a great idea for how to make the site really stand out? Come share it with us!

On **Wednesday, April 15th** we're excited to have **CAMBA** join us at Community Meeting to share information about "SISTA," an HIV prevention education program that we may offer here to women at the club. We know that prevention education is important to everyone in our community, so we'll also be providing a weekly HIV/AIDS education group here at the club through the month of May. Be on the look out for details to come!

At month's end we've got some inspiring advocacy work on the agenda to heighten our awareness of issues that impact our every day lives as LGBT mental health consumers. **Tuesday, April 22nd** the club will lead a group outing to a local community event in

recognition of **Earth Day**. In keeping with our efforts to really "green up" the club this past year we wanted to pay special attention to this day of honor and respect for the planet we all share.

The club is also excited to be participating once again in the **Empire State Pride Agenda's Equality and Justice Day** on **April 28th** in Albany. With a pro-LGBT majority in the State Senate we're more confident. Christian will travel to Albany with 5 club members to educate elected officials about the needs of LGBT mental health consumers.

We hope you can join at least one of these exciting special events during the month of April and wish a Happy Easter or Passover to all our members who observed the holidays.

Meet the New Staff & Intern Faces of RHC



Natalie Lessinger
Peer Specialist

Natalie joins the staff with a background in education and over a year working as a volunteer with the club. She has been a supportive and caring listener & looks forward to taking on this new role!



Jillian Henry
Outreach Peer Intern

Through community building efforts, Jillian will work over the next four months to spread the word about the services & support provided here at RHC.



Rico Rivera
Food Service Peer Intern

As any member knows, Rico has always lent a hand in the kitchen. In this new role Rico will assist in the kitchen & promote healthier eating.



Michelle Woolard
Hospitality Peer Intern

With interest in the club growing it's essential that we always give that special attention. Michelle is the perfect fit to ensure that every member gets a warm welcome to RHC!

Consumer Advisory Board Extends and Enhances Rainbow Heights Club Programming

On February 20, 2009, the Consumer Advisory Board met to discuss issues that affect the entire Rainbow Heights Club community. Twenty people attended this meeting, which happens every other month.

Members are responding well to the club's new groups and extended hours, and feel that the atmosphere remains warm and supportive even as the club grows. Members

talked about ways to develop groups and activities that let people stay in touch and go on outings together in a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. We're excited on developing this idea further. We also talked about ways to sustain and improve our evening meals program.

The next meeting will be on Friday, April 17, at 3 pm in the art room. All members are invited to attend.

Zappalorti Society Advocates for Housing, Employment and Cultural Competency

At the March 3, 2009 meeting of Zappalorti Society at Rainbow Heights Club, we not only celebrated the birthday of Bert Coffman and Michelle Woolard – we also sketched out the areas we feel are of most pressing concern to LGBT mental health consumers in New York City. The 14 people present unanimously agreed that these areas are supportive housing,

LGBT cultural competency of staff in mainstream agencies, and consumer employment. We deserve safe, stable housing, competent staff, and opportunities to work and develop our skills in environments that affirm our sexualities and gender identities. We'll continue to articulate and advocate for our goals at Zappalorti Society meetings every Tuesday at 2 pm at Rainbow Heights Club.

Poetry Club Update

Did you know that Michelangelo wrote love sonnets to the handsome models who posed for him? Did you know that Sappho couldn't resist a pretty girl in a white dress and flowers? Did you know that Walt Whitman, who sang the gay male

body electric, was proud to live, work, write and love right here in Brooklyn? In Poetry Reading Group, Christian helps members share their favorite poems, and their own verses as well. We read the poems aloud and then let the discussion flow. Please come join us on Tuesday at 6:30 in the art room!



Thank you Hospital Audiences Incorporated

Month after month HAI affords us the opportunity to provide free entertainment at all of our events.

HAI, is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1969. Each year, HAI touches the lives of more than 400,000 people in the New York City community whose access to the arts has been limited by health, age or income.

HAI provides cultural access through music, dance, theatre and the visual arts, reaching out to the frail elderly, mentally and physically disabled, seriously ill children at health and social service facilities and youth in grades K - 12.

Their mission statement is to, "inspire healing, growth and learning through engagement in the arts for the culturally underserved."

HAI relies on the talent and creativity of hundreds of artists and performers, in partnership with government agencies, foundations, corporations and private individuals.

RHC would like to thank our contact person Freddi Orange for his hard work in helping make all of our events memorable. For more information visit:

www.hospitalaudiences.org

Shopping with Teresa!



Featured Above: Teresa Theophano, LMSW, Health & Wellness Specialist

Grocery shopping may seem like a tedious chore to many, but it can also be a learning experience—and an enjoyable one at that. I always enjoy picking out fresh ingredients and looking for new meal ideas while I'm shopping. Here at Rainbow Heights I've had the chance to take members on group shopping trips to local stores including Pathmark, Perelandra (a health food store in Brooklyn Heights), and Trader Joe's.

A few members and I spend a couple of hours at the shops every two weeks or so to browse, discuss less familiar items in each venue, and bring a few bags full of groceries

back to the club. Pathmark can be overcrowded, but has many kitchen essentials. Trader Joe's is especially interesting because it has such a wide variety of healthy food and drink at excellent prices. Perelandra is definitely the most expensive venue of the three, but has great sales and a large bulk section. At all three stores we've chatted about the most nutritious options available, made practical shopping choices, and kept an eye out for bargains—those sales circulars are worth perusing. Happily, our shopping trips have also meant that we've gotten to spend some time outdoors on the occasional spring-like days we're lucky

enough to get during winter.

Members have helped pick out new options such as kiwi-strawberry juice to mix with seltzer and serve at dinnertime as an alternative to Crystal Light. They chose sweet multi-colored peppers to toss into a salad, and assisted in choosing and buying the highest-quality chicken we could find at a reasonable price for an arroz con pollo dinner. Come share your ideas and join us on an upcoming outing. We generally leave early on Tuesday afternoons, and the more the merrier! Stop by and see me any Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday for more details.

Hospitality Group Starts at RHC

by Nicole Avallone & Michelle Woolard



Introducing RHC's Hospitality Group!! Find out how to join every Tuesday at 3pm during the Fun Committee!

Would you like to get a visit from a member while you're in the hospital? Or maybe just a phone call from a caring friend would do the trick to bring a smile to your face? Well, over the past few months members of Rainbow Height's Club's member run Advisory Committee have been doing just that. In sharing how isolated some of them had felt at times in their lives where they really needed that extra encouragement, they realized they could provide that support to one another. And so began the RHC Hospitality Club.

Members of the Hospitality Club volunteer to call fellow members in

need of support or if someone needs the extra boost of a personal visit they'll agree on who do it and even pitch in to bring a nice snack or change for the hospital pay phone. Just call Rainbow Heights at 718-852-2584 and speak to our member volunteer Natalie Lessinger; she'll pass on word to the Hospitality Club and they'll be giving you a ring to say hello! The Hospitality Club also encourages all members to get to know one another better; exchange your number with a new friend and let them know when you need a call. You'd be surprised at the support you'll get!

RHC's Roving Reporter...

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Featured Above: Natalie Lessinger, RHC's Roving Reporter.

What Do you Feel When You're at Rainbow Heights?

"I feel peace of mind and Relaxed."
-Bill W.

"I feel very comfortable, and I'm treated like a woman."
-Dominique

"A sense of family, diversity and friendships."
-Dotty T.

We're on the Web!
www.rainbowheights.org

SAVE THE DATES:

April 1st
PRIDE Training
@RHC during
Community Meeting

April 12th
RHC Closed

April 15th
Meeting @4pm
Federation Meeting at
The Center @ 3pm/
CAMBA Presents
During Community Meeting

April 17th
RHC Consumer
Advisory Board
Meeting @3pm

April 24th
April Birthday Party

April 26th
Monthly Friends &
Family Brunch!!!

April 29th
RHC/ARHC Mixer

RHC's Friends & Family Sunday Brunch

See you next time on April 26th!!!

Friends and Family
Sunday
Brunch

at
Rainbow
Heights Club



The Last Sunday of Every Month!

Noon - 4:30pm

Beginning on October 26th and then continuing on the last Sunday of each month we invite you to invite those who you consider to be important in your life and your recovery, to visit your club and join us for Brunch!

So whether you want to enjoy a delicious brunch, listen to some music, have a chat, show off your club to your friends, or just chill with a book or the NY Times you can do it at Rainbow Heights club.

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