Transgender New Yorkers took a giant step forward this year. A change in the New York City health code means that they can correct the gender marker on their birth certificate without having to have convertive surgery or a legal name change. (Those two things have been required since 1971 if people wanted to correct their birth certificates.) This is wonderful. But mental health providers need to understand why this is vitally important, and how they can help transgender people complete the process. That’s where Rainbow Heights Club comes in.

Our staff have been training New York City care providers and consumers for ten years now. This spring we’ve been sharing our expertise and training providers at agencies funded by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to make sure that they know how to have affirming conversations with transgender people; why someone would want to change the gender marker on their birth certificate, without having had surgery or changing their name; and how to write the affirmation letter that will enable the person to go to the Bureau of Vital Statistics to have their birth certificate corrected.

The trainings have been a big success. Christian Huygen has done 15 trainings, in all five boroughs, to make sure that providers throughout New York City understand these important issues. Christian also did two trainings for 120 people who work at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, for free, so that all transgender people who go to 125 Worth Street to have their birth certificates will have a positive experience – and a smooth transition. More than 100 people have already corrected their birth certificates, so the system is working.

At Rainbow Heights Club, we don’t just advocate for change. We help people learn the new skills and information they will need to help make those changes happen. And we build positive relationships with government bureaus, managed care companies, and community allies. The success of our direct services helps to demonstrate that LGBT-affirming care helps people stay out of the hospital and take care of themselves and each other – and that saves all New Yorkers millions of dollars every year.
Rainbow Heights Club Guest Speaker Coordinator, Danny Brito, has outdone himself. He has invited an amazing array of guest speakers who provide members with important, even life-saving, information and, through his facilitation, created a welcoming forum for lively discussion. Reinventing what used to be a monthly event, he now provides the club with weekly speakers. In the first five months of the year alone, we have had wonderful guests speaking on myriad topics, including:

- Noemi Baez, Director at The Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence
- An incredible Reproductive Health Workshop Series spearheaded by Jeff Levin of Family Services Program at The LGBT Center and co-sponsored by The Healthcare Network. So far, the series has included talks on healthy relationships, sexual decision-making, and safer sex. There are more discussions to come. See “Save the Dates” on the back page.
- Representatives of the Human Resources Administration, who led a focus group to learn how HRA can better serve LGBT consumers.
- Scott Kohanowski of the LGBT Advocacy Project of the City Bar Justice Center
- Sasha Alexander from the Sylvia Rivera Law Project
- Nala Toussaint from Callen-Lorde on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV transmission
- Victoria Gonzalez, MA, on media representations of LGBTQ characters
- Speakers from Hunter College’s Center for HIV Education and Training (CHEST NYC)
- Sabrina Lackey from Baltic Street Resource and Wellness Center
- Maggie Jarry, co-founder of Daughters and Sons Initiative, on families affected by mental illness
- Alex Clark and Stephen Saw, Pharmaceutical Doctoral Candidates, on the effects of K2 and other street drugs
- Nineteen guests from George Washington University’s Alternative Breaks Program. The students enjoyed their Fall Break at RHC, learned about our program, and helped us celebrate Spring Fling.

Stay tuned for more terrific programming by Danny Brito!
Arts at the Club
-Rebecca Hoffman, LMSW

In addition to the amazing Talent Show, RHC offers weekly arts programming. Of course, there is Karaoke twice weekly. A member is beautifully belting out, “La Bamba” as I write this. And since September, Joan Roney, MSW Candidate and volunteer, has been leading Creative Arts Lab, a creative outlet for members to write poetry and create visual art. Members have been enjoying evenings of improv theater games hosted by Brooklyn College student Maria Isabel Zweig. Clay workshops “Model You” and “Model You, II” were a hit with members, who sculpted figurines of themselves, their loved ones, or their favorite animals. Next up, “Model You, III: Sculpt Yourself as a Superhero.” Arts at the Club helps us build self esteem by giving us a chance to let our hair down, get our feet wet, and try something we didn’t know we could do.

Kate Bornstein is a Queer and Pleasant Danger
-Jaime Barak, MSW Intern, Director of Member Services

A small group of Rainbow Heights Club members recently attended a screening put on by The Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies at CUNY of Sam Feder’s new documentary about Kate Bornstein, titled “Kate Bornstein is a Queer and Pleasant Danger.” After the film both the filmmaker and Ms. Bornstein herself were there to answer questions. During this Q&A Ms. Bornstein also spoke about the work she does with her therapist surrounding her borderline personality disorder and how that has played into her work as a transgender activist and author. The members of Rainbow Heights really enjoyed the film and getting to hear Ms. Bornstein talk after. Those who had not read her books before expressed that they wanted to do so now, and some talk was had about learning when Ms. Bornstein’s next appearance would be so they could go and see her again.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Trip
-Allen Minor, Peer Specialist

On a hot and sunny spring Tuesday, a group of Rainbow Heights Club members took a leisurely walk through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Rich, Michael, Masataka, Lincoln and Henrietta all marveled at the great variety of bright and beautiful colors and shapes of flowers we saw. As we travelled along the Cherry Walk, with rows of cherry trees on either side and a canopy of branches above, half of the delicate, pink blossoms had fallen from the trees, creating a fragrant, pink carpet at our feet. Entering the Japanese Garden, we walked along a path paved with tiles which bear the names of famous Brooklynites. From Joan Rivers to Isaac Asimov, and many others, we all found our favorites. At the Japanese Garden’s lake, we were entertained by fish and turtles. At the terrace near the greenhouses, we were amazed by the huge variety of tulips in bloom. So many colors and shapes, and many with names that made us laugh. We all had a great time!
At Rainbow Heights Club, we celebrate LGBTQ Pride all year long. But in June, the party really gets going. Please join us for three fun events. Saturday, June 13th is Brooklyn Pride, in which we will be marching. We will gather at 7 pm. Stop by the Club or check our website for details on meeting. Friday, June 26th, from 3 pm to 7 pm, is our Annual Open House Pride Party. Come dance the afternoon away and grab dinner at the Club at 5 pm. Finally, Sunday, June 28th is “Big Pride.” Come view the NYC Pride March with us from 12 pm to 3 pm. We will meet in Manhattan on the southeast corner of 5th Avenue and East 33rd Street (catty corner to the Empire State Building). It’s the same place as we met last year. Suggestion: take the 4 or 6 train to the east side, as the streets become more congested later in the afternoon, and there can be a long wait to cross 5th Avenue. We will stand in the shade of scaffolding to keep cool. We’ll wear our Rainbow Heights Club t-shirts, hold our banner high, and hand out literature. Afterwards, we will grab lunch. If you are a Brooklynite, or just prefer to meet at a familiar spot, meet in front of the Club at 11:30 am and we’ll travel to Manhattan together. June is also survey month here at the Club. From June 8th until June 26th, members can come to the Club, take a consumer survey, and receive a gift of appreciation for their time and effort.
Rainbow Heights Club MembersDemonstrate Great Skills

Jaime Barak, MSW Intern

Rainbow Heights Members Pool Tournament

It had all come down to an intense final game. Of the eight members who had started the competition, all but two had been eliminated in the earlier rounds through a bracket system, leaving the final game to just Dan W. and Byron. With bated breath everyone watched as the two went head to head for the title of pool tournament champion, until both finalists were merely knocking the 8 ball around the table. In the end Dan W. achieved victory and claimed the trophy and bragging rights, but everyone who participated showed tremendous skill at this great game of geometry and chance. It is easy to see that the members of Rainbow Heights Club are masters of the billiards table, which is not a surprise since playing pool is a favorite activity here at the club.

Rainbow Heights Club Bowling Trip

Did you know that Rainbow Height’s members are excellent bowlers? I do not mean that in the can-knock-down-lots-of-pins-with-a-ball sense (although that certainly is true as well) but rather that they have incredible sportsmanship, and know how to have a great time bowling. For two hours thirteen of Rainbow Height’s members took to Melody Lanes to get strikes, spares, splits, and yes even the occasional gutterball. It was a great day out, full of fun, friendship and free bowling shoes, and everyone had an excellent time. A fact that some of members couldn’t wait to talk about at our community meeting a few days later.

Rainbow Heights Club Talent Show

Rainbow Heights members dazzled their peers with their display of talents at our Talent Show this May, reciting poems (some they had even written themselves!), free styling rap, beat boxing, playing the drum, telling jokes and singing. For one hour we gathered in the community room to both observe and participate, as these amazing talents were put on display. Even the staff joined in the performances! The talent show was put on by Fun Committee who had planned the event for months prior to the show itself. When the show was over everyone was invigorated, proud and energized by both the sense of community and the raw talent.
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<td>Zappalorti Society</td>
<td>Lesbians’ Group</td>
<td>Life Skills Discussion</td>
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<td>Gay Men’s Group</td>
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<td>Thoughts &amp; Feelings Group</td>
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<td>5:15 PM</td>
<td>Harm Reduction Group</td>
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<td>Art Studio</td>
<td>Dating and Relationships</td>
<td>Rainbow Moonlight Karaoke Lounge</td>
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**Save the Dates!**

- **Reproductive Health Workshop Series: Sexual Decision Making**
  - Thursday, June 4, 3pm
- **Consumer Survey Month Begins**
  - Monday, June 8 (until Friday, June 26)
- **Mark Salzwedel on “Self Image and Projection”**
  - Thursday, June 11, 3 pm
- **Consumer Advisory Board**
  - Friday, June 12, 3 pm
- **Reproductive Health Workshop Series: Gender Roles**
  - Thursday, June 18, 3 pm
- **Human Resources Administration Focus Group Visits the Club**
  - Thursday, June 25, 2PM to 4 pm
- **Open House Pride Party**
  - Friday, June 26, 3-7 pm
- **NYC Pride March!**
  - Sunday, June 28
- **Rainbow Heights Club Closed**
  - Monday, June 29
- **Ignacio Rivera on Gender Fluidity**
  - Thursday, July 2
- **Rainbow Heights Club Closed**
  - Friday, July 3
- **Consumer Advisory Board**
  - Friday, July 11, 3 pm
- **Reproductive Health Workshop Series: Men’s / Women’s Health**
  - Thursday, July 30, 3 pm
- **Birthday Celebration!**
  - Friday, July 31, 4 pm
- **Consumer Advisory Board**
  - Friday, August 8, 3 pm
- **Reproductive Health Workshop Series: HIV 101**
  - Thursday, August 27, 3 pm
- **Birthday Celebration!**
  - Friday, August 28, 4 pm