



Lambda Archives of San Diego NEWSLETTER

"Preserving and Teaching Our History"

Giving Thanks, 2003: LGBT Achievements

by Sharon K Parker

The time of giving thanks is in full preparation. Families and friends make their plans to gather to share not only the meal but the feeling of camaraderie and to reflect upon the matters for which they are thankful. This is a scene that is echoed in millions of households across the nation, whether traditional, contemporary, avant garde, or just plain and simple! Here in San Diego, the scenes are really no different (our weather notwithstanding). Our LGBT community's offering of "special thanks" is decidedly different. LASD joins in celebration of important milestones in our history this past year - worldwide, nationally, statewide, and locally in San Diego.

SAN DIEGO:

The Center's 30th Anniversary

San Diego's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender(LGBT) Community Center ("The Center") - the nation's second oldest and third largest LGBT community center - is the hub, the cornerstone, a focal point within the San Diego LGBT community. From what began as a telephone and answering machine "hotline" in 1971, The Center currently serves thousands of individuals each year. Following the establishment of the hotline, Robert "Jess" Jessop and a group of caring and concerned men and women met to plan and pursue their dream of creating a center for gay San Diegans. For two years, they met and planned while still operating the hotline.

The Center opened in September 1973, as The Center for Social Services(CSS). Although known as the Lesbian and Gay Center of San Diego, filing papers and other legal documents reflected CSS due to the stigma with the use of the word "gay" (which donors were hesitant to use on checks). Also, there was the risk of refusal of a non-for-

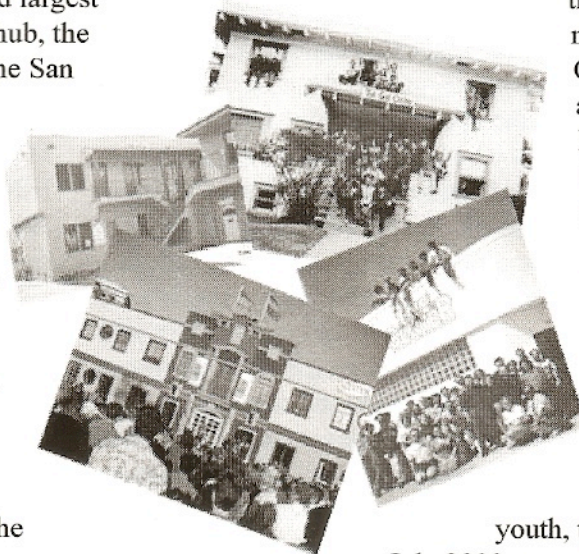
profit status by the IRS.

The Center has withstood enormous challenges, and many moves - from Golden Hill, to a building behind the Brass Rail, to its location on Normal Street, and now its current home on Centre Street - to keep its doors open and provide services to San Diego's LGBT community. The renovations to the Centre Street location have made it a very welcoming space.

Responding to the interest to create a branch in North County, and supported by various organizations, The Center North County opened in 1998, and in March 2001, moved to a newer, bigger location in San Marcos. Additionally, in answer to the needs for specialized services for

youth, the Hillcrest Youth Center opened in July 2000.

In January 2003, The Center began its 30th year of service to the San Diego LGBT community. Serving more than 12,000 people annually, with 50 staff and more than 400 volunteers, The Center is a beacon for the community and its members, a symbol San Diego's LGBT progress.



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