



## ORGANIZATION HISTORY

LGBTQ Outreach of Porter County started with a call for support from a concerned parent of a local middle school-aged LGBTQ+ youth. From our first meeting, we saw a clear need to create a safe space for youth in Northwest Indiana. In June 2019 we held our initial call-out meeting at Blackbird Coffee Shop in Valparaiso with 13 diverse advocates. By fall of 2019, we were meeting monthly with 15-20 regular community participants, ranging in age from 20-75+, with representation from within the queer community, families and ally members.

As we moved forward, we recognized a community need for LGBTQ+ advocacy for both youth and adults. A group of dedicated community members worked on mission, purpose, and by-laws throughout 2019, all while starting our flagship program, PRISM, the youth group that serves 12-18 year-olds. We announced our official 501c3 status in October 2020 at our first annual National Coming Out event in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since then, LGBTQ Outreach has expanded our programming to include free events such as our "Discover Community" series. We held over 10 different seasonal events in 2021-2022, each ranging in size from 12-30+ attendees. These informal gatherings took place at libraries and local parks to provide a safe space for folks of all ages to meet, find community, and socialize.

Our group has been a visible/vocal presence whenever concerns for LGBTQ+ students' rights in schools arise. We are committed to providing community support, activism, and advocacy regarding justice and equality. This has led to our public calls for change in school policies at school board meetings.

In 2022, we hosted two large speaker events: a "Trans Visibility" educational presentation with Megan Buell, a nationally recognized trans-advocate, which had over 80 attendees. The second was an informational community meeting with Kit Malone from ACLU of Indiana entitled: "Know your Rights: LGBTQ+ Students, Schools, and Police Interactions". Both of these events were held at the Valparaiso Public Library and were well received.

June and October are our busiest months of the year, with our participation in several regional Pride events during the summer and our very own annual "National Coming Out Day" fundraising event in the fall.