

## Inclusion And Support Needed For LGBTQ Youth



Suicide is among the leading causes of death in Oregon, with 825 Oregonians dying by suicide in 2017. For Oregonians ages 10 to 24, it is the second-leading cause of death. The youth suicide rate in Oregon has increased dramatically this decade: in 2010, about seven in every 100,000 Oregonians between the ages of 10 and 24 died by suicide, and by 2017, that rate virtually doubled. What's more, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are statistically far more likely to attempt suicide than youth as a whole.

“Adi’s Act” (Oregon Senate Bill 52), a bill aimed at putting polices in place to prevent youth suicide, has passed the Oregon House of Representatives with unanimous support, and is now waiting for Governor Kate Brown’s signature to become law.

The bill is named for and honors Adi Staub, a transgender Portland high school student who completed suicide in 2017. “Despite being fully supported and embraced by her family, Adi struggled to find footing in a world that did not accept the person who she always knew herself to be,” said chief sponsor of the bill Rep. Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland). “The risk of death by suicide increases in more vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, kids facing addiction, kids with out-of-home placements such as foster care, LGBTQ youth, and those bereaved by the death by suicide of others.”

If signed into law, the bill would require that the State Board of Education and Oregon Health Authority work to adopt rules that would help prevent suicide, including the use of suicide prevention experts and bringing in staff and parents to develop better policies for dealing with the issue.

**Sarah Melamed** (center), Crisis Response Worker, gives a presentation on LGBTQ issues. This is part of a series of trainings that The Child Center’s Diversity Committee is offering to staff members to increase awareness and understanding of equity, both in the workplace and for the clients we serve.

## Fun Run! Fundraiser



Royal India Cuisine hosted a *Fun Run!* fundraiser for The Child Center on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. After the run, they served their exquisite, authentic Indian food, as well as a donated keg of McKenzie Brewing James Blonde Ale. The top three finishers: Heather Frank (top right, 1<sup>st</sup> place), Cody Frank (top left, 2<sup>nd</sup> place), and Nanci Del Vecchio (bottom, 3<sup>rd</sup> place).



The Child Center tabled with information about our programs and services at a Public Health Fair in Cottage Grove on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The Fair, organized by the Family Relief Nursery, brought together community agencies to share information about health, nutrition, and safety resources through fun activities for families. Representing The Child Center were Andrea Gifford, Outpatient Program Director (left), Shannon Chipps, ABA Supervisor (center), and Donna Wladyka, Wellness Coordinator (right).

# Success Story: Former Client Turns Advocate



*Recently, one of The Child Center's former clients was invited to give testimony to 40 Oregon state lawmakers and representatives from the Oregon Health Authority to talk about his experiences with restraint and seclusion. His testimony was powerful and heartfelt and profound, and shows the impact that The Child Center has with the children we serve who are struggling with mental health issues. Part of his testimony is below.*

I am 15 years old and a freshman in High School. I experience autism, anxiety, dysgraphia, dyslexia, and depression among other labels that have been given to me since I was about 5 years old. I started being restrained and held down by teachers when I was in kindergarten. My mom tells me that it was because the teachers didn't know what else to do and I didn't have the words to tell them what I needed.

It was hard and I didn't feel like anyone understood me. When I would not understand something or be able to follow a direction quickly then the teachers would say that I was not following directions and they would send me to the office. When I would get frustrated, often I would hide or try to get away and then the teachers or principle would hold me down. Many times, when they would restrain me, I would get bruises and one time, I got a cut on my arm.

Restraining me is a life time thing that changed my life, it didn't help me learn and just made me fearful of teachers and school, my life would probably not have needed a bunch of the additional supports if I wasn't so scared. I needed structure, someone who understood me and time to process information. I would often try to get away and hide when things got too out of hand they would grab me and hold me down until I was so tired that I couldn't move. Then I was usually taken to a room that was closed so that I couldn't get out.

Now...I am currently in high school in all regular grade level classes. I don't need an aid and my GPA is 3.78.

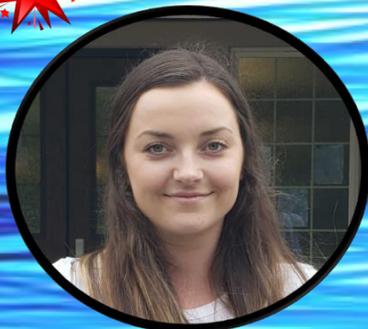
So what changed? I moved to The Child Center in Springfield and found that they listened to me and gave me the tools and resources to help me succeed. It wasn't easy but it wasn't difficult either...it was just life! For the first time, I felt like someone cared about me at school, they listened to me and asked me questions, they would give me time to make decisions and talked to me A LOT - sometimes more than I wanted! It felt good when someone understood what I needed and how I was different. They believed that I could be successful and they trusted me.

What I would hope would be different for other kids is that there would be more staff to help listen and understand, more resources to help kids learn and more opportunities to succeed and less opportunities to fail. I wish all kids would be set up for success and not to fail just because they have a disability or mental health condition.

What I want to say to you as you make decisions about what happens to other kids like me is that holding or restraining people has a lifelong effect and traumatizes kids, it doesn't teach us.

Thank you for listening to me.

## EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH!



**Dani Link (ITS Day Treatment BEA)**  
February 2019



**Amalie Lantz (ITS Day Treatment Therapist)**  
March 2019



**Brandi Litkei (Maintenance Worker)**  
May 2019

### We Couldn't Do It Without You!

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