

“Dance to Your Own Music”: A LGBTQ Celebration and Educational Program

Crittenton Children’s Center is a regional leader in child and adolescent mental health. We have been serving children and their families since 1896 with the mission to provide the highest quality innovative mental health services. Our vision is to be the “Best place to give care and the best place to receive care.”



With this dedication, we know we help patients best when we understand their uniqueness. To celebrate and enhance our understanding of the LGBTQ population, we held an event during the month of September. The purpose was twofold:

1. Kick off celebration for LGBTQ holidays in the month of October
 - a. National Coming Out Day
 - b. LGBT History Month
2. Provide education to our staff to increase their understanding of issues faced by LGBTQ individuals.

The theme for the event was, “**Dance to Your Own Music.**” Decorations included centerpieces that displayed old-fashioned 45 records and vases that said, “Rock-n-Roll.” Each vase held a bouquet of Tootsie pops in different colors/favors. Large musical notes served as the backdrop behind the refreshment table which was decorated in bright colors. We served cookies and fresh fruit and beverages.

Attendees had the opportunity to also visit a display table featuring a poster with information on the upcoming LGBT holidays and a letter from the CEO of Saint Luke's Health System providing statistical information on issues faced by this population. She also addressed the health system's commitment to



provide the best care to all patients.

Attendees listened to a presentation by several clinical staff who had recently attended training on the LGBT population. They received a list of the most recent resources; gained knowledge about LGBTQ treatment issues and; participated in a discussion about implications for Crittenton. There was a lengthy question and answer session as well.

The presentation included an interactive game that staff thoroughly enjoyed. Working in groups of 2 or 3, staff worked to match LGBTQ terms with definitions. It was fun and educational. Many staff felt the game would even be beneficial as a group activity for the adolescents we serve on our Residential Program.





Lastly, the event closed with attendees hearing the “Tootsie Pop story,” so they would understand the significance of the centerpieces as it relates to the work we do and the children we serve. Here’s a summary:

“Tootsie Pops remind us all of our childhoods. They are sweet on the outside and everyone wants to get to the sweet chewy center. Well, the Tootsie is a lot like the children we serve at Crittenton. When everything is wired correctly inside a child and the environment is healthy in a child's life, they are very much like the sweet center of the Tootsie Pop. However, the children we serve, either because of the way they are wired or because of what has happened to them, they are hard on the outside. They have layer after layer of hardness. But inside, they are sweet and tender. It takes a lot of licks to get to the center of a Tootsie pop. It takes a lot of licks to dissolve the hardness surrounding the hearts of the children we serve. Let the Tootsie Pop be a sweet reminder that with each interaction, we have the opportunity to help dissolve a layer. To help a child be who they are—sweet and tender.” Wanda Taylor

More than 40 staff attended the event representing all levels of the organization and every shift as well. Crittenton clinical staff was joined by top administrators, business office and fundraising staff, the clerical team and more.