

WE BELIEVE IN

HOPE

EQUITY

POWER

FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH







# A Joyful Splash!



Celebrating Your Impact in 2019



## Voices from the Year

As a queer organization, we recognize the importance of multiple stories. We honor those that were willing to share these snippets of their lives (through interviews and program feedback), in pursuit of expanding hearts and minds. Every time Outright appears in these words, you can see YOUR impact! **Over 3,000 of you said YES to a future full of hope, equity, and power.** May it be so!



### Hello Friend,

What you have here is our 2019 Annual Report. Take a moment to hold it. To really feel its weight in your hands. Please know that it comes to you with love, from us. And I promise, if gratitude were measured in ounces, this baby would be too heavy to lift! Because while this is a report, it is also much more.



It's a thank you card to you for all the ways you've been right here with us. It is a bold and tender message to our communities that we are here, with you, for LGBTQ+ youth. It's also a bit of a time machine.

These stories and images will take you back through moments when solidarity and celebration with youth was possible IRL. At the same time, I invite you to travel forward, as we dream together of a future built for all of us. We've been thinking a lot about what that future needs. And we know that at its core are hope, equity, and power. With youth, by youth, for youth—and always, with you by their sides.

Now let's do this!

*Dana*

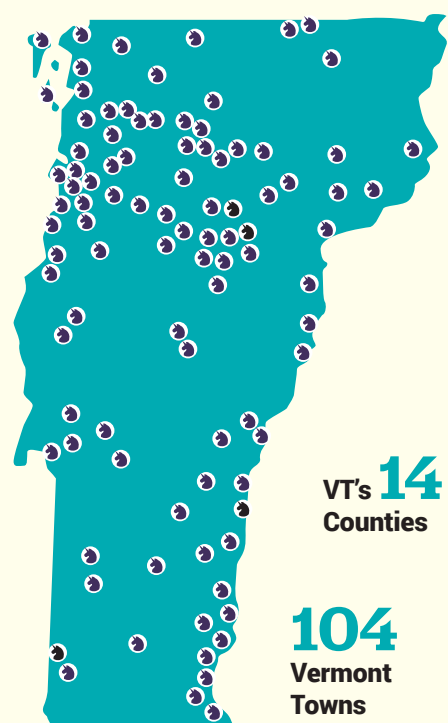
Dana Kaplan, Executive Director

PS. We will not waver, and it's because of donors, volunteers, and cheerleaders like YOU.  
**Heck Yeah!**

## Thanks to You

We had a truly remarkable 2019. It included a record-breaking Fire Truck Pull, a budget win at the Statehouse, and some very special multi-year grants. With all of this fertile ground, we are now a team of seven, working with youth and families to revolutionize our communities for a more just tomorrow.

### The Splash!



**3,247**  
Youth Participants

**3,116**  
Adult Participants

**111**  
Trainings

**3,030**  
Training Attendees

**6**  
Stuffs Snuggled at Outright

**83**  
Gender & Sexuality Alliances (GSA's)

**5**  
Friday Night Group Locations

**48**  
Nail Colors Offered at Prom

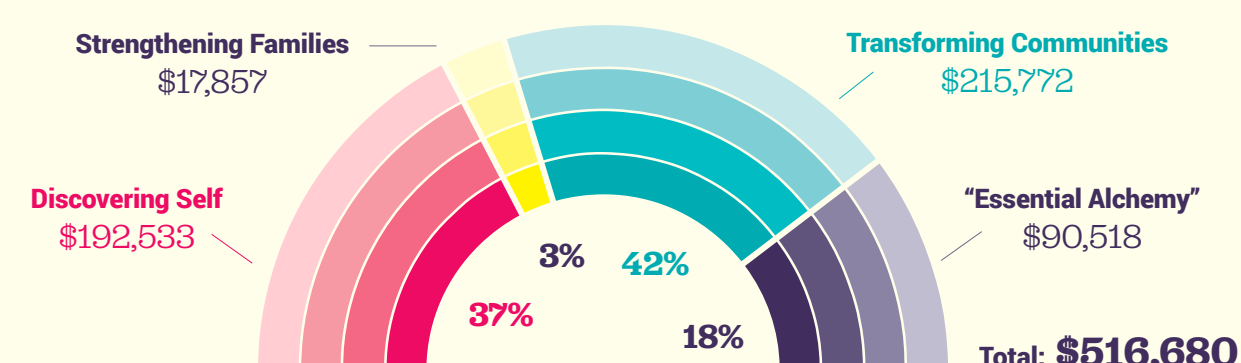
**2,475**  
Heck Yeahs to Outright Youth

**587**  
Outfit Changes at Summit

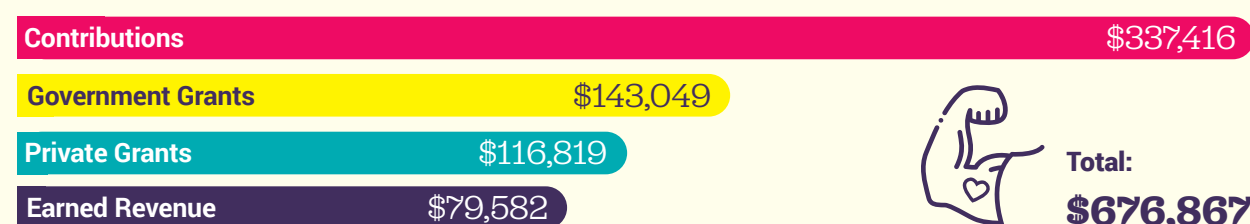
**140**  
Postcards Written to Legislators at Leadership Day

**3**  
Most Requested Songs:  
9-5, Dolly Parton  
Truth Hurts, Lizzo Juice, Lizzo

### What It Cost by Area of Work



### What You Raised



### Finding Home—Toni

Toni is all glorious, radiant energy—except when the topic is foster care. Then it's the quiet that settles over them while speaking guardedly about the pain of losing their grandmother, or the oblique reference to a childhood filled with trauma, that speaks volumes.

Toni moved through a series of homes after experiencing severe harm for being queer. Eventually they ended up with a family that registered them—very much to their dismay—to attend Camp Outright. That is where their journey to find home began.

"I think about the world, all the hatred, transphobia, and racism—all of the evil. **Camp Outright was a safety net where I could meet people like me, and form relationships I didn't think possible.** It was safe to feel all my feelings and not be judged. I learned so much about myself there. It was the most fun I have had in my life. It's like home."

Life is never simple, especially for QTPOC youth. After leaving camp, Toni learned that another forced transition was upon them. "My first thought was 'Not again.'" Toni was picked up by an Outright staff, who drove them to their new placement. Toni remembers asking over and over where they were going. "She kept telling me, 'Just wait and see.'"

Three hours later, they pulled up to their destination. That's when Fischer, **their camp counselor, walked out the door.** "I remember just bawling."

Fast forward to today. Toni just picked up their cap and gown, and is about to graduate high school, something they never felt was possible. "There were death threats at school for being gay, on top of being black and brown. I joined a club with other kids, where everyone is either a person of color, or queer. We walk those halls as a united front against everything that the high school is."

Toni continues to harness their power. They have plans to attend community college, and as they reflect on the future, they share the following: "What started as a tragedy slowly became a story of transformation and acceptance. Both self-acceptance, and acceptance of life how it is, all its ups and downs. I'm learning how to make a huge commitment to somebody. It's just crazy to think what would have happened if I'd not gone to Camp Outright. I'm really glad I don't have to find out."

**"What started as a tragedy slowly became a story of transformation and acceptance."**

Last year, Toni and Fischer officially joined through adoption. Now they are a "forever family." And to think, it all started at summer camp.



### When Stars Align—Fischer

For a long time, Fischer thought there were two givens in their life. After learning in 3rd grade that their teacher was a foster parent, they knew they too, wanted to be a parent without giving birth. They also thought that being genderqueer meant no more experiences at summer camp.

What they didn't see coming was that not only would both be possible, but that they'd happen through the magic of Camp Outright.

"I always joked I'd be a camp director if the summer camp I grew up attending wasn't so homophobic. When I came out as queer, camp was taken away from me." Then a friend recruited them as a counselor at Camp Outright. "It was the first time I could be queer and a mentor. Camp is such a special home for me."

Fischer reflects on the moment when they first met Toni. "I've always had strong relationships with the campers, but there was something special that happened with this one. I was like, 'oh sh\*t', this kid is ah-mazing! They were so powerful and magical, and had so much pain and emotion bottled up. I remember thinking, if they don't learn how to express and work with it, they are going to explode everywhere. We worked a lot that week on shifting how they used that power."

When Fischer returned home, they resolved to be a foster parent by the next summer. What they didn't know was that Toni's foster placement was no longer a good match, and DCF had turned to Outright for help. When Fischer called Dana to make sure they could stay in touch with Toni post-camp, they learned there wasn't a new foster family in place for Toni. "I told Dana, 'Have them send Toni to me, I'll be Toni's new parent.'" Outright advocated for me with DCF, since I wasn't even on their roster yet. It was thanks to the work you'd done within that system that paved the way forward."

Later that very day, Toni arrived. "I remember thinking, 'I'm not here to create more turmoil in your life. I am going to fully commit, and give you the space and chance to do this.' Every social worker told me, 'Don't say forever.' And I was like, 'Welllllll, yes!'"

As they recall these moments, Fischer and Toni are snuggled together, side by side on the couch. "I said yes to this one kid, and it turned out to be so much bigger. My being genderqueer is such a blessing in that we have this shared thing that we can both work through together and support. **When people say, 'Your kid is really awesome,' I just get to say, 'I chose really well—I just support them being themselves.'**" With that, Fischer plants a giant kiss on the top of Toni's head.

Fischer's story started when they said yes to themselves. That led to Camp Outright, which led to Toni. Their connection to each other forever? Now that's a given.

### Truth for Change—Ezra

"It's fun being a leader at Outright. I've been involved since my mom and I helped form Gender Creative Kids - now I volunteer at that program. I like helping people, making sure they have access to things. **I've learned how to talk to teachers and students from my involvement with my GSA and Outright.**

That really helped this past winter. In my school district, a staff person went into another classroom and heard a teacher doing a lesson on LGBTQ+ inclusive gender identity and sexuality. They wrote this 3 1/2 page letter to the school board, saying the staff member needed to go back to the classroom and re-teach the lesson and tell the kids that they had been wrong the first time.

It was really hurtful. A group of parents got together and had medical professionals, social workers, parents, and community members talk about this transphobia at a school board meeting. My GSA got involved too.

The interesting thing was this person said they wanted a public forum. Well they got it, but the only people who spoke at the forum were people who were against the letter. Not one person spoke in favor of it. This person had the guts to send a letter, but didn't have the guts to stand up and speak in public.

My friend Olli and I spoke. We talked about how it hurts to have to prove our existence almost every day, and how it's hard when people try to deny us who we truly are. After we spoke, they paused the meeting, and board members came up to us, shook our hands, thanked us, and told us we did amazing. They also agreed to have Outright do a series of trainings for all schools in the district. It was awesome."



### Being Me—M

"As a queer youth I see a lot of negativity and hate surrounding the LGBTQ+ community and who I am as an individual. I know it's very hard growing up in general, but I think growing up queer tops it.

When I heard about Outright's Summit from my teacher, a sense of relief washed over me. When I arrived, I couldn't help but smile seeing my colors flying across every wall. It was surreal to talk to people who knew what was happening in my life, and to meet people who could relate to me and give advice. It made being me easier to come to terms with.



I used to be ridiculously upset with myself and just upset at the world because of something that was out of my control. I would sit and ask myself a thousand times over, 'Why do I have to be this way?' I felt outcast, and odd, and just sad more often than not. Summit gave me a sense of pride in a piece of who I am. It taught me that being unique and different is a beautiful thing; that being yourself is something to celebrate and be proud of no matter what.

So honestly, thank you to everyone who was a part of this. I deeply appreciate everything that you do, and never stop doing this. If it meant something to me, I'm sure there's hundreds more out there who need this too. This time I had at the Summit is a memory I will take with me everywhere I go.

**To everyone that made this possible, I'm letting you know that you are making a difference, one life at a time. This will always mean something to me... so thank you."**