

The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center



EDUCATE | SUPPORT | EMPOWER



GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY
MILTON E. FORD
LGBT RESOURCE CENTER

“

To work toward a world, starting with the one we live in, where people can grow up knowing who they are — not only knowing who they are, but to claim who they are — not to have all kinds of false starts, not to have to spend tons of energy in covering up who they are, not to have it a big traumatic event to come out, but a *celebration* within a context that is there for them.”

Milt Ford, 2011 Interview
A People's History of the LGBTQ Community in Grand Rapids



TABLE OF CONTENTS



2

The Legacy of Milt Ford

6

About the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center

10

Milt's Legacy Continues

18

Changing Climate on Campus and Beyond

20

Future Generations

22

Letter from the Director

24

Quick Facts

The Legacy of Milt Ford

For more than four decades on the campus of Grand Valley State University, Milton E. Ford, Ph.D., impacted the lives of students, faculty and staff members. He did this by being in a deep relationship. In fact, deep relationships are the hallmark of Milt's legacy on our campus. As a beloved professor, first in the English Department and then in Liberal Studies, Milt was dedicated to supporting his students.

Milt came out publicly as a gay man in the mid-1990s. During this time, GVSU was negotiating the first of three rounds of discussions to adopt domestic partner benefits for unmarried staff and faculty members. Milt took great personal risks by coming out publicly, but he did it for a reason — to make LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) lives visible. His presence in the media put a name and face to the issue.

In the late 1990s, Milt began his tenure as faculty advisor for the LGBT student organization Out'N>About. He would serve in that capacity for more than a decade. Milt described the campus climate during that time by saying, "For safety reasons, they would not announce the meeting place for the LGBT student support group."

In 2001, as a positive response to the negative decision concerning domestic partner benefits, Milt supported his partner Gary Van Harn in the creation of the LGBT Scholarship Fund. The new scholarship quickly became the fastest growing fund at Grand

Valley. The listing of the scholarship was the first time that "LGBT" appeared in official Grand Valley literature. President Lubbers signed the scholarship documentation prior to retiring, and President Murray also endorsed the scholarship upon his arrival at Grand Valley.

From the time he came out, Milt recognized the needs of LGBTQ students and envisioned a dedicated space on campus for them. He worked tirelessly to fulfill that vision. The first manifestation of this space occurred in 2001 when a bookshelf in the University Counseling Center was dedicated to information on LGBTQ topics. That same year, Milt began teaching a course entitled "Understanding the Gay Lifecycle" (though he would say, "Unlike worms and butter beans, there is no gay lifecycle").

During the 1990s, the Division of Student Services created the "Liaison to the Dean of Students Office for GLBT Issues." In 2004, the role, held by Milt Ford, expanded to include office hours, which



were first held in the Dean of Students Conference Room and then in the Women's Center in winter 2005. In 2005, when Milt moved to the Liberal Studies Department in the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies, his office door listed his name and "LGBT Resources." Milt proudly announced, "Now we have a scholarship and a door!" In this role, Milt provided 15 "drop in" office hours each week for students.

In 2008, the Grand Valley State University Board of Trustees approved domestic partner benefits, and the LGBT Resource Center also opened in a 1,500 square foot office located in the main traffic area of the Russel H. Kirkhof Center. This office, a unit in the Division of Student Services, is dedicated to meeting the needs of Grand Valley's LGBTQ students. The opening was celebrated with a campus-wide event, "Three Centers: One Vision," acknowledging the partnerships with the Women's Center and the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Milt Ford served for two years as founding director of the LGBT Resource Center before returning to

Milt at his
and Gary's lake
house on
Little Bass Lake.

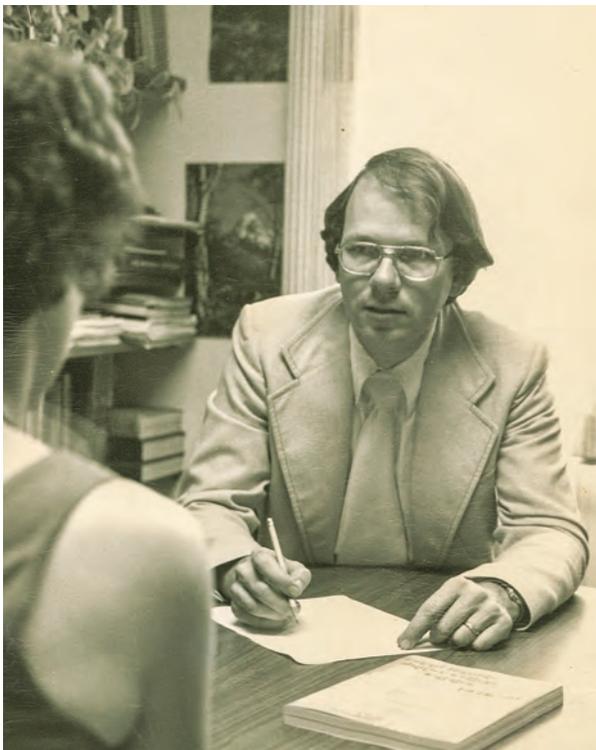
“

Milt believed in me when I didn't see anything worth believing in myself. He shaped my college experience in almost every aspect. But, even better, Milt helped shape the confident young successful man I am today. It is because of him that I see the world in such an interconnected way. Milt, I am going to keep dancing across the grid and that spring in my step is a direct consequence of knowing you. I am so privileged to have known you and call you my teacher, friend, and mentor.”

Kayden Robinson
Class of 2013



The Legacy of Milt Ford



In 1973, Milt began his tenure at Grand Valley, developing curricula for the new, experimental College IV.

full-time faculty status. During this time, Milt established the center's relationship with the Arcus Foundation and secured two grants totaling more than \$200,000. These monies enabled the center to secure an assistant director position, expand programming, and enhance relationships with community partners. Milt described the opening of the center and his tenure as director as his most rewarding professional accomplishments.

When Milt returned to full-time teaching, his advocacy for LGBTQ students continued. Milt served on the committee to create the LGBTQ studies minor, which was approved by University Academic Senate in the summer of 2013. During this time frame, Milt also contributed to the body of knowledge in student affairs literature. Working with current Grand Valley LGBT Resource Center Director Colette Seguin Beighley and respected LGBT Student Affairs Researcher and Writer Ronni Sanlo, Milt co-authored a chapter entitled "Student

Development: Theory to Practice in LGBT Campus Work” for the book *Expanding the Circle: Creating an Inclusive Environment in Higher Education for LGBTQ Students and Studies* (SUNY, 2015).

Milt’s roots as a Southern Baptist minister profoundly informed his understanding of the human condition. His pastoral values continued to manifest in the deep and caring relationships he had with his students. Grand Valley’s LGBTQ student population experienced Milt’s warmth and unconditional acceptance as a life-giving force.

One of Milt’s favorite writers, Thomas Merton, said, “The beginning of love is the will to let those we love be perfectly themselves; the resolution not to twist them to fit our own image.” Humble and never self-promoting, Milt was always motivated by his students’ needs. Four decades of Grand Valley students have been impacted by the space Milt created for them to be “perfectly themselves.” His legacy continues in the lives of his students and in the programs and services of the LGBT Resource Center he envisioned and created.



At left, Milt’s grandson Louis with his grandpa’s collection of rainbow bunnies (2014). Below, Milt and Gary with Milt’s grandsons, Miles and Louis (2013).



“

Milt is one of those people who, from first glance when we met, looked right at me and seemed to see something I still could not see. **He saw and loved me when I was struggling to fully love myself.** He was willing to help me become that person in every way possible. First as a friend, then as a teacher, and again as a friend, Milt has taught me that courage and hope can both run deeper than I ever thought possible. Milt, thank you for your faith in me. Thank you for your faith in all of us whom you touched.”

Jena Lewis
Class of 2012



About the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center

MISSION

The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center's mission is to educate, support and empower students to lead authentic lives, to challenge systems of gender and sexuality, and to work for social justice.

VISION

The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center strives to create an inclusive and just environment where the many expressions of gender and sexuality are celebrated. We will support and challenge all students on their developmental journey by creating an expansive space for students to understand and determine their own experiences within the context of the systems of sexuality and gender as well as within the context of other overlapping systems like race, class, and ability. Our students will be dynamic leaders in the social justice community who demonstrate solidarity by working with all marginalized communities for collective liberation.

POINTS OF UNITY

- We believe in grassroots, participatory democracy as a group and will use consensus as a model for both learning and decision-making.
- We are opposed to oppression in all its forms: racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia/biphobia/transphobia, religious intolerance, etc.
- We are opposed to violence, both personal and institutional.
- We believe that the current economic system does not serve the interests of the majority of people and that economic justice must be part of all our social justice work for the future.
- We believe in ecological integrity, environmental justice, and the urgent need for humanity to prevent catastrophe from global warming.
- We are committed to creating more dialogue and collaboration between social justice sectors and practicing the intersectionality of all social justice efforts in West Michigan.
- We are committed to understanding how state, national, and international policies impact the social justice work being done at the local level.
- We are committed to the transformation of relationships with one another.
- We are committed to systemic change.

“



Thanks to Milt Ford, future generations of LGBTQA students at GVSU and across West Michigan can claim a space of their own.

Milt's spirit will live in our hearts, our memory, and our work.”

Fermin Valle
Class of 2012



(Above) Student cohort from Milt's tenure as center director. (Left) Program coordinator Carrie Simmons with student award recipient Margie Munoz at Pride Awards. (Right) The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, which our students call “home base.”

“A warm, gentle, generous man of great wisdom and intellect, a symbol of the power of love and kindness, Milt lives on in the hearts, minds, and actions of the countless people he touched.”

Taylor Smith
Class of 2012



About the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center

STAFF

Colette Seguin Beighley, Director
Carrie Simmons, Program Coordinator
Emily West, LGBT Coordinator
Scott Burden, Graduate Assistant

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Liam Bailey, Gays in Faith Together (GIFT)
Scott Berlin, Assistant Professor, Social Work
Lynn “Chick” Blue, Vice Provost and Dean of
Academic Services and Information Technology
Scott Burden, Graduate Assistant,
Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center
Danielle DeMuth, Assistant Professor,
Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies
Kyle Felker, President,
LGBT Faculty and Staff Association
Takeelia Garrett-Lynn, Assistant Director,
Housing and Residence Life
Kevin Gierman, Director of HIV Program Services,
The Grand Rapids Red Project
Todd Heywood, Senior Reporter,
American Independent News
Grace Hoyer, Academic Community Liaison,
Kirkhof College of Nursing
Jessica Jennrich, Director, Women’s Center
Tony Josephson, Senior Compensation Consultant,
People Services, Herman Miller
Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Assistant Vice Provost
for Student Affairs
Rhonda LeMieux, Student Services Assistant,
Dean of Students Office
Steven Lipnicki, Assistant Dean,
Director of Pew Student Services
Donald Mitchell, Professor,
College Student Affairs Leadership
Matthew Mokma, Assistant Director of
Development and Alumni Relations,
University of Illinois at Chicago,
College of Business Administration
Andrew Plague, GVSU Student Body President
Mark Sampson, Clinical Director,
University Counseling Center



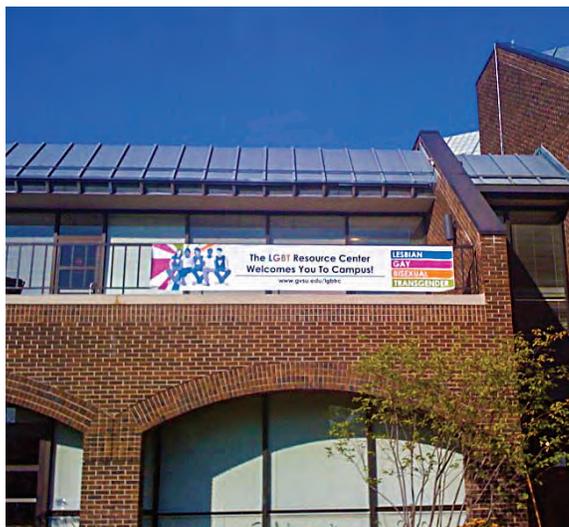
Emily West, LGBT Coordinator

Advisory Council Continued

Colette Seguin Beighley, Director,
Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center
Carrie Simmons, Program Coordinator,
Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center
Judith Snow, Therapist and Author
Kathleen VanderVeen, Director,
Disability Support Resources
Doug VanDoren, Pastor, Plymouth
United Church of Christ
Gary Van Harn, Allies and Advocates Chair,
Padnos International Center Staff
Emily West, LGBT Coordinator,
Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center
Rick Westra, Product Specialist, Herman Miller

MEMBER





At top, the original graphic identity created in 2008. Below, the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, housed on the Allendale Campus in the Russel H. Kirkhof Center.

“

The center has helped me learn that I can be gay and successful.

I had never really received that message before. I’ve met so many amazing people and found a place where anyone can be themselves without reservation.”

Ryan Cronk
Class of 2013



“The good that Milt did in this community will be spreading for a long time, and the example he set for others to live their lives with calm and fearless love will continue in the people Milt inspired and encouraged.

Leslie Boker
Senior



Milt's Legacy Continues

Ongoing programs and services of the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center



First-year Queer Alliance

FIRST-YEAR QUEER ALLIANCE

The mission of the First-year Queer Alliance (FQA) is to support first-year LGBT and allied students to develop strategies for a successful first year by creating a connection to Grand Valley, the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, and the queer and allied community.

"Honestly the best thing to happen to me."

"Seeing that there was an LGBT Resource Center definitely influenced wanting to come here. It was something I was looking for in college."

"Thank you for being the family I've always wanted. You all make me a better person. I love you."

"I never thought I'd come out to my family so quickly but the group supported me all the way."



Loud and Queer

LOUD AND QUEER

The mission of Loud and Queer (L&Q) is to empower second year and beyond LGBT and allied students to lead authentic lives, to challenge systems of gender and sexuality, and to work for social justice by fostering a community of learning, celebration, and solidarity.

"This is my first time being a part of the LGBTQ community. I honestly just enjoy being with my friends and having a support system."

"I've never felt so welcomed in a group."

"Just having somewhere safe to go at night and meet and discuss issues that affect my life."

"I've gained really close friendships because of L&Q and for that I'm really thankful."



LGBT Ambassadors at Grand Rapids' first Pride Parade (2013)

LGBT AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors are specially trained students who take a more active role in center programming and represent the center to the Grand Valley community at informational fairs, programming events, and in classroom settings. Participants gain public speaking and presentation skills as well as a deeper understanding of LGBT issues.

OPEN DOOR DISCUSSIONS

This program provides an opportunity for students to lead discussion-based events that revolve around their own interests. Open Door Discussions are student-initiated and student-led. Last year, students explored the following topics:

- Appropriation 101: Who's Allowed to Twerk?
- Breaking Down Stereotypes
- Media is Queer
- The Criminal (In)Justice System
- Solidarity 101
- Disabilities Within the LGBT Community
- It All Adds Up: Microaggressions

WEAR THE RAINBOW: CLOTHING SWAP

Everyone performs gender everyday. This performance includes clothing, accessories, and various kinds of body management and modification. Wear the Rainbow provides a space for the transgender and queer community to have access to items and skills that feel aligned with an authentic sense of self. A clothing swap and workshop which create access for transgender and queer people who may not have the financial resources or who may not experience the physical and/or emotional safety to explore gender expressions across the spectrum.

“

Milt reminds me that it is possible to spend a very long time in this profession and still remain both impassioned and compassionate. He reminds me that you can move beyond your limits and learn new things from new people and keep growing and thriving when others give up. He reminds us all that we are in charge of our attitudes, and that lifelong learning is not limited. He reminds me to dream and to do and to keep moving toward possibilities that others say are impossible.”

Wendy Burns-Ardolino
Chair — Department of Liberal Studies



PRIDE AWARDS

Pride Awards is a student-focused event to celebrate and honor the people who have had an impact on the LGBT community at Grand Valley during the academic year. Among the awards given are the Milt Ford LGBT Leadership Award, the LGBT Resource Center FIERCE Award, the Solidarity Award, and Ally of the Year. This event strengthens ties, builds community, and calls attention to the efforts of campus community partners.

QUEER IN THE NEW YEAR

For many LGBT students, the holiday break marks the first time they will be going home for an extended period since coming out, or they may be planning to come out to family over the break. Usually held in December on the last Friday of the semester, Queer in the New Year offers students a chance to interact with others who have already been in that situation to receive tips and encouragement. And, of course, there is always an opportunity to take an "Awkward Family Photo"!

GREEK ALLIES AND ADVOCATES

In cooperation with the faculty and staff members' Allies and Advocates program, the center trained more than 500 members of the campus Greek community to provide support and resources for LGBT students in sororities and fraternities. This training has empowered students to change the climate of their organizations to be more welcoming to and supportive of LGBT students.

"I plan to be more active in standing up to homophobia and defending LGBT rights."

"There are not enough lines on the page to describe how much I enjoyed and appreciated this experience."

"I will forever remember and cherish this experience. Thank you!"

"This program was very informative and life-changing."



Milt loved his forehead kiss from Gabriella Galore at the Pride Awards.



"Awkward Family Photos" at Queer in the New Year





Center Director Colette Seguin Beighley at Lavender Graduation

LAVENDER GRADUATION

As part of our university commencement celebrations, Lavender Graduation recognizes queer and allied students' contributions to the university and acknowledges their personal and academic achievements.

INTERSECTIONS

Our Intersections programming is the result of collaboration by the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Women's Center. The purpose of this work is to provide education and training around systemic injustice impacting all people, but especially playing out in the lives of marginalized communities. Intersections programming includes the Intersections Ambassador program for students holding multiple marginalized identities. We also host national speakers in an effort to educate our entire campus community.

Past speakers have included the following:

- Patricia Hill Collins
- Tim Wise
- John Carlos and Dave Zirin

LGBTQ STUDIES MINOR

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) studies minor is an interdisciplinary program which examines and debates issues regarding sexuality and gender. Engaging in an analysis of the intersections of sexuality and gender with race, class, and national identity, the LGBTQ studies minor equips students with the strong critical thinking, writing, and leadership skills that will prepare them to enter a wide range of professional fields. Students who participate in the LGBTQ studies minor complete a service-learning component. The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center works with faculty members to support students in this service-to-community portion of their education.



Intersections: 1968 Olympian John Carlos and sports writer Dave Zirin



"Queer Your Mind" sunglasses worn at the LGBTQ Studies Minor Reception. President Thomas J. Haas shown on the left.

CHANGE U: SOCIAL JUSTICE TRAINING

Created in 2010 as part of an Arcus Foundation grant, Change U is a semester-long, high-impact social justice training series. The mission of Change U is to provide participants with the necessary analysis and skills to participate in transformational change that moves beyond individual activism to collective liberation. Change U is designed to strengthen social justice movements on and off campus by fostering cross-issue, intergenerational, and diverse partnerships between the Grand Valley community and social justice efforts throughout the area.



**“Grand Valley is an institution
that is in the community and
of the community.”**

Provost Gayle Davis

Through the lens of history, Change U examines how change has come about through grassroots, collective movements. Further, this training equips participants with a framework for viewing social justice issues. The focus of Change U is to examine social issues with a more systemic view, moving beyond individual acts of discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia) to understanding the larger systems of oppression (white supremacy and patriarchy) that keep injustices in place.

Participants leave with the knowledge of how oppression works, how justice issues intersect, and how change is created. Grand Valley State University students, faculty and staff members, as well as community members, are invited to participate in this social justice training series.

“Change U showed me that I am not alone in the fight for social justice. There are many people who are committed and willing to work in solidarity with me.”

“Change U is the best decision I made in my college career.”

“Change U has been a place of great personal growth for me. By providing a safe space where I could be both challenged and supported, not to mention exposed to awesome resources for further learning.”

“The intersectional lens I learned to use from Change U is now a part of how I interact with the world on a daily basis.”

SOCIAL JUSTICE TRAINING

WWW.GVSU.EDU/SOCIALJUSTICE

CHANGE U COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Positions: Elected or Appointed

Kent County Commission
Grand Rapids Community Foundation —
LGBT Advisory committee
Grand Rapids Community Relations Commission
Green Grand Rapids Committee
Michigan Street Corridor Plan Steering Committee
Sustainable Streets Task Force

Positions on Boards of Directors

ACLU — West Michigan
Alternative Pathways
American Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids
Avenue of the Arts
Batterer Intervention Services Coalition
Be One: Catalyst for Inclusion
BL2END
Bloom Collective
Center for Women in Transition
Cherry Street Health Services
Equality Michigan
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan
Farm-to-School Program (Muskegon County)
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
Gay in Faith Together
GLSEN GR (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network)
Grand Rapids Women's Chorus
Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council
Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council
Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance
Healing Children of Conflict
Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan
Heart of West Michigan United Way
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
Holland is Ready
Kent County Water Conservation
Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance
LGBT Network of West Michigan
Michigan Coalition Against Sexual
and Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
Progressive Women's Alliance
Restore Hope
Room for All
Transgender Education Collaboration
United Growth of Kent County
Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts
Well House
YWCA of West Central Michigan

Staff of Nonprofit Organizations

Alternative Pathways
AmeriCorps
Aquinas College
Arbor Circle
ArtPrize
Bethany Christian Services
Blandford Nature Center
Campfire USA West MI
Center for Diversity and Inclusion — Aquinas College

Center for Women in Transition
Community Rebuilders
Disability Advocates of Kent County
Disability Network Lakeshore
Diversity & Inclusion Manager (Grand Rapids)
Gays in Faith Together
Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids
Grand Haven Public Schools
Grand Rapids Community College
Grand Rapids Community Foundation
Grand Rapids Community Media Center
Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy
Grand Rapids Public Library
Grand Rapids Public Schools
Grandville Avenue Arts and Humanities
Grand Valley State University
Habitat for Humanity of Kent County
Habitat for Humanity of Ottawa County
Heart of West Michigan United Way
Hispanic Center of West Michigan
Holland is Ready
Hope College
Land Conservancy of West Michigan
Life Services Parent Center
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Neighborhood Housing Services (Grand Haven)
Omega Community Services
Our Kitchen Table
Partners for a Racism-Free Community
Peace Corp
Ravenna Public Schools
Red Project
Reformed Church in America
Salvation Army — Booth Family Services
The LGBT Network of West Michigan
The Source
Unity Michigan
Well House
Wesley Fellowship
West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Volunteer and Internship Involvement

Actors' Theatre of Grand Rapids
Alliance for Ethnic and Cultural Harmony
Avenue of the Arts
Bethany Christian Services Foster Care
Bethany Christian Services Refugee
Resettlement Services
Bloom Collective
Center for Women in Transition
Circle Pines Center
City Life Wesleyan Church
Compassion Campaign
Creston Neighborhood Association
Crash's Landing Cat Sanctuary
D.A. Blodgett — St. Johns Home
Deep Green Resistance Grand Rapids
Disability Advocates of Grand Rapids
Drivers Licenses for All
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

Fulton Street Farmers' Market —
Expansion Fundraising committee
Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism
(GRACE)
Grand Rapids Young Professionals
Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council
Habitat for Humanity Kent County
Habitat for Humanity Ottawa County
Hands Across the City
Harbor Humane Society
Head Start Center Grand Rapids
Heartside Gardeners
Heartside Ministries
Helping Hands
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
Holland is Ready
Hope is Ready
Inclusive Justice
Institute for Healing Racism
IWW
Kent County Democrats
Kent County Domestic Violence Community
Coordinated Response Team
Kent County Sexual Assault Prevention
Action Team
Kent County Water Conservation
Kids Food Basket
LaughFest
LINC Community Revitalization
LOVE, Inc.
Michigan Project for Informed Public Policy
MOKA
Mom's Bloom
Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition
Mutual Aid Grand Rapids
Our Kitchen Table
Planned Parenthood
Plymouth UCC — Justice and Peace Taskforce
Really Really Free Market
Red Project
Salvation Army
St. John's Children Home
The White House Project
Transgender Education Collaboration
Transgender Michigan
Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts
United Methodist Church — Justice Advocacy
Until Love is Equal
Walk for Farm Animals
Well House
West Michigan AmeriCorps Collaborative
West Michigan Environmental Action Council
West Michigan Immigration Coalition
Women at Risk
Women's Resource Center
Young Nonprofit Professionals Network
of Greater Grand Rapids
YWCA

Updated: October 2014

GRAND RAPIDS LGBTQ PEOPLE'S HISTORY PROJECT



Following the model of radical historian Howard Zinn, the Grand Rapids LGBTQ People's History Project involves the historical documentation of the LGBTQ movement in Grand Rapids. By conducting more than 70 interviews and collecting archival documents, photographs, and video footage, this project has produced the feature-length documentary film *A People's History of the LGBTQ Community in Grand Rapids*. The film is available to view online, along with archival photos, documents, and interviews. This project captures the Grand Rapids LGBTQ community's struggle for equality and justice. More than 700 people attended the documentary's premiere showing in November 2011 and the film continues

to be shown in classes across campus. The website remains a rich research resource and continues to receive new materials.

“In order to engage effectively, we must first understand the context in which we do our work as well as develop an understanding of our local community history.”

**Colette Seguin Beighley, Director
Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center**

The Grand Rapids People's History Project is a production of the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy. The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, through a generous grant from the Arcus Foundation Gay and Lesbian Fund, was able to cosponsor this project. Grand Valley's Kutsche Office of Local History was also a cosponsor.

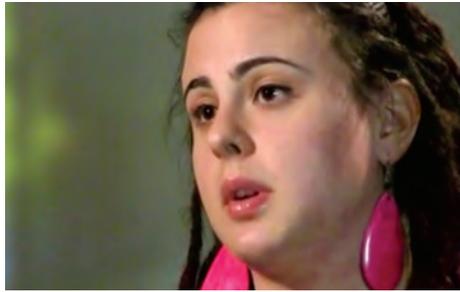
WATCH THE FILM ONLINE

WWW.GRANDRAPIDSLGBTHISTORY.ORG

“... there is an underside to every age about which history does not often speak, because history is written from records left by the privileged. We learn about politics from the political leaders, about economics from the entrepreneurs, about slavery from the plantation owners, about the thinking of an age from its intellectual elite.”

Howard Zinn





Grand Valley State University community members who were featured in the film *A People's History of the LGBTQ Community in Grand Rapids*. Left column, top to bottom: Wendy Wenner, Diana Pace, and Kim Ranger. Right column, top to bottom: Eva Jensen, Ben Pohl and Joi Dupler, Cindy Mader, and Mary Banghart.

“

Milt was radical in my reckoning — one who taught me how to go back to the roots of things and articulate one’s dream with the kind of passion that makes life worth living and — surely, worth examining. He’ll always be alive in our work and in our vision of liberal studies. I love you, Milt — my teacher, my friend, my comrade!”

Azfar Hussain
Associate Professor, Liberal Studies



Changing Climate *on Campus and Beyond*

Grand Valley faculty and staff members often seek support from the center when their children or grandchildren come out. Parents of prospective or incoming students contact the center to find out more about the climate and resources available on campus. Local high school Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) visit the center to develop an understanding of the kinds of services and support we offer while they are making their college selections. In addition, the center has become a trusted community resource and has received recognition throughout the university and across the nation.

“We want to express our gratitude to you and the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center for your continued



support and, most importantly, for bringing our son back to us. Grand Valley speaks to its diversity, but your university truly lives it. We never imagined how closely this would affect our family with our son, Joe. The Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center has changed his life and given him a voice. We could not be prouder of our son, our family, and the Grand Valley community for its support.”

Sheldon and Jeanie Miller

SERVICE TO CAMPUS

- Intercultural Committee
- 2014 Teach-In Planning Committee
- Intergroup Dialogue Committee
- Campus Climate Implementation Committee
- Gender Identity and Expression Committee
- MLK Award Committee
- myGVSU Campus Climate Committee
- Campus Violence Prevention Team (VAWA grant)
- Social Justice Training Committee
- Divisional Assessment Committee
- Team Against Bias
- Co-Curricular Programming Committee
- Social Media Committee

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

- Expanding the Circle: LGBTQ Studies and Services in Higher Education
- National Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
- Michigan Higher Education Consortium for Equality
- Equality Michigan
- Truth Wins Out
- Michigan Equality Catalyst Committee



Milt Ford and Gary Van Harn receive awards at Lavender Graduation (2012).

PUBLICATIONS

“Student Development: Theory to Practice in LGBT Campus Work”

Expanding the Circle: Creating an Inclusive Environment in Higher Education for LGBTQ Students and Studies

Milton E. Ford, Colette Seguin Beighley, and Ronni Sanlo • SUNY Press • February 2015

“Celebrating LGBTQ Youth: The Role of Educators and Families”

Colleagues magazine

Grand Valley State University College of Education
Winter 2014 • Carrie Simmons, Lindsay Greyerbiehl, Emily West, and Colette Seguin Beighley

“Beyond Identity Politics: Equipping Students to Create Systemic Change”

Intersectionality and Higher Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis

Colette Seguin Beighley, Carrie Simmons, and Emily West • Peter Lang Publishing • September 2014

Intersectionality and Higher Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis

Technical Editor Lindsay Greyerbiehl • Peter Lang Publishing • September 2014

AWARDS

- Milt Ford Leadership Award (2014): Colette Seguin Beighley
- Laker of the Year (2013): Carrie Simmons
- GVSU Women’s Commission Maxine Swanson Diversity Award (2013): Colette Seguin Beighley
- GVSU LGBT Faculty and Staff Association’s Prism Award (2012): Milton E. Ford

“

I would like to thank you for assisting me during what was a very stressful time last year when my wife and I were dealing with my child’s coming out as transgender. I felt that I needed to do more than just research the topic and was left thinking about who I could turn to for good advice. When I called the LGBT Resource Center, I was immediately put at ease and felt that I had found someone who could help me with the process of making good choices for my child.

A year and a half later, the transition process is in the beginning stages, and we are all hopeful that my child will have a meaningful and happy life. Thank you so much.

GVSU staff member



Future Generations

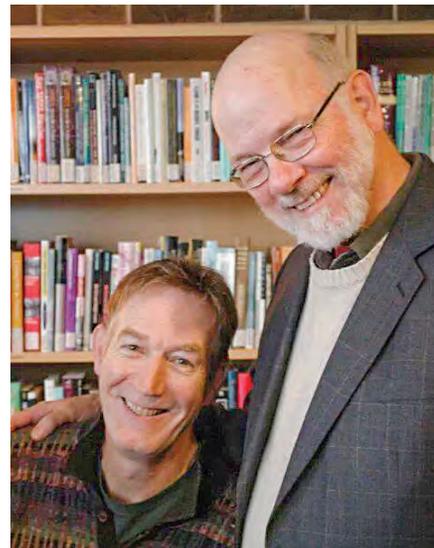
Milt Ford also had a dream for an endowment that would support his center in perpetuity. During his final years, Milt established and single-handedly began to fund the LGBT Resource Center Endowment. To honor Milt's legacy, his former students, colleagues, and friends are continuing to support his vision through gifts to the center endowment.

WHY I GIVE

“Over a period of years, my beloved partner, Milton E. Ford, invested in our students and in the creation of the LGBT Resource Center. Most of what Milt did was done quietly, patiently, and behind the scenes, including the creation of the LGBT Resource Center Endowment.

As his wingman, late-night strategist, and co-conspirator, I am absolutely dedicated to carrying his vision forward and to ensuring that the LGBT Resource Center will always be there for our students. It is my intention that the center will have the resources it needs to carry out its mission. That's why I give to GVSU.”

Gary Van Harn
Class of 2005



SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

LGBT SCHOLARSHIP
WEST SHORE AWARE SCHOLARSHIP
HAMLIN ENDOWED
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE LGBT RESOURCE CENTER ENDOWMENT,
VISIT WWW.GVSU.EDU/LGBTENDOWMENT

“

A year after I graduated, I began giving back to GVSU with a monthly gift to the LGBT Resource Center. Like many students who grew up in the West Michigan area, I came from a conservative family. I was still figuring out my own identity and had encountered resistance at home. I was 22 years old and had been dealing with being gay since I was 16, without any positive adult influence. As the LGBT Resource Center graduate assistant, I used to tell students that Colette and Milt were the first adults who supported my identity and with whom I had positive relationships. I give now simply because I know that support is consistently provided by the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center to students who need it most. GVSU was a safe place to explore my own identity and the world around me, and I continue to give so that young students who have similar circumstances can find a supportive place to develop a positive adult identity.”

**Matt Mokma, Class of 2008 and 2010,
first graduate assistant in the LGBT Resource Center**



“

GVSU's Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center is a beacon of strength, safety, and hope for so many students and alumni who identify with, and support, the community which it serves. When considering the geographic location of the center, the significance of its mission becomes all the more apparent. It is one of a very few LGBT-focused organizations managed with the highest level of professionals in their field with the backing of a major institution. These factors, along with the quality of services and programming provided, are why I make the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center the primary focus of my philanthropic giving and am proud to include them in my estate planning.”

**Tony Josephson
Class of 2011**



“



Our relationship with each other began over 10 years ago as graduate students at GVSU. The university provided an integral start to both our personal relationship and our professional journey as public servants. GVSU is a leader in shaping an inclusive culture for the LGBT community and West Michigan, and we support the university in many ways. As part of our commitment to GVSU, we teach as adjunct professors and participate in annual giving to further invest in the university's work of inclusion. From teaching, to volunteering, to giving to the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, we support the great university that brought us together and established us in our careers.”

**Jennifer M. DeHaan
Classes of 2001 and 2003**

Jill May, Class of 2003

Letter from the Director

–November 10, 2014–

Like many of our students, I was a beneficiary of Milt's revolutionary love. When marriage equality came to Michigan (however briefly) in the days following Milt's passing, it was bittersweet. While happy for this win, I was sad Milt could not have witnessed this moment. However, I was comforted by my memory of our trip to San Francisco the previous June.

While attending a conference, we were having breakfast together. He slid his phone across the table and shared the news that the U.S. Supreme Court had struck down both the Defense of Marriage Act and California's discriminatory Proposition 8. We quickly walked a few blocks to City Hall where news crews from around the world were recording this momentous occasion. As couples were marrying around us, I took a picture of Milt on the steps of City Hall holding a sign that said "Equality Now." Later that night, we attended the celebrations in the Castro district and took in every second of that significant day and place.

After Milt became ill, he asked me if I knew what part of that trip was his favorite. I guessed it was that historic day. He told me instead that it was the evening he and I had taken BART to the East Bay so I could show him where I grew up. That evening, he took me to dinner. Surrounded by the spectacular California hills, we walked and talked. It was a magical evening. He chose those intimate



“The true revolutionary is guided
by great feelings of love.”

Ernesto “Che” Guevara



moments as his favorite over the amazingly historic announcements and events that we had also witnessed. For Milt, it was all about the relationship.

Milt's revolutionary love changed me. Being in a relationship with Milt made each of us a better person. His love affirmed and gave space. As our students have attested, he saw in people what they could not yet see in themselves and gave us the gift of new possibilities.

As we continue Milt's work to create more just spaces on campus and in the world, it is important to remember that the kinds of services and support that are available to our campus LGBTQ community today were barely imaginable 10 years ago. They are possible now because of the work of Milt Ford. It is fitting that the center he founded has been renamed the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center.

There is a Zen proverb that states, "We stand on the shoulders of our teachers, not on their heads." We honor Milt in this way to remember that we do not do this work alone. There are always those who have come before and who have taken great risks and often paid great prices to create the spaces we enjoy today. Generations of students who never knew Milt will continue to benefit from his legacy.

And Milt's dream continues! We invite you to join our work through your financial support of the LGBT Resource Center Endowment. A gift to the endowment ensures Milt's legacy by providing a liberating space where our students can safely explore their identities in an environment filled with the sweetness of Milt's "revolutionary love."

In solidarity,



Colette Seguin Beighley
Director, Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center

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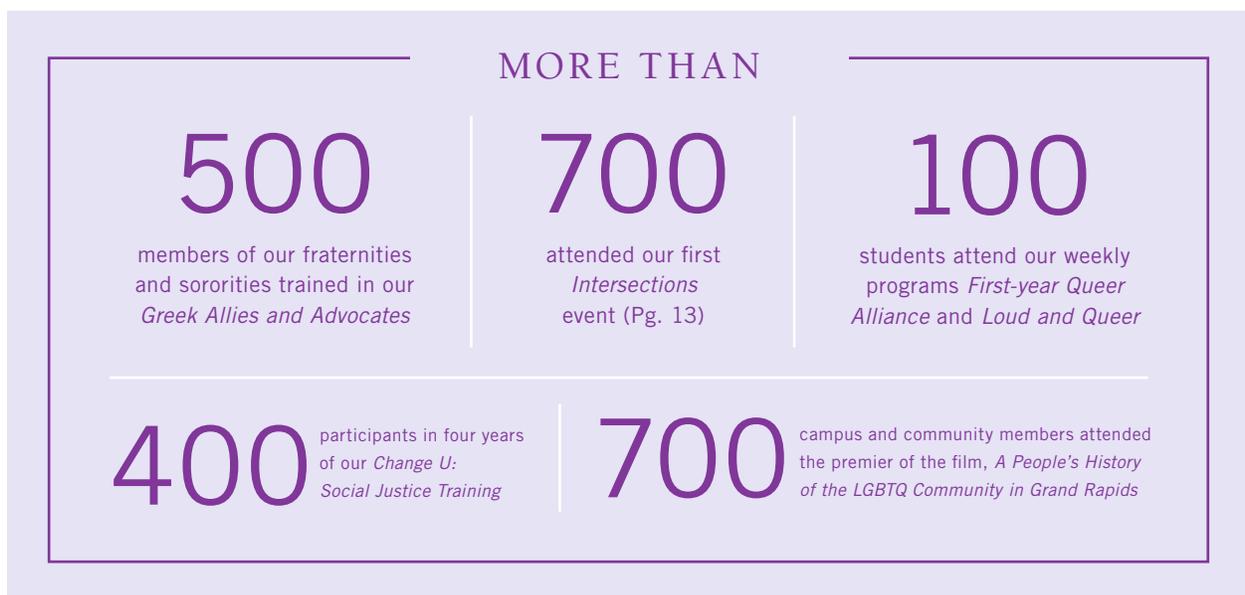
William Arthur Ward said that, 'The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.' Milt was one of those rare teachers who let students teach other students, and it is that confidence in his teaching ability that made his students learn so much and love him so much. He made all of his students feel special ... like each of us was deeply important to him. Although Milt won't be teaching anymore, his legacy will live on through his students."

Katherine Dobson
Class of 2013



Quick Facts

About the Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center



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“Grand Valley is now taking the lead in West Michigan for an understanding, acceptance, and integration of LGBT life into the community.”

Milt Ford, 2011 interview for the film
A People's History of the LGBTQ Community in Grand Rapids



Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center



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