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A look into The Center Project's community center.

the  
center  
project

# NEWS

## From the President's Pen



*Christi Kelly*  
*(she/her)*  
*President,*  
*Board of*  
*Directors*

For many years we've had big dreams of a vibrant, accessible, welcoming community center for LGBTQ+ people. Thanks to our volunteers, supporters, and donors, it's finally becoming a reality – and we couldn't be more excited to share it with you this spring!

While the house is covered in tarps and drywall dust, we've been busy growing our existing programs and resources – and starting exciting new ones, including a group for LGBTQ+ parents.

Community is so important in a world full of challenges to equity, equality and justice. Together we've made huge progress over the past few decades, and we continue to strive for a better, safer, stronger world for all.

We're so grateful to everyone who has participated in programs and events, volunteered for TCP, or supported our mission. Thank you for being part of the TCP family!

## About The Center Project

Our mission at The Center Project is to provide a safe, affirming space to learn, grow, build community, and access support and resources. Historically, our programming has focused on LGBTQ youth, families, and people living in rural areas; as we grow and expand our services and impact, we are committed to equity, justice, inclusion, and representation in our programming and leadership.



Our mission at TCP is  
to provide a safe,  
affirming space to  
learn, grow, build  
community, and access  
support & resources!

TCP is an all-volunteer community center focused on serving the needs of LGBTQIA+ people in Columbia throughout central Missouri. Located at 805 Fairview Ave. in Columbia's beautiful First Ward, we are within walking distance of the bus line, downtown, The Loop, all 3 college campuses, and local food and shelter resources.

We are proud to work in solidarity with other community organizations to make mid-Missouri better, stronger, and safer for all LGBTQIA+ people.

### Ways to support TCP and get involved!

- Email [info@thecenterproject.org](mailto:info@thecenterproject.org) to inquire about volunteer opportunities.
- Donations gratefully accepted by check, Paypal or Venmo.
- Visit [thecenterproject.org/donate](https://thecenterproject.org/donate) for a Paypal link and other details.

# A New Place to Call Home!

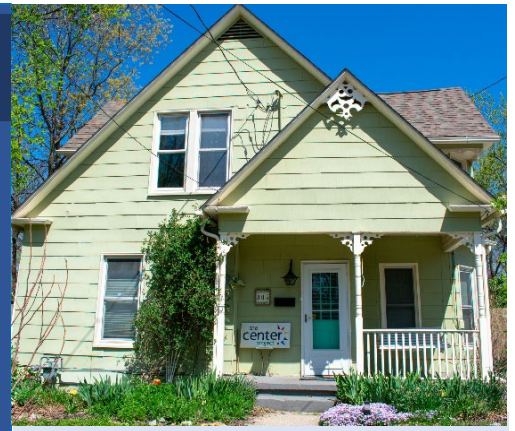
The past year brought about many changes for TCP. The largest and most transformational was the decision to make a long-awaited move towards a bigger and brighter future! To accommodate a water system project, the City of Columbia offered to purchase the land and structure that TCP previously owned on Hickman Ave. This would be the beginning of a beautiful transition for us, even if we didn't yet know in what ways. So we took the leap and began the journey toward a new home!

Fate (and really awesome people) brought us Realtor Adam Curtis, who worked tirelessly and excitedly alongside us to find the perfect space for a community center.

After a whirlwind search on a tight timeframe, we found our new home in April 2021. The beautiful, 100-year-old residential property at 805 Fairview Ave. has everything we'd hoped: a wonderful neighborhood close to downtown Columbia, versatile space for all our programs, and a welcoming feel for the community.



We've been so excited to work with Enrich Construction on this extensive project. Throughout covid set backs, the holidays and working around our programs, Enrich is on its way to making TCP beautiful and multi-functional inside and out!



## Remodeling includes:

- Creating a functional, accessible space by leveling and replacing floors, tearing down an interior wall to create a large gathering space, renovating the 1st floor bathroom and updating the electrical system.
- Full deck remodel to create accessible entrances.
- Garage renovation for a multi-use space for our youth group, Prism.
- New paint, trim, lighting, and furniture throughout.

*We'd like to extend a huge thank you to the Veterans United Foundation for their generous donation of \$77,600 in October 2021, a transformational gift that enabled TCP to grow and better serve the mid-Missouri area LGBTQIA+ community in ways only imaginable before!*



## Volunteer Spotlight

### Cameron Lee



Cameron (he/him) was born in Columbia, Mo., but lived several places growing up. He came back for college 16+ years ago and never left!

Cameron loves being around queer people and believes TCP is a great place to make a difference! He currently serves as Vice President of the Board, volunteers with the BRITE training program, and heads up our Clothing Closet and Gender Blender programs. He is also involved with the Fairview PTA where his child goes to school.

In his free time, he loves to bake, work with puzzles, and run! He has two adorable fur babies, Art and Louie, at home where he resides with his partner and kiddo.



# Program Spotlights

The Center Project is home to many wonderful programs and resources designed to meet community needs and create safe spaces for individuals to learn, grow and be together. Here are updates from a few of them:



Prism is The Center Project's LGBTQ youth group for ages 11-18 years old in the Mid-Missouri area! Prism was founded in 1998 by LGBTQ young people in Columbia to process the traumatic murder of Matthew Shepard.

Prism has continuously offered support to LGBTQ youth since its formation and has recently increased its reach. In 2019, we expanded the ages Prism serves from 13-18 years old to 11-18 years old because of younger folks in our community needing support as well. We have also seen more youth attending from outside of Columbia within recent years. We have had youth from all across the Mid-Missouri region—Kingdom City, Ashland, Centralia, Macon, Mexico, California, Fulton, Moberly, Boonville, Sedalia, and more—since we are still the only LGBTQ youth group in the area. As Prism grows, we are so grateful for all the community support. The pandemic has been really difficult for LGBTQ youth across the country due to not having access to safe spaces. However, Prism ensured some type of community connection either virtually or safely in-person throughout the entirety of the pandemic. Prism youth enjoy queer-themed arts and crafts, animal bones, witchcraft, Jackbox, Kahoot, Dungeons and Dragons, spontaneously belting out TikTok songs, anime, colorful hair creations, indie punk music, cosplay, and all the soda and snacks one's gay heart could desire. We are looking forward to a summer of joyful & and queer adventures with Prism!



Gender Blender is a community-led social / supportive space for transgender and non-binary adults (18+) to connect, have fun, and access resources. We are a welcoming, affirming, non-judgmental space to meet and socialize with other trans and non-binary adults.

Meetings are facilitated by trans and non-binary community volunteers and are casual and conversational. This is a friendly place to get connected to resources in the community. We also host larger events throughout the year based on group interests, like BBQs, outdoor activities, parties, and educational programs.

We meet 1x/month on Zoom and 1x/month in person. Zoom meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month from 6-7pm. In person meetings vary depending on activity, but are typically on the 3rd Saturday of the month!



## Parents4Parents

Parents4Parents is a group for the parents of LGBTQ kids. We invite participation from parents who celebrate their kid's identities, those who can't understand, those who are trying to understand, and those who don't know where they stand. We invite questions and open dialogue to support and celebrate our kids, increase knowledge, dispel myths, navigate the coming out journey, share concerns and celebrate joys.

The group meets twice a month – on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 6:30pm. In April, we will meet on the 12th and 26th at 6:30pm at the Unitarian Church of Columbia (2615 Shepard Blvd, 65201). For those parents who live at a greater distance from Columbia, we also hold Zoom meetings every other month. Our next Zoom meeting is May 10th at 6:30pm.

For more information, join our private Facebook group (Parents4Parents).

- We have short 15-30 minute parent leader meetings on the 1st Wednesday of every month

-Our Den meets on the 2nd and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:15, where we loosely follow an Inclusive Scout program of learning skills, offering service, and earning fun badges.

- We are currently a young crew of 6 and 7 year olds, but we do plan on going on a short camping trip in the next month or two.

- We are planning to meet during the summer.

## Pack 21

In 2019, TCP was one of the first LGBTQ centers in the country to charter a Scout Troop of 11-18 year olds. In honor of marriage equality, the Troop took number 626. During the pandemic it went dormant and is currently looking for new leaders. If you're interested in co-leading, contact Howard Hutton for more information.



**Howard Hutton**  
573-823-1868

Recently, TCP has chartered a new Cub Scout Pack (youth ages 6-11). In honor of our new home purchased in 2021 and the opening of Locust St Expressive Arts, we chose the number 21 for our Pack number. Pack 21 is always open for new Cubs and Parent Leaders. Because of ongoing construction in TCP's new home and membership drives through Locust St., we have coordinated to meet at Locust Street Expressive Arts. We will move some Den meetings to TCP when it's ready. The relationship with Locust St. Ex. Arts will continue as we will probably need access to their space for new Den growth and larger Blue and Gold Banquets.

## TCP Resources

TCP's Clothing Closet is a safe, comfortable, gender affirming space for LGBTQ people in need to find affordable and stylish clothing, accessories, and transition related items. Transgender people in particular face disparities in terms of access to housing and employment opportunities, leading to income inequality, often making gender affirming and transition specific clothing inaccessible. We also know that transgender people often face violence, harassment, and discrimination, and shopping for gender affirming clothing can be scary and unsafe, particularly for people who don't meet society's binary gender stereotypes.

All of our clothing (and shoes and accessories) are provided by community donations and offered to the community free of charge. We can help provide expensive transition related garments, like binders and undergarments, and can help with sizing, fit, and styling. We offer a range of styles and sizes and types of clothing, including professional / work clothing. Donations are typically accepted at TCP on Sundays from 3-5p. Please contact us for an appointment to go shopping anytime! Open hours coming soon.



Email

[tcpclothingcloset@thecenterproject.org](mailto:tcpclothingcloset@thecenterproject.org)

to donate or make an appointment!

**BRITE** (Building Respect and Inclusion Through Training and Education) is our inclusivity training program. It is intended for workplaces, organizations, and other groups who want to ensure their work and spaces are welcoming to and affirming of the LGBTQ community. Since August of 2020, we have offered training to nearly 2,000 people in diverse roles including, parents, educators, healthcare providers, members of faith organizations, social service providers, and other business professionals.

We'd love to work with you! If you're interested in learning more about a BRITE training for your organization, complete our request form here:

<http://thecenterproject.com.org/education>



**When you attend a BRITE training, you can expect:**

- To have your assumptions about sex and gender compassionately challenged
- To learn from facilitators who have first-hand experiences with the content
- Opportunities for meaningful interaction with your facilitator(s) and other attendees
- Actionable content tailored to your group's needs
- To build the foundation for an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship with The Center Project

## Trans Affirming Provider List

This list of trans / gender-affirming healthcare providers is a community effort and will continue to evolve in response to feedback and recommendations.

The providers on this list were recommended by:

- Trans and non-binary members of our community
- Parents of trans or non-binary youth in our community
- Healthcare providers who had been recommended by community members

Find the list at [thecenterproject.org/gender-affirming-provider-list/](https://thecenterproject.org/gender-affirming-provider-list/).

At this time, we are not accepting self referrals to the provider list. Healthcare providers are welcome to email us to share trusted recommendations at

## Library

Since we first opened our doors, TCP has proudly housed a tremendous library of books donated by the local community. Our fiction and non-fiction books span a wide array of subjects, issues, and communities, including important classical and historical queer texts.

Our Library is currently closed during construction. Follow us on Facebook for updates!

We're working with local bookstores to develop Wish Lists of new and essential texts from ground-breaking LGBTQ+ authors and thinkers. If you'd like to support us by donating books or funds, please reach out anytime to [info@thecenterproject.org](mailto:info@thecenterproject.org).



We were so honored and excited to host the Trans Youth Town Hall on April 2! Sponsored by a grant from Logo TV, the Town Hall celebrated trans youth and explored the issues they face today. TCP was one of only 10 organizations nationwide to win this grant to host a Trans Youth Town Hall!

More than 60 community members watched a virtual panel and then participated in small-group discussions. We heard from local trans youth about the issues they face in school and in the world every day.

Young trans people shared these powerful words at the event:

“People say it’s a phase... but if it was a phase, why would we be so passionate about being ourselves and liking who we like and being who we want to be?”

“People need to listen and let trans people lead.”

“It’s important for older generations to do your part to support us in finding ourselves.”

“In schools, it’s only getting better for trans kids whose parents support them.”

“The easiest way to bridge the gap is literally to talk. Talk about how people identify. Talk about how this isn’t rare. I know a ton of trans people at my school, and we never talk about it except at GSA.”

Thanks to everyone for being there, and big thanks to Logo TV for making it possible! Check out our [Town Hall Facebook post](#) for quotes from the youth and more photos and details!



- We're so excited for our first-ever **Rainbow Ride**, a fun, inclusive cycling event for all ages, experience levels and abilities! Join us June 11 in Peace Park for food, fun, and a 10-mile ride benefiting TCP (or just hang out and have a picnic!). Check out the [Rainbow Ride Facebook event](#) for details, or visit the [sign-up form](#) to volunteer.
- **Mid-MO Pridefest** is moving to September 24-25 this year! Mark your calendar for a full weekend of exciting events ... including a parade!
- We recently launched the **Rainbow Family Alliance**, a group for queer parents and their families! We're currently planning park meet-ups and other fun gatherings until the Fairview house is ready. Email [christi.kelly@thecenterproject.org](mailto:christi.kelly@thecenterproject.org) to join or learn more.
- **The Clothing Closet** has been on hiatus, as we wrap up construction in the Closet space. We're excited for move-in day on May 7 from 2-5 p.m.! If you're interested in donating clothes or volunteering your time, email us at [tcpclothingcloset@thecenterproject.org](mailto:tcpclothingcloset@thecenterproject.org).
- Interested in learning more about our long-term goals and plans? The **TCP 3-Year Strategic Plan** is now available online!

## 2022 TCP Board of Directors



Christi Kelly (she/her)  
President



Cameron Lee  
(he/him)



Janette Hanna (she/they)  
Secretary



Dion Wisniewski (he/him)  
Past President



Kerri Schafer  
(She/her)  
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Steven DeVore  
(he/him)  
PrideFest



Amanda Jacobs  
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Development &  
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Howard Hutton  
(he/they)  
Scouts



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Facilities Coordinator  
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Administrator



Anthony Lehman  
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## Stay In Touch!



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