



## **Coalition of Rainbow Alliances Monthly Meeting , December 8, 2024**

### **Members Present (Zoom)**

Brian Sylvester President	Brendan Brown (AgeLinc)
Lisa Cotton, Vice President	Bert Morton
Sheila Morris Treasurer	Lee Korty
Lori Carlsen Secretary (zoom)	Candice Clotfelter
Jim Barr, Ex-officio	Christina Newton
Shelley Vaughn (board member)	Nyah (PCASA)
Mike Johnson	Harry Carlsen
Sam Downs	Rex Schadow

Meeting called to order at 4:01 pm

Approval of minutes from November 10,2024 Jim made a motion to accept the minutes, Rex seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Treasurers Report-** Sheila provided printed reports and gave a verbal report. Lee asked about the Mexican Scholarship Fund, there was some confusion regarding pledge amount verbiage on printed Treasurer report. Lee and Sheila discussed that it isn't a pledge that funds were donated, both came to an understanding. The issue was resolved. Lisa made a motion to accept and file for audit, Rex seconded. Motion carried.

### **Committee Reports**

**Membership-** Brian reported that we have received one new volunteer form this past month.

**Social Media-** Brian reported the Facebook group has 14 new members bringing the total to 892 members. There were 47 posts viewed by 578 members. The most popular posts were the retirement announcement of Cooley with

340, the protect trans-children announcement with 334, and World AIDs Day with 324.

The Facebook page has 17 new members bringing the total to 953. There were 34 posts viewed by 1,600 members and 346 visits. The most popular posts were the help line phone numbers after the election with 507, the retirement of Cooley announcement at 334, and how to help trans folk slide with 198.

The website had 475 visits, an increase of 108% and post views of 347, an increase of 426%. The most popular traffic source was Facebook with 250 with direct entry at 109. Average session time frame was 6 minutes. Some design features for the website have been changed in November and the page devoted for the Ritz was also updated for 2025. Brian will be deleting last year's sponsors this month in preparation for the 2025 sponsors to be added.

**Activities**- Lisa reported she is working on an event in January or February. Possibly wood burning, stained glass, something crafty. She is looking for feedback. Lisa will be meeting with officer Beal from the Springfield Police Department for future involvements.

**Finance**- Sheila reported the finance committee has not met. Will postpone until after the first of the year.

**Partners & Supporters**- Brian reported Violetta Soria, of Maribus Chicago, reached out to CORAL to inquire if we would be willing to accept donations in any other form other than financial, such as food drives and/or coat drives. She also requested a history of CORAL. Brian will be sending her the history information material but wanted to check with the members on how this might look if we were to accept any other forms of donations in the future.

United O&A is planning a presentation for January 18th on Non-Violent Direct Action training. The options are:

Kingian Nonviolence Proposal for Springfield IL

2 Hour Nonviolence orientation During the orientation course, an overview of Dr. King's philosophy and methodology of nonviolence is given within two hours. The orientation is designed to heighten the awareness of Dr. King's approaches to nonviolent social change and how it was used to bring about change. During this 2-hour orientation we will discuss a few different modules, Types; Levels of conflict, Myths; Facts about nonviolence. We will also briefly touch on the Six

Principals of Kingian Nonviolence, Six Steps of Nonviolence and what 6 Stake holders are needed to bring about change within community. After the orientation workshop, participants now have enough information to decide if they want to continue.

Cost: \$350.00 for 1 Certified Kingian Nonviolence trainer with a maximum of 50 participants

1 Day Nonviolence workshop The Kingian Nonviolence philosophy provides the foundation for adult leaders to develop an understanding of the principles and methodology of Kingian Nonviolence and its universal application. Modules covered, Values Exercise, Violence is, Myths & Facts, 4 Types of conflict, 3 Levels of conflict, Six Principles & Six Steps of Kingian nonviolence, Top down/Bottom up theory, Framing the issue, 6 Stake holders needed to bring about change and The Pilgrimage to nonviolence. We will also talk about Ferguson how the nonviolence philosophy was applied. All training is supplemented by selected readings, videos, experimental learning activities and role play.

Cost: \$800.00 for 1 Certified Kingian Nonviolence trainer with a maximum of 50 participants.

They are leaning towards the all-day training and are requesting a sponsorship of \$400.00 for the event. Brian feels this is coming at a good time for the LGBTQ community as the next four years may hold many opportunities when we may need to demonstrate our presence and be able to do so in a fashion that gets the message across without being confrontational. Jim made a motion to provide \$400.00 to the training. Lee and Lisa disagreed stating it should be a lesser amount. Lee made a motion to provide O&A with \$200.00 towards the training, Candice seconded. Motion carried.

**Ritz Committee-** Lori reported the committee met today. She stated we currently have 3 Presenting Sponsors, 4 Bronze Sponsors, Giganti & Giganti are a 2-page advertisement again this year, Decatur Area Audubon is a Business Card ad. Brian stated that Gracie Tierney is on board as our photographer. Lisa, Lori, David and Mike will be meeting with Audrey at Pole Barn Chic to discuss decorations. Lori stated she and Bert will be going to KNR awards to give Cindy the names of award recipients. Names are not being announced right now. Lori stated that we will be giving a gift to each attendee at the Ritz. Lee stated that they have spoken to several businesses that plan on advertising again this year.

Lisa made the motion to accept committee reports, Rex seconded. Motion carried.

### **Old Business/Event Wrap-Ups:**

**Transgender Day of Remembrance, Phoenix Center-** Was held on 11/20/24. Brian was one of the presenters of names of those trans-individuals who died in 2024 at the Phoenix Center on November 20th. As always, the event is a somber one and there was a good turnout that evening. Brian, Rex and Candice attended.

**Thanksgiving Dinner-** was held on 11/23/24. Brian thought this year's event was one of the smoothest run we've had in many years. Again, we had more than enough food for everyone even though we had a much better turn out for the dinner than last year's. We saw new and old faces there that evening, which was wonderful to see. Brian also thanked Roz for the idea of changing the format of the presentation to during dinner as opposed to before dinner as it went over very well with everyone. Lee stated we need to advertise next year. Rex said there were so many pies but no cool whip. Lee made the motion that Rex will be in charge of bringing the cool whip next year, Lisa seconded. Motion carried.

**World Aids Day, 5<sup>th</sup> Street/ SARA Center-** Brian reported that a few members of CORAL joined Fifth Street/SARA Center for a small gathering at the AIDs Memorial Labyrinth on 12/01/24 from 3:30 to 7:30. While it was darn cold that afternoon, they attempted to warm everyone with a tent and space heaters which was a good idea.

**O&A United, Church of the Brethren-** Brian reported that United O&A met on 12/4/24 to discuss possible necessities for the LGBTQ community resulting from the election outcome. Some of those topics were marriage, powers of attorney, revocable trusts, and living wills. There was some discussion towards the end of the evening about CORAL also providing some additional information in the future for assistance to the trans-community with name and gender marker changes as well as legal representatives providing advice on next steps as well.

**Acorn Equality Fund Breakfast-** Brian stated that several members of CORAL made the trip to Peoria's Pere Marquette Hotel on 12/01/24 for Acorn Equality's annual breakfast at 9:00 a.m. Brian wanted to make sure that everyone knew that CORAL was recognized this year for their support of Acorn. Lee stated Acorn raised \$56,347.00. They have limited applications. Rex stated he would like to get the names of the Korty/ Morton scholarship award winners and invite them to the Ritz.

**Jaycees Holiday of Lights Parade-** was held on 12/7/24 seven members of CORAL braved the hordes of children waiting for candy as they strolled the downtown streets of Springfield in multicolored lights in the Jaycee's annual Parade of Lights. There were over 41 entries in this year's parade but the Jaycee's did a fabulous job of keeping the night moving and Santa made his way down the road before the hour was up.

**Holiday Meals-** April stated she was told that both days went well, she was unable to attend as she had COVID. She said others jumped in greatly.

**Logan County Pride Safe Zone Training-** Brian and Lisa attended Logan County Pride's presentation of Safe Zone Training on 11/14/24. The training was created as a project of love by two individuals who work in the field in 2013 as a free online resource for those doing LGBTQ awareness and ally trainings. The training involves such things as initial learnings of LGBTQ, vocabulary, do's and don'ts, and various scenarios for playing. Tristan and Kelci of Logan County Pride did a wonderful job as the coordinators for the evening.

**City of Springfield Holiday Planter-** Brian, Bert, and Lee decorated one of the downtown planters for the City of Springfield holiday competition. The CORAL planter is located at the corner of Washington and 6th street. While CORAL may not have won anything, it was well done and received several compliments while we decorated.

**Brothers and Sisters Together Holiday Dinner-** Lisa stated it will be held at Mario's in Chatham on Saturday 12/14/24 at 6pm. She says they may have 2 spots open for anyone that would like to attend. Bring a \$20.00 gift if you wish to participate in the gift exchange. Meals will approximately cost \$30.00 per person.

**SIU/Pritzker Study Updates-** Brian reported that the material for the ads and preliminary study have been chosen by the committee and are currently being finalized by the coordinators. We will not be meeting in December though and our next meeting will be towards the end of January.

### **New Business**

**AgeLinc/Fifth Steet/CORAL Partnership Idea-** Brian reported that several months ago, he reported to the executive board that there had been some interest in CORAL possibly getting involved with safer sex harm reduction services. At that time, he met with IPHA and AgeLinc to discuss how this might look and what might need to be done before such services could be offered. However, Brian had

reservations in this idea as he did not believe that CORAL had the staff nor expertise to take on such a challenge.

He decided to bring 5th Street/SARA Center into the discussion at that time to see if this could be better served with them as an addition to the idea. There have been several meetings between all the parties and it appears that a preliminary plan may be in place for this to happen sometime in the future. At this point, CORAL is being asked to assist with this project by possibly providing coordinators for the HIV support groups but more may be coming as the details are ironed out. Brian will keep everyone abreast of where we are on this.

**Phoenix Center Discussion-** Brian stated that there have been many rumors going around about what is happening at the Phoenix Center in the past several months, which he has heard as well. The issue has become “the elephant in the room” in many conversations so far. Because of this, he believed the time had come to discuss what he knew about the situation based on what he had heard from what is believed to be credible sources as opposed to what might be considered gossip.

Several months ago, Brian was involved with a conversation with IPHA about an opportunity involving grants. During that discussion, Brian pointed out to the representative that though he was flattered by this, CORAL felt that the Phoenix Center was already offering the services these grants applied to and that we would not want to compete against them. He was told at that point that IPHA would not be providing anymore grants to the Phoenix Center in 2025 as they were under investigation for data reporting fraud and all current grants had been frozen until the investigation was finalized. The representative also stated that they would prefer to work with another organization instead of the Phoenix Center.

At that time, Brian chose to keep this information to himself. A month later, Brian was having another conversation with someone who was working with IDPH and they were asked if they were working with the Phoenix Center. As the answer was negative, the IDPH representatives also stated that an investigation had taken place for data reporting fraud. However, they elaborated further. They stated that preliminary findings of the investigation had been blamed on the actions of a terminated employee who had worked for the Phoenix Center for approximately four years. That employee, when questioned, stated that they had been trained

to submit the data in that fashion. So IDPH extended their investigation back to 2015, long before this employee had been hired. The results showed the same activity was taking place at that time as well, long before the blamed employee was present. The representatives also stated that it was believed that Jonna Cooley was directly involved with the fraudulent activity and that it had been reported towards the Federal grants for investigation too.

It was at the next CORAL board meeting that Brian called executive session at the end of the meeting and shared this information with the executive board but stated that it was not for public consumption.

On November 13th , Brian received a text from Jonna Cooley requesting that he be one of the speakers for Phoenix Center's Trans Day of Remembrance event. Brian agreed and stated that he hoped to see her there to discuss collaborative activities for the future. However, the weekend after this, someone informed him that he might notice someone absent from the event after all. On November 20th, Brian did notice that Cooley was not present that evening. During a later conversation with a representative of the Center, Brian was told that Cooley and Director of Operations, Duane Williams, had been asked to step down by the Phoenix Center board and were banned from the premises.

As many know at this point, Cooley posted on social media on November 22nd that she was retiring from her position at the Center due to health reasons and the SJR posted an article about the separation on November 26th. In that same article, a representative from the Center stated that the board was having an emergency meeting on December 1st to discuss the situation but nothing more has been stated at this time.

Brian went on to say that his reason for bringing this all out in the open is because it has become apparent that our community and the Center may be needing CORAL's assistance in the days to come. Brian is hopeful that the Center's board opts to be transparent about the incident in the future and told everyone to be careful with what they are hearing and make sure to confirm their sources before sharing it further.

**Illinois Eagle Fund Request** - Rex made a motion to donate \$200.00 to the Illinois Eagle, Jim seconded. There were 3 nays, motion carried.

**Christmas Holiday Meals**- April stated they will be doing cold prep on 12/23/24 at 6pm at Chatham United Methodist Church. On 12/25/24 those who will be helping pack meals need to be there by 9:15am, Those delivering meals 9:30, Hot food and packing will be done at 9:45, meals will go out for delivery at 10:30am. Drivers are needed. Mike, Rex, Candice and Christina volunteered.

**MLK Breakfast**- Brian stated that CORAL will be sharing a table with Fifth Street. Lee stated that tickets should have been offered to CORAL members first. CORAL will be purchasing another table for the event. Brian has a list of CORAL members that would like to attend. Those individuals who confirmed they would be attending are: Brian, Lisa, Roz, Linda, Jenna, April, Rex, Mike, Candice, Lori, and Shelley. Tickets are \$40.00 each.

Lisa made a motion to adjourn, Rex seconded, Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.