Washington State Employees'
RAIN
LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group
PRIDE2022

SUBCOMMITTEE

Updates

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Co-Chairs: Justin Taylor (he/him), L&I and Caleb Baldwin (he/him), ESD

As pride inches closer, we're busy in C&O putting together a fantastic slate of panel speakers for June, and the rest of the year. We're also gearing up our RAIN speakers to provide our 15 minute 'Intro to RAIN' presentation to agencies.

On our website, you'll find RAIN promotional materials our committee has worked on; including a new digital sign that agencies can use if they have a signage system. If you're interested in getting involved in outreach opportunities or have an interest in producing communication products, join us at our next committee break-out meeting!

BEST PRACTICES

Co-Chairs: Ariel Kay (she/he), ESD and Haley Roady (she/her), UW

Best Practices has been working on a few projects the past few months.

These include Transitioning in the Workplace guides for employees, managers, HR, and coworkers; Expanding the Definition of Family in Washington State project; finalizing and sharing the FAQ for Pronouns in the Signature document; and providing regular feedback to agencies including the Puget Sound Partnership, Washington State Department of

Download the Pride Month Toolkit

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TRAINING

Co-Chairs: Jasper Marino (they/them), ESD and Marika Barto (she/her), OMWBE

The RAIN Training Group is excited to be moving forward with its training plan. In March 2022, the 'Importance of Pronouns' and 'Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Customers' trainings were piloted with Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) and the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). Based on the feedback provided from the attendees, we officially rolled out our training to the enterprise in April.

We are using Eventbrite as our scheduling platform and hope to be able to transition over to The Learning Center this year. We provided two trainings in April with approximately 30 attendees for each session. We still have room in our May, June and July sessions and enrollment information can be found here.

We are currently in the process of creating one more training (American History: The LGBTQ Experience) and starting our internal Train the Trainer (TTT) group to offer opportunities for folks at all levels of experience in facilitation, the chance to become co-facilitators for the RAIN trainings.

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RAIN Pride

SAVE THE DATES!

RAIN will be posting all event times as they become available. Be sure to keep checking our website for the most current information.

Download the Pride Month Toolkit

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

JUNE 1 — **RAIN Pride Month Special Edition featuring:** Pride Month Toolkit and Pride Month Proclamation (Email)

JUNE 4 — **Join RAIN at Capital City Pride** (In-Person Event)

TBD — **Flag Raising Ceremony at the Capital** (In-Person Event/Streamed)

JUNE 14 — **DEI Summit – ANHPI Panel on Intersectionality** (Virtual)

JUNE 16 — **RAIN Pride Month Special Panel** A conversation with LGBTQ+ leaders in state government (Virtual)

JUNE 28 — **DEI Summit – Allyship Panel: Transforming our Future Together** (Virtual)

JUNE 30 — **LLN and RAIN – Special Pride month panel on Intersectionality** (Virtual)

JULY 9 — **Join RAIN at Tacoma Pride Festival** (In-Person Event)

2022 STATEWIDE

Pride Events

by Saundra Schaefer (she/her, he/him), DRS

We're coming back out!

After two long, challenging years of COVID, we are ready for joy. Our community is making big preparations to gather, reconnect, and celebrate. We're ready to hit the streets, together as one, expressing our full authentic selves and holding our banners high.

If you are ready and rearing to join the crowd, save the dates! Here are just a few of the scheduled events across Washington:

Capital City Pride
- Parade Date: Saturday, **June 4** (Time TBA)
- Location: TBA

Spokane Pride
- Parade Date: Saturday, **June 11** from 11:00 AM through 11:00 PM
- Location: Spokane Riverfront Park

Wenatchee Pride Festival
- Festival Date: Saturday, **June 18** from 11:00 AM through 7:00 PM
- Location: Wenatchee Memorial Park

Yakima Pride Parade
- Parade Date: Saturday, **June 18** Starting at 10:00 AM
- Location: Along Yakima Ave, between 16th and Naches

Seattle Gay Pride
- Festival Dates: Monday, **June 20** through Sunday, **June 26**
- Parade Date: Sunday, **June 26** from 11:00 AM through 1:30 PM
- Location: Begins at the corner of Union Street and 4th Avenue

Tacoma Pride Festival
- Festival Date: Saturday, **July 9** (Time TBA)
- Location: TBA

Remember to bring plenty of sunblock, hand sanitizer, water and take rest breaks when you need them.

LETTING OUR

Pride Flag(s) Fly

by Marianne Ozmun-Wells (she/her, they/them), DSHS

The DSHS Economic Services Administration (ESA) began flying pride flags over our offices in 2019. The folks responsible for coordinating, procuring, and hoisting rainbow banners for 64 offices quickly became amateur vexillologists (scholars in the study of flags).

We have learned so much about flag etiquette, like how no flag can be above the United States flag on a flagpole and no more than three flags shall fly from any one flagpole. Nowhere was this issue more prevalent than when we made the decision to lower the Prisoners of War and Missing in Action flag, temporarily, to raise the rainbow banner.

The POW/MIA flag must fly on 10 specific days throughout the year. In ESA, we left it up all year long, until we began making room for the pride flag. In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that our offices were sparsely populated. Still, we decided to fly the pride banners for half of the month of June and to do scaled down flag raising events.

We held a very small, brief ceremony in 2021 and it was during that ceremony that I walked, for the first time, with a colleague whose father was Missing in Action (MIA) in Asia for more than 40 years before the military was able to confirm that he gave his life in service to his fellows.

The blustery, misty moment was somber as the symbol of my colleague's family sacrifice was lowered to make room for the rainbow flag.

I asked her how she felt seeing "her father's" flag come down and "mine" go up. She said, "There is time and room for both of us."

In that same spirit of inclusion, ESA will embark on the busiest June for flagpoles ever, and one that will set the precedent for all Junes to follow.

In observance of the first year since Juneteenth became a federal holiday, ESA procured Juneteenth flags to raise above our facilities. We have created a calendar for all of our facilities personnel so that all three flags, POW/MIA, Juneteenth, and Pride are visible in June.

- The POW/MIA flag will come down after Memorial Day.
- From the last working day in May until the last working day before June 14 (Flag Day), the pride flag will fly.
- From the last working day before Flag Day, the POW/MIA will fly.
- From the first working day after Flag Day until the last working day before July 4, the Juneteenth flag is flown
- From the first working day after the end of June and before July 4th, the POW/MIA flag goes back up.

It is more complicated than what we are accustomed to, it makes a bit more work for our grounds and facilities staff, but to be honest, it probably results in more notice paid to ALL of the flags including Old Glory and the Washington State flag.

So this June, in honor of Pride Month, and in celebration of those who fought for civil rights long before and alongside the LGBTQ+ family and in honor of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms, let us all remember that there is time and room for all of us.

Happy Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Independence Day! Thank you to those who have served and thank you to the families of those who lost their lives in service. Happy Juneteenth to our Black colleagues, friends and family. Your day, and the symbol honoring that day, are long overdue. To the LGBTQ+ community, our families, friends, and allies, Happy Pride! Let's all let our pride flags fly!

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Washington State Department of Enterprise Services

A CONVERSATION WITH

Tara Smith

by Masozi Nyirenda (she/her), DES

I initially came to the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) because of their DEI and anti-racism stance. Then Tara Smith, the new Director, recently appointed me her Chief of Staff. I was excited and honored because I know she possesses the passion, experience and leadership to help make real changes.

Here is a conversation she shared with me about her background, influences and goals...

You are originally from Miami, Florida. What brought you to Washington State?

Actually, I am originally from Sarasota, FL. Sarasota is on the west coast of the state and my entire family still lives there. I moved to Miami when I was 18 right after high school graduation, and lived there for 30 years. I loved Miami because I felt so much more comfortable being myself there and I blended in better. In Sarasota I always stuck out like a sore thumb!

I feel so grateful to my Miami community for helping me grow into the adult that I am today. I was able to build a good career, friendships, and network of support in so many ways. But somehow, in that deep place of inner knowing, I always felt that I would leave Florida one day and change my life completely. Eventually...slowly...I began to realize that I was growing weary of the excessive energy that surrounds anything and everything in Miami.

So I began seeking other places where I may want to live - We arrived in Puyallup on August 20, 2021 after seven days of driving 8 hours a day across the country. With 3 cats. And this is the point where I have to clarify that my partner actually did ALL the driving while I held down the cats, LOL. We drove up to the house, sight unseen, with Chris Stapleton's Starting Over album playing, and broke into tears together because the house was perfect and we felt so much gratitude to be here.

During your hiring process, what did the State do correctly and what areas need improvement?

I was really impressed with the State's recruitment process overall. It was pretty rigorous – which is what I would expect for a position that holds this much responsibility. I counted a total of eight different interviews overall, including the Governor and key stakeholders at different points.

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It would have been nice if the process went faster, as there were long periods without feedback or progress, but it all worked out in the end and I'm very humbled to bear the responsibility for shepherding this special state agency and all of our 800 employees.

What do you enjoy most about the work you are doing for the state/DES?

The people, hands down. Not because I'm an extrovert – I am fitting in nicely with the rest of Washington's introverts actually! But I so enjoy leading people in a way that helps them grow and develop, feel heard and valued, and feel proud to contribute to the community that we live in.

I am a public servant at heart, and chose the field of Public Administration intentionally because I love the idea of giving back to my community. To this day, I remember and utilize different aspects of my master's degree courses.

The combination of meaningful work that allows me to lead people in a servant manner is my jam!

What role or stance (if any), do you or will you take when it comes to bettering and improving opportunities for the LGBTQ+ community in state government?

I'd love to know more about how I can do just that. As a start, I am deeply committed to creating a safe environment for DES employees to be themselves at work. I am so excited to be working alongside the agency's first Chief Equity Officer who will help move that work forward to create a workplace that welcomes all people, including LGBTQ+, where all employees have opportunities for growth and leadership.

I'm so profoundly saddened to see what has developed in my home state following the recent "Don't Say Gay" legislation that so blatantly paints the LGBTQ+ community as predators. I am so relieved to be in a state where that is not presently happening at a legislative level, and promise to speak up if that ever becomes our reality here in Washington.

I hope that RAIN will allow me to remain involved in providing leadership to the work that is already being done across the state, and keep me involved in ideas and projects where DES can provide support.

What can we do as state employees to make our workplaces more inclusive and welcoming for marginalized groups?

Speak up. When you're a bystander and you hear subtle or obvious discrimination, it's our responsibility to do something. It doesn't always have to be right there in the moment in front of everyone, but reporting it is the right thing to do. I recommend reporting it to HR, who has a role and duty to protect you in your reporting. I was so moved by the recent words of Michigan Senator Malory McMorrow when she said, "Hate wins when people like me stand by and let it happen. I won't."

Use visual cues. I recently learned from an employee how impactful it was to see signs of acceptance and safety in the workplace through the display of pride flags or other messages.

Be yourself. I know that is easier said than done, especially in some places more than others. It takes courage, especially when you don't feel safe to do so. But, the more you choose to be yourself, the more others around you realize that they can, too. Don't be afraid to reach out to your agency leadership if you don't feel safe to be yourself at work, or the Office of Equity.

Any words of wisdom you can share?

Find your allies in leadership, those who will work to create a safe place for you. If you're lucky, they will be in your own agency and will be willing to escalate any concerns you have to the uppermost levels. You may be surprised that your managers and leaders really do care about this. And if they don't, go up the chain. Seek allies in leadership, even if they are in other agencies.

I, Tara C. Smith, will be your trusted ally if you need one.

(Edited for space - read full conversation here)

SUMH Times

Articles related to substance use and mental health in our communities, because we all need a little support sometimes.

PRIDE 2022

Sober Curious?

by Marianne Ozmun-Wells (she/her, they/them), DSHS

There is a new alcohol-free movement gaining traction in the U.S. among some who recognize that alcohol does not add all that much value to their individual lives. In fact, for many, it is a threat to quality of life and for the LGBTQ+ community, the threat is more foreboding.

Some estimates show that members of the LGBTQ+ community are three times more likely to develop substance use disorders than their straight/cis peers. Recent studies show that while the Covid-19 pandemic caused an uptick in alcohol abuse for all populations, it hit the queer and trans community particularly hard.

When we consider that for most of the 20th and 21st centuries, our only safe places of assembly were bars, pubs, and nightclubs, combined with the threat of being ostracized by family, faith, and society, it is little wonder that we sought solace in shots and schnapps.

For some, the sober curious movement is simply about health and wellness. It has become increasingly difficult for many in our communities who commit to healthy and ethical eating to reconcile how alcohol fits in. Recent research concluded that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption-zero. Many among us, who have sworn off animal products, food additives, and non-sustainable dietary practices, have begun to examine the human and environmental impacts of the alcohol industry.

If we also consider that when the alcohol industry saw disenfranchised queer and trans people, they saw dollar signs. It is not surprising that some within the community are fed up with being exploited by an industry that causes us harm. The use of the rainbow for marketing purposes is called “rainbow washing” and few industries do it better than big alcohol. Just think about the number of pride events with alcohol as primary sponsors.

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The sober curious movement does not require the admission of any kind of problem; it is not necessarily for those with alcohol use disorders; it is for people who wonder if their lives might be better without the accompaniment of alcohol.

A number of bars in larger metropolitan areas are increasing their emphasis on "mocktails," fancy mixed drinks sans the spirits. Others, Like Molly's Dry Bar and Bottle Shop, are banning booze altogether, opting instead for ambiance and sophisticated adult beverages. They are making it clear we can connect, socialize and have fun without the "liquid courage" that liquor ads suggest we need and they offer.

So, whether you are thinking of cutting back or want to go zero proof entirely, there are plenty of others in the LGBTQ+ community who are likeminded, clearheaded, and all about being able to remember the night before on the morning after.

If you are a social drinker who is sober curious, this link has plenty of information. If you have a hard time moderating your drinking or think you might have a drinking problem, WebMD might be useful in helping you to know for sure. If you need help to address your alcohol use, talk to your primary care doctor or click here for more information.

Next time in SUMH Times...

Find out a role that an influential lesbian played in the recovery movement.

All content in the RAIN newsletter is strictly informational and should not be considered medical advice.

RAIN MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT

Jasper Marino

(they/them)

by Justin Taylor (he/him), L&I

How long have you been a Washington state employee and what do you do?

I've been with Washington State for about four and a half years, my current title is Employee Experience Manager, with the ESD Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I do a lot of stuff around employee engagement, review employee engagement data, projects like our mentorship program, and different projects to increase those scores. I also support our agency employee resource groups.

How long have you been involved with RAIN and what interested you initially?

I've been with RAIN for as long as I've been with the state, so four and a half years. I joined for a couple reasons; I was looking for community and also, I was really interested in the stuff Best Practices was working on. At the time they were drafting a survey to send out and that really interested me. And some encouragement from Cassie and you, Justin [laughs].

Why do you think RAIN is important to LGBTQIA+ employees?

Oh, so much – some of the ones that pop to mind are community, growth, and learning; being able to do work that actually changes culture across state agencies. For me, being a trans person, I don't really get to regularly work with other trans people; so getting to go to RAIN and be around other people who are out and trans, and have that same lived experience. So that community piece is really important to me. I also think hearing from all the folks that go to RAIN, (hearing) their stories and the different speakers we bring in. I feel like I've grown so much, just from showing up to the meetings and on top of that, I've had ample opportunity to build skills too. I never have done trainings or facilitated trainings, and now it's something I do all the time. I saw a gap where people wanted trainings and said, "I can do this and figure it out".

What's your community like? Family, friends, who YOU consider your community!

I really love this question. I think here in Olympia I have a really wonderful community that I consider to be my chosen family. We call ourselves "the Fruit Loops" [laughs]. It's mostly because of the cereal to be honest with you. Each person in this group that I call family are just the kindest, most thoughtful, wonderful human beings ever. It was just chance that we met them and it worked out. We get together every Friday evening to end our week together and just have snacks, and kind of talk about our week. We do a

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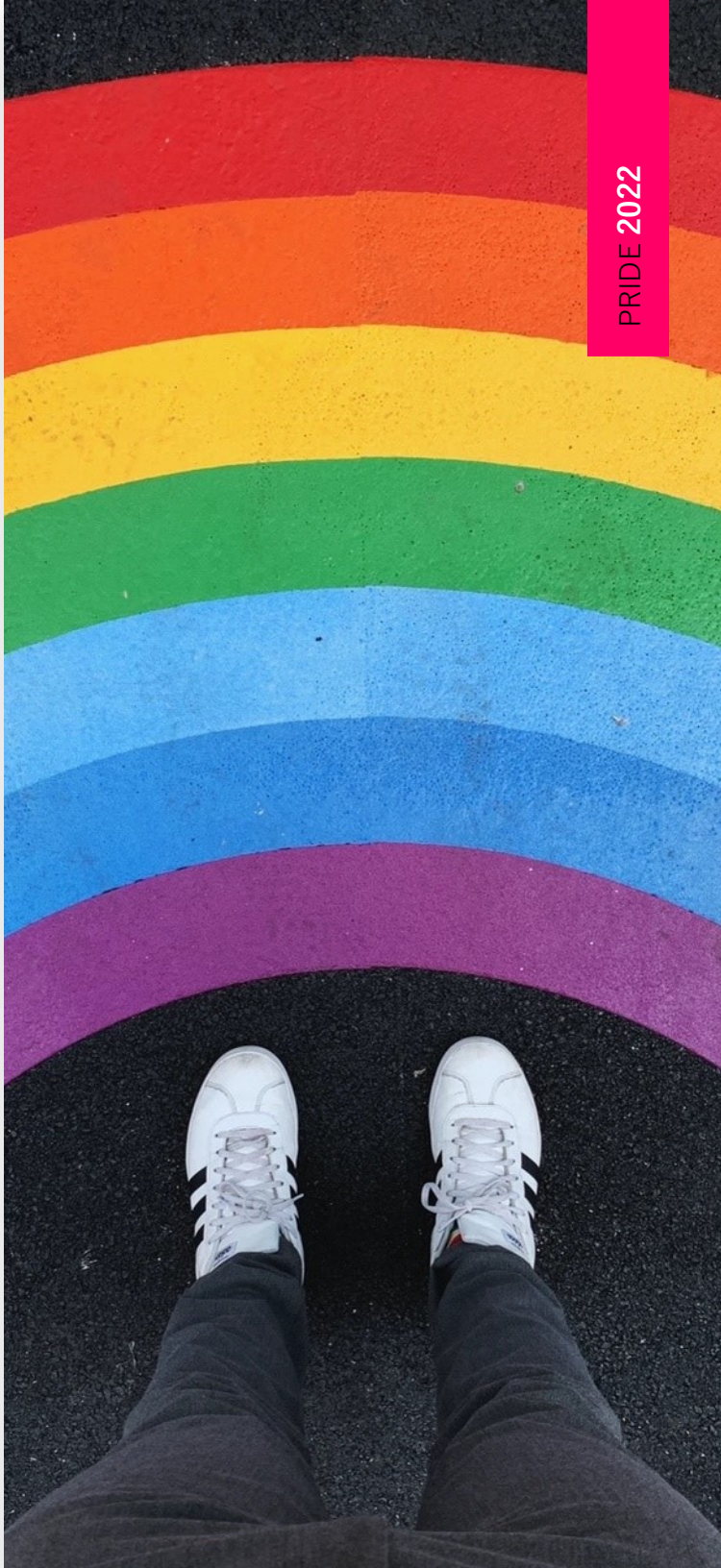

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lot together; we do family dinners, go on vacation together, support each other, and show up when someone needs something. It's just [pause] a wonderful, weirdo family you know? I feel very lucky to have found that community because I have lived in a lot of states and this is the first place that I could say that I can feel that community; that support, that structure, and that kindness of being around people that understand and see you.

What are your hobbies?

Mostly I love being outside – so hiking, hammocking, snowshoeing, camping, kayaking – if it's outside, I'm there. I also do powerlifting, which is an interesting one. I have my first competition this June and it's a LGBTQ specific competition, which is super exciting. I like building things, making moss walls, gardening, cooking – you know, the typical things. During COVID we built a dome shaped greenhouse on our lawn. Not sure how our neighbors feel, but I think it's cool [laughs].

Favorite food, movie or TV show?

Since I was a kid, the "I can eat this every day" thing is pizza. Not super original, but I can eat pizza every day.

My favorite movie for most of my life has been *Tank Girl*, which is such a weird movie [laughs]. I haven't watched in a while, so I don't know if it's aged well, but it was my favorite movie for a long time. It's such a strange movie though, most people don't know what I'm talking about.

Place you've never been to visit?

Singapore. I don't really know the answer to that [why Singapore?], but for some reason, I have always wanted to go to Singapore since high school. I went to culinary school too, so I think Singapore's food was amazing when we went through different cultural cuisines; their climate looks super cool, they have some amazing plants…something about it just… I just always wanted to go to Singapore. I don't have a great reason for it, but something about it has just drawn me there. One day I'll get there.

If you had the power to change one thing about the world, what would it be?

Oh gosh, such a heavy question. I think the unrealistic answer is to remove suffering. There are just so many people in pain in the world that I would love to make that just go away, but I think that's not a realistic answer. I don't think there is a realistic answer for this I guess laughs]. It just makes me so sad how many people are in pain on a consistent basis that if we can find a way to remove unnecessary suffering, I think it we would be so much better.

What else should we know about you?

I think something people don't know about me… I mean people should know it… but despite the fact that I do a lot of public speaking, facilitating and trainings, I'm an incredibly shy person socially. I really love engaging with people but I'm often too nervous to be the person to start that interaction. I say that because I welcome people to come talk to me, I'm just too shy to start the conversation. I think that's something that surprises people because in my work I have no problem talking in front of a group of people or facilitating, but in social situations, I shy away from interactions. I'm just a very, very shy person.

What messages do you have for people reading this?

There's been a lot of anti LGBTQ bills this year, so the message I want to get across is that – you belong. People that are part of the LGBTQ community belong; you have value, you have worth, and RAIN is here for folks. I know it's been hard for me with all these bills when they pop up and I know it's hard for a lot of other people. So the biggest thing I want people to take away is that LGBTQ people belong, have value and are worthy of taking up space, and should be here and should feel that community.

(Edited for space - read full conversation here)

We want to provide a deeper dive into the unique lives and skill sets of our members all across Washington State.

If you want to nominate someone to be featured in the spotlight, please email RAIN@ofm.wa.gov.

The Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) is an LGBTQ+ and ally

Business Resource Group

committed to diversity and inclusion efforts that allow staff to bring their full authentic selves to work in order to do their best work on behalf of Washingtonians.

Questions or feedback

RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

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Visit our website

LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN

WASHINGTON STATE LGBTQ COMMISSION

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