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A Speech about the UP Center of Champaign County - LGBTQA Center/Resource

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Topic: The UP Center of Champaign County – LGBTQA Center/Resource

General Purpose: To persuade

Specific Purpose: To persuade the audience to become involved in the Up Center

Thesis: The UP Center of Champaign County is essential because it is often the only lifeline LGBT individuals have within a smaller community.

1. INTRODUCTION

A) Attention Getter: Last year, a young student of Champaign was scheduled to have an expensive surgery. Running in to financial misfortune, he was in serious trouble. Thankfully, a local charity came to the rescue. Not only did they raise over 700 dollars for him, but greatly helped with healthcare resources, and provided emotional support. This generous charity was the UP Center, a resource for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, and allied residents of Champaign County. And as for the student? The student was me.

B) Credibility: As someone who has been involved with the UP Center and experienced what they can do firsthand, I believe that such a place is essential for growth and cooperation, as well as the confidence, consciousness, and safety of the queer community.

C) Relevance: In today's world, it is essential that such a community has a safe resource. The UP Center not only provides support for queer and ally-identifying people of all ages, but provides help and information for families, people of color, health, and culture. As part of their mission statement on their website, unitingpride.org, accessed April 12th, 2012, they "facilitate outreach and collaborate with the greater Champaign County to participate in the education and development of the overall community." It is a force that is working to better everyone, not just the queer community.

D) Thesis Statement: The UP Center is essential because, **as the 2010 LGBT Community Center Survey Report states**, in a smaller community, such a center is often the only lifeline LGBT individuals have.

E) Problem Statement: With all of this said, the UP Center is facing struggle that hinders its growth and stints its potential for reaching all of Champaign County. Today I will be discussing the obstacles of the Up Center, as well as some of the solutions that I believe will help it thrive, and how you can become involved.

Transition: As a smaller charity, the UP Center is like the Mom-and-Pop business, struggling for location, participation, and visibility.

2. BODY – Problems

A) One of the challenges that the Center faces is that it has a very small, central, and hidden location.

I. The official headquarters is located in the IMC, or Independent Media Center, which also holds several other community organizations or offices. As you might know, the IMC is not a very large space to begin with, and the UP Center only has a singular room, which hosts most of the groups that meet throughout the week. Only one group is able to meet at a time, and events must usually be held elsewhere in the community.

B) Another issue that the UP Center faces, **as its Vice President Megan Paecely said, when I spoke with her on April 4th 2012**, is that there is often times a lack of staff members and volunteers.

I. As the Center holds many different meetings and events, and has even hosted CU Pride Fest for the past two years, it is critical that they get as much help as possible. There is also an issue with having enough staff and volunteers to support regular daytime hours. Again, to **quote the report I listed**, "volunteers are integral to the operations of community centers and their involvement underscores the role that community centers play in broader communities." Involvement makes members of the community truly feel like they are a part of something

much larger. As a volunteer, I am very inspired to do what I can to make the UP Center a great place.

- C) In general, there are many citizens of Champaign County who are not aware that the center exists. When trying to discuss it with students and friends, I was sad to learn that most didn't know about it.
- I. It is important for the queer community to know that they have a resource like the UP Center, a place to support those in need and say "It's ok; there's nothing wrong with you. You're just fine." **Resources such as GLSEN'S National School Climate Survey, published in 2009, which includes 10 years of research, indicate that Illinois schools are not always safe for many queer students. LBGTAggingCenter.org, in November, 2011, revealed that nationally, LGBT adults are more likely to experience housing discrimination, and are less likely to have support from families.** We can assume the same sorts of things happen right here in our community. If not enough people know they have the UP Center to help them, how can it be a safe force in this community and prevent these things from happening?

Transition: With these issues at hand, one may think it might be an equal struggle to solve them. On the contrary – helping the UP Center thrive is very simple, through the power of networking, and just by contacting them, to let them know you want to be involved.

3) BODY – Solutions

- A) If donations to the UP Center are increased, it will have a better chance to expand.
- I. The website, unitingpride.org, features a donation page, and you can easily help financially, choosing a tab as to how much you'd like to give. You can choose the subscription option and donate 5 dollars a month – just 60 dollars a year! Think of how much you spend annually on other things. If significantly more financial support is given, the Center can look into larger resources for expansion ideas, such as Center on Halsted, which is in Chicago. Even if it was able to expand into having a front desk and two rooms, for example, it would be easier to locate, recognize, and return to.
- B) If the UP Center increases its network of other LGBT centers, awareness will spread.
- I. There are several other small groups in Champaign County, such as Parkland's PRIDE, and the University's LGBT Resource Center, as well as the Gay/Straight Alliances of a few high schools. By collaboration of these groups, education and community will be better united. For example, a couple of weeks ago, there was an anti-bullying film screening held at the Champaign Public Library that had members of the UP Center and both colleges' groups working together. If this happens more often, people will recognize the UP Center as a resource worth looking into.
- C) Networking aside, there are many ways that we, as citizens of Champaign County and surrounding areas, can get involved with the UP Center, so that it will increase in growth and support.
- I. By visiting the website, one has access to all of the support groups that are offered by the center, as well as contact information of all of the board members. It is incredibly simple to email, to let them know you are interested in becoming involved. If email is not your thing, the website provides a number to call, so you can set up a personal appointment.
- II. There is also an easily accessible calendar, which gives all group and event times. The meetings that deal with finance are actually open to the public, so everyone easily has the opportunity to contribute or listen in, so that you can help plan for the UP Center's future.

Transition: Becoming more involved in the UP Center just takes a little bit of dedication and motivation – it isn't difficult to join at all, and the personal reward of becoming affiliated is the enrichment of one's overall wellbeing.

4) CONCLUSION

A) Review: Today I have discussed the in's-and-out's of the UP Center, various issues it faces as a charity, and possible, easy solutions to ensuring it remains a positive, growing establishment in the community.

B) Lasting moment: To individuals outside of the queer community who question their place in the UP Center, I bid you welcome. Here, the allied community is just as important as the queer community, and whether or not you believe it, your support is vital for increasing awareness and acceptance with Champaign County and beyond. To individuals within the queer community, I implore you to become involved in some of the ways I described, because the UP Center is out to support you. As a product of their support, I have become more confident of my identity within the community and much more concerned with making it a better place. By becoming involved, I guarantee to you that it gets better.

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