Dear OUTWORDS community,

It’s been a while since we sent a newsletter, and we have lots of news to share. But I want to just start by saying thank you. If you are reading this newsletter, you are part of OUTWORDS. You have sustained us and helped us grow over the past five years. Yes, OUTWORDS is five years old! Time flies when you’re having fun and preserving the essential history of the LGBTQIA community, in the voices of those who created our community from scratch.

You have made this possible by sharing your time, wisdom, and financial support with us. So once again, please accept our personal thanks for joining us on this journey. And here’s to the next five years!

The Legacy of a Century

We want to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of our oldest interviewee to date, Shirley Greernes. Shirley was the proud mom and legacy keeper of Rob Eichberg, one of the co-creators of National Coming Out Day. Together, Shirley and Rob helped countless AIDS patients navigate their illnesses and traumatic losses in the early 1990s, before Rob also died of complications from AIDS.
Shirley passed away in August, just shy of her 101st birthday. Her son Peter wrote, "She lived the most amazing life, and she went out on her own terms, with no pain, no angst. She simply closed her eyes and went to sleep."

OUTWORDS is grateful to have had the chance to meet and interview Shirley in 2016, and through her, to have met her beloved son Rob. Thanks to Shirley, Rob's story lives on. Rest in peace, Shirley, and thank you for being such an incredible steward.

**On the Road Again**

As you know, OUTWORDS was able to continue recording interviews during the pandemic, by conducting interviews online. Thank you for enabling us to “pivot” so successfully!

We're also thrilled to report that over the past two months, we were able to conduct ten in-person interviews (with lots of Covid precautions) in Provincetown, Massachusetts; the San Francisco Bay Area; and the Hawaiian island of Kaua’i. (Total distance between Provincetown and Kaua’i: 5,181 miles!)

Our interviewees included David Wilson, a lead plaintiff in Massachusetts’ groundbreaking marriage equality case; Janetta Johnson, Executive Director of the Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project; highly accomplished psychiatrists and filmmakers Dee Mosbacher and Nanette Gartrell; and Kaua’i county council member KipuKai Kuali’i.

We cannot say enough about these individuals, as well as the other six we had the honor of interviewing, except to say that they have each contributed radically different, essential elements to our shared history. Many thanks to these remarkable people for welcoming us into their homes, and sharing their stories with OUTWORDS.
Here at OUTWORDS, along with recording new interviews, we are always looking for new and innovative channels and partnerships to share our elders’ stories with the world. In that spirit, we’re very excited to announce a new partnership between OUTWORDS and SAGE, America’s oldest organization serving the needs of LGBTQIA+ elders.

SAGE has an critically important program called SAGECare, which provides cultural competency training to all kinds of facilities providing care to older LGBTQIA+ people. Under this partnership, SAGECare will incorporate OUTWORDS videos into their trainings, providing stories of real people to help caregivers understand the unique lives, stories, and needs of our elders. Thank you SAGE for inviting OUTWORDS to partner with you on this important mission!

New Grants Rolling In

As evidence of how much OUTWORDS has grown from our humble beginnings, we’d like to extend our grateful thanks to the following institutional funders for their recent generous grants to OUTWORDS:

- California Arts Council ($32,500)
- The California Wellness Foundation ($20,000)
- California State Library ($17,000)

This is our first grant from Cal Wellness, our second grant from CA Arts Council, and our third grant from CA State Library! Many thanks to these organizations and their wonderful staffs for believing in LGBTQIA history as a timeless resource that can guide and inspire social change agents for generations to come.

Save the Date: OUTWORDS’ First Membership Drive

Thank you, again, to all who supported our “We’ve Got Your Back” campaign during Pride Month. Thanks to your generosity, we exceeded our stretch goal, raising $20,173 from 97 donors! Because of your support, we’ve been moving forward with our intergenerational initiatives, including the establishment of our first-ever Youth Advisory Council.

This October, we are thrilled to offer you another way to show your support for OUTWORDS. As you may know, recurring monthly donations of any size are the lifeblood of any non-profit’s growth and sustainability. When a donor makes a monthly financial commitment, the relationship grows, and magic happens!

In that spirit, OUTWORDS will be launching our first-ever Membership Drive on October 11 (Coming Out Day). During that week (Oct 11-15), we will be offering the chance to win tantalizing raffle prizes to anyone who becomes a member!
Mark your calendars and watch this space for updates--and thank you in advance for deepening your relationship with OUTWORDS!

**So Long, Farewell**

A couple of weeks ago, the OUTWORDS team gathered for a virtual breakfast-cereal-and-ice-cream-fest to celebrate and say goodbye to two amazing team members: volunteer **Michael DeLaurier** from Pacifica, CA; and summer intern **Sabine Maxine-Lopez** of Los Angeles.

Michael (middle-left) joined OUTWORDS in January of this year, and has helped us with everything from conducting prep interviews with our interviewees, to research and archival tasks. And Sabine (bottom-left) has been vital in numerous ways, from helping us to create our Membership Drive (see below) to prompting important conversations around equity and inclusion.

Michael has now begun his freshman year at Brown University, while Sabine continues their studies at Cal State Los Angeles. Bon voyage, Michael and Sabine, and thank you for everything!

**Shoe on the Other Foot: An Interview with the Interviewer**

While I'm usually the one asking the questions at OUTWORDS, I was honored to be interviewed recently by Jennifer Kroot and Robert Holgate for *San Francisco Bay Times*. We talked about the beginnings of OUTWORDS, and a bit about my own journey:

"One night in 2014, Mason Funk couldn't sleep. The TV producer lay awake next to his sleeping husband, the love of his life, and wondered, 'How did I get here?"
Funk is 62. As a child, he never dreamed he’d be able to legally marry a man, or even be openly gay. That sleepless night, he decided that he would archive the stories of LGBTQ+ elders, who paved the way for his life to be fully realized. He’d use his production skills to make sure the stories would be filmed as beautifully as possible. The Outwords Archive was born, and seven years later, he’s recorded almost 200 stories.”

You can read the full article here.

We can't say it enough: we can only do this work with your support. It's only because of you that we are able to keep these stories alive. If you'd like to keep supporting us as we move into the future, you can make a tax-deductible donation to OUTWORDS at our website.

Gratefully,

Mason Funk
Executive Director, OUTWORDS

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