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## **Capital Pride Announces Recipients of 2014 Capital Pride Heroes Awards, TransPride Engendered Spirits, And Bill Miles and Larry Stansbury Award Winners**

**WASHINGTON, DC** -- Capital Pride is proud to announce the recipients of the Annual 2014 Capital Pride Heroes Award, the TransPride Engendered Spirits, and the winners of awards named for the late founding board members of the Capital Pride Alliance, Bill Miles and Larry Stansbury. The recipients will be honored at the **Capital Pride Heroes Gala & Silent Auction**, Presented by Hilton Hotels & Resorts, on **Wednesday, May 21, 2014, 7:00-10:00 p.m.**, at the Artisphere, 1101 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22209.

Each year members of the community nominate individuals who have helped to further the causes of the LGBTQA rights. A committee of Capital Pride's Board of Directors recommended this year's top LGBTQA heroes from among those nominations, which the full Board then approved, along with the Engendered Spirits, who were recommended by the TransPride Committee, and the Miles and Stansbury Award winners. In addition to the Gala, the Heroes and Engendered Spirits are honored throughout the two-week celebration of Pride.

For complete biographies of the awardees and more information about the Heroes Gala & Silent Auction, visit the Capital Pride website at [www.capitalpride.org/heroes](http://www.capitalpride.org/heroes).

The 2014 Capital Pride Heroes are Nicholas Benton, David Perez, Rev. Dean Snyder, Dr. Imani Woody, and Tom Yates; the Engendered Spirits are Amy Nelson and Alexa Rodriguez; the Bill Miles Award Winner is Al Pellenberg; and the Larry Stansbury Award winner is Robert York.

The 2014 Heroes Gala is presented by Hilton Hotels & Resorts. Additional event sponsors include the Artisphere, Absolute Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Celebrity Cruises, Rainbow Floral Studios, State Farm Insurance, UBER, Verizon, and Wells Fargo.

### **Capital Pride Heroes**

#### **Nicholas F. Benton**

Nicholas F. Benton is the founder, owner, and editor-in-chief of the *Falls Church News-Press*, a general interest community newspaper based in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. The newspaper has published almost 1,200 consecutive weekly editions since its founding in March 1991. Benton has written every one of the paper's editorials since that time and has also written a weekly national affairs column since September 1997. In 2013 the *Letha Press* of New Jersey, which specializes in LGBT books, published in a single volume, entitled "Extraordinary Hearts: Reclaiming Gay Sensibility's Central Role in the Progress of Civilization," the 100 "Nick Benton's Gay Science" essays that Benton published weekly from October 2010 to October 2012 in Washington, D.C.'s LGBT community magazine, *Metro Weekly*.

Benton graduated with a B.A. from Westmont College, Santa Barbara, and a M.Div. with honors from the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley. In 1970, he co-founded the Berkeley Gay Liberation Front and wrote the editorial for the first edition of the West Coast's first gay newspaper, *Gay Sunshine*. He moved to Washington, D.C. in 1985 and served as White House correspondent from 1985-87, before founding his own news service, *Benton Communications*, in 1987, which led to the launch the *Falls Church News-Press*.

Nick is very active as an openly-gay business owner in LGBT advocacy; he champions equality and justice in his editorials, columns, and in his choice of news features. *The Falls Church News-Press* has twice been named Business of the Year by the Falls Church City Council. Benton has served two terms as president of the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce and has been awarded its Pillar of the Community Award twice. He was honored in 2012 as the recipient of Equality Virginia's "OUTstanding Virginian" award. His newspaper and website ([www.fcnp.com](http://www.fcnp.com)) include two weekly and exclusive gay-themed columns, "Anything But Straight," by Wayne Besen and "Johnny's World," by former Olympic figure skater Johnny Weir. Benton also serves on the board of the LGBT Democrats of Virginia.

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### **David M. Pérez**

Since becoming president of the board of the Latino GLBT History Project in May 2011, David M. Pérez has expanded the project's programs in history, education, cultural celebrations, advocacy, and leadership development for metropolitan Washington, D.C.'s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Latino community. Pérez is Director of Development for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the largest and oldest Latino membership organization in the U.S. In this capacity, David leads the fundraising efforts for LULAC's community-based programs in economic empowerment, education, civic participation, and health, in conjunction with LULAC's 1,000 councils nationwide. Pérez also leads the national LULAC LGBT Equality project. David was a founding co-convenor for the first Union Hacer La Fuerza Latino Institute at the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change, which gathered 250 LGBT Latino grassroots activists for a full day of networking, issue and skill-based training.

Locally, with the Washington, D.C. community David organizes around important causes such as immigrant rights marches, Latino Pride, and building solidarity between organizations that support LGBT people of color. Pérez currently serves on the District of Columbia Mayor's GLBT Advisory Committee. Pérez has served as Building and Grounds Committee chair and a leader in the 20s and 30s Group at St. Thomas' Episcopal Parish. Pérez received Metro Weekly news magazine's Next Generation Award for LGBT advocacy in D.C. in 2012; the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club's 2012 Justice Award; and in 2008 was featured in the "Out in the Workplace" article of California's premier Gay Latino Magazine, Adelante.

Pérez earned his M.A. in Latin American Studies from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a B.A. in Spanish and Social Science with a Minor in Biblical Studies from Biola University in Los Angeles, California. Born in the City of Torrance in Los Angeles County, and raised in Vista, a suburb of San Diego; he is a native Californian.

### **Reverend Dean Snyder**

The Reverend Dean Snyder has been the Senior Pastor at Foundry United Methodist Church since 2002. He has also been an activist, religious journalist, and pastor for more than 40 years. A native of Pennsylvania, he graduated from Albright College and Boston University Theological Seminary. Snyder is married to Jane Malone and lives on Capitol Hill.

Rev. Snyder has been a prime and unwavering leader in the fight to end discrimination against LGBT persons in the United Methodist denomination. In contravention of the church's Book of Discipline, he has performed more than 20 same-gender weddings. Last December, he opened Foundry's pulpit to another pastor who had been defrocked for violating rules against performing such marriages. Snyder's blog, "Dean's World," consistently calls out the denomination's mis-steps and offers constructive and ecclesiastically correct suggestions for ending United Methodism's institutional discrimination against LGBT persons. Snyder advocates for marriage equality and full inclusion from the pulpit, in the press, and in media interviews.

Rev. Snyder's leadership on an inclusive church is at first, and always, pastoral. During Snyder's tenure at Foundry, LGBT persons have been welcomed as members, leaders, and candidates for ministry; they have been fully included in the life of the church. Affirming statements from the pulpit and in group and person-to-person settings have countered lifetime stigmas felt by LGBT persons who have been condemned by their families and various religious institutions. Once marriage equality was recognized in D.C., Snyder's actions in marrying same-sex couples and allowing gay weddings at his parish became a pastoral necessity, and the new reality at Foundry, despite the denomination's rules against such practices. This strong and diverse church community has shown, especially during Snyder's tenure, that being fully inclusive is key to thriving, and especially, to bringing in young adults and families, straight and LGBT alike.

### **Dr. Imani Woody**

Dr. Imani Woody is the founding director and CEO of Mary's House for Older Adults, the first LGBT friendly residential housing development project in Washington, D.C. She currently works as a diversity consultant in the field of health, aging, and issues affecting the LGBT and people color communities as well as a nonprofit organizational development consultant. Dr. Woody is a mayoral appointee to the D.C. GLBT Advisory Council, and is the Program Officer for the Older Adults Advisory Council for the Metropolitan Community Churches. She serves as the Chair for SAGE Metro D.C. and a Board member of the LGBT Technology Partnership. Woody has served on many boards including the Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C. and the Women in the Life Association. She has been an advocate for women, people of color, and LGBT persons for more than 20 years. Dr. Woody is considered an expert on aging and LGBT issues, authoring research and other articles including as a regular contributor to the Diverse Elders Coalition.

As the director of client services at the Mautner Project, Dr. Woody managed programs that provided educational and direct services. She was the program manager for the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, working on national health programs to educate elderly African American women. Formerly a training specialist for AARP's Foundation, Woody developed curriculum and delivery of on-site and web-based trainings. She trained substantive experts to become trainers and provided on-going technical assistance to field trainers. As co-chair of PRISM, AARP's employee resource group, Woody developed national partnerships and helped create the WDC Elder Coalition.

Woody has a PhD in Human Services specializing in non-profit management and a Masters of Human Services degree from Lincoln University. She is a Washingtonian and lives in D.C. with her wife of 13 years.

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## **Tom Yates**

Tom Yates was born in Utica, NY, and graduated from the State University of New York-Potsdam, with a mathematics degree. He continued his education and earned an MA in mathematics from the State University of New York-Binghamton. Yates is a civilian mathematician with the U.S. Navy and lives in Silver Spring, MD.

Yates has been a steadfast leader and supporter of the Leather/Levi community, particularly in charitable works. He is a long-time member of the Defenders, the leather/Levi group associated with Dignity. His service to the Defenders has included the Washington, D.C. chapter and the organization's national board. Yates was vice-president (1998-1999), president (1999-2006) and executive director (2010-2012) of Brother, Help Thyself (BHT), the umbrella fundraising charity that helps fund LGBT organizations throughout the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas. Since its founding in 1978, BHT has raised and distributed more than \$2.3 million in grants to more than 130 groups. For nearly half of BHT's history, Yates has been an integral part of the leadership that has made that success happen.

In addition, Yates has been a long-time member of both Dignity/Washington and the national DignityUSA organization. He joined Dignity/Washington in 1983. Not only is Yates a generous member of the local chapter, but he was also a member of the board of directors for DignityUSA for six years. At three DignityUSA national conventions he donated audio-visual equipment and his skills at running it, thereby saving the organization a significant amount of money.

Whether Yates is working at Dignity/Washington, helping organizations function smoothly, hosting a social event to move a cause forward, he is helping make the LGBT community and world more humane and equal.

## **Engendered Spirits**

### **Amy Nelson**

Amy Nelson is the Supervising Attorney at Whitman-Walker Health's Legal Services Program, where she leads the transgender legal practice. That practice has grown ten-fold over the last three years, and thanks to Nelson's work, assisted more than 260 transgender clients in 2013 with identity documents, discrimination claims, and health insurance matters. In 2012, Nelson was instrumental in launching Washington's first Name and Gender Change Clinic to assist members of the transgender community in filing for legal name changes, obtaining accurate local and federal identity documents, and updating school and insurance records. In partnership with TransLAW, the monthly Name and Gender Clinic has helped hundreds of transgender individuals from the Greater Washington area and trained more than 150 volunteers on transgender issues.

In addition, the clinic connects transgender and gender non-conforming community members to Whitman-Walker's medical and support services, including mental health, immigration, and public benefits. Nelson's legal work also includes representing transgender clients in employment and healthcare discrimination matters.

Nelson is currently working with several local partners to implement D.C.'s recently-announced trans-inclusive health insurance regulations by educating outside medical providers, insurers, clients, and allies. Nelson was recognized as a "Shero of the Movement" by D.C. Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs in March of 2014. Like most Texans, she is proud to be a native, but is even prouder to call D.C. home for more than 15 years and to recognize D.C.'s national leadership in healthcare reform and transgender inclusivity. She graduated from The George Washington University School of Law with honors, having served as president of Lambda Law and on the International Law Review.

### **Alexa Rodriguez**

Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez is originally from Usulután, El Salvador where she founded Mi Nueva Familia. Mi Nueva Familia is a working group for people living with HIV and for transgender women. She also worked with the PanAmerican Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) as a health educator. In 2009, Alexa arrived in the United States and continued her work as an HIV/STI prevention educator with groups such as Identity, Mariposas, Empoderate Youth Group, Casa de Maryland, and the Virginia Department of Public Health.

Rodriguez currently is a promoter for Miss Maryland Latina, a board member for the Latino GLBT History Project, an avid advocate for Transgender Latina equality, the Miss Latino GLBT History Project 2012-13, and a member of the Trans-Latina Coalition – a national organization that advocates for and builds the capacity of transgender Latina immigrants. She currently works as the Youth Center Transgender Program Coordinator for La Clinica del Pueblo in Washington D.C. Her work involves providing HIV testing to clients and leading weekly transgender youth support groups as a counselor and mentor. In addition, Rodriguez supports the Center by planning leadership and social events for transgender youth.

Rodriguez arrived in the United States ready to fight and work for the transgender community. She saw transphobia persist in her home country and wanted to ignite a call for action. She has been an activist for 12 years fighting for the rights of the HIV positive and members of the transgender community. As a transgender and HIV positive individual, Alexa will continue to fight to make sure her community does not fail.

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## **The Bill Miles Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service**

### **Al Pellenberg**

Al Pellenberg has been engaged in organizing LGBT Pride celebrations for 30 years. In Atlanta, he helped take the Atlanta Pride Celebration from a few hundred marchers and celebrants to one of the top 10 destination prides celebrations in the United States. During his time in Atlanta, Pellenberg served in many roles for the Pride Committee and continues to support several Atlanta-based organizations with design and marketing expertise.

When Pellenberg and his husband relocated to the D.C. area, one of his first actions was to seek out members of the Capital Pride Committee to see if he could help their efforts. He found a niche as the Art Director and helped to sculpt and refine a clear and clean image for Capital Pride, both on the web, print, advertising, and the physical festival site. Last year Al used his experience to lead the team through the first in-house production of *The Official Guide to Capital Pride* in nearly 20 years, giving it more community focus, educational impact, and relevance while increasing the revenues from the Guide that help fund Capital Pride's year-long operations.

Pellenberg is passionate about the Pride movement and maintains that the mere act of gathering as many LGBT folks as possible in one place for one day is an act of political action and courage. Pellenberg feels strongly that each generation of LGBT persons must take stock of where they are, remember where they have come from and look forward to a better future for all of us.

*The Bill Miles Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service acknowledges exemplary contributions to the annual Capital Pride celebration. Bill Miles, Ed.D. was a dedicated volunteer and contributor to Capital Pride, as well as an active member of the DC GLBT community. He was a founding member of the Capital Pride Alliance.*

## **The Larry Stansbury Award for Exemplary Contributions to Pride**

### **Robert York**

Robert York is a native Oklahoman and has been active in the LGBT community of Washington, D.C. for more than 19 years. He is Deputy Director of Development for Whitman-Walker Health.

Robert served as the executive director of Capital Pride for six years (1999-2005), the longest serving executive director in Capital Pride's history. In that time, Capital Pride became recognized as the largest weekend event in Washington, D.C. and one of the top three Pride celebrations in the United States. York built the Pride Festival into a showcase event for the community adding new events, including the town hall meeting, a community-based committee, and instituted the Saturday evening parade celebration. The D.C. City Council recognized his leadership with a proclamation of "Robert York Day" on Feb. 20, 2006.

York directed AIDS Walk Washington from 2003-2005, served on the Human Rights Campaign Board of Governors, Gay Men's Chorus of Washington Board of Directors, the Mayor's Advisory Council for GLBT Affairs, the D.C. Chief of Police's GLBT Advisory Council, Metro PFLAG-DC, Team DC, and as an ambassador for Trevor Project DC.

York continues to help Capital Pride and has served on the Heroes Committee, Entertainment Committee, the Mr. and Miss Capital Pride event, the Parade Committee, Street Festival Committee, and as an advisor to the Capital Pride staff and Board. With the help of Larry Stansbury, Patrick Grady, and Frank Nowicki, York implemented and directed the Mr. and Ms. Capital Pride Leather contests, which are now run by D.C. Leather Pride. In 2006, York was recognized as a Capital Pride Hero.

York also promotes the Miss Gay DC America pageant. In the past four years, York has successfully had three national winners and over the past six years had two first runners-up. He is an active member of the Federal Triangles Soccer Club, Stonewall Dodgeball, and Sliders Softball and enjoys quality time with his boyfriend Patrick.

*The Larry Stansbury Award for Exemplary Contributions to Pride acknowledges outstanding efforts related to the annual Capital Pride celebration or Pride movement. Larry Stansbury was a longtime activist in the DC gay community, serving as a health educator, club manager, member of the leather community and gay motorcycle club groups, and executive director of Brother, Help Thyself.*

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*Capital Pride, located in Washington, DC, is the non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs of the LGBT community and its partners through educational events, entertainment, community outreach, and celebrations of diversity.*

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