

Collection #
P 0883

**GAY / LESBIAN SWITCHBOARD BENEFIT SHOW POSTER,
CA. 1990S**

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Processed by

Barbara Quigley
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 OVC Graphics folder

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1990s

PROVENANCE: Gift from Terry David Downey of Indianapolis, May 2022

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2022.0079

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

An organization known as the Community Referral Service, Inc., began operating the gay and lesbian switchboard of central Indiana in 1981. It created a network for the LGBTQ+ community to find entertainment, health care, and other services that would be safe and supportive. The switchboard operated for more than two decades until the internet rendered it unnecessary.

Geoff Lapin, Rusty Moe, Allen McCormack, and a few others cautiously established this information clearinghouse originally run by and for gay men. It consisted of a phone line patched to an answering service. Volunteers, armed with a binder full of wide-ranging information, took shifts answering the calls. This service initially was promoted by posting the phone number at gay bars throughout Indianapolis. In June 1981 it was advertised in the *Indianapolis Star* for the city's first Pride Week, which caused the switchboard to be inundated by calls from outraged *Star* readers the next day.

Calls were answered from 7pm to 11pm every day of the year. The volunteers also responded to calls to the Indiana AIDS hotline after hours. In the early 1990s the organization reported that approximately 25 percent of calls were from out of towners wanting directions to the bars; 20 percent of the callers had AIDS issues; the next largest percentage of calls were from those who had emotional issues pertaining to coming out, the breakup of a relationship, being lonely, or contemplating suicide. Other calls were for such things as information on social groups or referrals to professionals sensitive to lesbian and gay concerns. The volunteers, who did not use their real names when answering calls, had training from professional suicide prevention counselors. In 1993, the switchboard averaged sixty volunteers.

Events were created to raise funds for operating the switchboard. The first annual Gala (pronounced with a long first "a") for the switchboard was held in 1990. In September 1991, the Gala was at the Hyatt Regency Hotel; in 1992 and 1993 it was at Hilton at the Circle. Tricia Pohlman was president of the Community Referral Service in 1991 and 1993, with Jose L. Valencia taking that role in 1992.

The poster in this collection advertised another fundraising event, held on Tuesday, the 28th of April [believed to have been either in 1992 or 1998] at The Ten. The Ten was located at 1218 N. Pennsylvania Street in Indianapolis. It was a popular lesbian bar in the 1980s and was known for its drag shows in the 1990s. It closed in 2014.

Sources:

Brooks, Laken. "Recovering Queer History in Indianapolis." National Trust for Historic Preservation, 22 July 2019. <https://savingplaces.org/stories/recovering-queer-history-in-indianapolis> Accessed 1 May 2024.

Higgins, Will. "Before Indy Pride Week, the 'gay switchboard' offered a lifeline." *The Indianapolis Star*, 7 June 2017. [Before Indy Pride Week, the 'gay switchboard' offered a lifeline \(indystar.com\)](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/2017/06/07/before-indy-pride-week-the-gay-switchboard-offered-a-lifeline/1011117001/) Accessed 1 May 2024.

Indiana Historical Society. The Michael Bohr Collection of the Indy Pride Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives. Programs, GALA Benefit for the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard, 1991-1993, M1242, Box 9, Folder 10.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one mounted poster advertising a benefit show to raise funds for the Gay / Lesbian Switchboard. The event was announced to be on Tuesday, April 28th [believed to have been either in 1992 or 1998] at The Ten, a bar that was located at 1218 N. Pennsylvania Street in Indianapolis.

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Mounted poster advertising a benefit show to raise funds for the Gay / Lesbian Switchboard. The event was stated to be on Tuesday, April 28th [believed to have been either in 1992 or 1998] at 11:00 p.m., with guest emcee Monica Dane and the following entertainers: Vicci Lane, Leighann Taylor, Damien, Jodi (of Illusion's Fame), Dea Demonte, Samanta Sinclair, Danielle Stevens, Jim (of Brother's Fame), "2 Female Singers" Nancy and Jennifer, and "1 Female Comedian" Jennifer. The event was to be held at The Ten.

CONTAINER

OVC Graphics,
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